

Final Report

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015–21

4 August 2021

Authors: Pierre Townsend, Natalie Hicks, Enrico Leonardi, Katie Tong

Submitted by Itad



Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to thank all those who have supported and informed this Report on the Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Country Programme 2015–21. We are particularly grateful to the core UNICEF team members who have been involved in the evaluation – Tom Pellens, Esther Kaggwa, Stanley Gwavuya, Ivan Ssenkubuge and Minaa Rayan – the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Office, the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia and the Evaluation Reference Group, which have guided, informed and supported the inception phase, provided access to key documents, and facilitated discussions with key stakeholders.

This report was co-written by Pierre Townsend, Evaluation Team Leader; Natalie Hicks, Senior Advisor, and Katie Tong and Enrico Leonardi, Core Team Members. The evaluation team would like to thank: David Fleming, Quality Assurance Lead, for the Quality Assurance of this report; Becka Kindler, Project Manager; and Vince Evans-Gutierrez, Project Officer.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of UNICEF or of any of the individuals and organisations referred to in the report.

'Itad' and the tri-colour triangles icon are a registered trademark of Itad Ltd.

Contents

Contents	2
List of acronyms	4
Executive Summary	8
1 Introduction	15
1.1 Evaluation Background	15
1.1.1 Context	15
1.1.2 Evaluation Timeline	15
1.2 Evaluation Purpose and Intended Use	15
1.3 Evaluation Objectives and Scope	16
2 Evaluation Methodology	18
2.1 Overall Design, Evaluation Questions and Criteria	18
2.2 Data Collection Methods, Sampling and Analysis	19
2.2.1 Data Collection Methods	19
2.2.2 Sampling	21
2.2.3 Data Analysis Methods	25
2.2.4 Integration of Gender, Equity and Human Rights in Methods, Sampling and Analysis	26
2.3 Ethical Considerations and Quality Assurance	26
2.3.1 Ethical Considerations	26
2.3.2 Quality Assurance	27
2.4 Limitations	27
3 UNICEF's Country Programme and its Context	29
3.1 The Afghanistan Country Programme	29
3.1.1 Programme Content and Operational Structure	29
3.1.2 The 2017 Mid-Term Review	30
3.1.3 The Evaluation's Key Focus Areas and their Relevance to the ACP	31
3.2 Context of the Intervention	32
3.2.1 Developments in the Political and Security Landscape	32
3.2.2 Changes in National Policy Frameworks During the Period of Study	33
3.3 Impact of the Context on the ACP since 2015	35
3.3.1 Balancing Strategic Objectives with Escalating Needs	35
3.3.2 Progress in Implementing the Triple Nexus	35
3.3.3 Strategy to Achieve Access, Coverage and Equity for Women and Children	36
3.3.4 Capacity Building	37

3.3.5	Gender Integration	37
4	Findings	38
4.1	Focus Area 1: the Nexus	38
4.1.1	Programme Design and Internal Positioning in Support of the Triple Nexus	38
4.1.2	System-Wide Engagement and Positioning in Support of the Nexus	48
4.2	Focus Area 2: Coverage and Access	51
4.2.1	Equity and Multi-Sectoral Programming for the Welfare of Children	51
4.2.2	Approaches to Access	56
4.3	Focus Area 3: Partnerships and Capacity Building	66
4.3.1	Partnerships with Governmental and Non-Governmental Actors	66
4.4	Focus Area 4: Gender Integration	73
4.4.1	Gender Integration in Programme Planning and Practice	73
4.4.2	UNICEF Partnerships and System-Wide Positioning to Promote Gender	80
5	Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations	83
5.1	Focus Area 1: The Nexus	84
5.2	Focus Area 2: Coverage and Access	85
5.3	Focus Area 3: Partnerships and Capacity Building	87
5.4	Focus Area 4: Gender	88
5.5	Recommendations	89
6	Annexes	93
6.1	Terms of Reference	93
6.2	Evaluation Matrix	122
6.3	Sampling Principles and Guidelines for the Evaluation	133
6.4	Key Informant Question Guide	139
6.5	List of Key Informant Categories and Interviewees	157
6.6	Survey Questions	162
6.7	Disaggregation of Respondent Sample	170
6.8	Budgetary Categorisation of ACP Outputs	173
6.9	Bibliography	177
6.10	Itad Principles and Values	180
6.11	Overview of Itad's approach to QA	181

List of acronyms

AAA	ActionAid Afghanistan
ACO	Afghanistan Country Office
ACP	Afghanistan Country Programme
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
AMP	Annual Management Plan
ANDP	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANPDF	Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework
AoR	Area of Responsibility
A-SDG	Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goal
AWLI	Afghan Women's Leadership Initiative
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BPHS	Basic Package of Health Services
C4D	Communication for Development
CAHD	Community Approaches to Handicap in Development
CB	Capacity Building
CBE	Community-Based Education
CBI	Cash-Based Intervention
CBS	Community-Based School
CCCs	Core Commitments for Children
CDC	Community Development Council
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFS	Child-Friendly School
CHW	Community Health Worker
CLTS	Community-led Total Sanitation
CMT	Country Management Team
CoAR	Coordination of Afghan Relief
CP	Child Protection
CPAN	Child Protection Action Network
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CPD	Country Programme Document
CRC	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
CS	Conflict Sensitivity
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DAD	Development Assistance Database
DOE	Department of Education
DOLSA	Department of Labour and Social Affairs
DOPH	Department of Public Health
DRRD	Department of Rural Reconstruction and Development
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
EPI	Expanded Programme of Immunisation
EPP	Emergency Preparedness Platform
ER	Emergency Response
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
EVAW	End Violence Against Women

FA	Focus Area
FO	Field Office
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GATE	Girls' Access to Teacher's Education
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDI	Gender Development Index
GEM	Gender Equality Marker
GIRoA	The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GPR	Gender Programmatic Review
GRIP	Guidance on Risk-Informed Programming
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HNTPO	HealthNet Transcultural Social Organisation (NGO)
HP	Harmful Practices
HQ	Headquarters
HRDA	Human Resources Development Agency (NGO)
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICN	Immunisation Communication Network
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IP	Implementing Partner
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JCMB	Joint Coordination Monitoring Board
KAP	Knowledge Attitude Practice Survey
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
KII	Key Informant Interview
KM	Knowledge Management
LHD	Linking Humanitarian and Development
LoE	Level of Effort
LTA	Long-Term Agreement
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MHM	Menstrual Health Management
MNCH	Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoLSA	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MRRD	Ministry of Reconstruction and Rural Development
MSP	Multi-Sectoral Programming
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NAP	National Action Plan
NESP	National Education Sector Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPP	National Priority Programme
NTA	National Technical Advisor
NUG	National Unity Government
ODK	Open Data Kit
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OH	Outcome Harvesting
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
OR	Other Resources
P&M	Planning & Monitoring
PCA	Project Coordination Agreement
PIDB	Programme Information Database
PO	Project Officer
PSEA	Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PSN	Programme Strategy Note
QA	Quality Assurance
RAM	Results Assessment Module
RIP	Risk-Informed Programming
ROSA	Regional Office of South Asia
RR	Regular Resources
RWP	Rolling Workplan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SLT	Saving Lives Together
SMQ	Strategic Monitoring Question
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPE	Strategic Positioning Evaluation
SPEAR	Social Policy Evaluation and Research
SRM	Security Risk Management
TA	Technical Assistant
ToC	Theory of Change
Tor	Terms of Reference
TPM	Third-Party Monitor
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	United Nations Department for Safety and Security
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VWO	Voice of Women Organization
WADAN	Welfare Association for the Development of Afghanistan
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WASSA	Women Activities & Social Service Association
WCUK	War Child – United Kingdom (NGO)
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WoA	Whole of Afghanistan

WHO World Health Organization
WFP World Food Programme

Executive Summary

Purpose

The Strategic Positioning Evaluation (SPE) of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Afghanistan Country Programme (ACP) 2015–21 was commissioned by the UNICEF Regional Office of South Asia (ROSA) and conducted by Itad. The purpose of this evaluation is threefold. First, it aims to inform the design at country level of the next country programme 2022–25. Second, it aims to foster organisational learning about what works and does not work within a fragile and conflict-affected setting like Afghanistan. Third, the evaluation serves an accountability purpose. The evaluation was organised around four focus areas (FAs) in line with the purpose and objectives of the evaluation: (1) integration of and positioning for a strengthened humanitarian, development and peace nexus; (2) coverage and access to achieve equitable results for children at scale; (3) partnerships and institutional strengthening and capacity building (CB); and (4) gender integration into programme and advocacy work.

Methodology

Data collection for the evaluation was conducted between February and April 2021, and drew on a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, consisting of a document review, key informant interviews (KIs) and online surveys. Data collection on the ground focused on a geographical sample comprised of the Southern and Eastern regions of Afghanistan and a sectoral sample consisting of Health, Education, Child Protection and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), for study at national and subnational levels.

Respondent samples sought to achieve gender balance where possible, and were assembled from UNICEF staff and contracted personnel, other UN agency personnel, local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), donors, government representatives, and province-based respondents, including frontline workers.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

Focus Area 1: The Triple Nexus

Internal Positioning in Support of the Triple Nexus

The evaluation team found that a significant gap exists between nexus *policy and planning*, which are advanced in their development, and nexus *implementation* at programme level, which is heavily constrained by an adverse operating environment.

In all sectors examined, humanitarian delivery aims to draw on local capabilities which the Afghanistan Country Office (ACO) is actively helping to develop. Overall, about the same amount of resources is budgeted per sector outcome to development interventions (CB, resilience) as to humanitarian ones. This denotes that humanitarian and development outputs are designed to work in concert, and to contribute jointly to sector results. Despite the building of local capacities, this close integration in programme design does not always cross over to implementation, where humanitarian-development linkages are heavily undermined by contextual obstacles outside the scope of programming. The nexus is an imperfect paradigm for some of UNICEF's activities in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, in their implementation, development and humanitarian interventions can generally complement each other well if the context allows, and the synergistic relationship between humanitarian and development activities was generally viewed as self-evident by ACO and other United Nations (UN) personnel.

There are mixed perceptions around the strength of ACO's practical understanding of peacebuilding objectives and how to integrate them at programme level, and, while respondents provided examples of the ACP's contribution to peace, evidence to support this is anecdotal. Further, there is

limited understanding and use among staff of UNICEF guidance on peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity.

UNICEF Comparative Advantage in Promoting the Nexus

In Afghanistan, UNICEF's comparative advantage derives mainly from its dual mandate and its sectoral expertise, including in education, child protection, WASH and immunisation. In its work to advance the humanitarian-development nexus, ACO has generally used this advantage well, notably by building linkages across the two pillars of its country programme. Risk is proactively managed and widely understood to be an entry point for furthering humanitarian-development integration. This is illustrated well in ACO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Risk Management, Risk-informed Programming and Preparedness

In managing risk and preparing for it, ACO largely complies with formal process requirements. However, there is little evidence that this contributes to better risk preparedness and management. Rather, alongside its compliance with formal systems and processes, ACO manages risk on a largely ad hoc and tactical basis. This approach is better suited to Afghanistan's operational environment, in which risk is widespread, multi-faceted and fast-changing. The formal risk management and preparedness systems in place are not agile enough to support appropriate programme responses in the local context. They do, however, help to ensure that minimal standards are met in programme preparedness.

Although field offices feed into risk management and context analysis processes, the extent to which their inputs are taken up in ACO-wide risk analysis appears limited. Their more active participation in these processes would improve the overall quality of analysis used to inform ACO-wide programming.

Leadership in Integrating Humanitarian, Development and Peacebuilding Across the Aid System in Afghanistan

While there is good evidence to show that ACO has proactively engaged with stakeholders in support of the nexus, it is equally notable that it has—rightly—resisted pressure to do so when the likelihood of success was limited.

ACO's presence on sector-specific platforms is prominent and well received. However, advocacy work in support of the nexus for the welfare of children is generally viewed as overly cautious by partners and donors. There is also a sense that ACO should invest more resources and senior management time in stakeholder engagement and outward-facing positioning.

Focus Area 2: Coverage and Access

Equity

Following the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the ACP conducted in 2017, ACO has largely abandoned its approach to prioritising needs on the basis of focus provinces. Since the MTR, it has also acquired greater risk appetite in accessing hard-to-reach areas. This has allowed it to be more successful in achieving a good balance between addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and expanding the surface of its programme coverage. However, the ACO continues to face significant challenges in assessing needs in hard-to-reach areas and in its monitoring of results in these areas, and this constrains its ability to address equity.

In the past three years, ACO's approach to equity has been pragmatic rather than being guided by a set prioritisation strategy. This pragmatism has helped it navigate the significant contextual challenges to achieving equity in programme coverage. The diversity in approaches can yield valuable lessons and can serve to develop good practices around which programme sectors can gradually cohere to yield combined equity gains. A pragmatic approach is well suited, and the resulting lack of consistency in approaches is not a concern per se. However, it does call for clarity

on red lines and best practice in expanding coverage, as without guiding principles the multiple approaches used in the pursuit of equity in programming may become disparate over time.

Multi-Sectoral Programming

Since 2020, ACO's approach to multi-sectoral programming has become less theoretical and better rooted in implementation and practice. ACO has made good use of strategies and guidelines in this area. It has also seized opportunities to formalise and consolidate programme convergence, when circumstances on the ground had caused programmes to converge spontaneously. But multiple obstacles still exist to further progress in multi-sectoral programming, including sector siloes, the slow pace of decentralisation, a supply-side approach to programme selection, and the sector-specific dynamics of cooperation with line ministries.

Programme Strategy and Implementation in Support of Access

ACO does not have a formal strategy to access areas outside immediate government control, and this gives it some latitude to pursue access pragmatically. Of the multiple approaches used, the most successful are: to secure access through local implementing partners or extenders and frontline workers; and to leverage acceptance gained among local stakeholders through the delivery of programmes at community level. The reliance on partners and contractors to secure access entails risks both to these actors and to ACO. While formalising a strategy on access may ultimately prove constraining, there is evidence of a need to more clearly spell out red lines and good practices in securing access.

Across the ACP, improvements in programme agility and adaptiveness are closely tied to progress in decentralisation and to the provision of increased support and latitude needed by field offices to respond more autonomously to changes in their immediate environment ('Freedom in a Framework'), i.e. in the conduct of context analyses and in the staging of the required programme responses on the ground.

Conflict Sensitivity

With one exception in WASH, conflict sensitivity is currently not applied to ACO programming. ACO staff had a very generic understanding of the concept and application of conflict sensitivity, which aims to minimise the risk that aid interventions unwittingly fuel conflict or other adverse events. Related UNICEF guidance which prescribes conflict sensitivity as a minimum requirement in peace programming was not widely known by ACO staff, and there are multiple interpretations of what conflict sensitivity means in terms of programming. The fluidity and complexity of the operating environment in Afghanistan makes it very difficult to apply conflict sensitivity principles in programming, and the high granularity required for this is not typically present in the analysis work conducted by ACO. Limited use is made of contextual knowledge held by partners and contractors. In addition, the complex interplay between conflict sensitivity, stakeholder engagement and routine programme processes is not well understood.

Utilisation of Extenders and TPMs

Increasing use has been made of extenders during the current ACP period, primarily to expand programme coverage in contested areas. The deployment of female extenders has been constrained by cultural barriers, but the use of males to escort them has partly remedied this.

Although extenders have been key to programme expansion, their increased use has come with new risks, including that of blurring the accountability of ACO staff for last-mile programme delivery. New standard operating procedures (SOPs) have helped remedy this, but there remains room for progress. The monitoring of extenders and the verification of information reported by them are also areas in need of improvement.

The use of third-party monitors (TPMs) is currently limited in the ACP, due to problems encountered with contractors. While TPMs are not intended to replace the regular field monitoring of the ACO

staff, extenders, or the implementing partners, their limited use is causing an over-reliance on these other monitoring actors. This is true even as these actors cannot substitute for the independence of TPMs, given their active involvement in the monitored programmes. Additionally, a lack of an additional verification and validation layer in the overall monitoring architecture of the ACO has led to a piecemeal approach that falls below accountability and learning requirements. Further human and resource investments are required to institute a comprehensive TPM system that is fit for purpose.

Focus Area 3: Partnerships and Capacity Building

Cooperation with the Government

At the technical level, ACO generally enjoys good working relations with governmental counterparts. A complex political environment has constrained the application of the partnership strategy announced in the ACP document. By default, programme sectors have had to rely on rolling workplans (RWPs) to guide their partnerships with the government. Further progress requires concerted action across the range of aid actors in Afghanistan.

Although generally positive, partnerships with line ministries are often constrained by a lack of capacity and public resources, which ACO alone cannot resolve. Cultural barriers and sensitivities surrounding programme coverage in contested areas inhibit further progress in some partnerships, notably in the child protection and education sectors.

Partnerships with NGOs

UNICEF is viewed as a reliable partner but there is a perception among NGOs that their relationship with ACO is asymmetrical, and would gain from more inclusiveness in programme decisions, as well as partnerships set in a multi-year timeframe. In the course of interviews with NGOs, there was a sense that, while partnerships do generally yield the intended programme results at output level, ACO may have missed opportunities to fully leverage the potential offered by NGOs in terms of their knowledge of the local context, and their often better access to community-based leaders and hard-to-reach area proxies. A broader and more strategic approach to partnerships with NGOs should be considered, to encompass joint objectives in non-programme areas, including advocacy and engagement.

In line with the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs), ACO has entered into partnerships with a range of national NGOs. However, localisation goals remain distant, as these partners continue to lack viable capacity and rely heavily on ACO for support. Revised SOPs have been introduced to improve partner selection, but the general view among ACO staff was that they are not taken into account in the selection of local NGOs by government counterparts.

Alignment of Partnerships with Cooperation Frameworks

The evaluation team found that the ACP aligns with ministerial priorities, but alignment is less clear with National Priority Programmes (NPPs). There is a widely held view that the One UN Framework does not serve its intended purpose of enabling alignment between the international aid effort and the development goals of the Afghan government. Likewise, the Framework has limited use as a platform for the convergence of UN and other aid actors around the sustainable development goals (SDGs). These limitations severely constrain progress towards capacity-building objectives, and limit the role which ACO might play in contributing to intended results. Renewed engagement efforts are needed to make up for the limitations of the One UN process, by forging ad hoc alliances with like-minded stakeholders including UN actors and donors.

Institutional Strengthening

The lack of a strategic framework for capacity-building (CB) has given each sector some flexibility to develop its own sector-appropriate approach. But this has also come at the cost of a clear long-term

vision against which outcome- and impact-level results might be measured. To a significant extent, approaches in capacity-building have been shaped by contextual opportunities or constraints, as well as fluctuating levels of funding and the vagaries of relationships with counterparts. In this context, UNICEF has had notable successes at output level, but it remains uncertain whether these successes can be sustained or can translate into the desired change at impact-level. There has been growing recognition by ACO of the need to strengthen existing training systems and curricula with an approach to CB that is an integral component of long-term partnerships, rather than as a succession of add-on activities. Again, it is uncertain whether the operating context in the next planning cycle will enable this more integrated, long-term approach to take root at programme level, and to yield the desired outcomes.

Comparative Strengths in Capacity Building

There is recognition that UNICEF's dual mandate, spanning multiple sectors, puts it in a strong position to intervene in CB. There is generally broad recognition of the positive impact of specific capacity-building initiatives, resulting from UNICEF's expertise in specific sectors. However, outcomes in this area are shaped less by comparative advantage than by contextual factors and established good practice shared by all aid actors. In Afghanistan, significant contextual obstacles stand in the way of building sustainable partner capacity, and consensus is growing among donors and across the aid community that barriers to programme sustainability are far greater than a lack of capacity alone. In these conditions, ACO's acknowledged sectoral expertise may not be enough to bring about lasting capacity gains among its partners in key sectors. This challenging environment presents an opportunity for ACO to substantively review the working assumptions, principles and approaches that underpin its capacity-building activities in Afghanistan.

Use of National Technical Assistants (NTAs)

In the context of CB, the use of NTAs has become increasingly controversial, with some well-founded claims that it is unaccountable and has had unwanted consequences. In a war economy in which aid streams account for a large proportion of public revenue and elite capture is widespread, the continued use of NTAs must come with solid safeguards to protect against reputational and programme risks. ACO is planning to review and rationalise its use of the NTA system, but these measures come late.

Focus Area 4: Gender Integration

Strengthening of Gender at Organisation Level

UNICEF Afghanistan has made significant efforts and substantive progress in recent years in terms of investment and real commitment to Gender Action Plan (GAP) priorities and has done so in a challenging context. Considerable progress has been made in integrating GAP priorities into programming and there is evidence of systematic investment in gender evidence, analysis and knowledge management within UNICEF.

ACO work with adolescent girls is not just siloed in education but rather takes a cross-sector approach. For girls' education, the recruitment and retention of female teachers is recognised as a critical factor of success, particularly for the community-based education (CBE) approach.

Due to these advances, ACO is currently considered a 'role model' for application of the global GAP staffing and programmatic guidance. Further work is needed, however, to translate these achievements into consistent and well-evidenced approaches to gender-responsive and transformative outcomes in ACO programming. Evidence suggests that significant variations remain across sectors in the fulfilment of GAP priorities, and in the capture of results data to document progress towards them.

UNICEF Partnerships and System-Wide Positioning to Promote Gender

UNICEF Afghanistan has significantly stepped up its promotion of gender integration with implementing partners, but there is less evidence that this has translated into substantive support and capacity-building for doing so.

ACO is well recognised within the UN system and among NGOs and partners as a leading voice on gender, most notably as it relates to the priority areas of girls' education and child marriage. While UNICEF programming is widely viewed to be robust in its gender-responsiveness, there was a perception among some interviewees that ACO could do more in the areas of gender advocacy and gender transformation. In the context of Afghanistan, the evaluation team found that high-profile advocacy could alienate or antagonise key audiences, and that opportunities for rapid gender transformation are in fact very limited. In this context, an incremental approach is likely to yield the best results. Importantly, however, this should be accompanied by better messaging to enable ACO partners and stakeholders to gain a nuanced appreciation of the risks and considerable challenges which gender workstreams must typically reckon with in the Afghan context.

Summary of Recommendations

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS		Action to be Led by	Relevant Report Section
FOCUS AREA 1: THE NEXUS			
1	Until the actual and potential peacebuilding outcomes of ACO operations are better understood, refrain from prioritising peacebuilding in the next CPD.	Dep. Rep.	4.1.1.
2	As Afghanistan enters a period of significant uncertainty, recognise advocacy and stakeholder engagement as central to ACO positioning, and to the promotion of an enabling environment for the nexus and other strategic objectives.	Dep. Rep, Sector Chiefs, Comm. Chief	4.1.1.
3	Increase the participation of Field Offices and Implementing Partners in ongoing risk assessments; mainstream the practice of analysing risk in terms of vulnerabilities and affected groups.	Dep. Rep, Sector Chiefs, FO Chiefs	4.1.1.
FOCUS AREA 2: COVERAGE AND ACCESS			
4	To enable further progress towards multi-sectoral programming and results-based management, continue to support a shift from a 'planning per sector' to a 'planning per need' approach.	Dep. Rep, Sector Chiefs, FO Chiefs	4.2.1.
5	While reforms at scale are conducted to enable further decentralisation, foster ACO's operational agility and adaptiveness by enabling the better capture of programme-critical information.	Dep. Rep, Sector Chiefs, FO Chiefs	4.2.2.
6	Invest in developing in-house conflict sensitivity (CS) capacity, starting with simplifying and contextualising the existing UNICEF Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding Programme guidelines.	Dep. Rep, Sector Chiefs, FO Chiefs	4.2.2.
7	In the next programme cycle, expand the use of TPMs for independent results verification; complement and better harmonise the use of TPMs with monitoring activities conducted internally.	Dep. Rep, Chief Planning and Monitoring, Sector Chiefs, FO Chiefs	4.2.2.
FOCUS AREA 3: PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY BUILDING			
8	In preparation for a degraded operating environment in the next planning period, build more inclusive and consultative working relationships with NGO and civil society partners.	Dep. Rep., Sector Chiefs	4.3.1.
9	In consultation with other UN actors, accelerate efforts to review the use of NTAs in programmes.	Dep. Rep., Sector Chiefs	4.3.1.
FOCUS AREA 4: GENDER INTEGRATION			

10	Use the opportunity of the next ACP planning cycle to update ACO's gender strategy and to instil new momentum in its implementation.	Dep. Rep., Gender Advisors, Gender Specialists, Sector Chiefs	4.4.1.
11	While recognising the significant barriers to gender-transformative goals in Afghanistan, continue to pragmatically seek out opportunities for progress towards these goals wherever possible.	Dep. Rep., Gender Advisors, Gender Specialists	4.4.2.

1 Introduction

1.1 Evaluation Background

1.1.1 Context

The Strategic Positioning Evaluation (SPE) of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Afghanistan Country Programme (ACP) 2015–21 was commissioned by the UNICEF Regional Office of South Asia (ROSA) and conducted by Itad, a UK consulting firm specialising in monitoring and evaluation (M&E). It was considered an opportune moment to commission this evaluation given the requirement for country programmes to undergo a Country Programme Evaluation¹ and that a new Afghanistan Country Programme Document (CPD) was planned to be developed during 2021. As such, the evaluation aimed to support the drafting of UNICEF’s new CPD for Afghanistan. It updates and complements the 2017 Mid-Term Review (MTR) of UNICEF’s ACP. In its design and implementation, it also builds on the 2020 evaluation of UNICEF Afghanistan’s coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations.²

1.1.2 Evaluation Timeline

The evaluation was conducted between January and July 2021 and split into three phases:

Phase 1: Inception – During this period, the Itad evaluation team conducted an initial document review and had calls with the ROSA Evaluation Advisor and Multi-Country Evaluation Specialist, and other key stakeholders, to further refine the evaluation design and methodology outlined in the proposal. It culminated in the submission of an inception report in February 2021.

Phase 2: Implementation – This phase primarily consisted of data collection and triangulation, including field visits in March 2021. After in-country data collection and analysis, the team developed preliminary findings and presented these to the core UNICEF team for this evaluation during a meeting in May 2021 (see Section 2 for more information on methodology).

Phase 3: Finalisation and Communication - The evaluation team facilitated two sensemaking meetings, one with ACO staff Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) members and the other with the ROSA ERG members, to help inform the final draft report’s findings and recommendations in May and June 2021. The findings have already been used to inform the development of the CPD and were presented during the Strategic Moment of Reflection in May 2021. The finalisation of this report marks the end of this period, with a final dissemination event of the Afghanistan SPE due to take place July 2021.

1.2 Evaluation Purpose and Intended Use

The overall aim of this SPE is to assess how well the ACP has contributed—in terms of strategies, approaches and implementation—to the achievement of UNICEF’s strategic goals and mandate, as well as strategically positioning UNICEF within the development/humanitarian system and among national partners in Afghanistan. The purpose of the evaluation is threefold:

- To inform programme design and support managerial decision-taking at the country office level in preparation of the next country programme.
- To contribute to organisational learning about what works and does not work, especially in areas where the country programme has taken a leadership position, such as linking development with

¹ Requirement introduced in 2018 under the revised UNICEF Evaluation Policy.

² Andrew Featherstone and Charlotte Lattimer, *Evaluation of UNICEF’s Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations: Afghanistan Evaluation Report*, August 2020.

humanitarian action and gender integration, and within a fragile and conflict-affected setting like Afghanistan.

- To support accountability by providing an independent assessment of how selected strategies and UNICEF's positioning have contributed to supporting the progressive realisation of rights for all children, especially the most vulnerable.

The central assumption of the evaluation team is that programme convergence and the triple nexus form the core underlying themes that cut across the scope of this evaluation. These themes, and related approaches and strategies, are also key to informing UNICEF positioning, both internally in terms of building strategic coherence across UNICEF's Afghanistan programme and externally in terms of advocacy, engagement and partnerships.

The primary intended user of the evaluation is the Afghanistan Country Office (ACO) management and programme staff, to inform them in the design of the next CPD. ROSA management and advisors are also primary users in their capacity to support ACO in the development of the new CPD and fulfil their oversight function. Secondary audiences are other stakeholders of the country programme, to inform them transparently about the relevance, coherence, effectiveness and equity of the Afghanistan programming strategies.

1.3 Evaluation Objectives and Scope

There are three evaluation objectives, as stated in the Terms of Reference (ToR):

- Provide an independent assessment of the strategies and approaches adopted by the country programme with regards to specific areas of interest, and how well these have contributed to the achievement of UNICEF's strategic goals and mandate.
- Provide an independent assessment of UNICEF's positioning within the development/humanitarian system and among national partners with regard to specific areas of interest. 'Strategic positioning' refers to UNICEF's ability, through its country programme, to positively influence national agendas, leverage relationships, operate in areas of comparative strengths and take up a leadership role in order to advance its strategic goals and children's rights in the country.
- Draw key lessons from the innovative and adaptive capacity of the Country Programme design and implementation and provide a set of forward-looking and actionable recommendations for the next programming cycle.

The temporal scope of the evaluation is the Country Programme from 2015 to 2020. Information pre-dating this period was considered insofar as it illuminates issues in the current programme. The geographic scope is national, but with a key focus on the Southern and Eastern regions in order to gain a greater insight into implementation at a subnational level. The rationale for this sampling is further elaborated upon in Section 2.2.2 of this report.

The thematic scope of the evaluation covers the four areas of strategic interest identified during the evaluation scoping between ACO and ROSA, and subsequently covered in the ToR. Evidence and recommendations about these issues are considered of particular relevance for the strategic direction, management and positioning of the new country programme, and complement the 2017 MTR. During the inception stage, the four areas of strategic interest were slightly reframed into four focus areas (FAs) to enable analytical cohesion within each area of focus in the evaluation: (1) integration of and positioning for a strengthened humanitarian, development and peace nexus; (2) coverage and access to achieve equitable results for children at scale; (3) partnerships and institutional strengthening and capacity building; and (4) gender integration into programme and advocacy work.

The entirety of the UNICEF country programme within the context and development-humanitarian-peace system of Afghanistan is the unit of analysis to examine these focal areas. However, the specific sectors of education, health (with a strong focus on polio), water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and child protection were identified for specific attention because of their value to contributing to the evaluation objectives. The selection criteria used to explain the focus on these four areas is elaborated upon in Section 2.2.

2 Evaluation Methodology

2.1 Overall Design, Evaluation Questions and Criteria

This evaluation was designed as a **process evaluation** to meet the objectives of this assignment. This design enabled the evaluation team to evaluate how the programme is working and to unpack the factors, modalities and partnerships which are most effective in positioning UNICEF Afghanistan to deliver its strategic goals, including advancing the triple nexus.

Alongside this focus on process, feedback from UNICEF on the Inception Report highlighted a desire for the evaluation team to review country programme results data in order to understand whether (and which) programme processes and approaches are most effective in delivering the results envisaged. It was agreed between UNICEF and the evaluation team during inception that results would be assessed where this was demanded by the evaluation questions; it was also agreed that this review of results will consider aggregate reporting rather than data at the implementation level and the evaluation will not consider impact.

The evaluation team initially proposed to embed **outcome harvesting** (OH) within the overarching process evaluation design. However, further investigation during the inception phase showed that some of the methods that were proposed to deliver OH were not practical in the current field context, and the evaluation team therefore pivoted to adopt a lighter-touch approach to OH by incorporating outcome questions in the closing parts of the key informant interviews (KIIs) for UNICEF staff only.

The evaluation is founded on a number of principles, including:

- **Utilisation-focus:** The evaluation is designed to foster a strong sense of engagement and ownership of the evaluation process and outputs among the primary intended users within UNICEF.
- **Formative based on results:** The evaluation is formative but well-grounded in evidence-based results, focusing on analysis and evaluative judgements that will help to shape future activities and decisions.
- **Participatory, collaborative and inclusive:** The evaluation is designed to ensure a high level of engagement throughout the evaluation process and to leverage insights from a broad range of stakeholders.
- **Integral focus on gender** in the approach, the evaluation team, data analysis and the forward-looking aspects of the evaluation.

The evaluation framework, including evaluation questions, is organised around the four focus areas in line with the objectives of the evaluation. The evaluation team mapped the nine key evaluation questions (KEQs) proposed in the ToR to these focus areas, as indicated in Table . A set of sub-evaluation questions, indicators and benchmarks was defined in the evaluation matrix (Annex 6.2). Within these four focus areas, feedback from UNICEF during the inception period indicated that Focus Area 1 (nexus) and Focus Area 2 (coverage, access and equity) are the critical priorities for this evaluation, alongside the effective mainstreaming of gender. The evaluation team has therefore sought to strike an appropriate balance between breadth and depth of enquiry throughout the evaluation, with additional weighting towards Focus Area 1 and Focus Area 2 in data collection and analysis.

Table 1: Focus Areas, DAC Criteria and Key Evaluation Questions

Focus area	KEQ
1. Integration and positioning for a strengthened humanitarian-peace nexus Related DAC Criteria: <i>Relevance (KE1 and KE2) Coherence (KE2)</i> <i>Effectiveness (KE1 and KE2)</i> <i>Equity (KE3)</i>	KEQ 1 To what extent has UNICEF re-positioned itself to contribute coherently to joint humanitarian-development and peacebuilding objectives? KEQ 2 To what extent is UNICEF strategically well positioned to enhance the humanitarian-development-peace nexus within the national development system to the advancement of children's rights in the country?
2. Coverage and Access: Geographical coverage and access to achieve equitable results for children at scale Related DAC Criteria: <i>Relevance (incorporating dynamic efficiency KE3), Coherence (KEQ 3 and KEQ 4)</i> <i>Effectiveness (KE4, KE6)</i> <i>Equity (KE3)</i>	KEQ 3 To what extent have UNICEF's programme strategy and implementation coherently and consistently fostered multi-sectoral programming to respond holistically to children's needs at scale and protect the rights of children everywhere? EQ 4 How well have UNICEF's programme strategy and implementation effectively and coherently enhanced access to hard-to-reach areas ? KEQ 6 How well has UNICEF utilised extenders and third-party monitors (TPMs) to enhance programme delivery?
3. Partnerships and institutional strengthening and capacity building Related DAC Criteria: <i>Relevance (KE5, KE7)</i> <i>Coherence (KE5)</i> <i>Effectiveness (KE5, KE7)</i>	KEQ 5 How well is UNICEF positioned to ensure effective programme delivery through government and NGO partnerships and coordination with other UN agencies? KEQ 7 To what extent has UNICEF contributed to institutional strengthening and government capacity building in accordance with its comparative strengths?
4. Gender integration into programme and advocacy work Related DAC Criteria: <i>Equity (KEQ 8, KEQ9)</i> <i>Coherence (Internal KEQ8 and External KEQ9)</i>	KEQ 8 Is gender being integrated in programme planning and practice based on evidence generated and lessons learned? KEQ 9 How well is UNICEF leveraging its position in strategic partnerships to promote gender in evidence generation, policies and programming?

2.2 Data Collection Methods, Sampling and Analysis

2.2.1 Data Collection Methods

Data collection for the evaluation was conducted between February and April 2021, drawing upon a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods and primary and secondary sources. In the

circumstances of the continued global COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation sought to make best use of existing secondary data sources and to use remote data collection techniques where possible, especially where face-to-face interviews would be difficult to arrange. In designing its research methods and tools, the evaluation team referred back to the evaluation framework to ensure that the data collected was both relevant and sufficient to critically examine the topics of interest under each of the KEQs and to identify the factors which explain how and why changes have come about. Data collection methods included:

1. Systematic review of secondary literature and UNICEF results data and financial reporting

With the help of ROSA and ACO, the evaluation team compiled and reviewed an extensive set of key documents relating to the country programme. It also conducted a review of more general literature on the humanitarian and development situation in Afghanistan, to inform contextual analysis. These documents were coded in line with the evaluation matrix, and evidence was captured in the evidence framework designed for the evaluation.

The evaluation team received more documents from ACO than it had resources to review. It therefore prioritised documents produced since the 2017 MTR in 2017, as well as material directly relevant to the four focus areas under study. In total, more than 430 written sources were consulted.

Alongside this review of secondary literature and documentation, the evaluation team aimed to draw on UNICEF quantitative results data, particularly that captured in the Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQs), which are used to monitor progress against UNICEF's Strategic Plan, and in the Results Assessment Module (RAM), which is UNICEF's programme performance management and reporting platform. As noted in the limitations section below, however, potential disparities were noted between SMQ and RAM data on the one hand and qualitative evidence collected in KIIs on the other. The evaluation team investigated these with the support of ACO staff. However, this line of research was inconclusive, and the decision was therefore taken not to make use of SMQ and RAM data in the evaluation.

Further details of the documents reviewed are provided in Annex 6.9.

2. In-person and remote semi-structured key informant interviews

In total, 124 respondents were interviewed for the evaluation, either in person or remotely. Respondents spanned a range of stakeholder groups at national, subnational and supranational levels,³ including UNICEF staff, government and non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners, and donors (see Section 2.2.2 below on sampling, and further information of their position and organisations in Annex 6.5).

In the evaluation team's approach to selecting KII respondents, considerations relating to the feasibility and cost-efficiency of data collection weighed heavily, given the significant logistical constraints involved in collecting evidence in complex environments, and in obtaining the preliminary data needed to inform a high-resolution sampling strategy. The overriding objective was to ensure balanced representation across the programme sectors and geographical areas covered in the evaluation. Beyond this objective, the main criterion in stakeholder sampling was the depth and relevance of knowledge held of the policy and operational dimensions of the ACP – i.e. the aim was to prioritise *sectoral and thematic expertise* over further diversity inside each of the stakeholder groups.

KIIs were designed in a qualitative, semi-structured format tailored to elicit information along the key lines of enquiry for the four FAs. Interview transcripts were coded and classified on the basis of the four FAs and entered into the evaluation's purpose-designed matrix. As noted above, this tool was also used to code and classify evidence generated in the course of desk work. This enabled the

³ UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia and UNICEF Headquarters.

evidence collected in both methods of data collection to be triangulated, and provided the main basis for synthesis and analysis.

During the design phase of the KII tools, the evaluation team took into account recently conducted KIIs undertaken by the ongoing ROSA Humanitarian/Development Nexus Phase 3 review being conducted by UNICEF.⁴

Further details of the characteristics of respondents interviewed through KIIs for this evaluation are provided in Annex 6.5.

3. Remote surveys with key informants

Three remote surveys were administered, generating a total of 198 responses. They consisted of the following:

1. An English language online survey delivered in SurveyMonkey to UNICEF staff. This spanned senior management, sector specialists and managers located both in Kabul and in field and outposts (see detail, Figure 2 below). In total, 63 staff members responded to this survey.
2. An English language online survey delivered in SurveyMonkey to other stakeholders, including staff of other UN agencies, national and international NGOs, and donor agencies. These respondents were located in Kabul and in the Southern and Eastern provinces. In total, 45 respondents completed this survey.
3. A mobile phone survey conducted in Pashto and Dari, and complemented by an email survey with the same questions where phone contact proved difficult. These surveys were aimed at extenders, National Technical Assistants (NTAs) and frontline workers in the two regions sampled for this evaluation, as well as in Kabul. In total, 90 respondents completed these surveys.

All of the online surveys were designed to be relatively light-touch (25 or fewer questions) to reduce the burden on respondents and to encourage as high a response rate as possible. They were principally designed in light of trends identified from an initial analysis of the data collected through the KIIs, to deepen the evidence base and triangulate information around emergent themes. The evaluation team had initially intended to conduct very light-touch ‘spot surveys’ in advance of KIIs, but these were determined at the beginning of the implementation phase to be impractical, given the timeline for the evaluation.

2.2.2 Sampling

A purposive sampling strategy was used covering three main categories: programme sectors, geographic locations, and stakeholder groups of high relevance to the evaluation.

1. Sectoral sample

During the inception phase, the evaluation team reviewed the six programme sectors that comprise the ACP, and selected a sample of four sectors based on seven selection criteria, which included: their alignment (at output and outcome levels) with the evaluation FAs (especially human rights approaches and gender empowerment); their relevance (at activity level) to nexus and multi-sectoral implementation; their geographic coverage; their budget ceiling; and their use of extenders and TPMs.

By applying these criteria, the evaluation team identified a final sectoral sample consisting of: **Health, Education, Child Protection** and **WASH**, for study at national and subnational levels. A detailed explanation for each of the selected sectors against the seven selection criteria is provided in Annex 6.2

⁴ Emily Wylde, *ROSA Humanitarian-Development Nexus – Phase 3, Inception Report*, January 2020.

Geographic sample

The evaluation team used ACO's organisational units as a basis for geographic sampling. By examining ACP activities at field office level, the team could gain practical insights into how programmes are being implemented on the ground, and explore issues of efficiency and coherence in the relationship between field offices and the national office.

The team applied seven criteria to draw the sample at this level, including conflict intensity and humanitarian needs, social and cultural context, preliminary evidence of progress in UNICEF decentralisation, access and hard-to-reach areas.

By applying these criteria, the evaluation team identified a final geographic sample that consisted of:

- **The Southern region**, comprising the provinces of Nimroz, Helmand, Urazgon, Zabul and Kandahar. The evaluation team was heavily reliant on remote interviews and surveys in these provinces.
- **Eastern region**, comprising the provinces of Nuristan, Nangahar, Kunar and Laghman. The evaluation team was able to travel in person to Nangahar, Kunar and Laghman.

2. Key stakeholder groups

Respondent samples were drawn from directories provided by UNICEF and supplemented by the team's own research. A full breakdown of KII and survey respondent by type is provided in Annex 6.7.

Sampling was carried out across eight stakeholder groups with direct relevance to ACO. They consisted of the following:

- UNICEF staff
- Other UN agency staff
- Government officials
- NGO staff
- Donor and diplomatic representations staff
- Extenders
- NTAs
- Frontline workers

Sampling was purposive to ensure a balanced representation of respondents across the stakeholder groups. In line with the objectives stated above, sampling aimed primarily to target respondents with the most direct and relevant knowledge of UNICEF operations. In the case of government and NGO staff, respondents were targeted from among line ministries and NGOs engaged in ongoing partnerships with UNICEF. Among donors, respondents were targeted on the basis of the level of their financial support of the ACP. Similarly, UN agency staff were selected from among agencies active in the same programme areas as ACO, or cooperating with it on joint initiatives.

In the case of NTAs, extenders and frontline workers, respondent lists covered each of the four programme sectors examined in the evaluation. For frontline workers, lists could only be obtained for the health and education sectors.

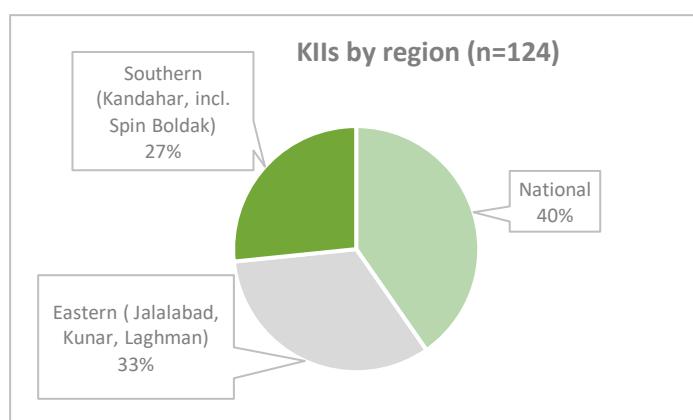
Where possible, respondents were targeted on the basis of the number of years they had spent working for or alongside UNICEF. For extenders and NTAs, the time spent with UNICEF among targeted respondents was no less than two years, and up to four years. For frontline workers this information could not be obtained. After respondents were long-listed on the basis of programme sector, time in role and gender, random dialling was then applied to the long lists.

Among UNICEF, other UN, NGO and donor sample groups, no gender bias was introduced in favour of women respondents to KIIs and surveys, as it was assumed that these groups were broadly gender-balanced and that this would carry over to the respondents approached.

In the case of government officials interviewed in KIIs, little could be done to correct the significant gender imbalance among this group; the relevance of the respondent to the subject matter was given priority over their gender.

For NTAs, extenders and frontline workers surveyed, a deliberate effort was made to target as many women as possible. Success in this was relatively limited among extenders and NTAs, where women account for less than 5% of this population. In all, efforts at gender-biased purposive sampling allowed 22% women among the 34 extenders and NTAs to be successfully contacted. The proportion was significantly higher among frontline workers, which are numerous enough in absolute terms to include a sizeable number of women. In this group, 55% of the 56 respondents were respondents.

Figure 1. KIIs by region



Despite efforts at purposive sampling, the practical and logistical constraints inherent in the Afghan environment were key factors in determining the final profile of sample groups. The most severe of these constraints applied to NTAs, among whom a very low response rate was obtained. In all, only eight NTAs, all of them male, could be contacted or agreed to take part in phone or email surveys. In KIIs, likewise, some sample groups were slightly under-represented in relation to others, due largely to travelling, access or scheduling constraints. For example, fewer respondents than initially planned could be interviewed from among national civil society organisations (CSOs). This slightly uneven representation across stakeholder groups had a small but discernible impact on the quality of evidence obtained.

Across KIIs, the sampling achieved a balanced representation between respondents in the Southern and Eastern region and those stakeholders at national level in Kabul (see Figure 1). The response rates of the surveys were 44% for UNICEF staff and 40% for the other stakeholders, including staff of other UN agencies, national and international NGOs, and donor agencies. The English and Dari and Pashto surveys had good coverage across sectors (health, education, child protection, WASH and other) (see Figures 2 and 3) and across UNICEF ranks (see Figure 4), with a high representation of national staff. 63% of Dari and Pashto survey respondents were at district level, which was critical for capturing local perspectives and avoiding urban bias.

Figure 2. UNICEF staff survey responses by sector

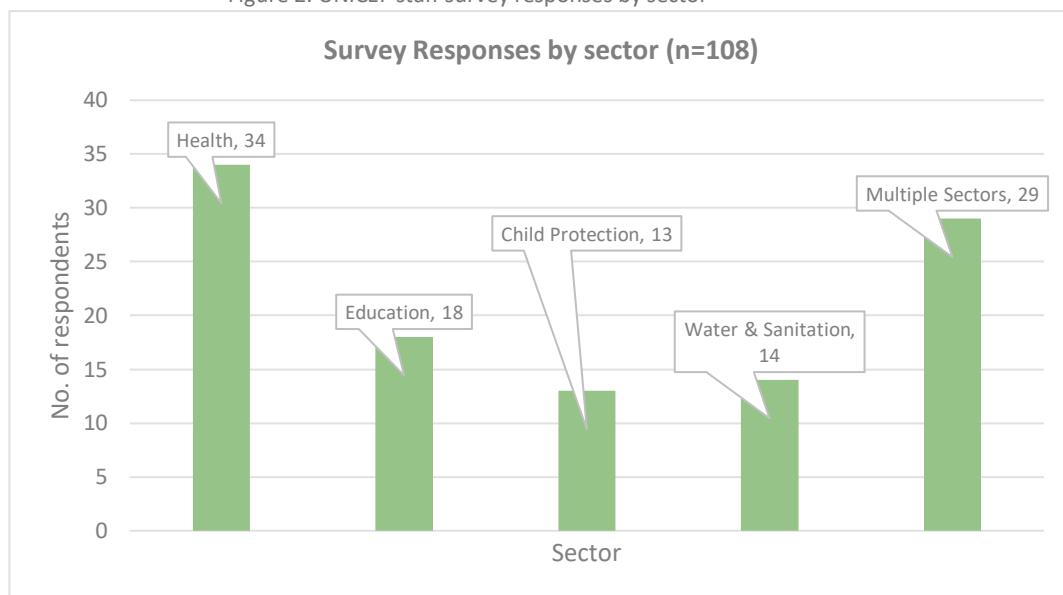


Figure 3. Dari and Pashto survey responses by sector

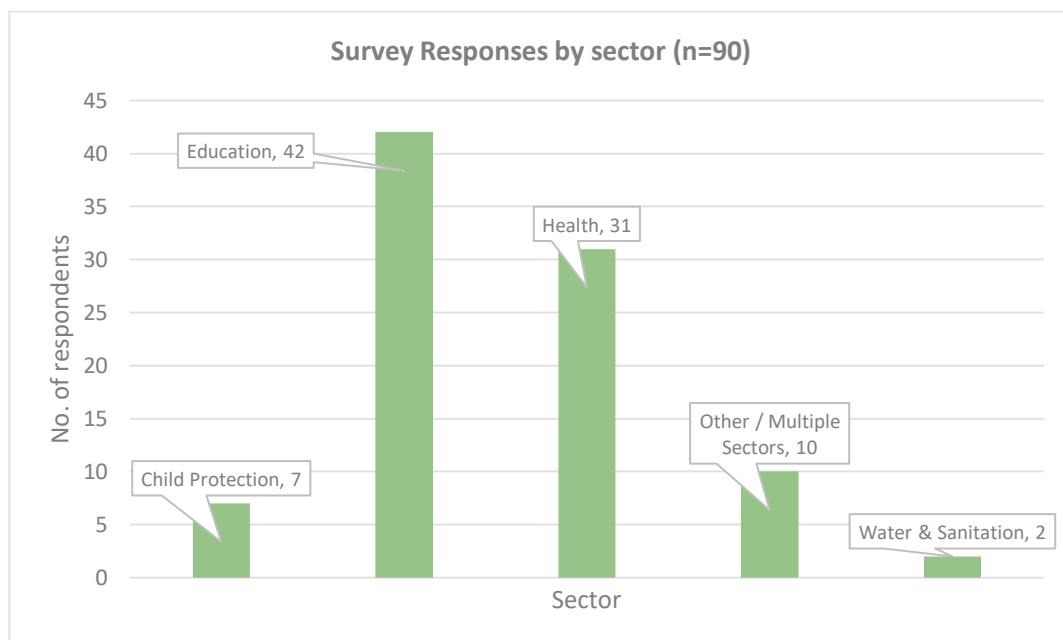
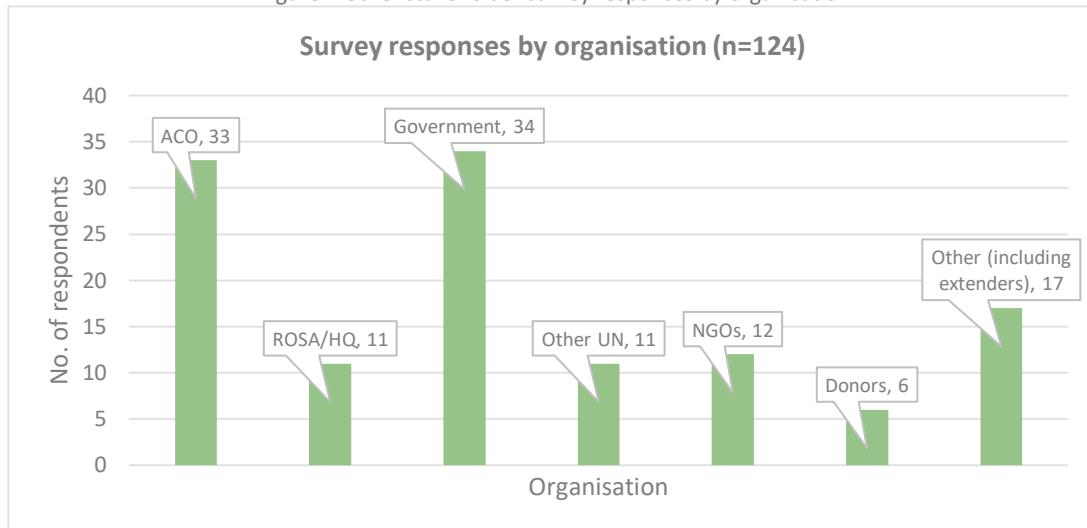


Figure 4 Other stakeholder survey responses by organisation



2.2.3 Data Analysis Methods

The evaluation adopted a pragmatic but systematic approach to analyse and synthesise data collected. An assessment matrix designed for this evaluation was used to code and classify the evidence collected from the document review and KIIs on the basis of the four focus areas as well as the source of the evidence. This tool was used for both KIIs and documentary sources, and enabled the triangulation of evidence from across the range of sources used. Coding was done manually, using the standard Itad coding system which enables data sources to be anonymised. Codes were generated in chronological order, with an alphanumeric prefix denoting the category of the source (KII or document). Each code was unique to the corresponding source, which was catalogued on a separate listing complete with relevant details.

Evidence entered in the assessment matrix was reviewed against quantitative data received across the four focus areas, consulting with UNICEF teams to confirm the data and their findings.

This approach to analysis enabled the team to identify causal pathways and to link evidence with findings and conclusions relating as closely as possible to the evaluation questions. Where a line of inquiry did not lead to conclusive evidence, no finding was formulated. This occurred in a number of sub-evaluation questions, which were flagged to UNICEF.

Data analysis followed the following key steps:

- **Step 1.** Deductive and inductive data coding against the KEQs
- **Step 2.** Iterative identification and mapping of themes
- **Step 3.** Systematic review of emergent themes and triangulation across data sources
- **Step 4.** Evidence summary

Within these steps, the evaluation team adopted a gendered approach to data analysis that was aligned to UNICEF guidance, which included guidance on integrating gender within evaluation based on definitions of programming, approaches, strategies, activities and results.

Unfortunately, it was difficult to include RAM data in the evidence base for this evaluation. Difficulties were encountered both in obtaining the data and in analysing it. For example, 2018 RAM results were reported against only one of the four focus areas (education) and, while none of the indicators for education was 'on track' at the time, the results achievement report for education overall was rated as 'on track' for that period. A 2019 audit identified similar shortcomings, and in addition found that

some of the results on RAM were not supported by sufficient evidence (means of verification). Since 2019, RAM reporting has improved and is overall more coherent and complete, although there is scope for further improvements, for example by improving the consistency of how progress is rated. Due to the improved reporting, the evaluation team was able to plot quantifiable results vs targets for all four FAs between 2019 and 2021; however, the data was later invalidated by a member of UNICEF staff, rendering it unusable in the evaluation.

2.2.4 Integration of Gender, Equity and Human Rights in Methods, Sampling and Analysis

During data collection and analysis, progress towards strategy and programme goals was assessed using a rights-based approach, as well as a gender and equity perspective where possible. This was done by drawing on key UNICEF policy guidance and orientations, including the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs), which approach vulnerabilities from a rights-holder perspective, as well as an equity- and gender-based one. During data collection, the evaluation team sought to achieve the inclusion of a meaningful proportion of women in the respondent samples; in the case of the survey of frontline workers, gender balance was achieved. In arranging interviews, a gender-sensitive approach was taken to ensure locations and times were selected that were accessible to female stakeholders. Data collection methods were also designed to be gender-aware, noting any barriers or bias that may occur.

Equity is a key area of inquiry in this evaluation and was investigated as far as conditions allowed. In the Afghan context, this topic is highly complex and cuts across sociocultural, demographic, security and programme considerations which deserve greater coverage than could be provided in this report. Among the constraints met in researching equity in last-mile programme delivery, limited access to project sites and community respondents were the most prominent. To mitigate them, the evaluation team planned to collect evidence and insights from the third-party monitoring company that was contracted by ACO on a pilot basis in 2020. However, as data collection concluded for this evaluation, this company had not yet responded to the team's requests for contact.

2.3 Ethical Considerations and Quality Assurance

2.3.1 Ethical Considerations

The evaluation was undertaken in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical guidelines for Evaluations and the UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis, adherence to which is signed and shared with UNICEF as an integral part of Itad's contract to deliver this evaluation.

Itad has internal policies governing the code of conduct of evaluation team members, safeguarding and data protection all of which form part of the contracts signed by the evaluation team members. These policies are attached as Annex 6.10, and meet the requirements of UNICEF and UNEG as regards ethical standards.

Evaluation team members' contracts also include clauses surrounding professional conduct, which include a series of obligations around ethical integrity, as follows:

- Be independent and impartial. Any conflicts of interest or partiality will be made explicit
- Safeguard confidential, sensitive and personal data acquired through the project and not use it for personal advantage or for the benefit of, or detriment of, third parties
- Be aware of the issues when interacting with vulnerable people and be sensitive to their needs
- Be aware of differences in culture, customs, religious beliefs and practices, and any implications these may have in terms of interacting with people in the course of work

- Be sensitive to gender roles and issues of disability, age and ethnicity, and be mindful of the potential implications of these differences when planning, carrying out and reporting on work
- Neither offer nor accept gifts, hospitality or services which could create, or imply, an improper obligation

As part of its commitment to research ethics, the evaluation team reviewed secondary sources and UNICEF data prior to the start of primary data collection in order to limit as far as possible the amount of unnecessary primary data collected and to reduce the burden on respondents.

When conducting primary interviews, members of the evaluation team read from a prepared script to inform interviewees on issues of anonymity, confidentiality, as well as their rights to refuse to participate, or to stop the interview at any time, and to request that any UNICEF staff present leave the interview if preferred. Informed consent was sought before each interview. ACO was consulted for guidance on the usual customary practices and whether written informed consent is required.

To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the data stored in the evaluation framework, all interviewees were allocated an anonymised ID code which allowed for disaggregation of data by gender and location, etc. All data was safely stored in an encrypted format on Microsoft Teams following Itad data security procedures.

2.3.2 Quality Assurance

Itad's approach to quality assurance (QA) is informed by the system of academic peer-reviewing and by established standards for evaluation quality, aiming to meet the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) standards for usefulness, cost-effectiveness, accuracy, credibility and equity.

The four-stage QA process was implemented throughout the evaluation. The process is summarised in Annex 6.11.

From UNICEF, the evaluation was managed by the ROSA Regional Evaluation Advisor, who played a key in ensuring quality. Responsibilities included the following:

- Coordination and supervision of all activities of the evaluation team, and decision making;
- Technical management of the evaluation, according to the ToR and stipulations of the Inception Report;
- Facilitating internal and external review and QA processes;
- Approving all deliverables, with support from the core UNICEF evaluation team;
- Providing overall guidance to the evaluation team on UNICEF requirements and standards for evaluative work.

Of key importance to the execution of the evaluation and responsible for the quality of the process was the creation of an ERG. Their role was to facilitate access to documentation and communication between the evaluation team and stakeholders. The ERG provided advice to the evaluation team, reviewed the Inception Report, the draft evaluation report, and the draft and final draft reports, and provided feedback on other issues as required. The ERG members included ROSA regional advisors, ACO management team members, and UNICEF Headquarters (HQ) Evaluation Office.

2.4 Limitations

Balancing breadth and depth in evaluation design: the thematic and geographic breadth of this evaluation is significant, and the evaluation team made a number of careful compromises in design to balance the desire to cover as wide a range of issues as possible with the need to interrogate issues in sufficient depth. To do this, as set out above and in the Inception Report, the evaluation

team limited the scope of the evaluation to four sectors and two regions, based on a detailed sampling approach.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: the evaluation team carefully planned the evaluation to mitigate the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, including moving to a larger number of telephone-based interviews and online surveys to minimise the risk for evaluation participants. Nevertheless, COVID-19 has had some impact on the work of the evaluation team, including requiring the team to cancel planned focus group discussions and substitute them with individual interviews, online surveys and telephone-based interviews. Following Itad COVID-19 safe working guidelines, international evaluators visiting Kabul self-isolated for three days on arrival, which slightly reduced the time available for face-to-face interviews.

Security: the evaluation team carefully planned the evaluation to mitigate security risks. Fieldwork for this evaluation has largely followed the expectations set out in the Inception Report, with the team able to visit more field sites in the Eastern region than the Southern region.

Evaluation timing: the evaluation took place during a period of significant turnover of staff at Senior Management Team (SMT) level. This had some impact on the evaluation in terms of reduced institutional knowledge and bandwidth on the part of recent appointees. The team was able to mitigate the impact of this limitation through additional interviewing and review of secondary documentation.

Secondary documentation and data – the evaluation team is grateful to ACO for facilitating access to secondary documents and data sets. However, as noted above with regard to RAM data in particular, the team encountered access and data-sharing constraints which resulted in limitations in the comprehensiveness of this data set. This affected its ability to analyse results data and budget allocations at provincial and district levels.

3 UNICEF's Country Programme and its Context

3.1 The Afghanistan Country Programme

The ACP initially covered the period 2015–20 and was extended until 2021. It aims to support the government of Afghanistan (GIRoA) and its line ministries, as principal duty bearers, in progressing towards the better realisation of the rights of children in the country. The overall goal of the ACP is to address inequity so that all children, adolescents and women, as the main rights holders targeted in the ACP, can have access to services needed to fulfil their rights to survival, development, protection and participation.

The ACP is based on a detailed and equity-focused analysis of the situation of children and women in Afghanistan. In its design, it aligns with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDP), which provides a common framework for the overall development effort in the country. The ACP was developed in close consultation with the key stakeholders involved; that is, the relevant GIRoA line ministries as well as Afghan civil society. UN actors, as well as NGOs and members of the donor community, were also consulted, given the key role of these stakeholders in contributing either financially or as programme partners to development objectives closely aligned with those of the ACP.

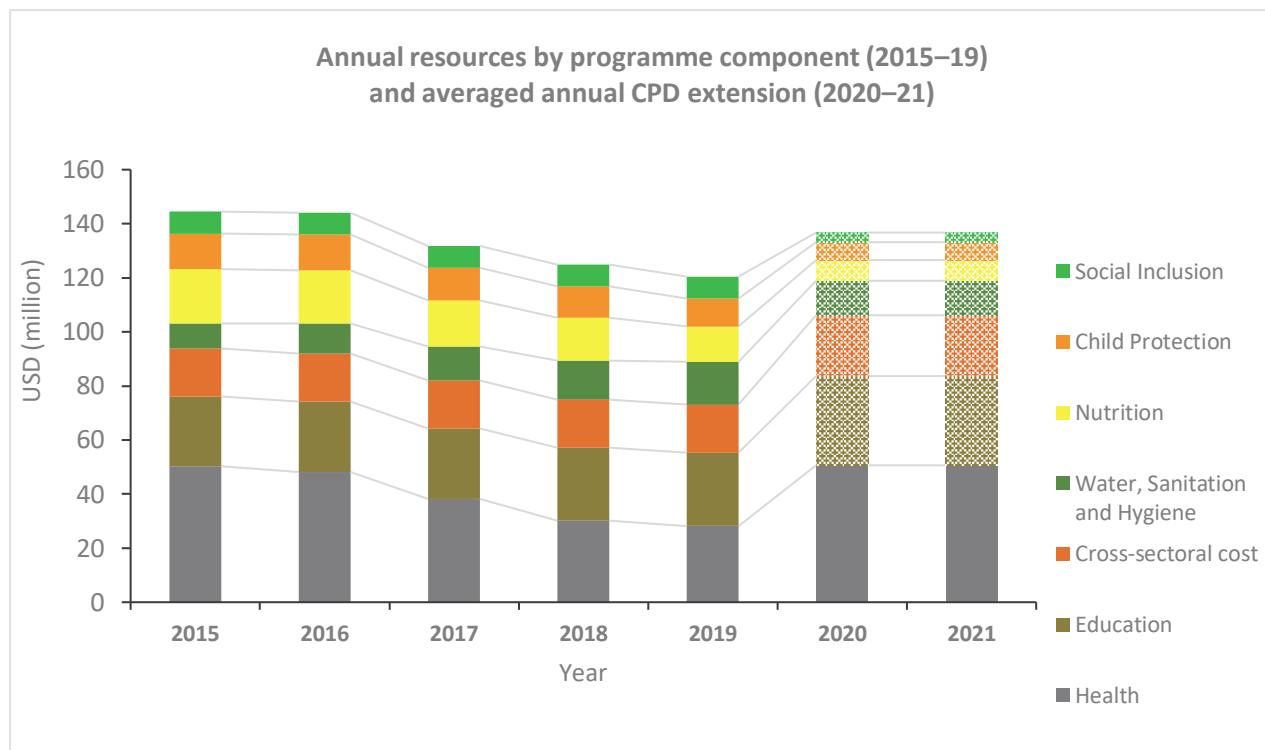
3.1.1 Programme Content and Operational Structure

At national level, the ACP aims to leverage the catalytic role of UNICEF to make sustainable changes in systems, policy and programme implementation, addressing root causes of rights violations. It supports nationwide access to care and basic services, including immunisation, polio eradication and the provision of teaching-learning materials. In the Northern Region, the programme aims to reduce vulnerability through a new focus on social protection, and the increased prioritisation of children's issues in local planning.

Under the ACP's overall goal, six sector-specific outcomes were formulated in the areas of health care, nutrition, child protection, education, water and sanitation, and social inclusion (see Table 2 below). Interventions focus on the most deprived provinces and areas, mostly in South, South East and Western regions, where the programme aimed to better ensure the access of children and women to basic services, and bring ongoing efforts to scale. To deliver on ACP outcomes, UNICEF in Afghanistan relies on an operational set-up which has varied over the years, currently consisting of a country office based in Kabul, supported by five field offices and six outposts.⁵ The total budget for the CPD between 2015 and 2021 was USD 1,185,868,000, and Figure 2 provides an overview of the annual resources by programme component (2015–19) and averaged annual CPD extension (2020–21).

⁵ UNICEF Afghanistan Organogram, June 2020.

Figure 5. ACP resources by sector



Key stakeholders of the ACP, at national and supranational levels, include internal UNICEF staff from the ACO, including the Representative, the Deputy Representative, Chiefs of programmes, Chiefs of cross-cutting sections and units, the Deputy Representative - Operations, and the UNICEF Regional Office of South Asia and UNICEF HQ. External key stakeholders include government representatives in major line ministries, including Public Health, Education, Foreign Affairs, Economy, Women's Affairs and Social Affairs; other UN agencies, including United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT); international and national NGOs; and donors. At provincial, regional and local levels, key stakeholders include UNICEF ACO Chief of Field Operations and Chief of Field Offices, government provincial directorates of key line ministries, NGOs, community-level influencers (religious leaders and elders), local service providers/frontline workers (teachers, health workers), local media and community members.

3.1.2 The 2017 Mid-Term Review

As described in further detail in Section 3.2 below, the security situation in Afghanistan began to deteriorate significantly in the years following the finalisation of the ACP document. This prompted UNICEF to conduct an MTR of the ACP in 2017, to take stock of changes in the operating environment and reorient the ACP accordingly. Following the MTR, the ACP was consolidated, and planned results were streamlined. Further alignment was also sought between ACP objectives and key strategic frameworks, including the ANDP and the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The substantial redesign of the ACP that followed the MTR is best illustrated by its new results framework. While the number of sector outcomes remained unchanged with one outcome per sector, the total number of outputs was almost halved, from 60 to 38.⁶ Equity remained a central theme in programme redesign that followed the MTR, with continued priority placed on the most

⁶ Revised ACP Results Framework, March 2020.

deprived areas and vulnerable groups. As discussed further below, however, the MTR found that the geographical approach to prioritisation used in the ACP was not well suited to ensuring equitable programme coverage.

Table 2 Summary of sector outcomes in the ACP

Health	WASH	Nutrition	Education	Child Protection	Social Inclusion
Improved access to health and immunisation for mothers, infants, children and adolescent girls	Increased and equitable use of safe drinking water and sanitation, and better sanitation	Increased coverage of nutrition services for infants, children, adolescent girls and mothers	Improved access to quality primary education for school-age boys and girls	Improved protection of boys and girls by national law and public services and systems	Stronger priority placed on child rights and gender equality in public policy, national law and social protection systems

3.1.3 The Evaluation's Key Focus Areas and their Relevance to the ACP

The evaluation's four key areas were identified and selected on the basis of their relevance to the ACP and its implementation in Afghanistan's highly challenging context:

- The **triple nexus** is central to programming in protracted emergencies where chronic and acute vulnerabilities have their roots in the failure of core state functions, including basic service delivery and the rule of law. In UNICEF programmes, the nexus implies the implementation of risk-informed and conflict-sensitive programming that strengthens national and local systems. The ACP's objectives, and the CCCs which underpin them, imply a dual focus on addressing immediate humanitarian needs and developing local capacities to address the root causes of inequity and deprivation.⁷
- Programme **coverage and access** are critical to equity, not only in terms of service provision but also in terms of needs assessments and results measurement. In the Afghan context, access and coverage must be approached alongside a good understanding of the mandated relationship between development actors and the state, and what this implies in terms of addressing needs in areas outside government control.
- **Partnerships and capacity building** are at the core of prevention, preparedness, resilience and sustainability, as prescribed in the nexus paradigm.⁸ They entail the provision of support to local stakeholders in joint efforts to address the root causes of inequity and deprivation, and to provide rights holders with assistance and sustained protection from harm. In accordance with its mandate, UNICEF in Afghanistan engages primarily with the government in its efforts to build sustainable capacity.
- **Gender integration** is central to equity and the advancement of rights for women and girls. This entails fighting gender-based violence, achieving the greater representation of women and girls among UNICEF stakeholders – including in programme design – and ensuring that UNICEF

⁷ UNICEF, *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action*, 2020.

⁸ OECD, *DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*, OECD/LEGAL/5019, 2021.

interventions are better suited to their specific needs.⁹ By promoting equal rights for women and girls, gender integration aims to increase their fuller participation in public life, and unleash untapped potential in support of development for all.

3.2 Context of the Intervention

3.2.1 Developments in the Political and Security Landscape

Beginning with the drawdown of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2014, the period covered by this evaluation is marked by growing uncertainty, during which security, rule of law and governance gains made over the previous decade have often been reversed. In recent years, the power vacuum caused by the phase-out of ISAF has caused an escalation of hostilities on the ground, with far-reaching humanitarian consequences and profound implications for the delivery of both emergency relief and development programmes. By 2018, about half of the national territory was under Taliban control or was contested, raising fundamental issues around coverage and access and, ultimately, the equity of approaches that bypass non-state actors and their systems of governance.¹⁰ Developments of particular note include:

Increasing conflict intensity, initiated by various actors. This poses an overwhelming security and humanitarian challenge, and this situation prompted the UN to declare in August 2017 that Afghanistan was no longer in a post-conflict situation but was a country undergoing active conflict. This security situation is likely to deteriorate further following the upcoming withdrawal of all remaining US forces.

The social contract is attenuating as a result of fractured state structures, weak government capacity, limited public service provision and systemic corruption. The presidential elections held in 2019 were contested and marred by violence which resulted in over 450 civilian casualties, largely caused by the Taliban, which has further undermined confidence in the electoral process in some sections of the community.¹¹ Swathes of Afghanistan are now governed by the Taliban shadow government and, in both hard-to-reach and GIRoA-controlled areas, informal and formal justice systems serve to perpetuate inequalities and human rights abuses.

Natural disasters and COVID-19. In 2017–18 Afghanistan experienced significant food insecurity, brought about by five consecutive years of low-yield wheat harvests, made worse by a severe drought in 2018 which affected over two-thirds of the country, putting 3.6 million people in need of life-saving assistance, and displacing 280,000. An already precarious situation has been exacerbated in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic; in November 2020 UNDP assessed that the impact of COVID-19 in Afghanistan would result in a GDP loss of 6% in 2020, leading to a cumulative real GDP loss of 12.5% by 2024 unless an effective recovery policy and strategy is put in place,¹² while the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) notes that the effects of conflict, economic decline, natural hazards, and now COVID-19, have contributed to even greater deterioration in food security in 2020.

Impact on women, girls and boys: Afghanistan has the second lowest score on the UN gender development index (GDI) globally, with Yemen scoring lowest.¹³ The deteriorating political and security landscape has had particular impacts for women, girls and boys. The UN gender index reports the percentage of women experiencing intimate partner violence between 2005 and 2019 as 50.8%; however, in reality this may be much higher, as monitoring is hindered by instability and deeply discriminatory social norms.

⁹ UNICEF, *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action*, 2020.

¹⁰ On non-state systems of governance in Afghanistan, see, for example, Ashley Jackson, *Life under the Taliban Shadow Government*, Overseas Development Institute, 2018.

¹¹ OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020*.

¹² UNDP, *Covid-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Fiscal Options in Response to the Coronavirus Crisis*, November 2020.

¹³ UNDP, 'Human development reports', available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/68606>

As the conflict has intensified, women, girls and boys have increasingly become victims of violence, and conflict-related sexual violence remains a serious issue including against boys.¹⁴ 2015 was a particularly deadly year. Insurgents improved their ability to exploit Afghan forces, leading to increased ground fighting and suicide and other attacks in major cities. UNAMA documented 11,002 civilian casualties (3,545 deaths and 7,457 injured), which represented a 37% increase in women casualties and a 14% increase in child casualties from the previous year, with one in four casualties in 2015 being children.¹⁵

The deteriorating political and security landscape is resulting in an increasingly precarious livelihood situation for Afghans, with particular consequences for women and children. The 2019 Whole of Afghanistan (WoA) Assessment estimated that more than 80% of the population was living on less than USD 1.90 per day, which is pushing people into debt. Travel bans and lockdowns are also furthering the gender livelihood gap as informal sectors close down, where women make up the majority of the workforce.¹⁶ Impoverished and displaced households are coming under increasing pressure as a result of recent shocks, with evidence suggesting that more households are resorting to customary negative coping mechanisms. For example, many children are driven into child labour before they are old enough to go to school, contributing to low education enrolment rates – nearly half of all school-age children in Afghanistan are not in formal education.¹⁷ The issue is particularly pronounced for girls – 60% of all out-of-school children are girls – and child marriages are also increased under economic strain: in July–October alone, 162 cases of child marriage or betrothal were registered among displaced people.¹⁸

In 2019, 3.8 million children were in need of life-saving interventions due to rising security incidents, internal displacements and food insecurity from drought.¹⁹ The delivery of humanitarian interventions to affected populations is impeded by weak infrastructure and extreme geographical terrains, making it difficult to reach widely scattered communities. In addition, as of 31 January 2020, 229 districts were under the Afghan government's control, which is only about 56.3% of the total Afghan districts.²⁰ Together, these factors throw up access obstacles to delivering services, collecting data and monitoring results.

The ACP notes that there have been some improvements in social service provision in recent years;²¹ however, access is not always equitable, with geographic differences, an urban/rural divide and societal norms having a negative impact on women and girls in particular. As districts slip out of government control, women and girls are also increasingly disadvantaged; the CEDAW 2020 report highlights, for instance, that '*many cases of gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls are referred to jirgas and shuras for advice or resolution, especially in rural and remote areas. Furthermore, the decisions made by the informal justice mechanisms were reported to frequently discriminate against women*'.

3.2.2 Changes in National Policy Frameworks During the Period of Study

During the period of study, GIRoA has promulgated a number of relevant enabling laws, strategies and directives that have sought to improve the situation of women, girls and boys in Afghanistan. In

14 'Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict', available at: <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/countries/afghanistan/>

15 UNAMA Afghanistan: *Annual report 2015: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, February 2016.

16 Veronica Kamanga-Njikho and Qandigul Tajik, 'Female-Headed Households Bear the Brunt of Covid-19 as Livelihood Gaps Increase', April 2020, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/stories/female-headed-households-bear-brunt-covid-19-livelihood-gaps-increase>

17 UNICEF, *Gender alert on Covid-19 Afghanistan*, July 2020.

18 UNICEF Afghanistan, *Annual Report 2018*.

19 UNICEF Afghanistan, *Annual Report 2019*.

20 'Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)', available at <https://www.sigar.mil/>

21 The ACP notes, for example, the following results with regard to basic services in the 2010–14 ACP: a) that enrolment in basic education rose from 7.3 million to 8.6 million between 2010 and 2012, although for girls this represented an increase of just 1%; b) routine immunisation, newborn care and malnutrition interventions were scaled up; c) by the end of 2013 the CPAN network was active in 54 districts, with 11,354 cases of child rights violations cases reported since 2010.

general the implementation of these reforms has often been quite lacklustre, with a notable uptick in activity prior to Joint Coordination Monitoring Board (JCMB) meetings and pledging conferences. There have also been regular changes of senior staff in partner ministries, especially after the 2019 elections.

During the period of review, the Ministry of the Economy and the UNDP drafted the *Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals* (A-SDGs). This document presents the alignment of A-SDG targets and indicators for with the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) and National Priority Programmes (NPPs). Following from this, the UN agencies further discussed ways to optimise and harmonise their efforts and to increase efficiency and effectiveness. These exercises led to the issuance of the ‘Afghanistan: “One UN – One Programme”’ document, submitted to the Afghan President in November 2017.²² Ultimately, the coordination between GIRoA and the UN culminated with the production in March 2018 of the ‘One UN for Afghanistan’ strategic document,²³ covering the period 2018–21, and the technical ‘One UN for Afghanistan Results Framework’ in August of the same year.²⁴

Other relevant policy changes of note include:

Table 2: Timeline of relevant policy changes

Year	Relevant policy change
2015	In July 2015 GIRoA launched its first UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan (NAP) , which has been developed to address the challenges women face in the aftermath of war and conflict in Afghanistan. However, this did not address disarmament issues or connect the proliferation of weapons with women's insecurity, and it did not include an allocated or estimated budget or provide a clear reference on the mechanism for civil society involvement.
2015	The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) signed the ' Kabul Declaration for Maternal & Child Health ' which identified targets to reduce maternal, newborn and child mortality by 2020.
2016	Finalisation of the National Education Sector Plan III (NESP III) by the Ministry of Education (MoE), which includes an increased focus on addressing girls' education. UNICEF contributed technical assistance to the MoE in the formulation process.
2018	During 2018, GIRoA took important steps to generate data and establish a policy base for child-sensitive social protection, including developing a Multidimensional Poverty Index . UNICEF provided technical assistance to MoPH to develop the Reproductive Maternal Newborn Child and Adolescent Health Strategy and financially supported the Afghanistan Central Civil Registry Agency to develop an offline birth registration database which registered over 408,600 children during January–October 2018. Also in 2018, a new penal code was adopted. Its draft had originally included a specific chapter on the elimination of violence against women, but the final adopted version of the 2018 did not include any reference to criminal offences of violence against women (with the exception of rape). However, the code was later amended by presidential decree (number 262) which criminalised all five serious offences against women mentioned in the End Violence Against Women (EVAW) law.
2019	The country's first Child Protection Law was passed by presidential decree. This is fully aligned with the global Convention on the Rights of the Child and accompanied by a corresponding National Child Protection Strategy . In 2019 further progressive legislation and strategies included the National Public Nutrition Strategy (2019–23) and free legal aid for all children in detention, along with psychosocial support and psychological counselling and an increase of 47% in the child protection budget of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

²² United Nations, *Afghanistan: “One UN – One Programme”*: 1 January 2018 – 31 December 2021, November 2017.

²³ GIRoA and UN, *One UN for Afghanistan: 1 January 2018 – 31 December 2021*, March 2018.

²⁴ The One UN Strategy document reviewed by the evaluation team is not signed by either the UN or GIRoA.

3.3 Impact of the Context on the ACP since 2015

3.3.1 Balancing Strategic Objectives with Escalating Needs

During this highly dynamic period, characterised by a deteriorating political and security context and escalating humanitarian needs, the UNICEF Country Programme is being guided by the 2014 Country Programme Document (ACP 2014). An MTR was conducted in 2017, to inform a programme response to the impact of the changing country context and escalating needs. The MTR recommended that the country programme should demonstrate additional strategic commitment to the more structured One UN environment, which aimed to supersede the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) as the key system-wide platform to support progress towards the SDGs. The MTR also called for greater focus on programme delivery against the Grand Bargain commitments, the humanitarian-development nexus, and cross-cutting commitments now embedded in UNICEF's revised CCCs.

Since the MTR, the Afghan context has continued to deteriorate and humanitarian needs have continued to escalate. This is emphasised in an HNO issued in December 2019 – i.e. for 2020 (with a further update for 2021) – which stated that upward adjustments in needs have been required on a year-by-year basis over the period of the ACP. As highlighted by interviews with ACO staff during the inception period of this evaluation, in this period UNICEF has sought to continually adapt to ongoing waves of contextual change and to continuously balance escalating needs with the strategic objectives highlighted in the MTR.

ACO efforts to navigate this challenging environment have resulted in strategic and technical shifts and structural reviews of ACO itself, including outposts, use of service providers, and staffing structures. ACO has attempted to align its work with the overall humanitarian and development community as the international community has shifted approaches between 2015 and 2020 with regard to how acute and chronic need should be prioritised and responded to. These changes, as noted by the 2020 UNICEF Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations Evaluation, have constrained UNICEF's targeting, mobilisation, and its options for inclusion in resilience activities. A number of stakeholders in this evaluation pointed to the overwhelming levels of need throughout the country. This may have increased the complexity for ACO to judge where the appropriate balance between coverage and equity should lie.

3.3.2 Progress in Implementing the Triple Nexus

ACO documents for the period 2014 to 2020 reveal that convergence and integration of humanitarian response (the double nexus) is a clear priority area for the country office. Previous reviews during this period have highlighted that progress has generally been slow in this area but that opportunities to build on good practice do exist. The 2017 MTR, for example, found continuing evidence of siloed working and also noted that ACO lacked evidence that system or community-level resilience is being recognised, assessed, and built upon in programming. The 2020 Coverage and Quality Evaluation corroborates these findings but also identifies positive examples of integration (such as the polio programme) and opportunities to build on these successes. Interviews conducted during the inception period for this evaluation also highlight that this area of ACO's work is continuing to evolve, and identify this as a relevant area of focus for the SPE, for example to determine if momentum is being maintained through mechanisms such as geographical focus, access points and advocacy. It should be noted that challenges in implementing the triple nexus are not unique to ACO. As detailed by other recent UNICEF global evaluations,²⁵ UNICEF globally had, in common with other organisations, struggled to provide staff with consistent definitions,

²⁵ Andrew Featherstone and Charlotte Lattimer, *Evaluation of UNICEF's Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations: Afghanistan Evaluation Report*, August 2020; UNICEF, *Global Evaluation of UNICEF's WASH Programming in Protracted Crises. 2014–19*, 2020.

terminologies, and guidance on linking humanitarian and development or nexus thinking, even as it has maintained a commitment to the principles of nexus thinking over time.

While UNICEF's focus on the double nexus is clear, evidence for its alignment to the triple nexus, and its support to the peace component, has been more circumspect. In relation to the One UN Framework, it has been questioned whether UNICEF has a mandate to be working on peace when UNDP and UNAMA are mandated with this focus. However, in the context of Afghanistan, there are a number of areas of UNICEF's work which align to the triple nexus. These include, for example, the importance of peace building to how UNICEF negotiates for access (at field level and in Doha) and implicit relevance to its work with child soldiers. The SPE will examine broadly how much of the UNICEF Conflict Sensitivity and Peace Building Programming Guide (2016) is considered in the design and implementation of programming in Afghanistan.

3.3.3 Strategy to Achieve Access, Coverage and Equity for Women and Children

This SPE uses UNICEF's definition of equity, which means that all children have an opportunity to survive, develop and reach their full potential without discrimination, bias or favouritism. This interpretation is consistent with the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which guarantees the fundamental rights of every child regardless of gender, race, religious beliefs, income, physical attributes, geographical location or other status. The equity-based approach in UNICEF's programmes and policies seeks to understand and address the root causes of inequity so that all children, particularly those who suffer the worst deprivations in society, have access to education, health care, sanitation, clean water, protection and other services necessary for their survival, growth and development.

This evaluation has identified four informal strategies employed by UNICEF to gain access into hard-to-reach areas: Decentralising ACO; responding to Taliban requests for the provision of services and/or multi-sector packages of support; access through implementing partners, extenders and frontline workers; and negotiating work agreements with the Taliban. These strategies have been explored in the evaluation in terms of their contribution to the goal of leaving no one behind (section 4.2.1 on Equity).

The MTR does not comment at length upon the issue of equity. It recommends that the overarching goal is retained and was clear about the limits of the analytical approach used to prioritise at province level to '*achieve the dual goals of reducing inequity and increasing efficiency and effectiveness*'. The findings underpinning recommendation 35 suggest that in the view of the MTR team, pragmatism was as important as the need to ensure equity in the selection of provinces. The MTR concluded by stating that there was a need to ensure that every programme adhered to human rights and equity principles and one of the eight strategic shifts recommended that '*every programme focused more on reducing gender inequality*'. There was, however, no direct reference to disability. The 2020 Coverage and Quality Evaluation referred several times to the data gaps and the challenges of getting information about these needs, particularly in hard-to-reach areas-controlled areas. The evaluation concluded that they could not determine the extent to which equity (need and vulnerability) was informing coverage decisions. UNICEF's target-driven approach to monitoring was also found to impede coverage relative to need.

The Coverage and Quality Evaluation concluded that progress was being made on strengthening gender integration across the ACO and programming, but not on inclusion of disability or securing improved access to customised services by disabled persons. The evaluation documented multiple processes and actions under way to remedy this issue, and also noted that the revised CCCs laid out UNICEF's corporate expectations clearly with regard to equity and, in particular, with regard to gender and disability.

3.3.4 Capacity Building

UNICEF's work is built on a large variety of partnerships and collaborations. Government institutional capacity building is actioned through the use of NTAs, who comprise a large component of the UN intervention in Afghanistan. NTAs are embedded throughout government line ministries and agencies (at national and subnational levels) with the objectives of assisting in capacity building and plugging capacity gaps. NTAs are paid by international partners and using Regular Resources funds, and serve to increase GIRoA capacity beyond the formal civil service roster (*tashkeel*). GIRoA has been the main implementing partner for the UNICEF ACO in terms of financing, sectoral and geographic scope throughout the country. However, limited capacity, a lack of transparency and curtailed access to extensive parts of the country have affected the quality of this collaboration. In some instances, partnerships with CSOs have been forged to enable UNICEF to overcome these challenges and to progressively expand its access into communities.²⁶

3.3.5 Gender Integration

Within the 2015–21 CPD, gender was considered as a cross-cutting issue to be mainstreamed across all programmes. The CPD highlights a two-pronged approach, including strengthening the realisation of rights of all individuals (girls, boys, men and women) and strengthening institutional effectiveness, with a focus on eliminating child marriage, improving access to health services, and education for adolescent girls. There is limited additional analysis within the CPD of approaches to this, enabling factors to leverage, barriers, or potential partnerships with other actors leading on gender inequality.

Within the Afghanistan CPD extension request in 2018 there is no reference to gender, but it is highlighted that one of the four headline results the CPD will continue to focus on will be increasing girls' access to education.²⁷

The MTR found that a gender dimension was not '*adequately and routinely included in data collection, analysis, reports, and advocacy*' and that there was inadequate targeting of girls and weak reviews of constraints and progress with regard to UNICEF contributions towards gender equality.²⁸ The MTR recommended (recommendation 40) that this be reviewed across all programmes, and this review was subsequently conducted in 2018. This was followed by the production of a detailed gender strategy in 2019²⁹ that references the (new) UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–21.³⁰ The 2019 ACO strategy commits to mainstreaming gender, and emphasises gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a guiding principle, while introducing targeted gender priorities in line with the UNICEF global Gender Action Plan (GAP).³¹ The GAP elaborates on gendered dimensions across the five goal areas of the Strategic Plan with a vision of (a) accelerating gender programming to expand to a broader range of issues and (b) institutionalising gender within systems and processes within UNICEF.

²⁶ Andrew Featherstone and Charlotte Lattimer, *Evaluation of UNICEF's Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations: Afghanistan Evaluation Report*, August 2020.

²⁷ UNICEF, *Afghanistan CPD Extension Request 2018*.

²⁸ GIRoA/UNICEF, *Mid-Term Review of the Country Programme of Cooperation Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and UNICEF, Summary Report* 28 August 2017, p.17.

²⁹ UNICEF, *Gender Strategy 2019-2021 For the Afghanistan Country Office*, 2019.

³⁰ UNICEF, *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*, 2017.

³¹ UNICEF, *Gender Action Plan 2018-2021*, 2017.

4 Findings

The findings below are organised around four key thematic areas: i) the nexus, ii) coverage and access, iii) partnerships and capacity building, and iv) gender integration.

4.1 Focus Area 1: the Nexus

This section examines how UNICEF has positioned itself and its activities to support the triple nexus and to reinforce the coherence of the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding spheres, both in its country programme and in a system-wide perspective.

4.1.1 Programme Design and Internal Positioning in Support of the Triple Nexus

Summary of findings:

In UNICEF's ACP, humanitarian and development activities are tightly integrated and generally complement each other well. There is a sense that UNICEF activities do, at least indirectly, help build an environment conducive to peace. However, further evidence is needed to verify this and inform programming. Its approach to risk has been consistent, but there is little evidence that it has drawn on purpose-made tools and guidance for preparedness and risk-informed programming. This is due mainly to the limitations of these tools in the Afghan context. The 2019 Procedure on Linking Humanitarian and Development Programmes has had limited impact so far on the ACP; progress in applying the nexus to the ACP has resulted from opportunities taken pragmatically at country level, rather than on the basis of the Procedure. Further progress on the nexus is hampered by contextual obstacles that are generally known and well understood, yet have not so far elicited clear positioning or policymaking on the part of ACO.

Internal Positioning in Support of the Triple Nexus

There is a very high degree of integration between humanitarian and development activities planned in the ACP. For the purpose of this evaluation, the operative definition of the nexus is that set out in the 2020 OECD-DAC Recommendation³² (see Box 1 below). By this benchmark, UNICEF's country programme in Afghanistan conforms closely to the nexus paradigm – at least as far as humanitarian and development programming are concerned (See Section 4.1.2 below for a separate discussion on peacebuilding).

At the planning level, the ACP results framework reflects a very high degree of integration between humanitarian and development programming.³³ Of the 53 groups of activity planned at output level, well over half (34) are geared specifically to improving the sustainability of assistance provided, through systems- or capacity building interventions aimed at government, community or civil society partners. Where outputs are aimed at addressing emergency needs or acute vulnerability, the preferred approach is to draw on local capabilities in doing so. For example, in the health sector, humanitarian assistance to acutely deprived or vulnerable populations, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), relies on local capacities in maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) care, as well as in vaccine management, social mobilisation for primary healthcare, and data collection and analysis for health monitoring purposes. Where local capabilities are too weak to address acute needs, resources are budgeted in the ACP to develop them. For example, in Water and Sanitation, budgetary provisions have been made to build the capacity of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) as required to ensure its management of equitable and sustainable WASH

³² OECD, DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, OECD/LEGAL/5019, 2021.

³³ The version referred to here is that of March 2020, which was revised following the ACD MTR of 2017. The earlier version reflected a comparable degree of integration between humanitarian and development programme strands.

programmes. In Education, likewise, budgets have been allocated to increase the capacity of the MoE to progressively take over the management of community-based education (CBE). In Child Protection (CP), budgets are similarly available to strengthen national and subnational management capacity.

Across the majority of sector outcomes in the ACP, about the same amount of resources are budgeted for systems and capacity building as for emergency or humanitarian assistance. This budgetary balance between humanitarian and development outputs is illustrated in Figure 6 below, and see Annex 6.8 for the budgetary categorisation that the evaluation team conducted. It reflects a deliberate effort on the part of ACO to combine humanitarian and development outputs under the same outcomes.

Box 1. The nexus: an applicable definition for UNICEF in Afghanistan

This evaluation uses the definition of the nexus set out in the *DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*, released by OECD-DAC in 2020.

Central to this definition is the notion of interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace programming, at both policy and programme levels. Notably, the Recommendation posits that development activities are key to enabling the better prevention and mitigation of humanitarian crises. Implicit in this is *the centrality of resilience and the strengthening of local response capacities*, which the Recommendation explicitly supports.

An important assumption in the DAC Recommendation is that linkages between the humanitarian and development spheres require stronger partnerships between actors involved in each of these two areas. Based on this assumption, the DAC Recommendation calls for complementarity among aid actors, based on their comparative advantage. It is important to note that, in the case of UNICEF, this dimension of the nexus has more limited relevance, as its dual mandate spans both the humanitarian and the development spheres.

In engaging in the type of partnerships envisioned in the nexus, the key objective for UNICEF in Afghanistan is therefore the pursuit of resilience and sustainability, underpinned by activities aimed at developing the capacity of its partners.

Another element of the DAC Recommendation that is of immediate relevance to UNICEF in Afghanistan is its call for proactive political-level engagement in advancing the nexus. This is in recognition of the fact that a programmatic outlook alone is unlikely to generate the momentum needed at political level to sustain system-wide efforts towards the nexus.

Finally, it is worthy of note that the DAC Recommendation places strong emphasis on conflict sensitivity as a minimal requirement in peace programming. This is consistent with UNICEF's own guidance, as set out in the 2016 Programming Guide on Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding.

Preparedness as a formal activity does not provide a strong basis for nexus programming. As discussed in a finding below on risk management, the Emergency Preparedness Platform (EPP), which is ACO's main programme tool to ensure minimal standards in preparedness, is not well suited to the Afghan context and is little used by ACO staff. Across the sectors examined, the evaluation team found that preparedness activities consisted mostly of ad hoc risk analysis, assessment and scenario planning. Due mainly to capacity and resource constraints, preparedness rarely extends to physical measures such as, for example, community-based disaster risk management or stock pre-positioning at district level. In the Afghan context, risk is multidimensional and omnipresent, and preparedness necessarily implies trade-offs in contingency planning. In the words of one interviewee, it is difficult in practice to 'prepare for everything' as this implies zero-sum decisions between competing priorities. For example, preparing for floods in Parwan province may divert

resources away from drought preparedness in Badghis or Badakshan provinces. Given these resource constraints, formal preparedness activities in Afghanistan appear unlikely to provide a viable basis for nexus programming.

Rather than a formal approach to preparedness, the evaluation found that a more prevalent trend across ACP programme sectors has been to use emergency responses as pragmatic entry points to ‘build back better’ interventions aimed, where possible, at better resilience and prevention. This approach, which implies a crossover from humanitarian to development programming, is discussed in more detail in a finding below.

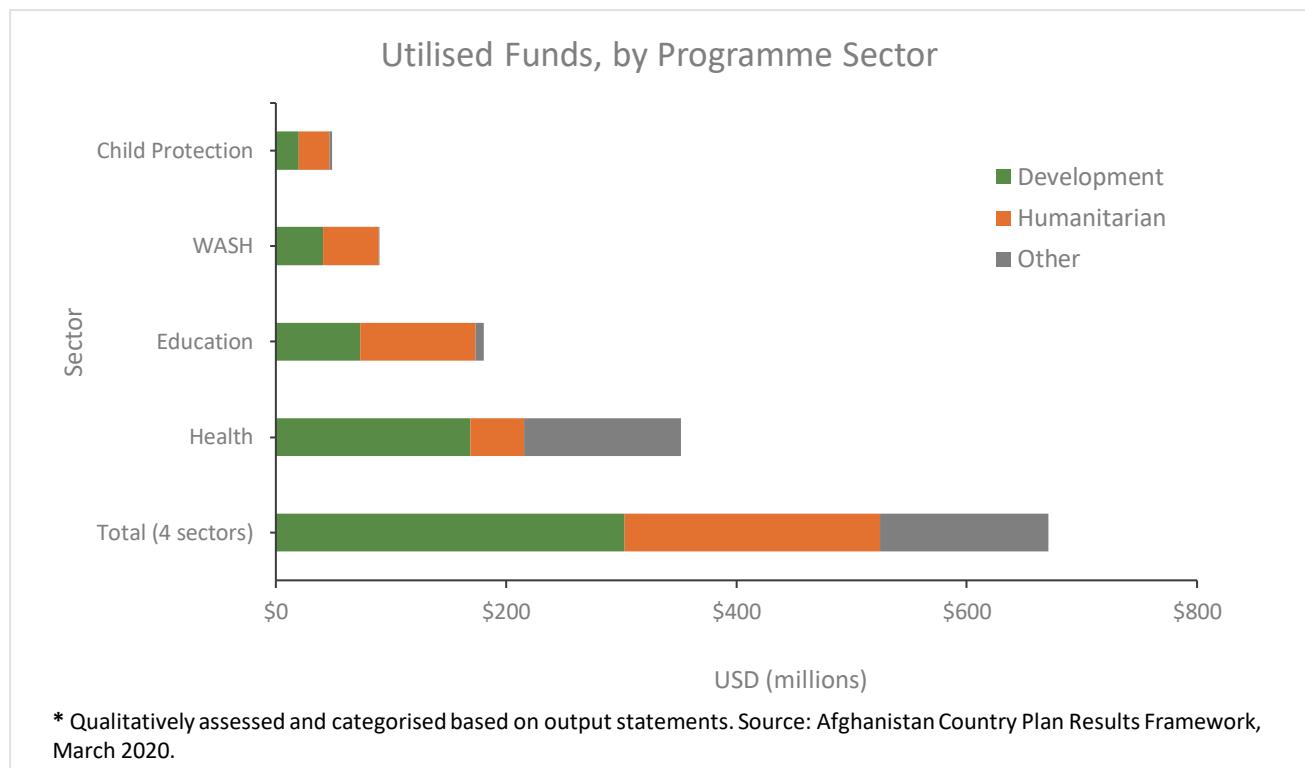
Across UNICEF personnel in Afghanistan, there is good general knowledge of the humanitarian-development nexus and how to apply it to programme activities. In the survey conducted for this evaluation among UNICEF country office staff, 82.6% agreed or strongly agreed that ACO had a good practical understanding of how best to integrate humanitarian and development objectives at programme level. Among UN agencies, NGOs and donors surveyed, 69% agreed or strongly agreed with the same statement.

Among ACO staff, 75.8% agreed or strongly agreed that their colleagues were familiar with the nexus. In staff interviews, integrating humanitarian and development activities across the ACP was also widely understood to be a desirable goal. One senior member of staff pointed out that the pursuit of this goal had become established best practice among aid practitioners over a decade ago, and was now accepted as a given by ACO sector chiefs. Another source pointed out that, independently of formal policy guidance on the nexus, building local capacity to sustain programme delivery was widely understood by staff to be an elemental part of risk management and mitigation. Echoing this, one source said that in the protracted emergency context of Afghanistan, recurrent emergencies over time had gradually caused development goals (i.e. resilience, sustainability, and the implied strengthening of local capacities) to become integral to programmes aimed at addressing acute humanitarian needs. This convergence of humanitarian and development strands in programming occurred organically, as immediate circumstances allowed or called for, as well as in a more planned manner. It is consistent with the fact that, as documented in research literature,³⁴ any progress towards the nexus in complex emergencies will rarely be linear. Instead, it will tend to involve an intermittent or even simultaneous focus on humanitarian and development objectives.³⁵

³⁴ On the shift from a continuum to a contiguum model of the nexus, see, for example, Damian Lilly, *Protection and the Nexus: Tensions and Opportunities*, Network Paper 82, HPN at ODI, April 2020.

³⁵ Ibid., as well as, for example, Tasneem Mowjee, Donata Garrasi and Lydia Poole, *Coherence in Conflict: Bringing humanitarian and development aid streams together*, DANIDA, November 2015.

Figure 6. Utilised Funds, by Programme Sector* (2015–20)



The nexus is an imperfect paradigm for some of UNICEF's activities in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, in their implementation, development and humanitarian interventions can generally complement each other well if the context allows.³⁶ This is illustrated by ACO's COVID-19 response. Across the four sectors examined, approaches to the nexus varied. For some, the nexus provided an imperfect paradigm. For example, some respondents pointed out that in the child protection, nutrition and immunisation sectors, humanitarian and development programme strands are too closely intertwined to be distinguishable. As illustrated by the training of frontline staff, addressing humanitarian emergencies at scale in these sectors necessarily calls for the building of some local capacity, which will naturally form the basis for development programmes, as long as the context allows. Whether the activities involved belong to the 'humanitarian' or 'development' categories is of little relevance to objectives pursued or to outcomes obtained. In this sense, the nexus as a formal paradigm might be seen as an artificial construct or 'a solution in search of problems'.

The synergistic relationship between humanitarian and development activities was generally viewed as self-evident by ACO and other UN personnel queried on the subject. There was a sense among interviewees that further progress towards the nexus depended not so much on better nexus expertise but rather on the removal of structural or contextual barriers to progress, which were well documented and well known to the aid community in Afghanistan. These obstacles, and ACO's response to them, are examined in detail in a finding below.

In the planning phase, ACO's deliberate aim of achieving coherence between humanitarian and development strands in its country programme is implicit in the ACP's results framework. An example of how this translates in practice is provided by its recent COVID-19 response, in which emergency interventions drew heavily on local capacities built with UNICEF support in the preceding

³⁶ For more detail on contextual obstacles to humanitarian-development coherence, see dedicated finding below.

years.³⁷ Referring to the COVID-19 response, multiple ACO interviewees for this evaluation noted that the pandemic in Afghanistan had provided an entry point for further development work in a Build Back Better perspective.³⁸ This latter component of ACO's response is less likely to be followed through to its intended outcomes, judging by prior emergencies in which interventions remained confined mainly to urgent humanitarian support and did not prompt a consolidation of development gains.³⁹ The evaluation team could not conduct in-depth research into the root causes of this bias, but there is some evidence to suggest that it may have been due to budget constraints or donor earmarking in favour of emergency interventions.

There are mixed perceptions around the strength of ACO's practical understanding of peacebuilding objectives and how to integrate them at programme level, and while respondents provided examples of the ACP's contribution to peace, evidence to support this is anecdotal. Further, there is limited understanding and use among staff of UNICEF guidance on peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity. In the survey conducted among ACO staff for this evaluation, 51.7% of respondents agreed that UNICEF in Afghanistan has a good, practical understanding of how to integrate peacebuilding objectives at programme level.⁴⁰ There was no significant variation in this response rate across programme sectors. Among other UN agencies, NGOs and donors, 38% agreed with the same statement, with no significant variation across these groups.⁴¹

At sector level, no evidence could be found that peacebuilding objectives are formally integrated in programming. In interviews, a range of diverse examples was given of how the ACP supports peace, and what could be done to increase this contribution further. While plausible, these opinions are not supported by evidence, and no research has been conducted so far to corroborate them. They do deserve mention, however, and provide two insights into ACO peacebuilding. First, a diverse range of possible avenues exists for peacebuilding, and provides a basis for research and analysis on the subject. Second, there is currently no unified understanding of what peacebuilding means in programming terms, and how it might be integrated in existing results frameworks.

As detailed further in a finding below, the evaluation team found that ACO staff had a very generic understanding of the concept and application of conflict sensitivity, which aims to minimise the risk that aid interventions unwittingly fuel conflict or other adverse events. Most staff interviewed were unaware that UNICEF guidance prescribes conflict sensitivity as a minimum requirement in peace programming, as called for by the triple nexus. Likewise, there was limited evidence that staff were familiar with the core conceptual distinction proposed in UNICEF guidance between conflict sensitivity (i.e. 'do no harm') and peacebuilding (i.e. 'do more good').⁴²

The evaluation team also noted a degree of ambiguity around the stated purpose of conflict analysis work conducted by ACO staff. While some interviewees linked conflict analysis to the goal of making programmes more conflict-sensitive ('do no harm'), the majority viewed conflict analysis as being integral to needs assessments, as required for preparedness purposes and to ensure that programmes in their design are a good fit with conflict-related needs. These two finalities call for distinct types of analysis. The lack of distinction between these two approaches is probably

³⁷ The response and mitigation measures rolled-out by ACO during the COVID-19 pandemic spanned all its programme sectors, and relied heavily on local partner personnel trained or otherwise supported by UNICEF in WASH, Health, Nutrition, Protection and Education. Source: UNICEF Afghanistan, *COVID-19 Response: Brief # 04*, October 2020.

³⁸ This perspective is echoed at regional level. See, for example, UNICEF, *Direct and Indirect Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Response in South Asia*, March 2021.

³⁹ For examples, UNICEF's drought response of 2018 was focused primarily on life-saving needs. Similarly, its response to floods in 2010 was confined to emergency assistance. Sources: UNICEF, *Western Region Drought Response – Humanitarian Situation Report #2*, September 2018; UNICEF, *Western Region Drought Response – Humanitarian Situation Report #3*, November 2018; UNICEF press release on floods in central and eastern Afghanistan, August, 2010.

⁴⁰ Itad surveys conducted for this evaluation between 15 March and 17 April 2021.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² UNICEF, *Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding: Programming Guide*, 2016.

reinforced by the fact that, currently, the only available platform for conducting formal conflict sensitivity analysis by ACO is the online EPP.

While there was strong evidence to show that conflict analysis as part of needs assessments is conducted across the ACP's programme sectors, the evaluation team found that only WASH engages in analysis deliberately aimed at conflict sensitivity in a peacebuilding perspective. This consists of ongoing assessments of whether limited access to water might exacerbate communal conflict, and the support of systems of water governance that ensure equitable access to this scarce commodity.

The Procedure on Linking Humanitarian and Development (LHD) Programming has had limited impact so far on the ACP. There was a sense among ACO staff that the Procedure is too far removed from Afghanistan's operational realities to be applicable. Significant efforts have been made to operationalise the procedure, yet it remains uncertain whether programme strands stemming from it will lead to the desired outcomes. In interviews, most ACO staff expressed well-informed views on the nexus, as well as on programme-level opportunities and constraints relating to its application in Afghanistan. In contrast, the evaluation team found that staff had little specific knowledge of the 2019 UNICEF Procedure on LHD, which is UNICEF's main policy document on the humanitarian-development nexus.⁴³ Among management, there was a sense that the LHD Procedure had been formulated in isolation of Afghanistan's operational context, and was therefore of limited relevance to it.

In part, this perception was borne out by the fact that, in 2019, ROSA commissioned an independent consultant to help UNICEF in Afghanistan (and other countries) to break down the LHD Procedure into a set of specific action points applicable at country level. In the view of several sources in Kabul, this was necessary as the Procedure on its own fell short of providing context-specific guidance.

In Afghanistan, work with the consultant involved both the Field Coordination Unit and the Social Policy Section, and aimed specifically at advancing the nexus through cash-based interventions (CBIs) and the development of social protection capacity. CBIs and social protection can have key enabling roles in the nexus, by allowing for linkages between humanitarian cash programmes and government-owned social safety nets.⁴⁴

Before this latest attempt, previous attempts had been made to address humanitarian needs through CBIs and social protection systems in Afghanistan, with little success (see Box 2.)

⁴³ UNICEF, *Procedure on Linking Humanitarian and Development (LHD) Programming*, PD/PROCEDURE/2019/001, May 2019.

⁴⁴ For a discussion on how cash-based programming can support progress towards the humanitarian-development nexus, see DAI Europe, *Grand Bargain Workshop: Linking Humanitarian Cash and Social Protection*, June 2019.

Box 2. Cash-programming and the nexus in Afghanistan

In principle, humanitarian CBIs and government-owned social protection programmes present strong potential to enable the nexus, as their common use of cash as a modality for assistance should make it comparatively easy to cross over from one to the other. Nonetheless, attempts at building these linkages have a history of mixed results in Afghanistan. In 2014, ACO piloted a child-focused social protection cash programme in Balkh, in view of assessing the feasibility and viability of interventions in this area. In 2016 and 2017, it provided technical support to the government to assist it in drafting a national social protection policy. With WFP and UNHCR, it also co-authored a feasibility study that year, covering multiple options for cash-in-emergencies, and aimed to inform subsequent programming work. Despite these efforts, CBIs launched by ACO during the period under review have generally remained limited in size, due to contextual obstacles to their mainstreaming. In 2017, ACO suspended a child-sensitive cash transfer pilot project, as no prospects existed for its sustainability and handover to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA). Cash support continues to be provided by ACO on a small scale.

In light of this it can be concluded that, thanks to the facilitation of the consultant commissioned by ROSA in 2020, ACO has actively engaged in workstreams that stemmed from the LHD procedure, and aimed specifically to support the operationalisation of the nexus in Afghanistan. However, the effect of the Procedure on ACO programming to date remains limited and indirect. It consists mainly of pursuing avenues which ACO has already explored in depth in preceding years. The final impact of the Procedure on the nexus in Afghanistan remains uncertain, given the very limited prospects for successful linkages of CBIs with effective social protection systems in the country.⁴⁵

Contextual Obstacles to Humanitarian-Development Coherence

Despite a high degree of integration between humanitarian and development activities in its programme planning, significant contextual obstacles limit ACO's ability to carry this coherence over to programme implementation. There are indications of a lack of clarity in policy and positioning around these obstacles. As well as undermining progress towards the nexus, this may have adversely impacted stakeholder perceptions of ACO performance. The evaluation team identified a series of significant contextual obstacles faced by ACO in linking up humanitarian and development programme strands, most of which relate to partnerships and capacity building (see Box 3 below). Interviews with both ACO staff and external stakeholders made clear that these obstacles are known and broadly understood by the aid community in Afghanistan. Some of the risks stemming from them are registered in the risk assessments annexed to the 2019 and 2020 Annual Management Plans (AMPs).⁴⁶ However, the evaluation team found limited evidence that these obstacles have elicited clear policy or strategic-level responses on the part of ACO, or have been incorporated in the narratives that underpin engagement with stakeholders. Rather, the posture of ACO staff towards these challenges was generally to accept them as inherent in the operating context, and to assume that they have no prominent place in outbound messaging.

In part, this apparent passivity may be because some of these obstacles are politically sensitive, and few can be resolved by ACO alone, or within the lifespan of a country programme. Nonetheless, there is evidence that a muted policy response to these obstacles has had an adverse impact on the quality of programmes over time. For example, they include delays in addressing shortcomings in the NTA system, or weakened programme continuity in some sectors, such as education, that benefit strongly from multi-year planning and funding.

⁴⁵ See, for example, International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, *COVID-19 and Social Protection in South Asia: Afghanistan*, September 2020: 'Prior to COVID-19 [...] non-humanitarian, non-contributory, flagship social assistance programmes targeting the individual or household level only covered an estimated 0.9 per cent of the population, with local initiatives lacking government support'.

⁴⁶ ACO Annual Management Plans 2019 and 2020.

There was also some evidence to suggest that ACO's lack of a clear outbound narrative on these contextual obstacles may have affected stakeholder perceptions of its work and performance. In interviews, two donors who suspended their funding of ACP programme strands in 2019 and 2020 indicated that they had done so due in part to programme performance issues. It was not immediately clear that these donors were aware of the very significant impact which contextual barriers to implementation were having in the relevant programme sectors.

Box 3. Contextual obstacles to partnerships

The following contextual obstacles to partnerships in a nexus perspective were consistently mentioned by a large proportion of interviewees. Some of these obstacles are discussed in further detail in Section 4.3.1 below:

- **High turnover of government staff.** Rapid and sometimes unpredictable staff rotations in GIRoA line ministries have an adverse impact on the continuity of joint activities. Multiple interviewees in the evaluation identified this as the main obstacle to substantive partnerships.
- **High turnover of ACO staff.** High turnover among ACO and other UN international staff was also noted as an obstacle to resilience in a nexus perspective. As noted by multiple interviewees, lack of programme hindsight among international staff is compounded by the fact that limited use is made of 'programme memory' held by national staff.
- **Siloed funding.** Multiple interviewees stated that donor grants in their programme sectors are still often earmarked for emergency or for development activities, and do not provide the flexibility required to cross over from one to the other. These observations are borne out by research on the subject (Alcayna, 2019; IPI, 2018; ICVA, 2017).
- **Short funding cycles.** Annual funding cycles remain prevalent for programmes in which desired nexus outcomes can only be achieved in a multi-year timeframe. According to one interviewee, lack of predictability in funding streams is particularly problematic in the execution of rolling workplans (RWPs), which by necessity are reviewed annually. Even within an annual timeframe, funding shortfalls are frequent.
- **Lack of public revenue.** Several interviewees mentioned a lack of public budget and a dearth of on-budget donor support as barriers to greater government ownership of joint programmes. Bilateral pledges at the Geneva Conference in late 2020 were about 20% lower than in the previous pledging period. In these conditions, a range of activities at the core of the nexus, most notably shock-responsive social safety nets, are unlikely to become sustainable.
- **Elite capture and rent-seeking** were mentioned in multiple interviews as serious impediments to partnerships in a nexus perspective. Controls and verification mechanisms required to mitigate these behaviours add drag to programme implementation and generate significant transaction costs. In the case of NTAs, the controls in place did not fully succeed in enforcing accountability standards on contracted personnel.

Risk Management, Risk-Informed Programming and Preparedness

Across sector programmes, there is a high level of compliance to processes relating to risk management, risk-informed programming and preparedness. However, the extent to which this contributes to appropriate responses to risk is limited. Despite the little use made of dedicated programme tools, ACO's response to major risks has been consistently well-coordinated on an ad

hoc basis. According to UNICEF guidance,⁴⁷ risk-informed programming (RIP) should be embedded in programme planning processes relating to both ACO's own country programme, and system-wide planning exercises such as UNDAF or One UN. Since the guidance was introduced in 2018, AMPs for Afghanistan have included risk assessments as Annexes.⁴⁸ A child-centred, multi-hazard risk analysis was also conducted across the ACP in 2020,⁴⁹ identifying a broad range of '*risk factors that affect the peaceful and resilient development of children and their communities in Afghanistan*'.⁵⁰ In addition, a separate study of conflict trends in Afghanistan was commissioned in 2020.⁵¹ Among other goals, these risk assessments aim to inform programme planning and related ToCs, and to provide entry points for preparedness, capacity building and resilience intervention in a nexus perspective.

As the 2022–25 ACP cycle has not yet begun, it was difficult to evaluate the uptake of these assessments in planning work. In interviews with ACO staff, however, it became clear that analysis relating to both humanitarian and conflict risks faces two main challenges in Afghanistan. The first is to ensure that it stays current and alive to the extreme fluidity of the context. The second is to integrate elements of analysis that relate to both countrywide and very localised events.

From a system-wide perspective, meeting the need for agility and depth in analysis is extremely challenging. One interviewee cited the widely held view at ACO that the study of conflict trends carried out in 2020 was outdated by the time it was approved for internal circulation. Although extensive and well researched, the study could not examine district-level conflict dynamics in any detail. In several interviews, likewise, ACO staff stated that risks identified in the risk assessments annexed to AMPs tended to be too generic to inform preparedness or contingency planning. Although some were subject to mitigation measures built into administrative processes, such as those relating to partnerships, none of the interviewees queried on the subject could provide an example in which any of these risks had informed programming in any significant way.

As shown by the recent outbreak of hostilities in Panjwai district, which caused aid activities there to be suspended while this evaluation was being conducted, it is mainly at the local level that conflict impacts on programmes. The implications of this in terms of decentralisation, and of the critical role of field offices in risk analysis and programme adaptiveness, are discussed in Section 4.2.2.

In terms of programme systems, one of the main tools to support risk-informed programming across the ACP is the online EPP, which was introduced in 2018 and is hosted by ROSA. The EPP covers six standard risks,⁵² against which programme sectors are required to enter contingency plans and to update them on a twice-yearly basis. According to the EPP's preparedness and compliance tracker, completion rates for ACO are good, with 94% of sector-based contingency plans entered into the system at the time of the evaluation. The tracker also monitors completion of the various fields to be completed per sector plan and risk category. For ACO, the combined weighted score on these measures was 70%, due to a few delayed entries.

Contrasting with these favourable scores is the quality of contingency plans entered in the EPP. When queried about them, ACO interviewees acknowledged that many of these plans lack sufficient detail to inform specific lines of action. For example, in the 'Armed Conflict' risk category, one sector's entry totalled less than 20 lines, with many subheadings in the template left blank. There was a strong sense that the main reason why the EPP was periodically updated was that this is a process requirement. According to two sources, the task was often delegated to junior staff.

⁴⁷ UNICEF, *Guidance on Risk-Informed Programming*, 2018.

⁴⁸ Risk assessments, annexed to ACO Annual Management Plans, 2019 and 2020.

⁴⁹ UNICEF Afghanistan, *Child-Centred Multi-Hazard Risk Analysis*, May 2020.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ UNICEF, *Analysis of Current and Projected Conflict Trends to Inform the UNICEF's Engagement in Afghanistan*, internal document, May 2020.

⁵² The other five risk categories are earthquake, floods/landslides, epidemic/pandemic, armed conflict, and drought.

Despite limited use of dedicated programme tools such as the EPP and the RIP guidance, there is strong evidence that major risks elicit consistent and well-planned programme responses. To illustrate this, two timely examples are ACO's response to risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and by the impending drawdown of NATO troops from Afghanistan. In both instances, programme responses to these risks were designed and managed in a largely ad hoc manner, on the basis of 'live' information drawn directly from programme sources on the ground, rather than from risk registers completed in advance. According to interviewees, this did not prevent related decision making and coordination from being timely and results-focused.

At sector level, likewise, a majority of ACO staff interviewed stated that risk was managed pragmatically and in an ad hoc manner, with minimal reliance on formal ACO tools or guidance. For example, in response to renewed fighting in Laghman province in May 2021, consultations took place spontaneously between ACO programme sectors and the Jalalabad Field Office, to identify risks and determine the feasibility and appropriateness of a response. Subsequent discussions were informed by reports generated by six inter-agency assessment teams on the ground, and gave full consideration to impending risks, including risks of internal displacement into Mehtalam City. The assessments conducted and the subsequent response relied in part on UNICEF in its capacity as WASH cluster lead. In this specific instance, the inter-agency assessment and response process took place in a mostly localised manner. Risk and conflict analysis was conducted locally on an inter-agency basis, with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) providing coordination and information management support to UNICEF and other humanitarian actors. While consultations did take place between the ACO programme sectors and the Jalalabad Field Office (FO), no evidence could be found that these discussions were prompted or facilitated by dedicated risk management tools, other than those already embedded in the inter-agency process.

ACO managers queried on the EPP said that the limited uptake of this tool by programme sectors is in part because of their reservations about its usefulness. To a large extent, the EPP requires a duplication of inputs into other programme tools and processes, such as AMPs. Also, like the multi-hazard risk assessment and the study of conflict trend commissioned in 2020, the EPP cannot provide tactical guidance and support in the face of fast-moving or highly localised risks.

Despite these limitations, several interviewees pointed to ways in which they thought the EPP was useful. One was to prompt programme sectors to think ahead and reflect on risks that might affect their activities. Another was to help ensure minimal standards of preparedness at sector level. A third was to serve as a repository of information on measures taken to mitigate risk as they arise. The EPP does allow actions to be logged while the adverse events they aim to respond to, or to mitigate, are unfolding. For example, this was done during ACO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

In the case of COVID-19 programming, events and programme responses on the ground quickly outpaced the EPP, and essentially confined its use to that of an *ex post* reporting tool. Responding to immediate and long-term risk involved tactical emergency measures that only incrementally provided a basis for longer-term actions. These actions were shaped by contextual factors that were hard to predict and harder still to plan for. A highly mechanistic approach to risk, such as that offered by the EPP, was always unlikely to capture these factors in the level of detail required for appropriate and timely responses at field level. As shown in activity reports on ACO's COVID-19 response,⁵³ this did not prevent programme sectors from adapting to fast-changing circumstances as they arose on the ground. Evidence shows that the pace and quality of measures involved in this

⁵³ UNICEF Afghanistan, *COVID-19 Response*, Briefs #01 to #04, April to October 2020.

adaptation depended more on bottom-up information flows to inform programming than on the use of dedicated programme tools.⁵⁴

4.1.2 System-Wide Engagement and Positioning in Support of the Nexus

Summary of Findings

In Afghanistan, UNICEF's comparative advantage in advancing the nexus derives mainly from its dual mandate and its sectoral expertise. It has drawn on these attributes to help create stakeholder alliances that bolster the sustainability of progress made towards the welfare of children. UNICEF in Afghanistan is widely recognised for its unifying role among stakeholders, but its approach to advocacy is sometimes viewed as overly cautious.

UNICEF Comparative Advantage in Promoting the Nexus

UNICEF has used its sectoral expertise and the leverage it draws from its dual mandate to rally stakeholders around common goals, which include or contribute to programme sustainability over time. Interviews with ACO staff and external stakeholders confirm that UNICEF's comparative advantage in advancing the nexus in Afghanistan draws from two main sources: its dual mandate and its sectoral expertise. UNICEF's dual mandate enables it, in principle, to hard-wire the humanitarian-development nexus into its own sector programmes. This can allow it to play a more prominent role in the relevant sectors and lessens its dependence on inter-agency partnerships in its pursuit of the nexus. The most illustrative examples of this may be in Nutrition, Health and WASH, where ACO can address life-saving needs while drawing on pre-existing partnerships with line ministries to follow through with more development-oriented interventions. As noted above, however, significant contextual obstacles in Afghanistan stand in the way of implementing programmes that contain both humanitarian and capacity building or resilience strands. Internally, and as discussed further in Section 4.2.1 below, slow progress in multi-sectoral programming compounds barriers to progress in building complementarity across the humanitarian and development areas of UNICEF's mandate.

In interviews, there was broad agreement among stakeholders that in several sectors, ACO's technical expertise had allowed it to contribute substantively, if not at scale, on both sides of the humanitarian-development nexus. Consensus on this was most notable in education and immunisation. In immunisation, UNICEF has played a highly prominent role in a countrywide polio vaccination campaign conducted jointly with WHO and the Afghan MoPH. The campaign has relied heavily on capabilities built locally by UNICEF and other actors. In education in 2020, likewise, ACO has leveraged its sectoral expertise to mobilise multiple stakeholders around a workplan to expand programme coverage, including in contested areas. This workplan includes measures aimed at capacity building and the creation of an environment conducive to the improved sustainability of programme outcomes.

In child protection, ACO is working with implementing partners on the provision of technical assistance to multiple ministries, aimed at the better implementation of the rights of the child.⁵⁵ Its support of the Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) is also at the crux of humanitarian and

⁵⁴ Programme sector staff queried on the subject stated that programming decisions in the COVID-19 response relied mainly on information stemming from the ground and conveyed to them by the field offices, partners, the clusters, and other sector-specific coordination platforms. The same limited use of the EPP was observed in more recent plans to prepare for the drawdown of US troops, announced on 13 April 2021. This announcement prompted a range of consultations both internal and external to ACO. At the time of writing, programme sectors were drafting contingency plans, and arrangements were being made to recruit a consultant to assist in the preparedness effort.

⁵⁵ This includes the provision of technical support to MoLSA's Child Protection Secretariat in its development of a national child protection policy.

development programming and involves capacity and environment building at field level.⁵⁶ In WASH, ACO has demonstrably built technical capabilities among its partners, most notably the MRRD and community development councils (CDCs). Independently of limitations in programme coverage, discussed in further detail in Section 4.2.1 below, these capabilities contribute meaningfully to the improved sustainability of programme outcomes.

System-wide Engagement and Advocacy in Support of the Nexus

In spite of the failure of the One UN Framework to provide a basis for structured, multilateral engagement in Afghanistan, opportunities to engage in collective efforts to advance the nexus and consolidate gains in system-wide sustainability have been actively pursued. Equally notably, there is evidence to suggest that avenues that showed less promise were – rightly – deprioritised.

According to a non-ACO source, system-wide engagement with the Afghan government showed some promise between 2016 and 2018, during the tenure of the country's sole Senior Advisor to the President for UN Affairs.⁵⁷ However, following this official's resignation in late 2018, structured consultations between UN agencies and the corresponding line ministries slowed down markedly. High-level engagement remained minimal during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, UN actors were required to engage with the office of the Vice-President rather than with senior officials of line ministries, resulting in bottlenecks and delayed responses in consultations.

In these difficult conditions, ACO and other UN actors have struggled to consolidate gains in their partnerships with the government. At least in part, this accounts for a lack of progress in linking humanitarian programmes with development interventions that rely on the participation of the government.

In this context, one example worth mentioning is the lack of ACO follow-up to the concept note on shock-responsive approaches, prepared by the UN in Afghanistan's Bridging Humanitarian and Development Responses Working Group.⁵⁸ An internal audit conducted in 2019 noted that ACO failed to engage with both Headquarters and the relevant GIRQA line ministry, to explore UNICEF's potential role in strengthening social systems in Afghanistan.⁵⁹ While some level of engagement was certainly warranted, the evaluation team found that, on balance, ACO was justified in not considering this a priority. Indeed, its comparative advantage in contributing to social safety nets in Afghanistan is lower than that of other stakeholders, notably the World Bank.⁶⁰ Prospects for successful outcomes in this area were highly uncertain and remain so to date.⁶¹ As illustrated in Section 4.3, other avenues for partnership with the government drew more heavily on ACO's comparative advantage, and were being pursued. Interventions in these areas aimed to address more urgent needs than those served by systems-building activities in social protection.

Despite the lack of a system-wide framework for cooperation with UN and government stakeholders, the evaluation team found that ACO was generally seen to exert measured but substantive leadership in its areas of expertise and comparative advantage. This related mainly to its leadership of clusters and sub-clusters, as noted in Section 4.3 below, but was also true of its influence in other fora, such as Spotlight and CPAN. Similarly, in more technical fora, UNICEF was

⁵⁶ Sayara Research, *Evaluation of Afghanistan's Child Protection Action Network*, February 2017. See also Save the Children International, *Child Rights Situation Analysis – An In-Depth Report*, 2018.

⁵⁷ Farkhunda Zhara Naderi was nominated to the role in December 2016 and resigned in November 2018.

⁵⁸ Cited in Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI), *Internal Audit of the Afghanistan Country Office*, December 2019.

⁵⁹ Ibid. The line ministry involved here was MoLSA.

⁶⁰ The World Bank's \$7.5 million Afghanistan Pension Administration and Safety Net project, which ran from 2010 to 2017, has been the largest social protection intervention conducted so far in Afghanistan.

⁶¹ In addition to the source referenced in footnote 80 above, see also, for example, specific references to Afghanistan in Rachel Cooper, *Social Safety Nets in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States*, Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development (K4D) helpdesk report, November 2018. Notably, this analysis quotes World Bank.

widely viewed as a supportive presence.⁶² Its prominent involvement in those fora did not expressly aim to advance the nexus, but did contribute to it through its support of capacity and environment-building activities.⁶³

UNICEF Leadership in Integrating Humanitarian, Development and Peacebuilding Across the Aid System in Afghanistan

ACO has opted for a measured and carefully reasoned approach to its advocacy of the nexus in support of children. This approach is justified, given a sensitive political environment. Even accounting for contextual risks, however, there is room for ACO to be more assertive and participatory in its conduct of advocacy work. While, at the technical level, ACO has actively drawn on its comparative advantage to advance the nexus, several interviewees felt that it could do more to leverage its close working relationship with the government, to press for more progress in joint programme implementation and in the enforcement of children's and women's rights. For example, one interviewee cited multi-stakeholder consultations on the resumption of school classes after COVID-19, in which they felt that ACO should have insisted more on the resumption of classes earlier than envisaged by the MoE. This example resonates with the findings of a 2017 evaluation of CPAN, in which there was a sense that ACO was sometimes too willing to compromise on the quality of collective outcomes, and reluctant to assert the need for mutual accountability in its partnerships with line ministries.⁶⁴

The evaluation team also found limited evidence of ACO's use of public communication to support efforts aimed at the nexus. While public communication as an advocacy tool is inherently risky in such as politically sensitive environment as Afghanistan, it can be useful to create or reinforce accountability among stakeholders. An example of this is provided in Box 4 below.

Box 4. Example of good practice: Creating accountability through the use of public communications

In June 2018 ACO, jointly with the Afghan MoE, staged a press conference to present their Afghan study on out-of-school children. The study is of high strategic value as it underpins the National Education Strategic Plan III by providing a baseline on out-of-school children.

The panel at the press launch was composed of the UNICEF Representative, the acting Minister of Education and the Ambassador of Canada, with a presentation by the ROSA Education Specialist. The event was extremely well attended by national and internal media and received good global coverage.

The event is notable for two reasons. First, the press launch involved close and successful teamwork between the education and communication sectors, with follow-up events organised in the following days to proactively engage foreign embassies in Kabul on the subject. Second, by providing global media exposure to the project, the event created strong accountability for it across the range stakeholders involved.

⁶² Such as, for example, the national and regional Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) and the Immunisation Communication Network (ICN).

⁶³ For example, UNICEF support of CPAN has included substantial capacity building assistance to MoLSA and Afghan CSOs since 2006. Prospects for CPAN's sustainability remain uncertain, however. Source: Sayara Research, *Evaluation of Afghanistan's Child Protection Action Network*, February 2017.

⁶⁴ Sayara Research, *Evaluation of Afghanistan's Child Protection Action Network*, February 2017.

4.2 Focus Area 2: Coverage and Access

This section looks at multi-sectoral programming and equity in programme planning and implementation, as well as the contextual factors that have affected progress in these two areas, and how ACO has responded to them. It also looks at the way ACO has managed access in view of expanding coverage and improving the quality of programme delivery. Its use of extenders and TPMs is also examined.

4.2.1 Equity and Multi-Sectoral Programming for the Welfare of Children

Summary of findings

ACO has made gains in programme coverage in the past three years. But it continues to face significant challenges in its assessment of needs and its monitoring of results in hard-to-reach areas. Different programme sectors have implemented varying operational approaches to prioritise and respond to needs and to increase coverage. This diversity in approaches can yield valuable lessons and can serve to develop good practices around which programme sectors can gradually cohere. Progress has been made in multi-sector programming in the past two years, although this continues to be challenged by internal and external factors which are only now starting to be addressed. These include sector siloes, the slow pace of ACO decentralisation, the complexity of measuring and reporting results across joint sectoral interventions, and donor preferencing and siloed partnerships with GIRoA ministries.

Equity in Programme Delivery

An increasing appetite for risk, incremental decentralisation of ACO and a ‘lift and shift strategy’ have furthered the advancement of ACO’s reach in the latter years of the ACP. The overall goal of the current ACP is to address inequity to ensure all children, adolescents and women have access to essential services. To this end, the country programme initially developed a geographical focus based on an analysis of the most deprived provinces coupled with a capacity gap analysis that would underpin area-based prioritisation. The shortcomings of this geographical prioritisation were well documented in the MTR⁶⁵ and ACO’s analyses also indicate that UNICEF is not active in some of the districts with the highest needs.⁶⁶ As a result, UNICEF has mostly abandoned the focus province approach, with the exception of polio, where it makes sense given the geographic clustering of polio in the country.

In contrast to the focus province approach, in the latter years of the ACP, countrywide reach has grown, partly driven by a greater risk appetite to implement in hard-to-reach areas. While the RAM data was not consistent enough to provide a solid evidence base to show coverage increases, key informants and evidence in recent project proposal documents evince a clear strategy to focus on hard-to-reach areas. Figure 7 below indicates the planned coverage of ACO interventions by sector and district in 2021. The health programme is operational in all districts. WASH and child protection have an approximate 50% coverage, owing to a GIRoA implementation modality for the former and a lack of acceptance of child protection conventions by the Taliban for the latter. Internal and external perceptions indicate that UNICEF has implemented a successful approach to selecting locations to achieve the best possible balance to address acute needs and assist the greatest possible number of people, although a small number of partners and stakeholders do also observe

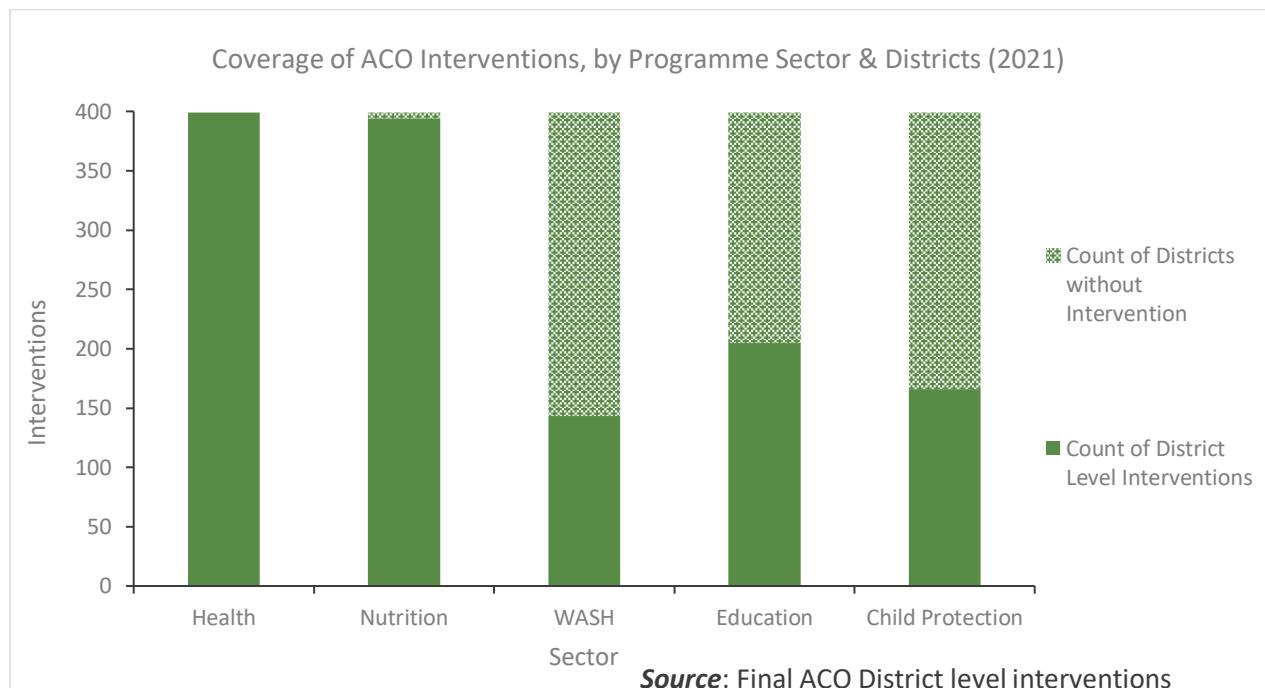
⁶⁵ Mid-Term Review of the Country Programme 2015-2019. Summary Report.

⁶⁶ KIIs.

that UNICEF is still mostly inclined to work in its comfort zone, that is, in more urbanised and secure areas.⁶⁷

Figure 7. Planned Coverage per Sector

	Health	Nutrition	WASH	Education	Child Protection
Count of District Level Interventions	399	394	143	205	166
Count of Districts without Intervention	0	5	256	194	233



UNICEF has implemented a number of strategies that provide a greater enabling environment to advance programme coverage and access in the latter part of the ACP period. The efforts at decentralising ACO (discussed in more detail in Section 4.2.2) will, in time, reap dividends in terms of institutionalising field offices better empowered to plan and programme according to local needs. The establishment of new sub-field offices in Helmand and Urozgan, while more a ‘lift and shift’ strategy than a rollout of ACO decentralisation processes, has contributed to accessing hitherto hard-to-reach areas. The establishment of the sub-field office in Tirinkot has further enabled better access of other actors to address humanitarian and development needs in Urozgan.

ACO faces a number of challenges in its efforts to prioritise support to high-need areas, including security issues, political sensitivities, donor preferencing and the availability of implementing partners. It also faces challenges in assessing needs in hard-to-reach areas. The evaluation team has found that ACO faces a number of constraints in its capacity to prioritise humanitarian and development assistance. The first of these constraints is the GIRoA implementing strategies which

⁶⁷ 77% and 62% of respondents, respectively, to the online surveys of UNICEF Staff and External Stakeholders agreed with the statement that ‘the way the Afghanistan country office (ACO) has prioritised provinces makes sense, and strikes a good balance between addressing the most acute needs and assisting the greatest possible number of people’.

UNICEF is mandated to align with. The MoE is a particularly strong ministry in terms of dictating its implementation strategy, and UNICEF walks a tightrope in terms of being able to push back on ministerial preferences. Geographic preferencing by donors can also inhibit ACO being able to prioritise those most in need. For example, some donors will earmark easier-to-reach locations, such as Bamiyan, to enable diplomatic field visits. Aside from the obvious constraints of security and the complexity of programming in hard-to-reach areas, reaching at equity is also contingent on the availability and capacity of implementing partners. As discussed in Section 4.3.1 of this report, ACO has to make trade-offs in localising partnerships for greater reach with compensating for capacity gaps that exist in some of these local partner organisations.

ACO is also constrained by a lack of detailed understanding of the needs in hard-to-reach areas,⁶⁸ despite increasing use of REACH Initiatives data to target interventions. While humanitarian and development coordination platforms (for example, the clusters and OCHA discussed in further detail in Section 4.3.1 of this report) have helped to improve targeting through shared analyses. However, in some areas the level of deprivation and the intervention needs remain opaque. 82% of extender survey respondents in this evaluation believe the highest needs are in hard-to-reach areas. Therefore, a deeper understanding of these needs is required to be able to address equity.

Different programme sectors have implemented varying operational approaches to respond to deprivation needs, prioritise support and increase coverage. Health and nutrition have the highest level of countrywide coverage, largely due to the use of mobile teams and frontline workers. WASH and Child Protection have the most limited geographic coverage, partially explained by the challenges associated with operating in a large number of hard-to-reach areas (described in the section above) and fewer financial resources than other sectors.⁶⁹ The evaluation team found that in the Eastern region, female teachers were working in hard-to-reach areas. As discussed further in Section 4.2.2 below, a significant enabling factor for access in hard-to-reach areas is Taliban demand for services, with health being most required by the Taliban.

The evaluation team finds that there is a lack of coherence between the sectors in their programming approach to equity. For some sectors, equity is conceptualised as programming in hard-to-reach areas. For example, in the ECHO-funded Education in Emergency project, there is a prioritisation to work in three Southern provinces in 580 hard-to-reach locations.⁷⁰ In the CLTS in the WASH sector, there are also efforts to programme in the remotest and hard-to-reach areas of Afghanistan to reach the goal of making Afghanistan an open defecation-free zone by 2025. The health sector, on the other hand, takes a more overarching approach to equity, evinced by the fact that it has interventions in every district in Afghanistan. Although lacking a coherent approach, there is evidence that all the sectors do consider the principle of equity in their developmental planning.

UNICEF is perceived externally as a very large UN agency with good reach throughout Afghanistan. In the latter years of the CPD, programming reach has been enabled by a greater risk appetite to implement in hard-to-reach areas. In the next CPD period this continued appetite for risk is encouraged, alongside further decentralisation measures to engender a clearer understanding at field level of the needs in hard-to-reach areas to ensure that ACO programming can reach those most in need.

⁶⁸ This was a key finding of Andrew Featherstone and Charlotte Lattimer, *Evaluation of UNICEF's Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations: Afghanistan Evaluation Report*, August 2020.

⁶⁹ 2021 count of districts with interventions is: Health, 399; Nutrition, 394; Education, 205; Child Protection, 166; WASH, 143 (source: ACO data).

⁷⁰ Provision of education in emergencies and lifesaving health, nutrition and WASH services to vulnerable children in Afghanistan (ECHO proposal annex narrative).

Multi-Sectoral Programming

Evidence suggests that convergent multi-sectoral programming (MSP) has increased in the last 18 months in three ways: through new approaches to planning, through creative operational choices and through emergency response. The 2020 Afghanistan AMP made reference to the need for '*operationalizing an intersectoral strategy*'. The evaluation team has found that since 2020 multi-sector planning and programming have evolved from theoretical to practical implementation, in particular through a series of programmes in the WASH, gender and education sectors.^{71, 72} This shift has been driven not only by global strategies and AMP goals but also by a will to scale up and formalise existing ad hoc harmonisation between sectors.

A clear majority of UNICEF staff believe that UNICEF strategy and guidelines for MSP are useful to guide programming on the ground and are enabling programme sectors to work well together in support of children, adolescents and women.⁷³ Global UNICEF policies such as the LHD procedures and the revised CCCs (2020), coupled with an increasing donor agenda to enhance effectiveness, efficiency and cohesion of intervention in fragile state (OECD-DAC 2019) have been important catalysts in driving the increase in MSP over the CPD period. Furthermore, a clear majority of external stakeholders believe that UNICEF's MSP is yielding good results.⁷⁴ Increasing efforts to plan for MSP in project design indicates that this type of programming, which is recognised as key for achieving the SDGs, is becoming more institutionalised and premeditated in ACO. There is now a need to properly formalise this convergence approach in the next ACP planning documents. An important lesson from the evaluation is that while formalising MSP in the next CPD is important, there is also a need for the CMT to prioritise this agenda in ACO. To ensure MSP planning is grounded in a sound understanding of needs and context, it is imperative to include field office input at the start of the project design phase while building a set of lessons learned (including a focus on inter-ministry coordination) from existing MSP such as Spotlight and the Integrated Services Package project to convince donors (and other stakeholders) of the relevance and effectiveness of MSP.

In recent years, convergent MSP has also been driven by judicious operational decisions made during implementation. Quite often this harmonisation is driven by personalities and a will to maximise programming impacts between the sectors. In Jalalabad, for example, the evaluation team found that UNICEF has been able to offer a joint package of nutrition, health and WASH services in medical facilities. According to KIIIs in the Eastern region, while there was no formal strategy for convergence, staff have been opportunistic in identifying synergies on the ground. A further example of successful harmonisation during programme implementation is the alignment between the polio, WASH and nutrition sectors in tackling an outbreak of wild polio in the Kandahar slums. Here, UNICEF decided not to pursue a stand-alone vaccination programme, but looked for opportunities for programme convergence by promoting enhanced WASH, the establishment of defecation-free zones and nutrition packages alongside vaccinations. It should be noted that in some instances multi-sector service packages are not driven by UNICEF staff or community request but by the Taliban, who have on occasion asked UNICEF to provide health and WASH services (sometimes as a condition to allow polio vaccinations) in hard-to-reach areas.

⁷¹ Programme examples include: (1) The EU-funded 'Spotlight' (an inter-agency multi-sectoral response project to provide services for survivors to increase access and use of SGBV/HP response services in Afghanistan); (2) The ECHO-funded 'Provision of education in emergencies and lifesaving health, nutrition and WASH services to vulnerable children in Afghanistan'; and (3) The South Korea-funded 'Integrated quality service package in hard-to-reach areas of Afghanistan'.

⁷² Examples of harmonised delivery approaches include improving gender-specific WASH facilities in schools to promote female menstrual health and encourage higher female enrolment rates.

⁷³ 79% of respondents to the online survey of UNICEF staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'UNICEF's approach to multi-sectoral programming has produced good results, in terms of enabling a combined approach to the diverse needs of children, adolescents and women. This has allowed my sector and other programme sectors to work well together in support of children, adolescents and women'.

⁷⁴ 71% of respondents to the online survey of External Stakeholders agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'UNICEF's approach to multi-sectoral programming has produced good results, in terms of enabling a combined approach to the diverse needs of children, adolescents and women'.

A further area which has supported the trend to greater programme convergence and MSP is that of emergency response. UNICEF's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to the severe drought in 2018–19 has provided some serendipitous opportunities for sector convergence. C4D has been instrumental in identifying and taking up such windows of opportunity. For example, in post-natal health services opportunities have been identified to include COVID-specific messaging around the importance of handwashing and good sanitation to help mitigate the spread of the pandemic. It is understood that monitoring has captured a significant uptake of these messages and changed hygiene practices. Now the C4D unit is staffed and operational (the section chief position was vacant for 18 months in 2018–19), it will have an important role to play in articulating multi-sectoral approaches, based on solid analyses and data.

Multi-sector and geographic convergent programming continue to be challenged by internal and external factors which are only just starting to be addressed. These include sector siloes, the slow pace of ACO decentralisation, the complexity of measuring and reporting results across joint sectoral interventions, and donor preferencing and siloed partnerships with GIRoA ministries.

While there are promising trends towards multi-sector planning and implementation, such approaches are still in their infancy in ACO. The rollout of this work faces both internal and external challenges which will need to be addressed in the forthcoming months. In the next ACP period, the vision and administrative infrastructure required to increase this type of programming will need to be far more clearly articulated at a country office level and accompanied by a strong will from the CMT and all staff to work genuinely across the sectors.

With regard to internal constraints, one of the key challenges is continued siloed working among ACO sectors, driven by institutional culture and resource allocation. The emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic has provided opportunities to overcome such constraints: for example, the increased flexibility of RWPs in 2020 (in response to COVID-19) has been extremely useful in enabling resource sharing and response fine-tuning in the Eastern region (i.e. polio funds utilised by other sectors).

In addition, the slow pace of decentralising decision making to the regions has also impacted on both the planning and implementation of MSP. Sector programming continues to be very Kabul-centric in both the formulation of project proposals and in implementation. Data and contextual knowledge about needs primarily rest at field level but are not yet being maximised sufficiently in multi-sector planning, and few opportunities exist for field-based staff to substantively engage and input local knowledge at the project development stage.

Box 5. Example of good practice: Innovative approaches to designing a geographically convergent multi-sector project in Daikundi, working with extenders in the child protection and WASH sectors

The Integrated Services Package Programme in Daikundi Province (funded by South Korea) is a good example of convergent programming on the ground. The programme aims to increase the availability of and access to basic, quality integrated services for the most vulnerable groups – particularly children, adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women – in hard-to-reach areas. The programme uses an innovative approach which taps into different facility and community-based initiatives across all sectors, in a targeted geographical area, and draws on a complementary behaviour change approach. In doing so, it aims to address all gaps in education, health, nutrition and WASH provision in a coordinated approach and to produce multiplier effects which single sector programming would not be able to achieve.

MSP is also undermined by weaknesses in approaches to results aggregation and reporting at sector and project levels. For example, the structure of the RWPs and associated monitoring frameworks are not conducive to measuring and aggregating results across sectors. While the monitoring frameworks for the three new multi-sectoral programmes are practical, it is not clear how results at project level will contribute to overall sectoral goals. The evaluation team further observes that MSP often depends more on personalities and people's will to share analyses and to look for joint opportunities, rather than being embedded in a systematic approach. As such, the financing and results measurement approaches taken in the RWPs will need to be revisited if ACO is to scale up its efforts to increase convergent MSP.

In terms of external challenges, donor earmarking and prioritisation (geographically and thematically) pose barriers to multi-sector working. The evaluation team observes that, in principle, donors are not averse to convergence, but there is a need for UNICEF to make better use of data and analyses to build an evidence-based case for the effectiveness of this type of programming. Generating a strong set of lessons learned from the three multi-sector projects will be an important part of this evidence case.

A second external challenge is the siloed nature of sectoral relationships with GIRoA partners. It is common for different sectors in ACO to share common GIRoA ministry partners, particularly with large ministries such as MoPH and MoLSA. However, these partnerships are siloed between each sector/project and the respective GIRoA partner. Inter-ministerial coordination and decision making in Afghanistan is time consuming and often marred by resource turf wars. Therefore, a multi-sector programme that works across several ministries will face a complex relationship with GIRoA. The Spotlight project, which engages with a variety of different ministries, will be an important learning experience for ACO in this regard.

4.2.2 Approaches to Access

Summary of findings

ACO has relied on four (at times, mutually reinforcing) informal strategies to improve access, and its ability to respond to needs in hard-to-reach areas rests predominantly on implementing partners, extenders or frontline workers. The most effective strategy is access at a local level through implementing partners, extenders and frontline workers who have engendered trust within communities. UNICEF's capacity and agility to respond to risks in hard-to-reach areas is largely reliant on the use of extenders. During the current ACP period the use of extenders has increased rapidly, although only very few of these extenders are women. The remote management of these actors is challenging and exposes ACO to both programme and reputational risks, stemming from constraints in ensuring good oversight over extenders in hard-to-reach areas. At the same time, ACO relies heavily on implementing partners, ACO staff and extenders for monitoring. The lack of an overarching monitoring framework has led to a disparity of approaches among these actors. The fragmentation of ACO's monitoring architecture has likely been aggravated by the limited use of TPMs to verify and validate monitoring data across the ACP. ACO has tools at its disposal for conflict sensitivity programming; however, knowledge of these tools is limited among UNICEF staff.

Programme Strategy and Implementation in Support of Access

ACO does not have a formal strategy on negotiating access into hard-to-reach areas, and institutionalising such a strategy could be controversial for GIRoA and some donors. To date, ACO has relied on several informal strategies to improve access, which have contributed to varying degrees to the goal of leaving no one behind. While formalising a strategy on access is not advised, formalising the 'rules of the game' for UNICEF staff in the field would bring better clarity and

assurance to staff. There is a number of hard-to-reach areas groups operating in Afghanistan but this evaluation has confined its focus to the largest group, which is the Taliban. During the current ACP period, the reach and institutionalisation of Taliban shadow governments has increased. It is superficial to statistically compartmentalise Afghanistan into hard-to-reach areas- and government-controlled areas, given the extreme fluidity of the situation on the ground. However, for UNICEF to fulfil its mandate and leave no child behind, it has been an operational imperative to negotiate, or enter into dialogue for access, with the Taliban. ACO does not have a formal strategy for negotiating access into hard-to-reach areas. This is due to two pragmatic reasons. First, negotiating access is achieved through a number of informal, dynamic and overlapping strategies (highlighted below) that are hard to capture in a formal manner. Second, GIRoA and some (not all) of UNICEF's donors are opposed to actualising agreements with the Taliban. UNICEF perpetually walks a tightrope with GIRoA in terms of making working agreements with the Taliban for programming in hard-to-reach areas, maintaining neutrality and running the risk of souring its relationship with GIRoA.

This evaluation has identified several informal strategies employed by UNICEF to gain access into hard-to-reach areas, which have all contributed to varying degrees to the goal of leaving no one behind. These include:

1. **Decentralising ACO:** in March 2020, UNICEF opened two additional sub-field offices.⁷⁵ The opening of these offices is part of a 'lift and shift' strategy that enables the ACO to quickly respond to the dynamic context in Afghanistan. For example, the ACO identified Ghor province as a hard-to-reach area with high unmet needs and, in response, quickly moved to establish a sub-field office. The 2020 coverage evaluation posited that these outposts offer UNICEF a foothold to increase its proximity to populations living in areas of high need that hitherto have been difficult to access.⁷⁶ Key informants in UNICEF and in government and NGO partners have strongly indicated that a larger field presence for ACO has increased the reach of programming in hard-to-reach areas and opened up areas for other humanitarian and development actors in provinces such as Urozgan. However, the physical presence of more UNICEF field offices does not necessarily equate to improving UNICEF's agility to gain access in hard-to-reach areas without the accompanying decision making authority. In addition, the process to devolve administrative processes and increase field presence has been slow and is still under way.⁷⁷ This impacts on the ability of field office staff to make quick, on-the-ground decisions with regard to access.
2. **Responding to Taliban requests for the provision of individual services and/or multi-sector packages of support:** the education, health and WASH sectors have proved to be important entry points for UNICEF programming in Taliban-controlled areas.⁷⁸ In the Eastern region, for example, UNICEF has reached a technical agreement with the Taliban to establish 4,000 Community-Based Schools (CBSs) in hard-to-reach areas, with the COVID-19 pandemic also providing an important catalyst for programme access.⁷⁹ Research by the evaluation team and secondary studies indicates that health and education in Taliban areas are sometimes a hybrid of NGO and state-provided services, operating according to Taliban rules;⁸⁰ for example, studies

⁷⁵ Located in Lashkargah (in Helmand Province) and in Trinkot (in Uruzgan Province). These are in addition to the UNICEF country office in Kabul and (as of June 2019) eleven field offices (five zone offices in Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar and Kabul – for the central region, co-located with the country office – and an additional six outposts).

⁷⁶ Andrew Featherstone and Charlotte Lattimer, *Evaluation of UNICEF's coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations: Afghanistan Evaluation Report*, August 2020, p.28.

⁷⁷ A number of UNICEF staff interviewed by the evaluation team (in Kabul and in the field) point to a failure to fully institutionalise the 2019 Accountability Framework, a lack of fiscal decentralisation to the regions, and a highly centralised Country Office that leads on all planning and decisions.

⁷⁸ In theory, the GIRoA does not collaborate with the Taliban on public service delivery, and nor does it permit aid agencies to do so. In reality there is a 'pragmatic relationship' between GIRoA and the Taliban (especially at subnational level).

⁷⁹ In the Eastern region, the Taliban requested help to address the pandemic with a multi-sector package of WATSAN, health and nutrition supplies. These interventions can be interpreted as planting seeds of goodwill for further cooperation to take place.

⁸⁰ Ashley Jackson, *Life under the Taliban Shadow Government*, Overseas Development Institute, 2018.

point to agreements in hard-to-reach areas whereby the Taliban allow girls to study up to grade six; the MoE funds the schools but the Taliban monitor the schools under their control.⁸¹ UNICEF is required to navigate these complex and highly contextual arrangements. At times UNICEF can rely on GIRoA officials at a local level to help facilitate access into hard-to-reach areas, but this is ad hoc and requires a deep political economy understanding of the implementing areas.

3. **Access through implementing partners (NGOs/CSOs), extenders and frontline workers:** implicit within this approach is that IPs, extenders and frontline workers are promoting and respecting UNICEF's core principles of neutrality and acceptance. This strategy for access is further explored in Section 4.3 and results in a significant transfer of risk to these actors. It also hinges heavily on the level of trust that these partners have gained in communities, which is hard to assess.
4. **Negotiating and signing work agreements with the Taliban in Afghanistan:**⁸² this is not a new strategy in Afghanistan, but UNICEF's ability to negotiate workplans with the Taliban is significantly enabled if a donor mandates or actively encourages UNICEF to work in hard-to-reach areas⁸³ in Afghanistan. However, entering into work agreements with the Taliban is a high-risk endeavour which can lead to negative results. Ultimately, the Taliban is not a monolithic organisation and the degree to which Taliban groups are willing to find compromise is highly localised.

The degree to which UNICEF can gain access through any of the strategies varies between different sectors. Arguably, access tends to be easier when these are services most in demand by the Taliban, such as health provision. Despite UNSC 1612, child protection access is the most challenged for access because its objectives are currently controversial and not well understood by the Taliban. WASH has predominantly programmed through GIRoA structures and CDCs and is quite constrained in this current operational arrangement with GIRoA.

While formalising a strategy on access is not advised, there is evidence to suggest that greater clarity and support could be provided to national staff regarding the UNICEF rules of the game on negotiating with hard-to-reach areas. The 2019 audit pointed to confusion among field staff about what to do when confronted with a situation that obliged them to negotiate with hard-to-reach areas to implement key activities.⁸⁴ This lack of clarity was also underscored in the 2020 coverage evaluation that recommended UNICEF should support field staff better in this regard.⁸⁵ This evaluation found that the lack of clarity on the rules of the game at field level persists, with field offices reporting mixed messages emanating from senior staff in Kabul with regard to negotiating programme access with the Taliban.⁸⁶ It understood that there are plans to recruit a new security officer in the ACO for the next CPD period, who will provide support on access issues. This staff member (with other key ACO staff) could draft an internal basic operating procedure for UNICEF field staff as regards red lines and parameters of their engagement with hard-to-reach areas.

Programme Agility and Responsiveness in hard-to-reach areas

UNICEF's ability to respond to needs in hard-to-reach areas predominantly rests on implementing partners, extenders or frontline workers. The monitoring and management of these actors is difficult in hard-to-reach areas and this can create vulnerability for UNICEF in terms of reputational risks and unintentionally doing harm, especially in the absence of a detailed

⁸¹ Ali Mohammad Sabawoon, 'One Land, Two Rules (6): Delivering public services in insurgency-affected Nad Ali district of Helmand Province', Afghanistan Analysts Network, June 2019.

⁸² I.e. not in Doha.

⁸³ An example of this is the new ECHO-funded project for the provision of education in emergencies and lifesaving health, nutrition and WASH services to vulnerable children.

⁸⁴ UNICEF, *Audit of Afghanistan Country Office. Summary of Draft Observations*, OIAI, 7 July 2019.

⁸⁵ Andrew Featherstone and Charlotte Lattimer, *Evaluation of UNICEF's coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations: Afghanistan Evaluation Report*, August 2020.

⁸⁶ KII.

understanding of the needs in hard-to-reach areas⁸⁷ and a lack of a systematic monitoring system for activities taking place in these areas.

UNICEF predominantly relies on implementing partners, extenders and frontline workers to access and programme in hard-to-reach areas. Within the operating context of the ACO, the evaluation team could not find an alternative strategy that would more effectively reach people most in need in hard-to-reach areas, and as such the evaluation proposes improvements to the current strategy. ACO is proud of its appetite for risk and ability to expand access within the United Nations Department for Safety and Security's (UNDSS's) prescriptive rules and regulations. However, this results in the main risks on the ground for negotiation and implementation in hard-to-reach areas being transferred to these three groups. In this context, it is notable that a significant proportion of UNICEF staff perceive that current ACO approaches to accessing hard-to-reach areas were not effective and could be improved. The evaluation team finds that UNICEF could strengthen its model by improving its stewardship of extender services (discussed in detail below), building stronger trust with implementing partners, improving programme cycle management and providing adequate support and training to frontline workers.

UNICEF implementing partners (not GIRoA) are comprised of international and national NGOs/CSOs. Many of the international NGOs, such as the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR), Save the Children and IRC are well established in Afghanistan and have built up high levels of acceptance in the communities that they work in. UNICEF has increasingly tried to engage with more local NGOs/CSOs to further access into hard-to-reach areas and as a broader strategy of localisation of the Afghanistan ACO. Across both types of partnerships, the evaluation team found that capacity and attitudes for engaging in hard-to-reach areas are variable, and this results in a piecemeal approach to gaining access. In some cases, national NGOs/CSOs have better reach and relations to enhance access into hard-to-reach areas, but their lack of administrative and professional development capacity demands that UNICEF provides additional resources and oversight to support their activities.

The challenges of working in hard-to-reach areas create pressures in the relationship between UNICEF and some its implementing partners, with the risk of undermining transparency and trust. Firstly, it is well documented that the Taliban charges 10% tax (or '*ushr*') on development projects implemented in hard-to-reach areas-controlled areas.⁸⁸ This puts implementing partners in a very difficult position vis-à-vis their grant agencies such as UNICEF. On the one hand, implementing partners (IPs) are mostly forced to pay this tax if they wish to implement their project. On the other hand, it is very difficult for NGOs and INGOs (International NGOs) to admit this reality to its donor. This situation can lead to UNICEF lacking a full picture of how funds are being used for programming in hard-to-reach areas, and this could compromise UNICEF values and pose a reputational risk to ACO. Secondly, the evaluation team found that some implementing partners felt pressured by UNICEF to operate in certain hard-to-reach areas and that ACO is putting implementing partners at risk.

Further pressures in the relationship between UNICEF and its implementing partners are generated by short project cycles and cases where funding of multi-year programmes is interrupted during implementation. Developing trust and acceptance in hard-to-reach areas requires time well beyond the remit of a short humanitarian intervention. Unless there is a well thought-out engagement strategy to work across the humanitarian and development nexus, there is a danger that IPs will engender mistrust from communities for isolated, quick-impacting projects. Similarly, the evaluation team found that in multi-year programmes, when UNICEF was not able to transfer funding to the

⁸⁷ This was a key finding of Andrew Featherstone and Charlotte Lattimer, *Evaluation of UNICEF's coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations: Afghanistan Evaluation Report*, August 2020.

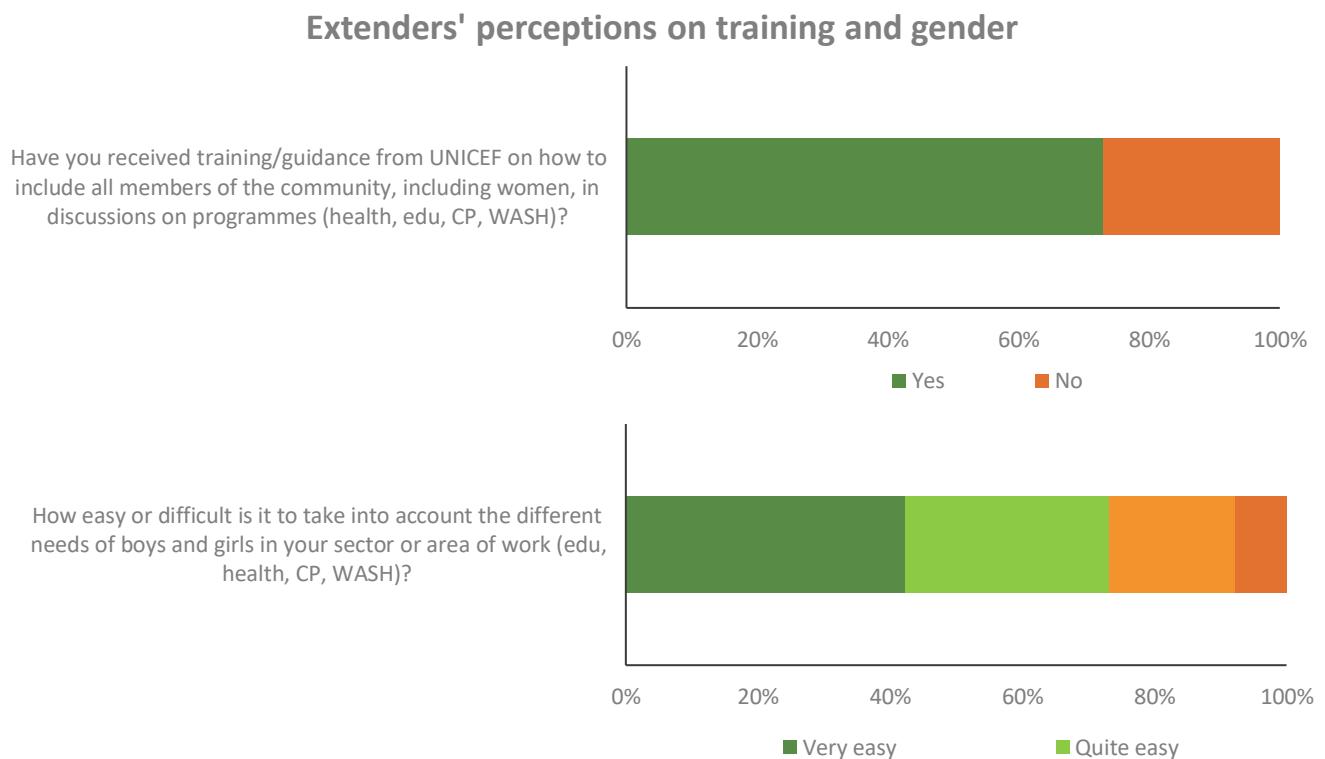
⁸⁸ According to KIs conducted by the evaluation team; Ali Mohammad Sabawoon, 'One Land, Two Rules (6): Delivering public services in insurgency-affected Nad Ali district of Helmand Province', Afghanistan Analysts Network, June 2019.

implementing partner on the agreed timetable, the partner had to stop implementing, and consequently encountered a loss of goodwill and acceptance from the community. In these respects, UNICEF does not quite live up to the expectations/commitments of the Saving Lives Together framework.

Engaging on gender programming in hard-to-reach areas, as in other sectors, is dependent on Taliban demand for services, and programmes that do not align with these demands are halted. For example, following the 2019 scandal (sexual abuse of school children), UNICEF attempted to set up multi-purpose centres to assist children and adolescents (boys and girls) who were victims of exploitation; however, the centres were closed by the Taliban.

As highlighted above, a key constraint to programming in hard-to-reach areas is a lack of detailed understanding of the needs in these areas, despite the use of REACH Initiatives data. This also applies to gender programming, for which there is a particular dearth of evidence to inform programme design. The survey of extenders (Figure 8 below) indicates that there are some weaknesses in terms of extenders being able to address gender concerns in the communities they work in (which are mostly hard-to-reach areas). Approximately 20% of extenders said they had not received training/guidance from UNICEF on how to include all members of the community, including women, in discussions on programmes. This correlates with another survey response in which approximately 20% of extenders perceived that it was quite difficult or very difficult to take into account the different needs of boys and girls in their sector or area of work.

Figure 8. Extender perceptions on training and gender



There are also risks to female frontline workers who are implementing UNICEF programmes. The evaluation team found that female frontline workers in health and education have been able to play a vital role in providing services in the Eastern region. However, there is less acceptance of female

frontline workers in the Southern region, and they often need to be accompanied by a *mahram* to ensure their safety and acceptance. Female frontline workers are at increased risk of harassment and violence in hard-to-reach areas, particularly when working on issues contentious to the Taliban, such as polio.⁸⁹ Accordingly, in the Pashto and Dari survey conducted, 15 out of 32 female frontline workers considered the security and access conditions of where they worked as ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’. This was unique to female respondents, highlighting the differing security perceptions of men and women.⁹⁰ UNICEF has introduced innovative thinking on reducing risk to and protecting female frontline workers. Within polio programming, two consultants have been retained to identify the risk and protective factors behind the targeting of female health and outreach workers.

UNICEF staff and external stakeholders all point to the fact that it is expensive to programme in hard-to-reach areas. This has led some to question whether this programming represents value for money and an efficient use of resources. The factors that increase costs are the Taliban tax, an increased need for extenders and additional resources required to monitor activities and implementors. By subscribing to ‘leave no child behind’, UNICEF has implicitly accepted the extra programming costs. However, it has yet to invest in a systematic data and monitoring system to gain a better understanding of the real needs in hard-to-reach areas and the quality of its activities in hard-to-reach areas. The ACO is reliant on a patchwork of data collected by implementing partners, extenders and frontline workers, with very limited oversight of the methods used by these groups or a baseline to measure results. This underlines a lack of transparency in value for money programming in hard-to-reach areas and raises reputational risks for UNICEF. The requirements and challenges of TPMs are discussed in more detail below.

Responsiveness to Conflict and Other Risks

ACO is not well equipped to plan and programme for localised and contextualised risks, including localised escalations in the conflict, and to manage them in an agile fashion. Risk-informed analyses, including conflict assessments, are more likely to be effective if they are undertaken internally by ACO, and with field offices playing a greater role in contextualising the analysis.

UNICEF uses a variety of corporate and UNDSS tools to inform context/operational risk-informed planning. The UNDSS security risk management (SRM) assessment guides overall security classifications (i.e., PC1, PC2). At country office operational level, key risks are captured in the AMPs. However, as the internal audit of 2019 observed, it is hard to institute a systematic risk management system with the rapid in-country work cycles of the international staff.⁹¹ The SRM and AMP manage macro-risks, which tend to be quite static in nature. This limits the capacity of these tools to assist in dynamic programme responses to conflict or other risks. As noted in Section 3.1.2 above, the evaluation team found that current risk management tools available to ACO do not enable localised or more agile responses to risks.

The dynamic situation across Afghanistan means that risk analyses and conflict assessments are most useful when they are tightly focused in time and geographical location. However, the progress achieved so far in decentralisation does not yet allow a strong bottom-up approach to risk and context analysis. Field offices do not yet have the latitude and support necessary to conduct their own analysis and to act on it promptly, within well-established guidelines and parameters.⁹² Key informants have pointed to a lack of field analysis as a key obstacle to risk-informed decision making. In one documented instance, this lack of contextual knowledge and understanding on the part of

⁸⁹ This is sadly evidenced in the shooting of three female polio vaccinators in March 2021. Ruchi Kumar, ‘Killing of Female Polio Vaccinators Puts Afghan Eradication Campaign at Risk’, 2021, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/apr/21/killing-of-female-polio-vaccinators-puts-afghan-eradication-campaign-at-risk>

⁹⁰ Pashto and Dari survey results.

⁹¹ OIAI, *Internal Audit of the Afghanistan Country Office*, December 2019.

ACO led an implementing partner to request progress in this area as a condition for continued cooperation.

UNICEF has invested in two substantive countrywide conflict analyses.⁹³ As noted in Section 3.1.2 above, the evaluation team did not observe significant ownership of these analyses. Several UNICEF interviewees stated that conflict analyses are not fit for purpose when they are undertaken by external consultants, and this work must be ongoing rather than periodic. ACO interviewees generally recognised that further in-house capacity is required to match the ambition of higher standards in risk-informed planning and programming.

At sector level, conflict sensitivity principles are not well understood and are very rarely applied to programming. Staff have little knowledge of available guidance. ACO has not yet generated a clear common understanding of conflict sensitivity applicable to its programme planning. The evaluation team could find evidence of only one instance in which conflict sensitivity was applied to ACO programming. This was in the case of WASH interventions, in which the risk of communal conflict over scarce water resources was mitigated through consultations with stakeholders and a participatory approach to programme formulation and design. In other sectors, as noted in Section 4.1.1 above, staff interviewed had little knowledge of UNICEF guidance on conflict sensitivity, and its relationship with peacebuilding.

Although some UNICEF staff were able to articulate some of the conflict sensitivity principles implicitly, UNICEF guidance on the subject was largely unknown to them. The analysis of conflict trends conducted in 2020 provides ACO with advice on how to improve conflict-sensitive programming. However, the evaluation team could find no evidence that ACO has applied this guidance. There was a sense among UNICEF staff interviewed that conflict sensitivity was too theoretical and not grounded enough in the contextual realities which had to reckon with. This puts UNICEF behind the curve vis-à-vis some of its international non-governmental organisation (INGO) partners, such as Save the Children and IRC, whose approaches to conflict sensitivity are more advanced and better embedded in their programming and planning. For example, Save the Children is guided by a global Conflict Sensitivity Brief⁹⁴ which provides useful contextualised examples of conflict sensitivity programming in their country office. This global briefing is accompanied by various conflict sensitivity initiatives in their country offices, such as conflict sensitivity guidance notes and case studies.

The evaluation team has identified a lack of transparency in UNICEF's relationships with some of its partners. This can undermine conflict sensitivity and have negative consequences. For example, UNICEF did not consult with some of its major implementing partners when negotiating the work plan with the Taliban in Doha. This resulted in making an agreement with senior levels of the Taliban that did not represent the views and principles of other Taliban groups which exercised some control Afghanistan. In response, these in-country groups in the north of the country halted the project activities of the implementing partner in this region. Conflict sensitivity in such a complex context as Afghanistan requires working with others, rather than a 'go it alone' attitude.

Hiring and human resource management can be a very divisive issue in Afghanistan. At ACO in Kabul there is a need to balance transparency, gender and ethnic equity, and merit-based recruitment. Even if this is taking place, there is a need to highlight this clearly, especially to GIRoA partners. In the case of extenders, although these are contracted services, there is still a need for clear oversight in recruitment processes to ensure that UNICEF is seen to be acting in a fair and honest manner. In

⁹³ UNICEF Afghanistan, *Analysis of current and projected conflict trends to inform UNICEF's engagement in Afghanistan*, internal document, 2017, cited in Andrew Featherstone and Charlotte Lattimer, Evaluation of UNICEF's coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations: Afghanistan Evaluation Report, August 2020; *Analysis of current and projected conflict trends to inform UNICEF's engagement in Afghanistan*, May 2020.

⁹⁴ Save the Children, *Conflict Sensitivity Brief*, December 2019.

Afghanistan, corruption (perceived or real) is used as a currency to damage organisational reputations.

There are indications that ACO is implicitly recognising the importance of conflict sensitivity for planning purposes. For example, one staff member advocated the need for a mindset change in ACO to recognise that UNICEF does not need to be the first responder to all humanitarian emergencies. Instead, UNICEF should allow other capable organisations (e.g. MSF, ICRC) to respond first while UNICEF takes time to plan a more considered response that addresses issues of sustainability and do no harm.

Utilisation of Extenders

Of the extenders recruited, only a small proportion are women. ACO has made efforts to address this imbalance because female extenders are critical for service delivery in sectors such as health and education. Extenders are paid by UNICEF and contracted through an LTA which has traditionally been with a private company. The contractor provides the administrative supervision for the extenders while UNICEF is responsible for the technical supervision. The LTAs are issued at Kabul level, but the extenders are normally from the regions where they work, in order to allow for better access and understanding of the context. The use of extenders has been important for access and information gathering for ACO. UNICEF currently employs 3,531 extenders in health, nutrition, polio, education, child protection, WASH, cash and C4D, with an annual total cost of USD 9,339,293. Although ACO records do not provide for a temporal analysis of extender usage over time, UNICEF key informants pointed to ACO's increased use of extenders as a way of improving access throughout the country. Although extenders do operate in areas to which international UNICEF staff have access, this appears to be the exception rather than the norm. In the survey of extenders conducted for this evaluation, all respondents stated that they worked in areas which other UNICEF staff could not reach.⁹⁵

It is understood that many more extenders are male than women. Although the extender data provided by ACO is not gender disaggregated, it is commendable that ACO has recruited 471 female mobile vaccinators and 25 female mobilisers in C4D. It is understandable that the majority of extenders are male, given cultural norms and the insecurity in most places in Afghanistan. ACO has made efforts to address this imbalance, because female extenders are critical for service delivery in sectors such as health and education. ACO has been able to increase the number of female extenders in the health section, and the evaluation team found that females were being employed in both the health and education sectors in the Southern and Eastern regions, including in some hard-to-reach areas. In the Southern region, which is socially very conservative, the use of *mahram*, or male chaperones, has been valuable to enable female extenders to go about their work. However, staff have pointed out the high costs of engaging a *mahram* in project activities.

The increase in the use of extenders during the last ACP has enabled ACO to access hard-to-reach areas, but heavy reliance on them has risked undermining UNICEF staff responsibilities and the quality of programme delivery. New SOPs have led to improvements in their use and there are good examples of their use in particular sectors. There is still room for improvement, however, especially in terms of systems to capture and verify information reported by extenders and in training provided to extenders. Extenders are the 'jack of all trades' in ACO. Their use has expanded rapidly during the current ACP for monitoring purposes, gaining access in hard-to-reach areas, capacity building, provision of technical assistance to the GIRoA and taking on UNICEF staff tasks in areas that ACO staff cannot access. In this sense, they have significantly contributed to UNICEF's commitment 'to stay and deliver'.

⁹⁵ Extender survey question #2: 'Do you work in areas which only extenders can access and are not accessible to other UNICEF staff?' 100% of extenders replied to this question with either (1) 'Yes, those are the only areas in which I work' or (2) 'Yes, but I also work in areas accessible to UNICEF staff'.

At the same time, the rapid increase in the use of extenders led to the perception earlier in the ACP that their use was ‘out of control’. ACO itself began to recognise that extenders had been misused by some ACO staff who had given them responsibilities normally reserved to UNICEF personnel. ACO has responded to this situation by increasing guesthouse capacity in the regions and redoubling efforts to ensure a stronger field presence of UNICEF in the field. This is a useful but intermediate step. Attention could also be focused on decentralisation to ensure that field staff are adequately resourced and empowered to both fulfil their responsibilities, where access is possible, and carefully manage the work of extenders in the field.

The evaluation team has understood from both internal and external stakeholders that one particular weakness of the rapidly expanding extender approach is that it is hard to test and verify the veracity of extender information. Another related issue highlighted by UNICEF staff is that ACO does not have a systematic process of capturing the information that extenders bring in. This information tends to stay with their direct report rather than feed into a wider evidence and learning system. Other informants have pointed to some cases where the extenders know much more than the programme officer who is responsible for the project to which they are assigned. Other ACO sectors have highlighted that large amounts of information are collected from extenders by ACO staff but this data is neither gathered nor used in an effective way.

In response to some of these challenges, in February 2020 ACO sought to address current practices for engagement with extenders.⁹⁶ It has since developed new SOPs and guidelines which aim to rationalise the use of extenders. The online survey of UNICEF staff conducted by the evaluation team suggests that perceptions of the use of extenders are changing, with 87% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that extenders and TPMs are useful in contributing to quality programme delivery and monitoring.

Box 6. Example of good practice: the use of extenders and technical advisors by the Child Protection and WASH sectors

In the Child Protection sector, extenders are placed into high-level technical positions (including reviewing and reporting on legislative and CRC reporting) and are viewed like consultants. Working relationships with UNICEF are based on an assumption of professionalism and high standards, which is accompanied by close and supportive relations with UNICEF counterparts. The Child Protection sector has been able to develop a strong, well-managed and well-supported operational core of extenders, due largely to its comparatively small size. An enabling factor may be that the Child Protection sector does not have broad reach into hard-to-reach areas, as the Health or Education sectors.

In the Eastern region, the WASH sector relies on Technical Assistants (TAs) who have similar roles to those of extenders but are recruited directly by the ACO WASH sector and are jointly supervised by it and the CDCs. This approach places a higher administrative burden on ACO and may not be feasible for large-scale recruitment, but it does allow for more rigorous recruitment and oversight.

As highlighted in Box 6 above, the evaluation team identified a number of innovative and effective models of working with extenders currently being deployed in the WASH and child protection sectors. These examples point to particular ways in which the use of extenders may be improved in future. A further area in which ACO can improve its use of extender services is in the training offered

⁹⁶ UNICEF Afghanistan Programme Retreat, 17–19 February 2020, Kabul, Session 5: Extenders & NTAs: Approaches and opportunities to maximise potential.

to extenders. While the long-term arrangement with third-party contractors stipulated that, upon recruitment, all extenders would attend an induction session organised by UNICEF programme sections/field offices,⁹⁷ the 2020 audit found that some extenders were not aware of ACO's ethical requirements and of the mechanisms to address misconduct or PSEA cases and that ACO lacked a specific induction programme for extenders.⁹⁸ As highlighted in the section on Programme Agility and Responsiveness in hard-to-reach areas above, slightly over 20% of respondents report not having received training/guidance from UNICEF on how to include all members of the community (including women) in programme discussions. This is probably linked to the second survey finding whereby approximately 20% of respondents report finding it difficult, or very difficult, to take into account the different needs of boys and girls in their programme sector.⁹⁹ The evaluation team underlines the importance of ensuring that all extenders received this basic training and have a clear understanding of PSEA and associated reporting mechanisms.

Utilisation of TPMs

While ACO fully understands the importance of independent verification of its programme activities, it has encountered significant problems with previous TPM providers, and has been disinclined to resource further TPMs (after 2020). Currently, ACO largely relies more on implementing partners, ACO staff and extenders for monitoring purposes. This has led to a piecemeal approach to monitoring that falls below accountability and learning requirements. Further human and resource investments are required to institute a comprehensive TPM system that is fit for purpose. During the ACP programme period, ACO has contracted TPM services in LTA arrangements with private firms. The contracting of TPMs stopped in 2020 after completion of a six-month TPM pilot in the Southern and Eastern regions. The use of TPMs (prior to the pilot in 2020) has been problematic for ACO. The 2019 audit pointed to various failings of the system: '*staff indicated the inefficiency of the third-party monitors [...] and delays in terminating them*'. For example, the main limitation was that the contractors were not able to provide sufficient quality training and continuous coaching to field monitors. Further, the contractors were not proactively conducting QA, despite a structure of supervision that was reported to be in place, which was expected to check and verify if these field monitors were actually conducting field visits. The contractors were reluctant and did not provide verification of field visits with GPS evidence (e.g. GPS embedded in photos or ODK reports). The contracted field monitors were often paid very low wages and given limited means for travel/transportation, which subsequently discouraged them to conduct actual field visits.¹⁰⁰ Monitoring is now mostly conducted by UNICEF staff, IPs and extenders.

The evaluation team found that some ACO staff in Kabul and at field level have a poor perception of the work and usefulness of TPMs. For example, health officers in the Eastern zonal office used TPMs twice in the region, in 2017 and 2019. They perceived that TPMs were useful for some data and information collection but believed the TPMs had no technical capacity to analyse the data.¹⁰¹ In this case, extenders were viewed as more efficient and effective for TPM purposes. Similarly, the nutrition sector observed that TPMs had higher costs, with little quality assurance of their services.¹⁰²

The poor impression of the value of TPMs in some ACO sectors has provided little impetus to raise funds to extend the 2020 pilot or factor in the use of TPMs into project budgets in the current ACP period. The exception to this trend is education and nutrition which, the evaluation team

⁹⁷ This induction was to include, among other topics, the code of conduct and ethical behaviour, and the related reporting tools and systems.

⁹⁸ OIAI, *Internal Audit of the Afghanistan Country Office*, December 2019.

⁹⁹ The remaining 80% found it easy or quite easy to take this into account.

¹⁰⁰ OIAI, *Internal Audit of the Afghanistan Country Office*, December 2019.

¹⁰¹ KII.

¹⁰² KII.

understands, is already looking at ways to increase resource allocation for TPM.¹⁰³ At senior levels of ACO, it is well recognised that UNICEF requires a systematic way to monitor its work so that it is fit for purpose and lives up to donor requirements. In this regard, it is considered important to sufficiently budget for TPM in the next programme cycle and integrate costs into sector workplans/RWPs. Given past difficulties in raising funds for TPM, costs could be considered as core budget (RR, or Regular Resources in UNICEF terminology) and not need to be identified every year (OR, or Other Resources). Based on provisions made by other aid agencies in Afghanistan, it is estimated that approximately 1% of the total ACO budget should be earmarked for TPM.¹⁰⁴

While independent TPM is a requirement for compliance, monitoring for learning and accountability purposes should be considered carefully in the ACO monitoring architecture. To enhance ACO's monitoring toolkit, other avenues could be considered, such as testing and reinforcing community-based grievance mechanisms already in place, expanding their coverage where possible, and piloting a system of peer-to-peer monitoring across programme sectors and among implementing partners.

4.3 Focus Area 3: Partnerships and Capacity Building

This section looks at the effectiveness of UNICEF's partnerships with the Afghan government, NGOs, and other UN actors, and the alignment of these partnerships with key cooperation frameworks. It also considers how UNICEF in Afghanistan has drawn on its comparative advantage to strengthen the capacity of the government.

4.3.1 Partnerships with Governmental and Non-Governmental Actors

Summary of findings:

ACO has generally developed good and effective technical partnerships with line ministries, but government buy-in of joint programmes remains limited. ACO is viewed as a reliable partner by NGOs, although some NGOs expressed a desire for a more inclusive approach to partnerships. ACO programmes are clearly aligned with government priorities at ministerial level, but alignment is less clear with the NPPs. There are widespread reservations about the One-UN Framework, which has little discernible influence on inter-agency processes. UNICEF's Cluster leaderships are generally well perceived, and there is a sense that clusters present opportunities to be used more proactively as platforms for advocacy. Despite the lack of a formal capacity building strategy, UNICEF has had some notable successes in this area in terms of output-level results. However, it has also faced serious challenges; lessons learned on best approaches are starting to be considered by some sectors. The NTA system has become increasingly controversial, with some well-founded claims that it is unaccountable and has unwanted consequences. ACO is planning to review and rationalise its use of the system, but these measures come late.

Cooperation with the Government

Despite challenging conditions, evidence from interviews and documentation reviewed indicates that ACO has generally developed good technical partnerships with line ministries, although government buy-in and ownership of joint programmes remains limited. The government and the local administrations are the main partners for UNICEF in Afghanistan. They allow the organisation to cover large parts of the country with its programmes and interventions, as well as to respond to humanitarian crises and emergencies. Interactions with line ministries have had some success in

¹⁰³ KII.

¹⁰⁴ KII.

delivering against output-level objectives set out in RWPs, which form programme roadmaps for ACO's cooperation with GIRoA. However, multiple sources noted in interviews that bottlenecks in working relations with the President's Office and the volatile political context have impacted adversely on the working environment for UNICEF and other UN agencies.¹⁰⁵ Although a partnership strategy is mentioned in the 2015–19 ACP,¹⁰⁶ ACO was unable to establish a formal strategy with the government, and each sector independently navigates its collaborations with key counterparts in the framework of the relevant RWPs. The recently developed Afghanistan Partnership Framework¹⁰⁷ offers some broad guidance for international organisations; while its intended scope appears to be increased government ownership, the impression among agencies and donors is that it just underscores the government's desire for more direct control over aid resources.

Technical cooperation at ministerial level has been largely successful in terms of output-level RWP indicators, with some variations between sectors. One of the strongest partnerships is between the WASH sector and the MRRD, which has evolved over a long period. According to multiple sources,¹⁰⁸ this collaboration has grown so close that it has made it difficult at times to expand the programme in Taliban-controlled areas. However, the WASH sector was able to join in the more recent ACO expansion drive, including in the context of the COVID-19 response in 2020.

Work with the MoPH revolves around the large polio programme, which, due to its high priority, provides partners with common incentives to harmonise their operations. UNICEF's other interventions in the health sector are dwarfed by the presence of larger programmes, notably the \$300 million Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) programme funded mainly by the World Bank, with some EU and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) support. There was a widespread perception among interviewees that the BPHS and other programmes in which the MoPH is a partner are undermined in its equity, efficiency and effectiveness by a lack of accountability and poor monitoring.¹⁰⁹ One problem mentioned by multiple interviewees is the lack of a rigorous and transparent process for the selection of local implementing partners for these programmes. A related problem, according to the same sources, was that the size of these programmes and relatively low conditions of entry were attracting a large number of local NGOs, with few remaining available for partnerships with UNICEF.

UNICEF has a long-term partnership with the MoE, with some successful large-scale interventions, such as the CBE programme and the Girls' Access to Teacher's Education (GATE) initiative. Lack of resources and the limited ability of the MoE to fulfil handover commitments have adversely affected the quality and scale of these interventions. The Child Protection section needs to interface with multiple ministerial counterparts, and must also navigate sensitive human rights and protection issues, making its partnership complex and challenging. During the last 18 months, meaningful progress was made in terms of policy adoption and systems building in joint programmes. Due to its high degree of sensitivity, Child Protection faces the hardest challenges to expanding its interventions in Taliban-controlled areas.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ KII.

¹⁰⁶ UNICEF, *Afghanistan Country Programme Document 2015–2019*, 2014.

¹⁰⁷ 'Afghanistan Partnership Framework': Afghanistan Conference, Geneva, 23–24 November 2020.

¹⁰⁸ KII.

¹⁰⁹ KIIs.

¹¹⁰ KII.

In addition to the contextual obstacles identified in Section 3.1.1 above, more specific challenges to partnerships with governmental counterparts were noted in Kabul and regional levels; they can be summarised as follows:

- Limited local capacities, both technical and financial, to sustain agreed partnership commitments and responsibilities; these can affect all levels of planning and implementation and are especially critical for the ownership and sustainability of the interventions after the handover.
- Security constraints limit the access to large sections of the country and oblige ACO to work through extenders; this increases the complexity of the interventions and inevitably reduces their efficiency and effectiveness.
- Sensitivities to work in Taliban-controlled areas create specific challenges. At provincial level, UNICEF Field Offices need to find a right balance to ensure local administrations understand and accept the work done in areas beyond their control. At central level, these sensitivities are more complex to navigate due to the contextual political dynamics and have led in the past to adverse outcomes (*Persona non grata* of the Chief of Polio).
- The magnitude of the problems UNICEF aims to address in Afghanistan is so large that, even with a large budget, ACO programmes require continuous prioritisation, and their upscaling is challenging.

In addition to these challenges, the government occasionally pressures UNICEF for greater transparency and better reporting on its activities, according to multiple UN, NGO and donor sources.¹¹¹ While room for improvement exists in these areas, there was a sense that government commitment to some interventions was adversely affected by the fact that funding for them is off-budget (i.e. not delivered by donors directly to government). The resulting tensions remain unresolved and impact the quality of partnerships. Some NGOs feel that in some instances UNICEF should stand up more firmly to government demands.

In surveys conducted by phone and email, NTAS were equally divided on whether it was difficult to ensure that GIRoA has a good understanding of the different needs of boys and girls. All but one stated that addressing gender issues was considered by their government counterparts as an important part of their responsibilities. While this indicates that gender integration is a high priority for a proportion of Afghan civil servants, other sources expressed the view that systemic gender inequality remained widespread in the Afghan civil service.¹¹²

Partnerships with NGOs

ACO is perceived as a reliable partner, although relationships are often viewed as asymmetrical, with a desire for greater openness and inclusion often expressed by NGOs. Given ACO's focus on cooperation with GIRoA, its partnerships with national and international NGOs are relatively limited. As of January 2021, ACO has 32 active PCAs with 31 partners. Field-level interventions are to a large extent implemented and/or complemented by small local community-based organisations, which contributes to ownership and sustainability. In parallel with the progressive expansion of interventions in Taliban-controlled areas, ACO has been looking to increase the number and scope of partnerships with both national and international NGOs.

There was a sense among sources approached for this evaluation that long-term collaborations with international NGOs have been mostly successful in achieving the desired objectives.¹¹³ Examples of the effectiveness of these partnerships, corroborated in interviews with multiple sources including donors, are the collaborations with the Danish NGO DACAAR in the WASH sector, the joint work with

¹¹¹ KII.

¹¹² Key Informant Interviews.

¹¹³ This includes partnerships with DACAAR, War Child, Save the Children, Christian Relief Services and Care International.

War Child in the framework of the ‘Children on the Move’ programme, and the extensive partnership with Save the Children in the education sector. However, the administrative burden and lack of predictability that often comes with UNICEF funding have limited the continuity of partnerships, with multiple project cooperation agreements required, involving occasional gaps and high transaction costs. In some cases, partnerships have aimed to span both development and humanitarian interventions, but donor earmarking of budgets for one or the other of these programme areas have hampered bridging between the two. Like other organisations, these INGOs were also affected by the complexities of working with the government, and the demands placed by it on programmes. Some NGO sources noted that in some cases, their in-country capacity, coverage and access to Taliban-controlled areas had been adversely impacted.

When ACO signed an education workplan with the Taliban in Doha (2020), this happened without prior consultations with key partners and created difficulties for those partners whose programmes were in hard-to-reach areas controlled by factions not party to the workplan. There was a sense among multiple UNICEF and external interviewees that information-sharing by UNICEF with its NGO partners was more limited than required. These sources pointed to the need to develop partnerships based on trust, beyond the transactional dimension of PCAs.

ACO’s long-term objective of achieving better programme sustainability through local partnerships is in line with Grand Bargain commitments, as well as UNICEF’s commitment to localisation, as set out in the CCCs. However, localisation presents multiple challenges. Aside from capacity constraints, multiple interviewees reported opaque partner selection processes dominated by line ministries. Since the ACO Audit Report conducted in 2019,¹¹⁴ which pointed out that rules and guidelines for the selection of national NGOs were poorly applied, new SOPs have been put in place for stricter adherence to the rules. Occasionally, however, Field Office staff interviewed for this evaluation felt that their recommendations and suggestions about the selection and management of local NGOs were not taken into account by government counterparts.

With the assumption of a continued expansion of ACO interventions in Taliban-controlled areas, more and broader partnerships with national NGOs will be indispensable. This would be in line with the general localisation efforts aimed at stronger ownership and sustainability UNICEF supports around the world. However, it would also raise the issue of increased risk for these NGOs asked to work in a dangerous environment, and the consequent reputational risk for UNICEF. With this in mind, there is a consensus that ACO should commit to long-term collaborations with key local partners, with a comprehensive capacity-building component and a ‘hand in hand’ approach through all programmatic phases.

Alignment of Partnerships with Cooperation Frameworks and Use of Coordination Platforms

ACO programmes are clearly aligned with government priorities at ministerial level, but alignment is less obvious with the NPP. In large part, this is because NPPs lack government leadership and direction. The alignment of UNICEF and government priorities is evident at ministerial and technical level, with some good examples in the Education, WASH and Child Protection sectors, as well as in the large polio programme. In some cases, for example the new Child Protection policies and the CBE programme, ACO has been able to influence key government counterparts for better alignment.

The broader exercise of formally aligning UNICEF Country Programmes with the ANPDF and NPP has proved more challenging, despite the 2018 establishment of the One UN Framework¹¹⁵ and the

¹¹⁴ OIAI, *Audit of Afghanistan Country Office, Summary of Draft Observations*, 7 July 2019.

¹¹⁵ GIRQA and UN, *One UN for Afghanistan: 1 January 2018 – 31 December 2021*, March 2018.

framework matrix.¹¹⁶ Multiple interviewees said that alignment with the NPPs is made difficult by the fact that they lack leadership and strategic direction.

There is widespread scepticism towards the One UN Framework, and no evidence of its application outside Kabul. Overall the Framework has little influence on the way aid stakeholders engage with each other, and no discernible impact on how programmes are implemented. The One UN Framework was established in January 2018 to support the ANPDF in replacement of UNDAF. It is the main system-wide platform for ACO's engagement and coordination with the Afghan government and other aid actors in Afghanistan.

However, the One UN Framework in Afghanistan has never taken hold as a platform for structured, multilateral engagement. Nominally, ACO co-chairs the One UN Education working group and Programme Management Team. In fact, these bodies have rarely convened since 2018, according to a source external to ACO. The effectiveness of technical working groups was widely questioned by interviewees for this evaluation. The evaluation team found that among the UN agencies in Kabul, a good understanding of the One UN Framework was mostly confined to senior management.

At Kabul level, among UN agencies and donors, there is a general recognition of the benefit for the UN to speak with one voice in its dialogue with the government, particularly in joint advocacy and engagement in support of the SDGs. However, this is accompanied by strong scepticism about the capacity of the relevant actors to harmonise their mandates and administrative systems. Several interviewees also noted that competition over increasingly scarce funding was not conducive to cooperation among UN agencies, or meaningful steps towards programme convergence around the SDGs.

Despite these limitations, there were examples of good cooperation between UN actors at sector level. For example, the Spotlight Initiative for Central Asia and Afghanistan,¹¹⁷ which aims at breaking gender barriers, is jointly driven by UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women. Similarly, the collaboration within the gender-based violence (GBV) Area of Responsibility (AoR) between UN agencies and NGOs to strengthen referral pathways and safe spaces, and ultimately strengthen integration of gender in protection. Finally, the Children on the Move initiative involves UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR and the War Child NGO. Work on polio has led UNICEF and WHO to work very closely, despite occasional divergences of view and distinct programme processes.

The presence of UNAMA, with a clear political mandate, complicates the position of UNICEF and other actors whose mandates straddle the humanitarian-development divide. In interviews, ACO staff were divided on how to approach the political pillar of the UN mission in Afghanistan. There was evidence of some room for improvement in the knowledge among staff of IASC and other policy guidance on the subject.

UNICEF's Cluster leaderships are generally well perceived. There is some consensus that the Clusters can and should be used as platforms for advocacy on broader issues, such as the nexus and funding flexibility. In Kabul UNICEF leads the WASH and Nutrition Clusters, co-leads the Education in Emergency Working Group, leads the Child Protection AoR under the Protection Cluster and is an active member of the WHO-led Health Cluster. ACO was perceived by cluster members and OCHA to be performing well in its leadership function, and this was made easier by the decision to eliminate the so called 'double-hatting' of sector programme staff, and hire independent cluster coordinators under the supervision of the Chief of Emergency and Field Coordination. Child Protection is the only sector which is yet to take this step, largely for lack of resources. Several interviewees stressed the need for UNICEF to use clusters to support more comprehensive advocacy

¹¹⁶ UN Afghanistan, *One UN for Afghanistan Results Framework 2018-2021*, 2018.

¹¹⁷ 'EU-UN Flagship Spotlight Initiative Launched in Central Asia and Afghanistan', available at: <https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/press/eu-un-flagship-spotlight-initiative-launched-central-asia-and-afghanistan>

goals beyond emergency response, such as the nexus and better modalities for programme funding by donors.

The main challenges faced at Kabul level are linked to the role which UNICEF and other large agencies are perceived to play within the clusters, with a perceived tendency to marginalise small organisations, especially if they are not implementing partners. Additionally, in line with the localisation approach pursued by UNICEF and other UN agencies, ministerial counterparts co-lead the clusters. The objective of handing over cluster leadership to government counterparts is still remote, given their lack of capacity and high staff turnover.

In the regional capitals, UNICEF plays a prominent role in cluster coordination. Double-hatting is the norm in the coordination cluster led by UNICEF, with NGOs typically playing a co-lead role. While OCHA and cluster members generally agreed that UNICEF performs well in its regional coordination role, there was also a sense that regional sub-clusters are significantly weaker than their national equivalents.

Institutional Strengthening and Comparative Strengths in Capacity Building

Despite the absence of a formal CB strategy, UNICEF has had some notable successes in this area at the technical and output levels; however, there have also been serious challenges. There is some initial evidence of the increased impact and sustainability of approaching capacity building as an integral part of partnerships, rather than an add-on. Very different understandings and interpretations exist among internal and external interviewees of what CB and institutional strengthening are, and many found it difficult to define UNICEF's comparative advantage in CB. However, there is a recognition that UNICEF's expansive mandate spanning multiple sectors puts it in a favourable position to intervene in this area, with its expertise in several key sectors.

No ACO-specific strategy for CB exists, and each sector has developed its own approach. To a significant extent, these approaches have been shaped by contextual opportunities or constraints, as well as fluctuating levels of funding and the vagaries of relationships with counterparts. Against this challenging backdrop, the main focus of UNICEF's CB interventions has consistently been at the technical level, with substantive engagement with mid-level ministerial and administration staff and field personnel (teachers, health workers, social workers).¹¹⁸ Among the CB initiatives which multiple interviewees viewed as meaningfully contributing to the strengthening of systems in Afghanistan, the most notable were the Faculty for Social Workers, the GATE female teacher training programme, the above-mentioned CPAN, and some of the more comprehensive and long-term CB efforts driven by the WASH sector. The ambitious CBE programme, while impacted by sustainability and government ownership issues, was also considered a successful CB initiative by most interviewees.

While at the technical level, sources interviewed for the evaluation agreed that there had generally been a good uptake of know-how and capacity, there was also broad agreement that the sustainability of these gains had been undermined by factors mostly outside the remit of ACO programming. In this sense, and in light of the contextual challenges and obstacles listed above, there is an increasing acknowledgement within ACO that its efforts at capacity building may not have yielded commensurate results in the long term. This view is consistent with research on development assistance to Afghanistan.¹¹⁹

Several interviewees noted that a long-term approach to CB, geared to the integration of training activities in broader and more long-term development efforts, was more likely to yield results than 'add-on' interventions designed and implemented in response to the short-term availability of

¹¹⁸ Institutional support at higher level to establish sustainable political momentum for child-related issues has been more sporadic; an example brought to the attention of the evaluation team was the work done in close collaboration with key ministerial counter parts for the adoption of the CPAN, which entailed consistent on-the-job formation.

¹¹⁹ For a succinct and solidly evidenced review of obstacles to development cooperation with the Afghan government, see Christoph Zürcher, *Meta-Review of Evaluations of Development Assistance to Afghanistan, 2008-2018: Chapeau Paper*, BMZ, March 2020.

budget lines. Long-term CB carefully integrated in broader institutional development was especially likely to show good results where the focus was on strengthening existing training systems and curricula. Besides the already mentioned GATE programme or the Social Workers Faculty, the inclusion of Child Protection and Human Rights sessions in the training curriculum for the Afghan Police, done in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior, offers a good example of this approach.

Use of National Technical Assistants

The NTA system has become increasingly controversial, with some well-founded claims that it is unaccountable and has unwanted consequences. ACO is planning to review and rationalise its use of the system, but these measures come late. The NTA system was introduced by the President's Office in 2016 to replace what was then viewed as a dysfunctional Technical Advisor system. The role of NTAs has since increased in size and scope, and there are currently about 22,000 NTAs embedded in government offices, shared among UN agencies.¹²⁰ They are normally funded by the UN and hired by the respective ministries or government offices.

There is a widespread perception among the UN agencies, NGOs and donors interviewed for this evaluation that the NTA system is dysfunctional. Some interviewees stated that it is one of the key problems affecting the way in which the international community provides assistance to Afghanistan.

The list of problems affecting the NTA system is long, and concerns about it are not new.¹²¹ These problems have revolved mainly around the higher salaries paid to NTAs, and a lack of clarity and consistency in their recruitment. Despite efforts to align salaries and reform recruitment processes, the prevailing view continues to be that the NTA system is unaccountable and prone to elite capture.

There have also been issues of blurred accountability and unintended consequences, with NTAs supplanting ministerial staff instead of remaining within the remit of their advisory roles. Interviewees stated that UN agencies often engage with NTAs directly, rather than with their ministerial counterparts. This has reinforced the notion that NTAs form an entrenched elite isolated from the system which it is intended to support. The evaluation team could not find evidence of measures to promote gender balance among NTAs.

ACO has been using a high number of NTAs in the past years, with variable results. For the WASH section, which has relied on approximately 200 NTAs annually between 2018 and 2020, they represent an important component of the programme, allowing it to strengthen cooperation with the MRRD, expand the outreach of its interventions, and enhance capacity building. In some cases, female NTAs have been appointed to focus on gender issues, and their role has generally been viewed as successful.

There is a general recognition among UN agencies, shared by ACO interviewees, that a review of the NTA system is needed, and that this should be accompanied by a sharp reduction of their numbers. However, there are also concerns that rapid downsizing might create a capacity vacuum and adversely impact the sustainability of some programmes.

UNICEF has already started shifting its approach to utilise more extenders (see FA2 for details), and to increasingly place NTA-type of advisory positions under more direct ACO oversight. This, for example, has been the case in WASH and Child Protection. In parallel, ACO is planning to review and consolidate its NTA network.

¹²⁰ ACO KII.

¹²¹ See, for example, observations on the NTA system in Afghanistan in OECD DAC Capacity Development Unit, *Monitoring the Fragile States Principles: Reflections on Issues of Capacity and Capacity Development*, 2009.

4.4 Focus Area 4: Gender Integration

This section examines measures taken by ACO to integrate gender in its programmes, as well as to promote gender integration among partners and to support their progress towards this goal.

4.4.1 Gender Integration in Programme Planning and Practice

Summary of findings:

UNICEF Afghanistan has made substantive progress in recent years, learning from the 2018 Gender Programmatic Review (GPR) and operationalising a gender strategy. Its operationalising of GAP guidance at an institutional level has been very effective, with the ACO considered a ‘role model’ in the application of the guidance. However, these institutional changes are yet to percolate to programme level. While there is clear coherence between programming and GAP priorities, approaches to operationalising these priorities vary in gender sensitivity across the Gender Equality Marker (GEM) scale and in evidence generation and analysis. At country and sector levels, reporting processes are weak on systematic gender analyses or gender mainstreaming progress (as per gender strategy ambitions), and this hampers knowledge management and learning aimed at the better integration of gender.

Investment in Gender Analysis and Knowledge Management

There is evidence that programmes have adopted recommendations from the GPR and sought to integrate gender more effectively in programme design and monitoring. Yet there are still many opportunities for ACO to strengthen its approach to gender through better analysis, use of sex-disaggregated and qualitative data, and consolidation of learning across sectors.

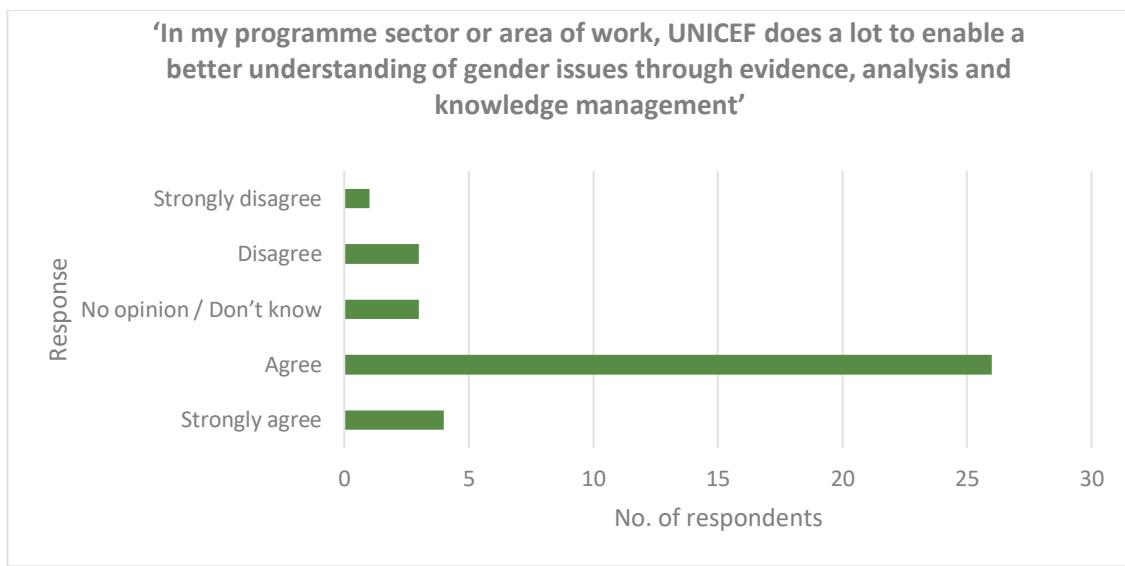
In 2018 ACO requested a GPR, which highlighted that gender had been integrated well into the country programme. The GPR also identified areas for further improvement. This led to the development of ACO’s Gender Strategy (2019–21), which spans five key strategies to approach gender equality (see Box 7). These are discussed throughout this section.

Over the past three years, important steps have been taken to operationalise the gender strategy, notably as it relates to systematic evidence generation, analysis and Knowledge Management (KM). This is reflected in the survey findings: a majority of UNICEF staff respondents (30 out of 37) agree that ACO does a lot to enable a better understanding of gender issues through evidence, analysis and knowledge management (see Figure 9 below).

Box 7.ACO gender strategy 2019–21: key strategies to approach gender equality

1. Ensure gender-responsive design and implementation of key programmes
2. Targeted gender priorities on empowering adolescent girls and women (*see findings in the ‘gender-responsive programming’ section*)
3. Reinforce Institutional results on gender equality (*see strengthening of gender at organisational level*)
4. Build institutional capacity on gender within UNICEF and of partners (*see 4.4.2*)
5. Position UNICEF as a strong gender-responsive organisation within the national development and Humanitarian context (*see 4.4.2*)

Figure 9. ACO staff survey response on gender



While strengthening programmatic evidence and analysis processes on gender are generally moving in the right direction, some of the gender strategy's ambitions have not been met.

Situation analysis and context analysis

An important initial step in integrating gender into programming starts with a gender-sensitive context analysis. At country level, situation analysis surrounding children and women was not updated as planned, despite the lack of an update since 2014 and the fact that the country programme was extended by two years until December 2021.¹²² A situation analysis was, however, conducted on child marriage, which has increased understanding of the impact of early marriage on health outcomes.¹²³

At sector level, there are also no consistent plans to conduct a context-specific gender analysis to help identify gender-related challenges and barriers. The Education sector does go some way towards integrating a gender lens into the 'risks, bottlenecks and barrier analysis', e.g. differing barriers for girls in access to education. There is also anecdotal evidence from the health sector that the polio section undertook a gender-sensitive political economy analysis which identified the influence of grandmothers in family acceptance of the vaccination.¹²⁴ However, gender-sensitive analysis is not integrated in a systematic way.

Gender-sensitive indicators and monitoring

There have been important developments in integrating gender monitoring. According to the GAP gender overview for Afghanistan 2018–20, by 2020 100% of UNICEF programmes were integrating gender into their programme documents (country programme documents and programme strategy notes) as opposed to 0% of programmes in 2018. Also, by 2020 all eight country programmes had at least one integrated gender priority result, as opposed to only five programmes in 2018.¹²⁵ Within the sectors, there is a clear concerted effort to introduce gender-sensitive indicators from the standard indicators bank (RAM) that are tagged at gender level 3 (meaning the indicator directly

¹²² Internal Audit of the Afghanistan Country Office, December 2019.

¹²³ UNICEF staff member.

¹²⁴ UNICEF key informant.

¹²⁵ GAP gender overview for Afghanistan 2018–20.

addresses a gender barrier).¹²⁶ Education, WASH and CP have at least two indicators that directly address a gender barrier; Health is an outlier with less well developed gender-sensitive indicators despite the focus on maternal health. That said, there are several missed opportunities to generate valuable gender-sensitive data for learning and decision making through more routinely disaggregating by sex. For example, in health indicators, it is not clear who is getting vaccinated¹²⁷ or, in WASH indicators, who among IDPs/host communities are accessing sanitation and handwashing facilities; this information could provide valuable insights.

Data monitored through the results frameworks at country and sector levels are mostly quantitative, and there is no systematic collection within the RF or through other means to collate qualitative evidence with a gender lens. There are some incidences of qualitative data being collected: for example, the CP EYR notes that the C4D programme monitored parishioner attitudes on harmful practices and GBV.¹²⁸ However, it is unclear how this data feeds into cross-sector gender learning.

Knowledge Management and Learning

ACO's ambitions to uphold UNICEF's role as a 'knowledge hub'¹²⁹ requires further strengthening in relation to gender. As per the ACO gender strategy, the ACO should annually produce a review and progress report on the gender mainstreaming strategy. This is yet to be created. In terms of knowledge products, there are several examples of good practice in applying a gender lens to assessments, such as the 'Rapid Welfare Monitoring Assessment of COVID-19 Impact' (Nov 2020) and the 'Herat WASH drought response KAP survey report' (Oct 2019). However, the next step of consolidating the learning and sharing cross-sector is missing.

Strengthening of Gender at Organisational Level

UNICEF Afghanistan has made significant efforts and substantive progress in recent years in terms of investment and real commitment to GAP priorities at an institutional level, and has done so in a challenging context. Due to these advances, ACO is currently considered a 'role model' in the application of the global GAP staffing and programmatic guidance.

The gender strategy states three primary objectives: (a) to strengthen integration of gender equality issues across UNICEF ACO programme areas (including in emergency contexts); (b) to enable and empower all staff and implementing partners to take on the responsibility to mainstream gender concerns in their work; and (c) to create an enabling environment for promoting gender equality.

Activities designed to contribute to the achievement of these objectives include both investment and systems to track progress. With regard to investment, UNICEF Afghanistan recruited in 2019 a P4 Gender Specialist to coordinate the gender strategy implementation, reporting directly to the Deputy Representative. ACO has also met the 15% organisational benchmark for gender expenditures in 2020.¹³⁰

Gender parity in staffing is a further GAP priority. This is difficult to achieve within the context of Afghanistan, especially for national staffing positions, as depicted in Figure 10 below, where national staff categories 'NO' and 'G' show less male/female diversity than the international staff category 'P'. Nevertheless, ACO is concertedly tracking gender parity and is taking steps to consider the challenge holistically and identify innovative solutions.

¹²⁶ Indicators are ranked from 0 to 3, with the following connotations; GT 0 - the indicator is not a gender indicator; GT 1 - the indicator implies a sex-disaggregation of data collected; GT 2 - the indicator measures a significant contribution to gender equality; GT 3 - the indicator directly addresses a gender barrier.

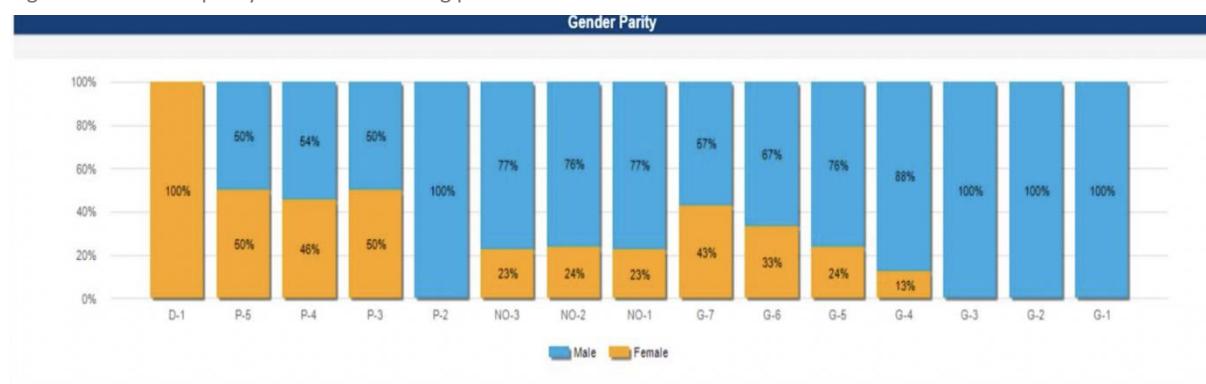
¹²⁷ Raised by UNICEF Key informant.

¹²⁸ CP EYR 2019.

¹²⁹ UNICEF, *Afghanistan Country Programme Document 2015-2019*, 2014.

¹³⁰ UNICEF dashboard.

Figure 10. Gender parity across ACO staffing positions



'P' 1–5 represent international professionals, with P1 being most junior.

'NO' (National Officers) and 'G' (General Staff) represent locally recruited staff again with 1 being most junior.

'D' is most senior and can be either international or national.

ACO's holistic thinking on the subject includes an understanding that creating an enabling environment for gender parity within the workplace is a long-term commitment rather than just a matter of drafting a policy.

Innovative solutions introduced by ACO are outlined in Box 8 and include proactive and considered strategies to recruit more women. Examples include: recruitment among the Afghan diaspora and attracting female graduates from university into more junior roles with support to quickly move upwards; and all staff with hiring capacities being strongly encouraged to positively consider female applications.

Written tests for new recruits are provided within central Kabul rather than within the UNICEF compound (requiring travel) and UNICEF also provides staff transportation, which removes another barrier to female employment. In addition, ACO has established creche facilities for both female and male staff, which acknowledges the gender dimensions of promoting equality within households and encourages an active role for fathers.¹³¹ All of these adjustments and considerations constitute positive progress towards a more gender equal workforce and also reflect an institutional innovative attitude: '*It is an office not worried about trying new things*'.¹³²

In terms of building gender into policies, planning and programming, ACO has mandated a gender review of all documentation (policies and strategies) and ACO has established a Gender Task Force to ensure that progress against the gender strategy is monitored and measured.¹³³ All of these things

Box 8. Example of good practice: innovative approaches to promote female recruitment

ACO has adopted a number of working practices to promote female recruitment, including:

- i) Recruitment among Afghan diaspora and female graduates;
- ii) Providing written tests for new recruits in central Kabul rather than at the UNICEF compound (reducing the requirement for travel);
- iii) Providing staff transportation;
- iv) Targeted strategies to recruit, mentor and promote female national staff;
- v) Establishing creche facilities for both female and male staff.

¹³¹ UNICEF, *Trip Report: Review of UNICEF Afghanistan's Gender Equality Strategy*, 2020.

¹³² UNICEF key informant.

¹³³ UNICEF, *Trip Report: Review of UNICEF Afghanistan's Gender Equality Strategy*, 2020.

together have led to ACO being considered, with regard to implementation of GAP staffing and programmatic guidance, a ‘role model’ for UNICEF globally.¹³⁴

Gender-Responsive and Transformative Programming

While UNICEF Afghanistan has seen significant progress at institutional level on integrating gender, progress at programme level comparatively lags behind. Notwithstanding, there are clear efforts to link programme goals to GAP programming priorities.

Targeted priorities within GAP are centred around adolescent girls’ well-being and empowerment, and focus on five areas: i) promoting adolescent girls’ nutrition, pregnancy care, and prevention of HIV, AIDS and HP; ii) advancing adolescent girls’ secondary education; iii) preventing and responding to child marriage and early unions; iv) preventing and responding to GBV in emergencies; and v) facilitating accessible and dignified menstrual health management (MHM). ACO programming speaks to these priorities for example through the focus on child marriage & GBV (Child protection sector), MHM (WASH sector) or girls’ secondary education (Education sector) and pregnancy care (Health).

In line with GAP priorities, ACO has a flagship¹³⁵ programme on adolescent girls’ education. Building on recommendations from the GPR to use education as a platform to be more holistic in addressing gender, the programme takes a cross-cutting approach linking education programming to child marriage, WASH and MHM in schools. As part of this programme, UNICEF advocacy successfully resulted in the development and launch of the first-ever Girls’ Education Policy helping to put girls’ education as a top priority on the government’s agenda. UNICEF responds to barriers to girls education in a practical, holistic and coherent manner, including:

- Linking educational results with reducing child marriage with CP programming;
- Addressing insecurity and conflict barriers through demilitarisation of schools and CBE: a specific strategy within the broader CBE strategy of Afghanistan to recruit and retain female teachers, which has long been recognised in Programme documentation and globally as a crucial component for successful girls’ education;
- The use of cash transfers to vulnerable families – with no specific educational condition, but where families are encouraged to use the funds for supporting adolescent girls’ education;¹³⁶
- Working through WASH programmes to increase WASH facilities in schools;
- Investment in girls’ dormitories and sanitation facilities in conjunction with WASH programming;
- Working with the MoE to improve gender disaggregated government educational data; and
- Working with the health programme to provide weekly iron and folic acid supplements to adolescent girls in schools.

In addition to the above, since 2017 the programme has been empowering adolescents by enhancing their knowledge, improving their access to information and supporting their rights to healthier and safer lifestyles in the provinces of Badghis and Bamyan.

Other programmes which directly address GAP priorities include the Afghan Women’s Leadership Initiative (AWLI), which has been developed within a context of high rates of both child marriage and out-of-school girls, coupled with a growing realisation of the combined detrimental effects of these

¹³⁴ This is a more informal accolade highlighting the progress made by ACO to date: a more formalised version of this would be categorising ACO as a ‘GAP Champion country’, which, global and regional UNICEF respondents confirm, will become the case if ACO continues on the same trajectory with regard to gender integration.

¹³⁵ ACO has moved on from the specific terminology of ‘flagship’ programming as articulated within the CPD, but the adolescent girls education programme remains a priority programme for ACO.

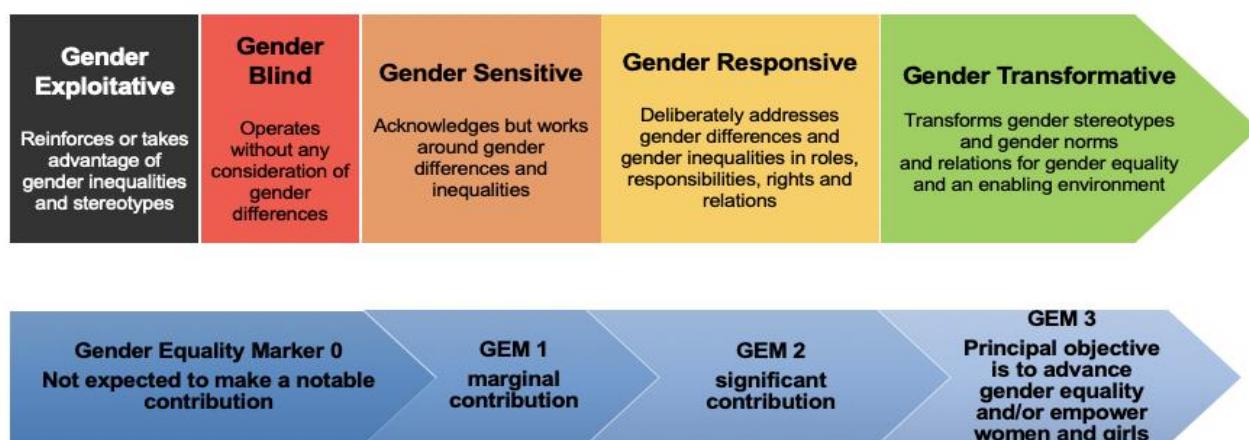
¹³⁶ Monique Awad and Salwa Nezami, ‘Cash Transfer Supports Girls’ Education in Afghanistan’, 2020, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/stories/cash-transfer-supports-girls-education-afghanistan>

phenomena for the girls involved and for society at large.¹³⁷ This also links in a coherent and holistic manner to the GAP priority of increasing adolescent girls' well-being and empowerment.

Although UNICEF Afghanistan programming targets women and girls in line with GAP priorities, the level of gender integration and gender sensitivity in programming remains inconsistent across sectors, with a lack of systematic gender analysis being a key barrier.

UNICEF programmes work to a gender scale and associated GEM categories that classify programming approaches and activities in relation to their impact on gender equality and equity (see Figure 10). When programming is reviewed against the GEM categories, the evaluation team finds significant variation in approaches adopted by different sectors. It is important to note that, while an intervention might overall fall into one GEM category, there may be approaches or activities within the intervention that span across the GEM continuum.

Figure 10 - UNICEF gender scale and GEM categories¹³⁸



Gender-transformative programming

For a programme to be considered gender-transformative, it needs to go some way to shifting embedded gender norms and power relations. The Child protection and Education sectors lead on tackling these root cause issues through promoting attitudinal and behaviour change. For example, C4D's innovative participatory community mobilisation dialogues on child marriage and GBV and Education's policy work contribute towards an enabling environment.¹³⁹

Gender-responsive programming

Within the WASH sector in particular, there are many good examples of gender-responsive programming – for example the provision of MHM facilities in schools, which allows girls to access education (linked to the GAP targeted priority programme); and the establishment of water points by household, which reduce women's insecurity in using public water sources. While positive, this cannot be considered gender-transformative, as it continues to reinforce the sexual division of

¹³⁷ The AWLI project consists of three objectives:

- Change perceptions on the acceptability of child marriage and mobilise communities to delay marriage by raising awareness of adolescent girls' rights, the laws in place to protect them, the negative consequences of child marriage, and the importance of educating girls;
- Empower adolescent girls to make life choices through education, vocational and life skills training, and peer support. This also includes unconditional cash grants in selected districts in two provinces;
- Map and document the changing status of adolescent girls in the programme's participating districts and provinces.

¹³⁸ UNICEF, 'Gender Expenditure Markers and Gender Expenditure', PowerPoint, 2020.

¹³⁹ Child Protection and Education sector, End of Year reports 2019.

labour – which posits that collecting water is the work for women and girls – and has no strategies to shift this perception.

Gender-sensitive programming

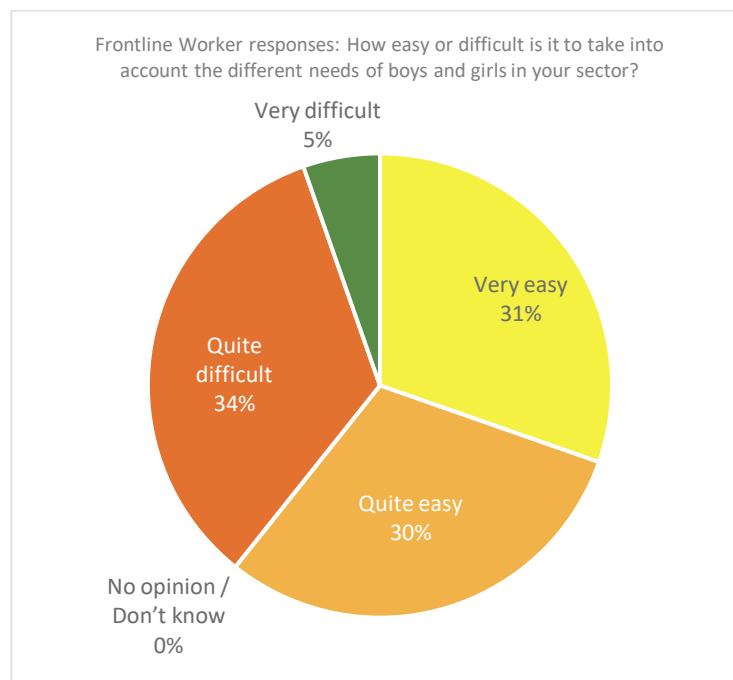
Other elements of programming are more accurately described as gender-neutral or gender-sensitive. For example, in the polio sector, analysis undertaken to identify whether the vaccination programme might have different impacts for boys and girls is gender-sensitive to the extent that it is considered that there might be a differential impact on girls.¹⁴⁰

Gender-blind or exploitative programming

Some aspects of ACO programming may be considered gender-blind or gender-exploitative (and therefore potentially harmful). For example, in the health sector, the use of (unpaid) female community health workers (CHWs) recruited through programme partners could have unintended harmful effects for women¹⁴¹ given that they are usually accompanied by a male relative, with associated stipends being paid to the male relative.

Programming elements that fall into gender-responsive and transformative GEM categories look beyond simply targeting women and girls with services, and integrate gender. They do this by conducting gender analysis to consider how people might experience the problem differently because of their gender, and also to identify the gender gaps in access to and agency over resources, and gendered power relations that may affect the solution to a problem. An example of gender targeting in WASH programming includes initiatives that target girls and build latrines to help during menstruation. While these are ‘gender-sensitive’ in providing the correct resources for girls, they does not consider intersections between latrines and GBV whereby washrooms are sites of sexual violence.¹⁴² Therefore, while this intervention is gender-responsive in addressing differences, it is gender-blind on GBV.

Figure 11. Frontline Worker survey response on gender



¹⁴⁰ The analysis showed that there was, in fact, no difference.

¹⁴¹ Implementing partner key informant.

¹⁴² Marni Sommer, Suzanne Ferron, Sue Cavill and Sarah House, *Violence, gender and WASH: Spurring action on a complex, under-documented and sensitive topic*, Environment & Urbanization 27(1):105–116, 2015.

Considering cross-sector programming, there are two key enablers towards moving from ‘gender-responsive’ to ‘gender-transformative’ programming, including;

- a robust gender analysis (including the voices of beneficiaries where possible) that feeds into programme design and decision making; and
- community engagement and empowerment around attitudes and behaviour change.

As such, a core barrier to gender-transformative programming is the lack of systematic gender analysis, which, at worst, reinforces harmful norms and/or puts women and girls in harmful situations. There is also a risk that the emphasis on education as a platform for cross-sector gender integration could silo gender mainstreaming to programming within school sites. Geographies also play a part in constraining gender integration. The Eastern region, for example, is extremely conservative. Integrating gender and addressing gender issues gets increasingly difficult, moving away from urban to rural areas.

Another barrier is the capacities and abilities of frontline workers. The survey results show that an overwhelming majority believe gender to be very important within their work, although interestingly those who report that it is not, or do not have an opinion, are female. It is of note that in the survey, over a third (39%) of frontline workers felt that it was difficult or very difficult to take into account the different needs of boys and girls in their sector (see Figure 11 above). This response cut across CP, education, health, WASH and multi-sector/‘other’ sectors.

4.4.2 UNICEF Partnerships and System-Wide Positioning to Promote Gender

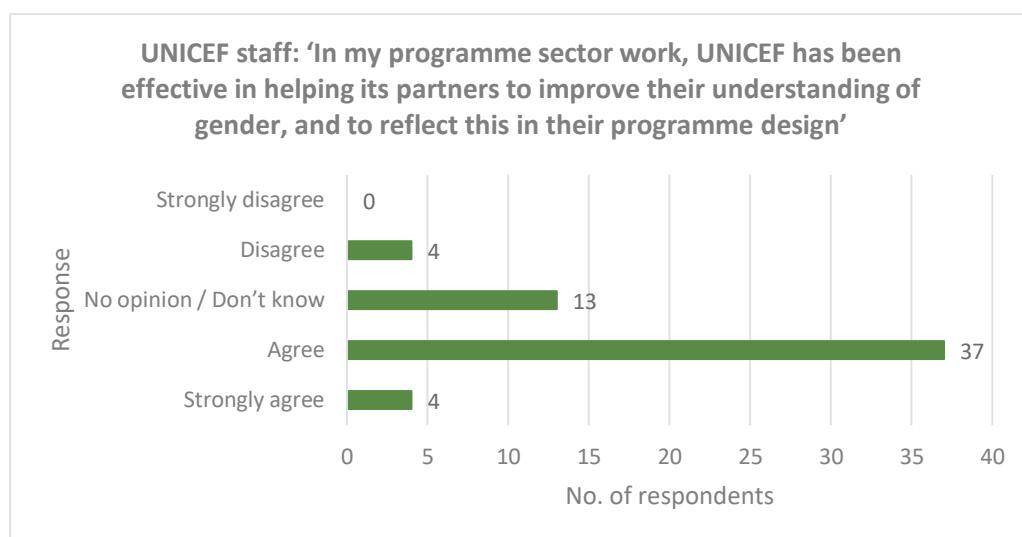
Summary of findings:

ACO has promoted better gender integration through its partnerships, and has taken an innovative approach in working with some women-led CSOs. Further work is needed to practically support partners to implement quality gender programming. UNICEF in Afghanistan is well recognised for its robust gender-responsive programming. There was a perception among some interviewees that ACO should be bolder in its approach to advocacy and gender-transformative goals. Rather than a more assertive posture in related activities, this suggest a need for better ACO messaging to its partners to explain and justify its current approaches.

The evaluation team found that ACO has taken an innovative approach to supporting gender integration by working with a series of women-led CSOs. However, there is limited evidence of practical support to partners in integrating gender considerations across organisational and programmatic areas.

The evaluation team found some evidence that ACO is promoting gender considerations with its implementing partners. In interviews, both UNICEF staff and external stakeholders agreed that UNICEF has provided support to partners in better understanding gender issues and how to reflect them in programming. This is illustrated in survey results in Figure 12.

Figure 12. UNICEF staff survey response on gender



Other evidence includes the fact that gender is now reported as one of the mandatory criteria included in any programme cooperation agreement (PCA). However, there is limited evidence from IPs or government partners of increased capacity or commitment on their part for applying gender considerations in programming, undertaking gender analysis, and working with disaggregated data.

A particularly positive and innovative approach undertaken by UNICEF has been through deepening partnerships with a number of women-led CSOs, including Voice of Women Organization (VWO), Women Activities & Social Service Association (WASSA), and ActionAid Afghanistan (AAA) on their women and girls-focused interventions. This recognises that these CSOs already have the commitment to gender and, with UNICEF's support, can themselves work to change the equality situation within the country.

Recognising the challenges inherent in the Afghan context, the steps taken in ACO's promotion of gender are positive and provide a basis on which to build further. One area of continued work is support to partners in replicating some of the gender equity-focused initiatives that UNICEF has introduced in recent years at an institutional level.

ACO is well recognised within the UN system and among NGOs and partners as an authoritative, if measured, voice on gender, specifically with a comparative advantage on girls' education. Although its programming is widely acknowledged for its gender-responsiveness, some interviewees felt that it could do more to achieve gains in gender transformation. A majority of key informants viewed UNICEF as a champion of gender equality, with some reporting that UNICEF is more advanced in this area than other UN agencies.¹⁴³ The comprehensive and coherent girls' education programme, and all associated aspects such as the linkages with child marriage and the MHM in schools aspects, are well known, well acknowledged and well respected within Afghanistan. This is solid and sustainable programming with many potential longer-term gender-transformative results.

ACO has also shown a capacity to adapt and innovate on gender programming in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted livelihoods and increased rates of GBV.¹⁴⁴ UNICEF conducted a rapid COVID-19 assessment in Herat which reviewed the differing experiences of men

¹⁴³ External key informants.

¹⁴⁴ ATR consulting, *Rapid Welfare Monitoring Assessment of Covid-19 Impact*, 2020.

and women in the pandemic. This assessment was ground-breaking in its application of a gender lens to COVID-19 programming.¹⁴⁵

However, ACO was not viewed as a dynamic gender actor, pushing boundaries on gender transformation and social norm change. Insofar as respondents perceived UNICEF to draw on its comparative advantage, it was seen to do so through its application of technical expertise to programme design and implementation (education specifically), rather than through vocal advocacy. Some interviewees faulted it for this, saying that its posture on gender was overly prudent.

Evidence collected by the evaluation team suggests strongly that a high-profile stance in advocacy and gender transformation, aimed at more rapid progress towards desired outcomes, would likely be counterproductive in the context of Afghanistan. In this sense, perceptions that ACO's posture is overly cautious call for better messaging aimed at partners and stakeholders, to raise their awareness of the significant challenges involved in achieving progress towards gender goals in Afghanistan, and of the risks implied in attempting to achieve too much too soon.

One area where ACO has increased UNICEF's visibility and leadership potential within gender, and on GBV specifically, is through the Spotlight Initiative, a multi-year global EU/UN partnership to eliminate violence against women and girls by 2030. As a joint programme between UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, and UN Women, the Initiative highlights a notable move towards greater UN inter-agency cooperation. For UNICEF, the gender advisor leads on this initiative which, together with UNICEF's strong field presence, has helped to solidify its role as a lead actor in this initiative.

¹⁴⁵ UNICEF key informant.

5 Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The context for the next ACP planning period will be marked by increased uncertainty as the US initiates its drawdown from Afghanistan. This event is likely to exacerbate operational challenges, with a possibility of heightened conflict, more acute needs, increased barriers to access, and more difficult engagement with government and other key stakeholders. In this new context, donor funding may also decline, and prospects for the sustainability of programme delivery may become more remote. These new conditions will require ACO to become more agile in its decisions and programme responses, and particularly astute in the formulation and implementation of its strategies.

The conclusions and recommendations below incorporate key lessons on the operating context, and on how improvements may be made to programme delivery. Across the programme sectors examined, the evaluation team found that three core areas warrant particular attention:

Focusing on results

Programme management practice at ACO is heavily process-led and is yet to become genuinely results-oriented. The focus on process compliance rather than substantive results imposes a mechanistic approach to programming that lacks agility and is ill-suited to the extreme fluidity of the Afghan context. This is especially notable in the areas of risk management and risk-informed programming. In these areas, a strict adherence to process inhibits a more pragmatic and ultimately more reliable approach to gauging the context surrounding needs, and ways to navigate these.

Non-programme areas of intervention

The evaluation team found that ACO activities are heavily programmatised, with non-programme activities such as advocacy and stakeholder engagement often given lower priority.

In complex emergencies generally, and more particularly in Afghanistan today as it enters a highly challenging period, the importance of clear outward-facing messaging, underpinned by a forward leaning posture in stakeholder engagement, cannot be overstated. Critically, this needs to be informed by granular, bottom-up context analysis (see below). Being outside the framework designed for the evaluation, outward-facing engagement has only been summarily touched on in this report. We address it in the context of the nexus which, as in the case of other strategic goals set out in the 2017 MTR, cannot progress unless it is accompanied by ongoing efforts aimed at consensus and environment building. This view is consistent with nexus best practice.¹⁴⁶

Decentralisation

The third area in need of progress is decentralisation. Despite some positive steps, ACO operations remain overly centralised, both in terms of operational architecture and decision making processes. The evaluation team found that there is room for field offices to play a significantly more active role in key programme functions, most notably risk and context analysis, and decision making on access and stakeholder engagement. Beyond these two areas, the evaluation team found that progress in decentralisation would yield benefits in terms of operational agility, MSP, and programme congruence with needs on the ground.

In this section we set out our conclusions against each of the four FAs, followed by recommendations.

¹⁴⁶ The OECD *DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus* (2020) calls for forward-leaning political-level engagement in support of the triple nexus.

5.1 Focus Area 1: The Nexus

A significant gap exists between nexus policy and planning, which are in an advanced state of development, and nexus implementation, which is heavily constrained by an adverse operating environment. ACO has developed strong programming capability in the former; however, significant contextual obstacles prevent this from translating into progress towards the nexus at programme level.

Nexus Planning, Implementation and Positioning

Although several interviewees attributed slow progress on the nexus to sector siloes in the ACP, the evaluation team found no evidence that siloes were undermining humanitarian-development linkages in ACO operations. This is because the dual mandate that characterises UNICEF activities in Afghanistan enables each programme sector to establish humanitarian-development linkages *within* its own programmes. For example, the WASH section addresses urgent humanitarian needs by trucking water to remote communities, while addressing the root causes of vulnerabilities through development activities such as the drilling of wells and the training of communities in their maintenance.

The evaluation team found that the same complementarity between humanitarian and development activities is actively – but individually – pursued by all sectors across the ACP. In the four sectors examined, humanitarian delivery aims to draw on local capabilities which ACO is actively helping to develop. Overall, about the same amount of resources are budgeted per sector outcome to development interventions (capacity building, resilience) and to humanitarian ones. This denotes that humanitarian and development outputs are deliberately designed to work in concert, and to contribute jointly to sector results.

In implementation, the evaluation team found that humanitarian-development linkages are heavily undermined by contextual factors that are largely outside the remit of sector-level programming. These obstacles relate mainly to the considerable challenges involved in ensuring the sustainability over time of partner capacity built in joint programmes. This lack of sustainability owes to structural factors deeply rooted in the aid environment in Afghanistan.

Rather than a programmatic focus, the mitigation of these obstacles calls for interventions in non-programme areas, including steadfast advocacy, clearer outward-facing positioning and more articulate policy responses on the part of ACO. A key finding in this evaluation is that ACO's involvement in a leadership and coordination capacity in these areas has been limited, due in part to the shortcomings of the One UN framework and the absence of a viable platform for system-wide engagement. ACO needs to compensate for the lack of such a platform by redoubling efforts to engage bilaterally with like-minded stakeholders. This means allocating more senior management time to ensuring that its messaging on the nexus and other key policy goals is better heard and understood. Critically, it also means formulating stronger evidence-based narratives on the contextual obstacles that stand in the way of the nexus, so that stakeholders –including donors—can become better aware of the root causes of the slow pace of progress in this area, and collectively formulate the needed policy responses.

In engaging on the nexus, ACO should make more deliberate use of its comparative advantage, which stems primarily from its dual mandate and its sectoral expertise. Evidence collected during the evaluation shows clearly that linkages between humanitarian and development programme strands of activity are hard-wired in the very design of the ACP. While progress at rolling out the nexus have come against considerable obstacles inherent in the context, ACO staff interviewed on the subject showed a significant conceptual and programme-level understanding of where and how these linkages could be achieved if circumstances allowed. In the Afghan context, this know-how should be viewed as a public good and more should be done to share it pragmatically. Natural entry

points for this are provided by multi-partner initiatives in which ACO has proven sectoral expertise, such as Spotlight and CPAN.

Peacebuilding

Although peacebuilding as an aspirational goal is widely adhered to in principle by ACO staff, the evaluation team found no evidence of formal steps taken to incorporate peacebuilding objectives in sector programming. Peacebuilding and related UNICEF guidance are not well known or understood by ACO staff. The same is true of conflict sensitivity, which UNICEF guidance prescribes as a minimum programme requirement in peacebuilding.

There is a need for dedicated research on the ACP's potential peacebuilding effects, to inform a decision on whether peacebuilding should be pursued as a formal objective in the next ACP. This decision requires careful consideration, as UNICEF's pursuit of peacebuilding outcomes is constrained by its adherence to humanitarian principles.¹⁴⁷ In addition, there is a need to determine whether UNICEF in Afghanistan can take on the additional burden involved in the formal pursuit of peacebuilding objectives.

Risk Management and Preparedness

At sector level, risk management is mainly carried out on an ad hoc basis. Dedicated tools aimed at managing risk and improving preparedness, such as such as RIP guidance or the EPP, are not widely used to inform programme decisions. As noted in Section 4.1.1, the use of the EPP in particular is problematic. Compliance to related requirements is demanding, yet a majority of staff interviewed considered that the EPP has limited benefits and is remote from operational realities on the ground. RIP guidance appears more likely to achieve buy-in at sector level. A reason for this is that RIP approaches risk in terms of its effects on needs and vulnerabilities; in this sense, it is consistent with both needs-based and results-based programming, and speaks directly to sector priorities.

Although field offices feed into risk and context analysis processes, the extent to which their inputs is taken up appears limited. Their more active participation in these processes would improve the overall quality of analysis used to inform ACO-wide programming. While further progress is made on decentralisation, better programmatic use of contextual knowledge held by field offices, and by implementing partners and extenders, would also enable modest but more rapid gains in programme agility.

5.2 Focus Area 2: Coverage and Access

ACO has expanded its programme coverage in the past three years, thanks to an increasing appetite for risk, as well as incremental decentralisation and the increased use of IPs, extenders and frontline workers. But it continues to face significant challenges in its assessment of needs and its monitoring of results in hard-to-reach areas.

Equity

Given the imprecise picture of needs in large swathes of the country, it is challenging to determine if equity is being attained and whether value for money and effectiveness are maximised in hard-to-reach. Programme delivery to high-risk areas continues to face serious obstacles, including security and access constraints, political sensitivities surrounding engagement with non-state armed groups, supply-side approaches to prioritisation, and the limited availability of implementing partners.

Different programme sectors have implemented varying operational approaches to respond to needs, prioritise support and increase coverage. As illustrated in the findings, this diversity of approaches is dictated by the particular traits of each sector and a well-founded desire for

¹⁴⁷ Neutrality as a humanitarian principle limits the extent to which UNICEF can associate with UNAMA and advocate against actions or behaviours that are obstacles to peace.

pragmatism in implementation. The resulting lack of consistency in approaches is not a concern per se. However, it does call for clarity on red lines and best practice in expanding coverage.

Multi-Sector Programming

MSP has evolved from theory and design to implementation in the last 18 months, in particular through a series of interventions in the WASH, gender and education sectors.^{148, 149} This shift has been driven not only by global strategies and AMP goals but also by a will to scale up and formalise existing ad hoc harmonisation between sectors. Continued progress is likely to be constrained by sector siloes, compartmentalised partnerships with GIRoA ministries, donor earmarking, the slow pace of ACO decentralisation, and the complexity of multi-sectoral results measurement and reporting.

Access

The lack of formal strategy on negotiating access into hard-to-reach areas-controlled areas is not, in itself, an impediment to access. On the contrary, it provides latitude for exploring and adjusting approaches to access on a pragmatic basis. ACO has relied on four – at times, mutually reenforcing – informal strategies to improve access. Its ability to respond to needs in hard-to-reach areas predominantly rests on implementing partners, extenders or frontline workers. The most effective strategy is to engage at a local level through implementing partners, extenders and frontline workers who have engendered trust within communities. Rather than developing a formalised strategy on access, a basic operating procedure setting out red lines and good practice may be more appropriate.

Programme Agility

Across the ACP, improvements in programme agility and adaptiveness are closely tied to progress in decentralisation and to the provision of increased support and latitude needed by field offices to respond more autonomously to changes in their immediate environment ('Freedom in a Framework'). A key lesson in this regard is that improvements in operational agility and responsiveness require an in-depth reform of ACO's operational processes and architecture, enabling field offices to play a significantly greater role in programming. Innovative programme tools and programming guidance, such as the EPP and RIP, are no substitute for this. While reforms at scale are conducted to enable further decentralisation, improvements in programme agility should be pursued by improving the quality of information that feeds into programming, including in hard-to-reach areas.

Conflict Sensitivity

With one exception in WASH, conflict sensitivity is currently not applied to ACO programming. In the Afghan context, effective conflict-sensitive programming requires not only a good understanding of conflict sensitivity principles, but also a capacity to produce conflict analysis that is commensurate in scope to the programme space to which it applies. For example, the analysis feeding into conflict sensitivity programming in a countrywide perspective will be very distinct from that used at local level by the field offices. Conflict sensitivity training should be provided preferentially to field office staff, as they are the main points of operational interface between ACO and its environment. Training should allow staff to understand how to apply conflict sensitivity not only to programming but also to their engagement with local stakeholders, and to the use of programme features such as extenders, frontline workers and IPs.

¹⁴⁸ Programme examples include: (1) The EU-funded "Spotlight" (an inter-agency multi-sectoral response project to provide services for survivors to increase access and use of SGBV/HP response services in Afghanistan); (2) The ECHO – funded "Provision of education in emergencies and lifesaving health, nutrition and WASH services to vulnerable children in Afghanistan,"; and (3) The South Korea funded "Integrated quality service package in hard-to-reach areas of Afghanistan."

¹⁴⁹ Examples of harmonised delivery approaches include improving gender-specific WASH facilities in schools to promote female menstrual health and encourage higher female enrolment rates.

Use of Extenders and TPMs

The increase in ACO's programme coverage is due in large part to the use of extenders, and the evaluation team could not identify an alternative modality that would be equally effective in reaching vulnerable groups in hard-to-reach areas. Despite its advantages, a lack of oversight has weakened lines of accountability, with an adverse impact on the quality of extender performance in 'last-mile' programme delivery. Given that extenders mostly work in areas not accessible to UNICEF staff, the monitoring of extender outputs and the verification of extender reporting remains a challenge. Although new SOPs have led to improvements in the use of extenders, there is still room for improvement.

ACO's limited use of TPMs is causing an over-reliance on ACO staff, implementing partners and extenders for monitoring purposes. This has led to a fragmentation and disparity in monitoring practice, with results that fall below accountability and learning requirements. Further human and resource investments are required to institute a comprehensive TPM system that is fit for purpose.

5.3 Focus Area 3: Partnerships and Capacity Building

At the technical level, ACO has built strong partnerships with its government counterparts. Whether this can translate into sustainable outcomes depends on contextual factors that can only be addressed indirectly, through environment-building measures including advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and concerted action across the range of aid actors in Afghanistan. Progress towards this has been heavily constrained by the lack of a well-functioning platform for system-wide cooperation.

Gains made to date will remain precarious as Afghanistan enters a period of high uncertainty. Renewed engagement efforts will be needed to consolidate these gains, and to make up for the limitations of the One UN process by forging ad hoc alliances with like-minded stakeholders, including UN actors and donors.

In the course of interviews with NGOs there was a sense that, while partnerships do generally yield the intended programme results, ACO may have missed opportunities to fully leverage the potential offered by NGOs in terms of their knowledge of the local context, their often better access to community-based leaders and hard-to-reach area proxies, and their capacity to relay and amplify some advocacy messages. As Afghanistan enters a period in which programme delivery will become more complex, a broader and more strategic approach to partnerships with NGOs should be considered, to encompass joint objectives in non-programme areas.

In its partnerships with NGOs and Civil Society Partners, results have been affected by a lack of sustainability in capacities built. As noted in Sections 4.1.1 and 4.3.1, obstacles to sustainability are structural and rooted in the environment. Some of these obstacles might be mitigated through more flexible funding set in a multi-year perspective, and efforts to engage with donors on this objective should be maintained at both country and headquarters levels.

Another important finding in the evaluation is that the lack of long-term strategy for capacity-building and institutional strengthening may have undermined the continuity and coherence over time of related activities, with possible adverse effects on their sustainability. Without such a strategic framework, the impact- and outcome-level results of capacity-building interventions are necessarily harder to measure; course corrections, when needed, cannot be informed by strong evidence.

While ACO's comparative advantage in capacity-building could not be conclusively identified, there was good anecdotal evidence that its strong sectoral expertise did contribute to the quality of capacity-building interventions. In each of the four sectors examined, not only did much the technical know-how held by ACO cross over to partners, but sectoral and contextual insights specific to each sector served to inform the design and roll-out of capacity-building activities. This was most

visible in WASH, where programmes aimed at building the capacity of both the MRRD and the CDCs were relatively complex and particularly well honed. As discussed earlier, however, the extent to which these sectoral proficiencies can translate into lasting results at outcome and impact levels is unclear; the prevailing view was that capacities built to date were generally not self-sustainable and would be unlikely to endure a withdrawal of ACO support.

Across the range of interviews conducted, the clear sense emerged that the use of NTAs carries significant risk, both in programme and in reputational terms. Collective efforts to mitigate these risks have been under way for several years, yet it appears that ACO's involvement in these efforts have been relatively modest. Given the changing context in Afghanistan, active measures to mitigate the risks posed by NTAs have gained new urgency.

5.4 Focus Area 4: Gender

ACO has made significant progress with gender integration over the last few years. There has been notable progress in operationalising GAP guidance and priorities at country level, as well as institutional strengthening. This progress has been enabled by investments in staff and innovative strategies to initiate a shift away from the unequal gender balance within ACO. This is worthy of note as the context of Afghanistan means starting this from a particularly challenging place. Within UNICEF, the institutional gender work has earned it the recognition of 'role model'. Externally, UNICEF in Afghanistan is recognised as a strong and solid gender-responsive actor.

There have also been a number of sectoral achievements and innovations. Targeted priority programming is strong, particularly in relation to girls' education. There is evidence of transformational approaches in the Education and CP sectors creating change at policy level through advocacy on girls' education, and at community level by empowering communities in attitude and behaviour change, for example around attitudes to child marriage and GBV. Transformational approaches have been enabled by programme commitment to gender analysis and community engagement. There are also examples of positive gender-responsive programming, for example in relation to WASH and MHM in schools.

However, there is still further work to do on systematising analysis, monitoring, reporting and learning at programme level. The absence of country-level situation analysis on women is a particularly important gap. At sector level, the integration of gender is challenged by a lack of analysis and still-limited partner capacity.

Going forwards, ACO can draw on pockets of excellence from programming to develop and implement a more aspirational gender strategy that is more systematic across all sectors in strengthening gender analysis, monitoring and learning, and enables sector programmes to shift further towards being gender-transformational, where feasible.

ACO's comparative advantage in the promotion of gender integration lies in its technical and programme expertise. To a considerable extent, its role as an authoritative leader in gender advocacy must be adapted to the cultural context of Afghanistan, where a high-profile stance on this topic may alienate or antagonise some of its target audiences. While an incremental approach is more likely to yield the desired results, some interviewees for this evaluation –including donors– faulted ACO for what they perceived to be an overly prudent approach to gender advocacy and gender transformation. This provides further ground for one of the key recommendations in this evaluation, which is to renew bilateral engagement and messaging efforts aimed at ensuring that ACO stakeholders –some of whom are strategically key—can gain a better appreciation of the significant challenges involved in the accomplishment of its mandate in Afghanistan.

5.5 Recommendations

FOCUS AREA 1: THE NEXUS		Action to be Led by	Relevant Report Section
1	<p>Until the actual and potential peacebuilding outcomes of ACO operations are better understood, refrain from prioritising peacebuilding in the next CPD. Specific actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in ACO-wide consultations on peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity to improve staff understanding of these concepts and generate knowledge on their application in the context of the ACP. Until the feasibility and likely outcomes of peacebuilding activities are better understood, refrain from allocating resources and setting formal objectives in this area, and prioritise conflict sensitivity instead (see recommendation 6 below). 	Dep. Rep.	4.1.1.
2	<p>As Afghanistan enters a period of significant uncertainty, recognise advocacy and stakeholder engagement as central to ACO positioning and to the promotion of an enabling environment for both its strategic objectives and its country programme. Specific actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate appropriate resources and senior management time to the formulation of clear and legible messaging. To ensure consistency and effectiveness in advocacy and engagement work, draft formal narratives to convey tightly prioritised messages on selected themes (e.g. the nexus, gender, access) and ensure the good knowledge and use of these narratives by all relevant staff. In these narratives, make explicit the contextual obstacles that bar further progress towards the nexus and other strategic goals, and clearly articulate the limits and boundaries of ACO work in Afghanistan. 	Dep. Rep, Sector Chiefs, Comm. Chief	4.1.1.
3	<p>Increase the participation of Field Offices and Implementing Partners in ongoing risk assessments; mainstream the practice of analysing risk in terms of vulnerabilities and affected groups. Specific actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enable risk-informed programme responses and ensure that they are consistent with a needs-based approach, analyse risk in terms of its end-line effects on selected vulnerable groups, as prescribed in UNICEF guidance,¹⁵⁰ rather than in terms of set typologies of risks, as done in the EPP. Rather than approach risk assessment and risk management as stand-alone activities, further embed them in ACO's ongoing planning and programming processes. To mitigate sector-siloed approaches and to foster a multi-sectoral perspective on risk-informed programming, allow Field Offices and Implementing Partners to play a greater role in risk analysis and the formulation of programme responses. 	Dep. Rep, Sector Chiefs, FO Chiefs	4.1.1.

¹⁵⁰ UNICEF's 2018 *Guidance on Risk-informed Programming* prescribes a 'people-centric' approach to analysing contextual risk. This approach is consistent with needs-based programming and a multi-sectoral outlook.

FOCUS AREA 2: COVERAGE areas AND ACCESS			
4	<p>To enable further progress towards multi-sectoral programming and results-based management, continue to support a shift from a ‘planning per sector’ to a ‘planning per need’ approach. Specific actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce the recently introduced requirement to design Theories of Change (ToCs) at sector level. In selected areas of intervention, such as that covered by the Integrated Services Package, pilot multi-sectoral ToCs for use as roadmaps in multi-sectoral programme design. • Support a multi-sectoral outlook by introducing multi-sector monitoring, and provide the required training to a selected cadre of extenders. 	Dep. Rep, Sector Chiefs, FO Chiefs	4.2.1.
5	<p>While reforms at scale are conducted to enable further decentralisation, foster ACO’s operational agility and adaptiveness by enabling the better capture of programme-critical information. Specific actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build up ACO’s internal capacity to draw on and analyse anecdotal information held by extenders. Use this knowledge more systematically to help compensate for the limitations of formal needs assessments, notably in hard-to-reach areas where needs are reportedly the greatest. • Develop contextual knowledge iteratively from professionalised and more systematic extender reporting. Where appropriate, develop templates and set debriefing processes for extender reporting. 	Dep. Rep, Sector Chiefs, FO Chiefs	4.2.2.
6	<p>Invest in developing in-house CS capacity, starting with simplifying and contextualising the existing UNICEF Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding Programme guidelines. Specific actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training to staff on these principles through webinars and training exercises. Introduce the use of CS checklists as a routine tool in project design and monitoring. • In ensuring the application of CS, focus particularly on Field Office staff and provide them with the necessary support and oversight. 	Dep. Rep, Sector Chiefs, FO Chiefs	4.2.2.
7	<p>In the next programme cycle, expand the use of TPMs for independent results verification; complement and better harmonise the use of TPMs with monitoring activities conducted internally. Specific actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure adequate resourcing of TPMs, consider them as core budget (RR) and earmark approx. 1% of the total ACO budget to this programme-wide facility. Carefully consider the deployment of TPM capacity in light of alternatives for both accountability and learning. • Enhance ACO’s monitoring toolkit by reinforcing community-based grievance mechanisms already in place, expanding their coverage where possible, and piloting peer-to-peer monitoring across programme sectors and among implementing partners. Peer-to-peer monitoring should also be envisaged with other UN agencies. 	Dep. Rep, Chief Planning and Monitoring, Sector Chiefs, FO Chiefs	4.2.2.

FOCUS AREA 3: PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITY BUILDING			
8	<p>In preparation for a degraded operating environment in the next planning period, build more inclusive and consultative working relationships with NGO and civil society partners. Specific actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operate a shift away from transactional relationships with implementing partners, towards more symmetrical partnerships underpinned by mutual accountability. With selected partners, set cooperation in the long term and commit to consistent capacity building support over a multi-year timespan. Proactively draw on the significant contextual knowledge of NGO and CSO partners. As well as tapping into this knowledge for risk analysis, as recommended above, use it to inform joint advocacy activities in which the comparative strengths of NGO and CSO partners are better understood and more deliberately leveraged. 	Dep. Rep., Sector Chiefs	4.3.1.
9	<p>In consultation with other UN actors, accelerate efforts to review the use of NTAs in programmes. Specific actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drawing on the experience gained in diverse sectors such as WASH and Child Protection, arrive at a clear and informed position on whether, and to what extent, the benefits of using NTAs as proxies in programme delivery outweigh the reputational and programme risks that this carries. Consult internally and with stakeholders on possible measures to further mitigate the risk of using NTAs, including by modifying their briefs, scope of work and reporting lines. On the back of UNICEF's dual mandate and the scope of its institutional development portfolio in Afghanistan, exercise leadership in shaping UN-wide consensus on the use of NTAs in the aid effort and related best practice. 	Dep. Rep., Sector Chiefs	4.3.1.
FOCUS AREA 4: GENDER INTEGRATION			
10	<p>Use the opportunity of the next ACP planning cycle to introduce a strengthened and consistent approach to analysis, monitoring, progress reporting and learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the current gender strategy action plan and consider how ambitions around 'gender-responsive design and implementation' can be revitalised by instilling gender analysis and gender progress reporting and learning at all levels. At country level, ensure key situation analyses have been conducted and systematise learning. At sector level, systematise gender analysis, monitoring and reporting approaches. 	Dep. Rep., Gender Advisors, Gender Specialists, Sector Chiefs	4.4.1.
11	<p>While recognising the significant barriers to gender-transformative goals in Afghanistan, continue to pragmatically seek out opportunities for progress towards these goals wherever possible. Specific actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map ACO sectoral plans against the gender scale to identify which sector interventions are strong in gender integration and which are not. Review gender-transformational programming and draw out learning which can be applied to other interventions that are lower on the GEM scale, with particular attention to the use of gender analysis, community engagement and attitudinal and behaviour change work. 	Dep. Rep., Gender Advisors, Gender Specialists	4.4.2.

6 Annexes

6.1 Terms of Reference

unite for
children



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

1. INTRODUCTION

UNICEF works to promote and protect the rights and wellbeing of children and women in Afghanistan. In September 2014, UNICEF's Executive Board approved the [Afghanistan Country Programme \(ACP\) 2015-2019](#) to support the Government of Afghanistan in realizing the rights of children and women. The five-year programme comprises of six convergent programme areas. A Country Programme Action Plan was subsequently signed in November 2014 with the Government of Afghanistan. In 2017, a mid-term review of the programme was conducted that assessed mid-term progress in collaboration with key stakeholders and formulated strategic recommendations to revise the programme.

The revised UNICEF Evaluation Policy issued in 2018 requires country programmes to undergo a Country Programme Evaluation. Given that a new Afghanistan Country Programme Document (CPD) is planned to be developed during 2020-2021, it is an opportune moment to identify critical lessons from the current programme to inform the design of the next CPD; as well as conduct an independent assessment of progress towards strategic commitments and performance in light of the changing context of Afghanistan. Therefore, an evaluation of the ACP 2015-2019 is commissioned with a focus on the strategic positioning of UNICEF and its Country Programme in specific areas of interest, and subsequently the evaluation is titled the Strategic Positioning Evaluation (SPE). The overall aim of the SPE is to assess how well the ACP—in terms of strategies, approaches and implementation—has contributed to the achievement of UNICEF's strategic goals and mandate as well as strategically positioned UNICEF within the development/humanitarian system and among national partners in Afghanistan. This means looking beyond programmatic outcomes and assessing UNICEF's ability to develop and implement programme strategies that are most appropriate in the country context to advance strategic goals and its mandate.

2. THE AFGHANISTAN COUNTRY PROGRAMME AND PROGRAMMING CONTEXT

2.1. Afghanistan Country Programme

The Afghanistan Country Programme of Cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and UNICEF was approved to run from 2015 until 2019 and further extended to 2021. It contains six planned outcome-level results, which support broader planned outcomes in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Afghanistan 2015-2019. These six outcomes are in the areas of: Child Protection; Basic Education; Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health; Nutrition; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene; and Social Inclusion. The [Country Programme Action Plan](#) includes the initial results framework per Outcome. The programme was planned to be implemented mainly through development approaches with concurrent emergency interventions.

The ACP aims to focus on the most-deprived provinces and areas, mostly in South, South East and Western regions in order to accelerate the access of children and women to basic services and bring efforts to scale. At a national level, the country programme leverages the catalytic role of UNICEF to make sustainable changes in systems, policy, and programme implementation, addressing root causes of rights violations. The programme supports nationwide access to high-priority interventions such as routine immunization, polio eradication, provision of teaching-learning materials, and vitamin A supplementation. In the Northern Region the programme aims to reduce vulnerability through a new focus on social protection and increased prioritization of children's issues in local planning. The programme design is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the

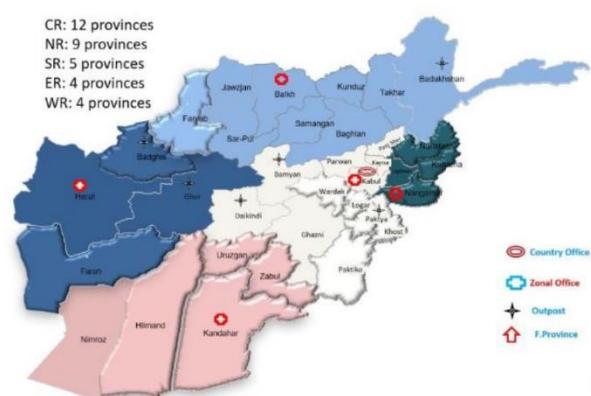
TERMS OF REFERENCE

***Strategic Positioning Evaluation
of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019***

Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action.

In 2017, a participatory [mid-term review \(MTR\) of the country programme](#) was conducted in view of significant changes to the programming context including changes in the situation of children in Afghanistan, impact of increasing conflict and return of families from other countries among others, as measured by newly available data. The MTR process included a consolidation and simplification of the results structure and an alignment with the Afghanistan national Peace Development Framework, ministry strategies and plans, and the Sustainable Development Goals. While the six programme outcomes were maintained, four headline results were identified—1) Eradicate polio 2) Increase immunization coverage through strengthened routine vaccinations 3) Decrease the number and percentage of girls out of school at every age 4) Prevent all forms of malnutrition—on which the Country Programme would deliver at scale and under all circumstances. This approach, focusing on four headline results, was replaced in 2019 by an integrated programming approach.

UNICEF Afghanistan currently has field presence, and operates via a decentralized structure, through its 5 zonal offices and 6 outposts.¹ Currently, among the 393 staff of UNICEF ACO, 165 work in zonal offices while 288 in ACO's national office in Kabul.



Partners of the country program include government at national and sub-national levels, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and other civil society, bilateral aid missions, other UN agencies, and media partners. Partner ministries include: Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Ministry of Justice, the Central Statistics Organization—now National Statistics and Information Agency (NSIA)—, and the Civil Registration Organization (Ministry of Interior). See annex 1, for a stakeholder map of the country office.

¹ Zonal offices are located in Herat (West Region), Jalalabad (East Region), Mazar (North Region), Kandahar (South Region) and Kabul (Central Region). Outposts are located in Ghor, Badghis, Daykundi, Bamyan, Badakhshan and Paktia. The number of zonal offices was the same at the start of the programme in 2015, while the outposts were 8.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

2.2. Programming context

The ACP was designed to be a development programme in a fragile context. Since then, economic growth has been less robust than hoped and poverty rates remain high. Gender inequality remains a persistent and very serious issue across all sectors, but among children particularly in education and child marriage. Conflict and violence have further exposed women and girls to abuse, including gender-based violence.

A recently conducted risk analysis suggests that the complexity and scope of humanitarian situations affecting children have increased.² This includes emergencies with different direct and underlying causes and both acute and protracted emergency situations. Numerous areas of the country continue to experience natural disasters, and as a whole, Afghanistan is vulnerable to climate and environment-related risks (e.g. extreme weather conditions). In terms of Afghan children on the move, most children move with family members, but there are unaccompanied children traveling to and returning from Pakistan and Iran, and among the internally displaced.

There has been an increase in the number of families who are food insecure, especially in the winter and spring months. According to the Humanitarian Needs Overview and Plan for 2017, as well as assessments and reports by multiple organizations, there has been a deterioration in the security situation and an increase in the number of families and children negatively affected by one or more humanitarian situations. This includes an estimated 5.3 million children.

Afghanistan's communities are acutely vulnerable and highly exposed to a variety of hazards and stresses, with limited mitigation capacity or safety net. The country overall has low adaptive and coping capacity, with a weak institutional and policy environment to reduce and mitigate risk. It is the least peaceful country globally, with the highest level of conflict intensity. The impact on children of conflict caused by anti-government elements and the return of families and children from other countries are among factors that have increased the challenges to achieving substantial gains for children. Attempt to engage in peace talks have resulted in hopeful signs but also regular renewed fighting that has impeded humanitarian access to various provinces.

The UNICEF country programme contributed to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF³) for Afghanistan. The UNDAF is a collective effort of UN agencies, in areas of comparative advantage, aimed at achieving jointly identified priorities related to human rights and development. The current programme of cooperation between the UN and the government of Afghanistan covers the period 2018-2021 and is aligned with the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), which is recognized as the single coordinating structure for development assistance in the country. The ANPDF serves to focus all development assistance to Afghanistan around the priorities of the GoI, ensuring that Afghanistan's development is Afghan owned and led.

3. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND INTENDED USE OF THE EVALUATION

² DevSmart Group (2020), Child centered, multi-hazard risk analysis.

³ Now referred to as United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

3.1. Evaluation purpose

The purpose of the SPE is threefold:

1. Inform programme design and support managerial decision-taking at country office level in preparation of the next the country programme. Recommendations are to be provided which must be specific enough that necessary actions can be determined in response.
2. Foster organizational learning about what works and does not work, especially in areas where the country programme has taken a leadership position, such as linking development with humanitarian action and gender integration, and within the fragile and conflict-affected setting like Afghanistan.
3. UNICEF has an accountability to design and implement programmes at a standard of excellence. The evaluation will support accountability by providing an independent assessment of how selected strategies and UNICEF's positioning have contributed to supporting the progressive realization of rights for all children, especially the most vulnerable.

3.2. Evaluation objectives

Towards the achievement of above purposes, the SPE is meant to:

1. Provide an independent assessment of the strategies and approaches adopted by the country programme with regards to specific areas of interest, and how well these have contributed to the achievement of UNICEF's strategic goals and mandate.
2. Provide an independent assessment of UNICEF's positioning within the development/humanitarian system and among national partners with regards to specific areas of interest. Strategic positioning refers to UNICEF's ability, through its country programme, to positively influence national agendas, leverage relationships, operate in areas of comparative strengths and take up a leadership role in order to advance its strategic goals and children's rights in the country.
3. Draw key lessons from the innovative and adaptive capacity of the Country Programme design and implementation and provide a set of forward-looking and actionable recommendations for the next programming cycle.

3.3. Scope of the evaluation

Thematic scope: the evaluation needs to take a cross-sectoral perspective with a focus on strategic areas of interest (evaluation issues). During the evaluation scoping the following evaluation issues were identified as being of strategic interest: 1) integration of and positioning for a strengthened humanitarian, development and peace nexus; 2) geographical coverage and access to achieve equitable results for children at scale; 3) optimization of implementation modalities and institutional capacity development; and, 4) gender integration into programming and policy advocacy work. Evidence and recommendations about these issues are of particular relevance for the strategic direction, management and positioning of the new country programme, and can complement the 2017 Midterm review and existing evaluation evidence.

The entirety of the UNICEF country programme within the context and development/humanitarian system of Afghanistan is the unit of analysis to examine the issues, although specific programmes or strategies may receive specific attention because of their value to learning and accounting for results. The focus of the evaluation is on UNICEF work in Afghanistan, not the work of the entire UN or specific agencies or missions.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

The evaluation issues are to be assessed with a focus on effectiveness, coherence, relevance, equity as well as efficiency. The latter is primarily understood in terms of dynamic efficiency, i.e. the ability of the ACP to adapt its approaches, implementation and resource base to changing needs and context and learn based on evidence. It is not expected that the evaluation will examine efficiency from an 'economy' perspective nor implementation fidelity perspective. Assessing the impact and the sustainability of the ACP is not a focus of this strategic positioning evaluation.

Sectors: All sectors of the ACP are within the scope of the SPE. Programming sectors are an important but not the main unit of analysis, although specific sectors can be examined to address the evaluation issues and questions. As the evaluation is conceptualized as a SPE, an assessment of result delivery per programme sector/outcome is not envisioned but rather how different programme activities and results contribute to strategic goals and UNICEF's strategic position, in particular in the strategic areas of interest.

Timeframe: the principal focus is on the present country programme from 2015. Information pre-dating this period will be considered insofar as it illuminates issues in the current programme.

Geographic scope: The scope of the evaluation is national.

Participants: Because a critical purpose of the evaluation is to inform UNICEF's next country programme UNICEF stakeholders at country and regional level will be primarily involved in the design and governance of the evaluation. However, given that the evaluation has a focus on the strategic positioning of UNICEF and its Country Programme, the consultation of external stakeholders is critical to addressing the evaluation questions.

3.4. Intended use of the findings

In 2020/21, the ACP is in its last year of the implementation cycle. Parallel to the SPE, the Country Office is preparing for the next CP cycle, with several related on-going and recently completed exercises (such as a perception study, a situation analysis, a conflict analysis and a risk analysis). The evaluation issues have been identified because of their relevance for the design of the next ACP. By approaching the CP evaluation from a strategic positioning angle, the value addition of the UNICEF investment can be assessed through an evaluation of the strategic choices, partnerships and adaptive capacities employed by the Programme. The intended results of the evaluation will be available for the development and fine-tuning of the change strategies for the new CP, which will cover the period of 2022-2026.

4. EVALUATION ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

This section presents the key evaluation questions (KEQ) and indicate sub-questions of interest. The questions are organized by the four identified strategic evaluation issues. Annex 2 presents a brief background of each of the issues. The bidders are invited to refine the evaluation questions in their proposal based on literature review and contextual and sectoral expertise.

1. Integration of and positioning for a strengthened humanitarian, development and peace nexus

KEQ 1. To what extent is UNICEF well positioned to strengthen the coherence and complementarity between humanitarian action, development and peace building within its programming and operations?

- To what extent are UNICEF's development and humanitarian strategies, approaches and actions mutually reinforcing and/or coherent? How can coherence and synergies be improved?

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

- How well has risk-informed programming—including risk analysis, design, response and monitoring—evolved, strengthened and been systematically operationalized across programme sections and field offices? How can it be improved?
- To what extent is UNICEF well positioned through its strategies, operations, partnerships and advocacy to coherently and consistently strengthen the resilience of systems, communities and families to sustain the wellbeing of children? How can it be improved?
- To what extent have UNICEF's programmes and operations adapted to the changing conflict situation and become more conflict-sensitive, based on adequate and useful conflict analysis and informed in general by evidence on contextual risks? How can the programme's adaptive capacity to conflict be improved?

KEQ 2 To what extent is UNICEF strategically well positioned to enhance the humanitarian-development-peace nexus within the national development system to the advancement of children's rights in the country?

- To what extent is UNICEF operating in its areas of comparative strength and advantage to enhance the humanitarian-development-peace nexus considering the array of other actors?
- To what extent and how has UNICEF been able to influence the nexus approach through the coordination structures at national and subnational level, and take leadership in integrating humanitarian and development response to the benefit of vulnerable children and women?

2. Geographical coverage and access to achieve equitable results for children at scale

KEQ 3 To what extent have UNICEF's programme strategy and implementation coherently and consistently fostered multi-sectoral programming to respond holistically to children's needs at scale and protect the rights of children everywhere.

- To what extent has there been consistency between UNICEF ACO's strategic vision on multi-sectoral convergence, geographical coverage and scale, and the actual programming choices made on the ground? What factors explain deviations from the strategic vision in the CPD and actual programming; what were driving factors to adjust any programming approaches?
- To what extent did ACP implementation promote synergies, coherence and better position UNICEF to fulfil its core mandate on children's rights?
- How well has UNICEF been able to balance the dual goals of reducing inequity and increasing programme efficiency and effectiveness? How can UNICEF approach be improved to achieve the dual goals?

KEQ 4 How well have UNICEF's programme strategy and implementation effectively and coherently enhanced access to areas controlled by anti-government elements (AGEs)?

- How effective are current approaches used to accessing and programming in areas controlled by anti-government elements? How well are they institutionalized in ACO's programming and organization? How can they be improved?
- To what extent does UNICEF have the capacity and programmatic agility to respond to needs and risks in AGE controlled areas? How can it be improved?



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

- How well has UNICEF been able to engage, coordinate and partner with other UN and non-UN cooperating actors to enhance access to AGE controlled areas?

3. Optimization of implementation modalities and institutional capacity development

KEQ 5 How well is UNICEF positioned to ensure effective programme delivery through Government and NGOs partnerships?

- How have Government and NGO partnership strategies evolved during the programme period and been well adapted to changing context, needs and priorities set in national policy frameworks? To what extent is there a common partnership approach with clarity of purpose and rationale?
- How effective are UNICEF's partnerships with Government and NGOs for programme delivery? To what extent do they allow UNICEF to influence actual service delivery? How can effectiveness be improved?
- What are UNICEF's strengths and weaknesses as a partner as perceived by Government and NGO partners? What opportunities and threats to the partnerships exist?

KEQ 6 How well has UNICEF utilized extenders⁴ and third-party monitors (TPM) to enhance programme delivery?

- How has the use of extenders and TPM evolved during the programme period and has it become better adapted to changing context and needs? Is there clarity of purpose and rationale of their use?
- How effective are extenders and TPM to respectively contribute to quality programme delivery and quality monitoring? How can their capacity to deliver be further improved?
- How well have extender and TPM delivery processes, oversight and monitoring been designed and implemented to improve their effectiveness and flexible use?

KEQ 7 To what extent has UNICEF contributed to institutional strengthening and government capacity building in accordance to its comparative strengths?

- In which programming areas has UNICEF demonstrated a strong capacity for institutional strengthening and building sustainable government capacities? To what extent is there a clear strategy on institutional strengthening and government capacity building?
- Is UNICEF operating in its areas of comparative strength in terms of institutional strengthening considering the array of other actors? Is ACO an authoritative voice on capacity strengthening in public sector services?
- To what extent has the use of National Technical Assistants contributed to government capacity strengthening?⁵

⁴ A (field based) extender is a person employed by one of ACO's extender contractors (contracted under an approved Long-term Agreement) to undertake a defined set of duties (set in a Terms of Reference). Extenders enable ACO to deliver a programme in conflict areas and where UNICEF staff cannot gain access. They can also be hired for ad hoc projects where specialist skills and local knowledge are required at short notice. Source: UNICEF Afghanistan (2019) *Office Instruction on Contracting for Extenders*

⁵ ACO implements its programming, among others, through the secondment of National Technical Assistants (NTAs) to government partners.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

4. Gender integration into programming and policy advocacy work

KEQ 8 To what extent is gender increasingly being integrated in programme planning and practice based on evidence generated and lessons learned?

- How systematically is UNICEF investing in and mainstreaming gender-related evidence generation and knowledge management and using the evidence to guide programming? How can it be improved?
- How is the strengthening of gender at organization level been translated into more gender-responsive and transformative programming? What are early lessons learned? How can it be improved?

KEQ 9 How well is UNICEF leveraging its position in strategic partnerships to promote gender in evidence generation, policies and programming?

- To what extent has UNICEF been effective in promoting and building capacity among partners to produce gender data and undertake gender analysis?
- How well has UNICEF been able build and leverage strategic partnerships to increase its visibility as an organization that is committed to gender equality and collaboratively influence policies and programming related to gender inequality in Afghanistan? Is UNICEF operating in its areas of comparative strength and advantages considering the array of other actors?

5. METHODOLOGY

Bidders are required to present their best ideas as part of the technical proposal. The quality of the methodology section will, together with the quality of the proposed team and demonstrated understanding/experience with the Afghanistan context, determine whether a bidder is deemed technically qualified.

The different evaluation issues presented in the previous section cover dimensions that are strategic to the development of the next country programme. The bidders can propose an overarching conceptual framework or specific conceptual models to examine the different issues. Regardless of the conceptual lenses proposed, a clearly outlined evaluation matrix will need to be developed during inception that further refines the evaluation questions, proposes criteria that will be looked at to answer the questions (i.e. what matters to answer the question), and includes the information sources and methods used. The bidders need to include a preliminary evaluation matrix in their proposal.

The evaluation approach needs to take into account the purpose of the evaluation, in particular to inform the design of the next country programme. The way that the identified evaluation issues have been addressed in the country programme has been evolving as well as UNICEF's overall guidance on it. The evaluation needs go beyond describing this evolution. It needs to provide an assessment that can guide strategic choices going forward taking into account the complex context of Afghanistan.

Bidders should display the ability to identify, conceptualize, and manage a range of methods. The following is intended to offer useful information on actual or potential resources and limits:

1. Systematic document review will be a foundational method to apply. The evaluation team will need to review and systematically analyse both UNICEF and non-UNICEF documents that are relevant to the evaluation issues. Document review is not to be considered as a mere informative exercise during the inception phase but as a core method to contribute to answering the evaluation questions. The bidders need to demonstrate their expertise and capacity to efficiently and effectively map out, assess the relevance and systematically analyze a variety and large amount of documents. Use of such existing

ToR – Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

Page 8 of 29

TERMS OF REFERENCE***Strategic Positioning Evaluation
of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019***

secondary data is even more important during the current Covid-19 crisis because the potential for primary data collection is constrained. Document identification needs to take place during inception and will continue throughout the evaluation. Annex 3 presents some of the key documents to support the proposal formulation.

2. UNICEF can provide data from its administrative information systems that are used for planning, monitoring, reporting and performance management. These can be used to map and analyse achievement of results, implementation of activities, budget allocation and expenditures, partnerships and gender integration. These data can be particularly valuable to map out and analyse partnerships and use of extenders and TPMs across the programme period and programmes. Gender marking and tagging of outputs, activities and expenditure is also happening, which can help address the gender evaluation questions. The access, usefulness and comparability over time of such data needs to be assessed during the inception phase. Bidders need to foresee capacity to efficiently process and analyse such information. Expertise in geographical representation of results, activities or expenditures through appropriate software can add value. It strengthens the proposal if bidders can demonstrate understanding and previous experience with UNICEF administrative information systems. Annex 3 presents an overview of systems that can be used.
3. Primary data collection among key stakeholders and implementing partners via qualitative data collection methods such as key informant interviews is required. The preliminary stakeholder mapping in Annex 1 provides a first basis to propose such qualitative data collection methods. The mapping needs to be completed during inception. Given the travel constraints during the Covid-19 pandemic, the bidders need to have the capacity to efficiently implement remote qualitative data collection or/and work through national team members/partners. Because the evaluation questions emphasize learning from actual implementation and operational choices on the ground viz-a-viz strategy and vision, sufficient consultation among UNICEF field office staff need to be foreseen. Furthermore, given the focus on UNICEF's strategic positioning within the broader interviews with representatives of government partners and other development/humanitarian partners (UN and non-UN) are to be included.
4. In order to address evaluation questions 5 and 6 data collection with NGO/CSO partners, extenders and third-party monitors needs to be planned. Consultation of these stakeholders can also provide data for other evaluation questions, for example, related to gender integration and positioning (evaluation questions 8/9). The data collection can make use of qualitative techniques, but short remote/online surveys can also be considered. Access to sample frames needs to be assessed during inception.⁶ When surveys are proposed, the bidder needs to explain how it fits the evaluation matrix and what the focus can be. The bidder also needs to demonstrate experience and capacity to efficiently implement and process online/remote surveys and promote adequate response rates.
5. To address some evaluation questions the bidders can propose focusing on specific programmes and/or locations to gain an in-depth understanding of how and why strategies, approaches, actions or delivery modalities were operationalized. This can provide good practice learning that can inform broader strategy formulation for the next country programme.
6. It is not expected that primary data will be collected from end beneficiaries among community members. Any proposal to do this as part of the methodology must carefully justify why this is the case.

⁶ The number of partnerships established during the 2015-2019 programme period is 181. A list of partnership contact details can be provided. Lists of extenders can also be compiled. Third-party monitors are contracted through companies. Details of individual monitors can be obtained if required. Also, lists of National Technical Assistants can be compiled.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

7. Consultation with community influencers/representatives or/and community service providers needs to be foreseen in order to represent a local perspective of the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency and equity of programme delivery. This perspective can be valuable to better understand, among others, how well the humanitarian, development and peace nexus is operationalized at local level across different programmes and contexts; how convergent programming and equitable access to services are experienced locally; how effective UNICEF's approaches are to reach areas controlled by anti-government elements at local level; how extenders and TPMs are perceived by local stakeholders; and, what can be learned from gender integration at local level. Sampling will be required for data collection at this level, a preliminary approach for which the bidder needs to present in the proposal. UNICEF can facilitate contacts. Bidders need to demonstrate their capacity to implement data collection among community representatives and service providers in an effective and timely manner in the context of Afghanistan. The Covid-19 pandemic creates extra challenges for such data collection. The bidders need to propose creative ways to collect the data under Covid-19 conditions, which constrain face-to-face data collection.
8. The methodology should be aware of and prepared to take advantage of the accumulated and in-process evidence generated through research, studies, and evaluations conducted within the UNICEF-Afghanistan programme of cooperation.⁷

The foregoing comments have mostly focused on data collection. Bidders should not just focus the methodology section of the technical proposal on data gathering. The methodology must also pay attention to evaluation design, tools to be used, and analytic approaches to be employed to make sense of the data. It is important that the evaluators integrate evaluative thinking throughout the evaluation. Mere descriptive analysis of trends and situation is not sufficient. The evaluation design needs to foresee evaluative judgments to be made.

Gender and equity are important dimensions to examine as part of this evaluation. They receive specific attention as part of evaluation issues 2 and 4. However, they should also be considered as cross-cutting across the other evaluation issues. For example, how partnerships are contributing to equity and inclusion; or, how

⁷ Of particular relevance are several ongoing or recently finished evidence-related projects.

- UNICEF ACO has contracted a Perception Study about the levels of awareness, understanding and support for child rights and UNICEF's reputation and mandate among key stakeholders at all levels. The study was in inception phase in August 2020.
- UNICEF ROSA has developed a draft conceptual framework in 2020 to understand the humanitarian-development nexus. A consultant has been contracted to apply the framework on case study countries, for which Afghanistan is considered. Therefore, depending on the timing, the evaluation team may be able to draw on this evidence.
- UNICEF ACO commissioned a conflict analysis to inform its engagement in Afghanistan. The study report was finalised in May 2020. It is an update of a 2017 conflict analysis as part of the Mid-Term Review of the 2015-2019 Country Programme. The conflict analysis addresses topics that are particularly relevant for the evaluation, such as, UNICEF's use of conflict analysis and sensitivity mechanisms, access to conflict affected areas, agility of UNICEF programming to account for different conflict realities and UNICEF's reliance on extenders in conflict affected areas.
- UNICEF ACO commissioned a child-centered, multi-hazard risk analysis. The study report was finalised in May 2020. It examines multiple dimensions of vulnerability; as well as environmental, conflict-related, socio-economic and biological hazards that Afghanistan experiences. In addition, it assesses the institutional capacity present in Afghanistan to manage risks and the implications for UNICEF's child rights programming in different sectors.
- As part of a global evaluation exercise, UNICEF ACO completed an Evaluation of UNICEF's Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations. The evaluation assessed UNICEF performance in achieving coverage and quality in complex humanitarian with the aim of improving UNICEF response to humanitarian crises in Afghanistan.
- UNICEF ACO commissioned an adolescent portfolio evaluation with a gender lens. The study report is expected to be finalised in September 2020. The evaluation is meant to help strengthen the focus on adolescents in Afghanistan in line with UNICEF's current corporate focus on the second decade of life of children, "Generation Unlimited".

ToR – Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

TERMS OF REFERENCE***Strategic Positioning Evaluation
of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019***

gender is mainstreamed in the operational use of extenders and TPM to adequately access women and girls. Bidders should propose how gender and equity can be integrated across the evaluation.

Due to the limited time frame and Covid-19-related travel constraints no inception mission by international evaluation team members is foreseen. The bidder needs to propose how to organize the necessary consultations during inception remotely and/or via local partners. During inception at the minimum a kick-off call needs to be planned as well as consultation with key UNICEF stakeholders at national and regional level. Also, a meeting with the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) needs to be scheduled to present the evaluation design and inception report.

During the implementation and validation stages of the evaluation country visit(s) to Afghanistan can be planned by all international team members, but the evolving Covid-19 pandemic may constrain this in practice. The bidders are encouraged to present proposals on how data collection can take place without international travel. The budget for any international travel needs to be identifiable in the overall financial proposal.

Although contract payment will be based on deliverables and not on days of effort expended, it is still important that the anticipated level of effort be presented in the technical bid, either in the methodology section or in the team composition section. All named persons should show the expected level of effort—in person-days—to be invested by evaluation stage. Additional pools of effort by not-named persons [e.g. document analysis; statistical analysis] should also be included. The level of effort presentation in the technical proposal cannot contain any cost information like daily rate.

6. EVALUATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Period	Expected focus/Deliverables of the assignment	Other elements in the overall programme to be aware of or link to
1 Inception period: Month 1: 1 November – 30 November 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Further map out and assemble relevant documents for review and analysis. Start with document review. ▪ Review of availability and accessibility of administrative data. ▪ Refinement of stakeholder mapping. ▪ Refinement of evaluation questions and development of the methodology, including all tools to be used. Deliverable 1 drafted [Inception Report] ▪ Presentation to and acceptance of the approach by the supervisor(s) ▪ Contact with involved stakeholders; preparation for data gathering and analysis efforts ▪ Data collection may begin in conjunction with the inception effort; e.g. interviews with key informants can cover their contribution to the main content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) formed. First ERG meeting at the end of the inception period. ▪ UNICEF and other stakeholder are contacted to secure cooperation for the effort. ▪ Documentation and data are assembled by UNICEF for use by the evaluation team. ▪ Inception report requires external quality assurance
2 Field work, analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing document review and secondary data analysis. ▪ Primary data collection and analysis 	

ToR – Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

TERMS OF REFERENCE***Strategic Positioning Evaluation
of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019***

	1 December – 30 January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visit to Afghanistan by international team members, if possible. ▪ Presentation of preliminary findings for discussion and validation. 	
3	Draft final report and validation 1 February 2021 – 28 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drafting of final report. ▪ Recommendations fully developed and discussed with ERG ▪ Virtual meetings with those who will receive or utilize the deliverables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The final report is quality assured by an expert external to the UNICEF evaluation manager ▪ Dissemination actions implemented.
4	Final report 31 March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All deliverables completed by due date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Final evaluation report is subject to GEROS quality rating ▪ Management response is prepared by Country office following the submission and approval of the final report

7. WORKING LOCATIONS

The base of work will be the premises of the consultant/agencies utilizing information acquired remotely. An extended mission or several visits by different team members is authorized for the team to work in Afghanistan. However, the feasibility and timing of such mission/visits depends on the ongoing Covid-19 situation. The bidders are encouraged to include local experts that can avoid international travel if needed.

If needed, UNICEF Afghanistan will facilitate accommodation, transport, office space and other logistical support for institutions' international consultants during in-country missions. The contracted institution will be responsible for availing their own computers for the assignment. All travel should be economy class.

8. DELIVERABLES

1. An Inception report that presents the complete methodology approach to conducting the work, with all tools fully drafted. The inception report needs to contain a detailed and agreed evaluation matrix. All design issues under discussion to that point are to be answered, any revisions to the issues and questions, and issues of reference group role and supervisory quality assurance.
2. PowerPoint with preliminary findings for discussion and validation. The evaluation team will present the preliminary findings for validation among the ERG and other key stakeholders as required.
3. Draft Final Report with key findings, conclusions, preliminary recommendations and lessons. This report to include chapters based on the evaluation issues presented in the ToR. The report follows the outline provided in Annex 3. Deviations from this outline can be discussed but need to be agreed by UNICEF.
4. Final Report based on draft final report and revisions after feedback and quality assurance by the ERG and other reviewers.
5. PowerPoint: A visually compelling presentation to provide an evaluation brief for the key stakeholders.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

Other notes:

- The final report needs to include actionable recommendations that can be used to formulate concrete management response.⁸ The bidders can propose how actionable recommendations are developed and validated.
- Monitoring deliverables about work progress are not listed but will be periodically required.
- Page limits, if any, to be established during the inception period. In general, there will not be artificial limits, but the report should aim for conciseness, readability, and visual appeal.
- The format of the final deliverables will be decided in the inception period. A high value will be placed on products that communicate well with different audiences. Thus, infographics, PowerPoints, and other products may be fully integrated into the reports or may be proposed as complementary end products.

9. NORMS AND STANDARDS

The evaluation will abide by the following norms and standards:

- [United Nations Evaluation Group \(UNEG\) Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System, 2016](#)
- [UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis, 2015;](#)
- UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, 2008;

These guidance documents will be part of the contract of the evaluator/team. The bidders should include ethical considerations of the evaluation work in their proposal.

The integration of gender equality and human rights in evaluation are an important norm as part of UNICEF evaluation practice. UNICEF evaluation practice follows UNEG guidance on integrating gender equality and human rights.

The final report is expected to meet [UNICEF-adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards](#) as well as benchmarks used in UNICEF's Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS). Annex 3 provides an overview of the final report outline.

10. PROPOSED PAYMENT SCHEDULE

First payment:	20%, upon approval of the inception report
Second payment:	20%, upon acceptance of PowerPoint of preliminary findings for discussion and validation
Third Payment:	30%, upon receipt of draft version of final report
Fourth payment:	30%, upon acceptance of final report and accompanying PowerPoint

⁸ Recommendations need to be timebound and directed to a specific organization.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

11. EVALUATION MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Supervisor/Approving Authority: The ROSA Regional Evaluation Advisor, with support from the Multi-Country Evaluation Specialist, will supervise the assignment and approve the deliverables. In the event that on-site quality assurance is needed when the supervisor cannot be present, the QA role may be delegated to the Chief of Social Policy, Evaluation, Analytics and Research/Research and Evaluation Specialist of the Afghanistan Country Office or one of his immediate colleagues.

Evaluation Reference Group: An ERG will be created to support the consultants and the supervisors. Particular roles of the ERG will be to facilitate access to documentation and persons that must be involved, and to provide feedback on draft deliverables and other issues as required. A full TOR for the ERG members will be drafted.

12. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

This contract will be awarded to a single institution. Consortium arrangement are eligible to bid, but UNICEF will only sign a contract with the lead partner.

The team needs to have experience and be able to operate in the fragile and conflict affected context of Afghanistan. This includes the ability to travel to remote areas of Afghanistan for fieldwork. The inclusion of local experts/partner to facilitate this and add to contextual awareness is highly recommended.

This evaluation is of a strategic nature. The team leader and other senior team members need to have experience with this type of strategic evaluations, which findings are meant to support strategy formulation of the next UNICEF ACO country programme. Familiarity with the UNICEF institutional environment and work within the UN system is highly valuable.

Team Leader

A team leader must be named. She/he will direct all parts of the effort. The leader will be the person accountable in the organization's name to UNICEF. The leader will coordinate and supervise the work all teams or persons of the organization in their contributing roles. She/he will ensure the quality of the process, outputs, methodology and timely delivery of all products. The team leader will take direct responsibility for all deliverables being of satisfactory quality. The leader will ensure that the deliverables emerge in a timely fashion as a result of an in-depth analytic process as well as ongoing consultation with the organizers of the regional consultation and the steering committee.

The key qualifications of the Team Leader include:

- At least ten years of professional experience in evaluations/strategic analytic review exercises, with evidence of understanding global standards, theories, models and methods related to evaluations and research;
- Strong experience in evaluations/reviews of country programmes or corporate strategies/policies, including expertise in institutional change, strategy formulation, results-based management and programme planning cycles; having applied such experience in UNICEF or other UN organisations is desirable.
- Field experience of humanitarian response in complex high threat environments and conflict settings where access and security represent major challenges; recent work experience in Afghanistan is desirable;



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

- Advanced understanding of humanitarian principles, humanitarian space, humanitarian access, international humanitarian law, human rights law, the human rights-based approach to programming;
- Experience in integrating gender into evaluation and good understanding of gender issues;
- Previous work or consultancy experience with UNICEF (and UN systems) and understanding of UNICEF's mandate is desirable;
- Sectoral knowledge of UNICEF programme sectors: Child Protection, WASH, Nutrition, Health, Education (of a majority, if not all, sectors), as well as the Core Commitments to Children;
- Experience with interaction and data collection with different level of government counterparts and development partners
- Diplomatic and social engagement skills necessary for dealing with government and nongovernment representatives in a politically fragile context;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English required;
- Demonstrated team leader experience of complex, multi-programme evaluations, with multiple workstreams.

Other team members

The other named persons in the proposal will have experience and skills that complement the Team Leader. These complementary capacities should include at least one person each with expertise in the following subjects. Note that one team member can cover more than one subject. It is recommended to have at least one national team member based in Afghanistan.

Required

- Expertise in gender analysis/evaluation and gender programming. A gender specialist needs to be part of the team, who can lead on evaluation issue 4.
- Expertise in humanitarian evaluation and humanitarian response, with advanced understanding of accepted principles and standards for humanitarian action, and the international humanitarian system and coordination;
- Advanced understanding about the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCC);
- Expertise in linking humanitarian and development programming in fragile and conflict-affected settings, including risk informed programming in social sectors, risk analysis, emergency preparedness, and resilience building;
- Expertise in programming in conflict-affected areas, conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding;
- Expertise in the analysis of partnerships and other implementation modalities, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings;
- While expertise in all sectors of UNICEF's country programme (health (incl. polio), nutrition, education, WASH, social protection, communication for development) is not required, it is desirable that team members can demonstrate experience in as many sectors as possible;



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

- Strong qualitative research skills, including systematic document review; expertise in remote qualitative data collection is a plus;
- A work history in South Asia, with experience in Afghanistan a significant advantage;
- Adequate gender representation;
- At least some team members with fluency in Dari/ Pashto for data collection.

Significant advantages:

- Advanced understanding of UNICEF strategy and planning processes and the functioning of the UN system. Understanding of UNICEF administrative information systems is a plus;
- Development of attractive products to disseminate complex information via Infographics and other means;
- Expertise in the development and implementation of small-scale online surveys;
- Expertise in the geographical representation of results, activities and budgets across the programme period through appropriate GIS software;
- Knowledge of the social, economic, political and conflict context of Afghanistan.

Total team size:

There is no upper or lower limit. However, given the limited timeframe of the evaluation a relatively large team is desirable, depending on the expertise that can be covered by different team members. While the different evaluation issues are interlinked, they allow for some of the issues to be the focus of specific team members.

Coordination across team members will be important to ensure that data collection among key informants is integrated across evaluation issues.

Any changes to the team composition presented in the proposal and included in a potential contract would need to be discussed with and agreed by UNICEF.

Declaring prior work with UNICEF or with the UNICEF Afghanistan country programme. Institutions and individuals may have worked for UNICEF ACO in the past or with an implementing partner. All such affiliations must be declared within the proposal. UNICEF will review these declarations and judge the potential for conflict of interest. If a COI is presumed, the bidding institution will have a limited time to propose a substitute.

13. APPLICATION AND EVALUATION PROCESS

Each proposal will be assessed first on its technical merits and subsequently on its price. In making the final decision, UNICEF considers both technical and financial aspects. The bid review team first reviews the technical aspects of the offer, followed by review of the financial offers of the technically compliant vendors. The proposal obtaining the highest overall score after adding the scores for the technical and financial proposals together, that offers the best value for money will be recommended for award of the contract.

The Technical Proposal should include but not be limited to the following:

General Issues

The technical proposal should minimize repeating what is stated in the TOR and should emphasize the conceptual thinking and methods the bidder expects to utilise.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

There is no minimum or maximum length. If in doubt, ensure sufficient detail.

Bidders are requested to attach previous work samples along with the proposal.

Bidders may be asked to provide additional information.

Ensure that the level of effort [LOE] to be committed by the named team members in each phase is visible within the technical proposal. Cost data cannot be included within this technical proposal LOE discussion. That same LOE information with additional cost data should feature in the financial proposal.

Specific Reminders

Keep in mind that the following specific items are to be included, in addition to whatever other approaches and methods proposed:

1. A preliminary evaluation matrix (see section 5).
2. Presentation of a work plan in three phases: 1) Inception; 2) Implementation, including field data collection; and 3) Analysis and report preparation. The plan should be as realistic as possible.
3. Views on whether it is feasible/desirable to sample and analyze a portion of the country programme activities rather than the whole, if such an approach can reach valid conclusions of the evaluation issues.
4. An identification of the risks that may be actually or potentially present for the successful execution of this assignment, and the mitigation measures that are recommended for limiting their effect.

RATING CRITERIA for the TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

Technical criteria	Points to consider	Score
Company/Team profile & Experience	Demonstrated proof of producing high quality evaluations. **To be demonstrated by submitting 1-3 samples Experience with country programme or strategic evaluations.	10
	Ability and experience doing research and data collection in Afghanistan, including in remote areas.	5
Team composition and qualifications	Team Leader meets the qualifications and experience leading teams conducting country programme or strategic evaluations	10
	Other team members, per qualifications sought	5
	Team members experience (including research and data collection) in Afghanistan	5
Proposed methodology and approach	The overall approach is technically adequate for the assignment. The elements listed in section 5 have been properly considered in the design of the approach. The methodology advances beyond data gathering and discusses the analytic approach to arriving at findings. The evaluation approach facilitates strategic decision making about the next country programme.	15

ToR – Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

Page 17 of 29

TERMS OF REFERENCE

***Strategic Positioning Evaluation
of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019***

	Risk identification and mitigation measures are suitable for the assignment.	
	The evaluation matrix reflects a good understanding of the evaluation issues (i.e questions and criteria are relevant and appropriate) and proposes relevant methods/data sources	5
	The proposed data collection strategy and workplan is appropriate for the context of Afghanistan and considers innovation/flexibility for conducting evaluation during Covid-19.	10
	The Level of Effort for the named persons and for the effort as whole is sufficient to deliver at quality and takes into account the proposed timeframe.	5
TOTAL SCORE	Maximum possible score	70
Assessment	Passing grade: >48 [i.e. 70% of the maximum possible score] Failing grade: <49	Pass Fail

The Financial Proposal should include but not be limited to the following:

Bidders are expected to submit a lump sum financial proposal to complete the entire assignment based on the terms of reference. The lump sum should be broken down to show the detail for the following:

- **Resource costs**
Daily rate multiplied by number of days
- **Any other costs (if any)**
Indicate nature and breakdown
- **Copy of the company registration (if relevant)**

Bidders are required to estimate travel costs in the Financial Proposal. The budget for any international travel needs to be identifiable in the overall financial proposal. Please note that i) travel costs shall be calculated based on economy class fare regardless of the length of travel and ii) costs for accommodation, meals and incidentals shall not exceed the applicable daily subsistence allowance (DSA) rates, as propagated by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). Details can be found at <http://isc.un.org>.

Cumulative Analysis will be used to evaluate and award proposals. The evaluation criteria associated with this TOR is split between technical and financial as follows:

70	%	Technical
30	%	Financial
100 % Total		

TERMS OF REFERENCE***Strategic Positioning Evaluation
of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019*****Annex 1. Preliminary stakeholder map of the Afghanistan Country Programme (ACP)**

Stakeholder	Role in ACP	Sector(s)	Responsibilities in the ACP
National level			
ACO Representative	Strategic leadership UNICEF representation Operational manager	All CP sectors/programmes, cross cutting and operational sections and units	The main governance body to oversee ACO programmes and operations
ACO Deputy Representative Chiefs of programmes Chiefs of cross cutting sections and units	Programme Management Pillar	Health Nutrition Polio Education Child protection WASH Communication advocacy and civic engagement Resource mobilization Planning and monitoring Communication for Development (C4D) Emergency Social Policy, Evaluation and Research Gender Adolescents Field operations Field offices Cluster coordinators	Overall technical guidance and oversight to development and emergency programmes and the consistency of technical standards, approaches, plans, results, monitoring and reporting; Promoting partnerships at the national level, encouraging donor relations at the sector level, Maintaining situational awareness of national and regional economic, social and political dynamics and trends affecting UNICEF programme implementation. Ensuring capacity building and learning of UNICEF programme staff and partners in programme policy and innovations for the successful implementation of UNICEF's core commitment to children
ACO Deputy Representative-Operations	Operation Pillar Note: security is led by security advisor who directly reports to Representative	Functional areas of supplies and logistics, administration, finance, human resources, ICT, construction oversight, and the Business Support Centre (BSC). Administrative and budgetary oversight is also provided to the security function.	The operations pillar acts in partnership with the Programme and Field Pillars. Contributing to and advising on programme planning, management and implementation where required. Providing financial and budgetary information, advice and assistance to all functions as required. Providing oversight and support to ensure compliance with policies and procedures.

ToR – Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

Page 19 of 29

TERMS OF REFERENCE

***Strategic Positioning Evaluation
of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019***

			<p>Managing operations relationships with other agencies and UNAMA.</p> <p>Managing the office's Business Operations Strategy (BOS) as per Headquarters guidance.</p> <p>Managing the office's internal and external audit processes and advising the office on control and oversight issues.</p> <p>Managing the office's Annual Risk Assessment (ARA) system and processes, such that all offices and categories of staff fully understand and have an input in the exercise, including the Staff Association</p> <p>Overseeing the office's ethics and financial disclosure processes, including ensuring that coverage includes categories of non-staff personnel such as extenders.</p> <p>Overseeing the fulfilment of UNICEF's duty of care obligations to staff and visitors concerning well-being, living standards and the provision of health care.</p> <p>Supporting the processing of operations transactions to facilitate the efficient implementation of programme activities.</p> <p>Transaction processing efficiency and effectiveness</p> <p>Ensuring that all section relevant Operations staff are fully aware of current Programme Criticality levels and the consequences of this for operations activity and programme delivery.</p>
Government Major line ministries, including Public Health, Education, Foreign Affairs, Economy, Women Affairs and Social Affairs	Strategic and implementing partner	Health, nutrition, education, WASH, social/child protection	Among the ministries and other government entities, some of them play implementing partner role e.g. ministry of public health; some play strategic partner role e.g. ministry of education that carry the national education plan, GPE.

ToR – Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

Page 20 of 29



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

UN Agencies (including UNAMA, WHO, UNFPA, UNHCR, WFP, UNDP) and UNCT	Implementing and strategic partners	Health, education, nutrition, social/child protection Cluster coordinators	Other UN agencies work with ACO as strategic partners and/or implementing partners. Also, they play advisory role in the form of clusters or working groups
International and national NGOs	Implementing partners Advisory role	Nutrition, education, WASH, social/child protection, emergency	NGOs mostly implement ACO programs in the field under direct partnership. Also, NGOs play an advisory role in the form if working groups, advisory groups and clusters
Donors	Funder	All programmatic sections and units	Funding programmes/ providing financial resources
Supra national level			
UNICEF Regional Office of South Asia	Technical assistance Oversight Quality assurance	All programmatic and operational sectors, including cross cutting sectors such as gender	Regional Office provides technical and programmatic advice, support and guidance. Regional Office facilitates knowledge sharing and learning across country offices. Regional Office conduct quality assurances, monitors and provides oversight over country office plans, operations, programmes and management.
UNICEF HQ	Guidance Oversight Policy setting & strategic leadership	All programmatic and operational sectors, including cross cutting sectors such as gender	HQ provides strategic and technical guidance to regional and country offices HQ develops policies, guidance, tools and systems to enable programme delivery HQ provides strategic leadership and overall direction to the regional and country office HQ ensures oversight of UNICEF's overall performance
Provincial/regional			
ACO Chief of Field Operations Chief of Field Offices	Management of field operations	All Field Office's level programmes and operations	Provide an effective interface with the programme, operations, and supplies sections to ensure effective programme delivery. Guide process of planning, organizing, controlling and monitoring financial resources with a view to

ToR – Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

TERMS OF REFERENCE

*Strategic Positioning Evaluation
of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019*

			<p>achieve organizational goals and objectives.</p> <p>The Chief of Field Operations further supports UNICEF-led Clusters to ensure that UNICEF delivers effectively on its cluster obligations.</p> <p>Chiefs of the zonal offices are accountable for:</p> <p>Represent UNICEF in area of jurisdiction and manage partnerships with local authorities and local civil society organizations;</p> <p>Oversee the context analysis, programme planning, implementation, monitoring and review in the field offices under his/her responsibility and make course corrections in conjunction with section chiefs; manage all funds and supplies allocated to the zone;</p> <p>Develop Field Office work plans aligned to national programme sector work plans and their implementation;</p> <p>Draft field focused PCAs and ensuring PCAs are implemented and monitored and reported regularly and accurately; performance and ensure adequate performance, capacity building</p>
Government Provincial directorates of key line ministries	Implementing partners/ collaborators	Health, nutrition, education, WASH	UNICEF Field Offices coordinate with government to facilitate implementation
NGOs	Implementing partners	Nutrition, education, WASH, child Protection, emergency	NGOs mostly implement ACO programmes in the field under direct partnership.
Local			
Community level influencers (religious leaders and elders)	Implementation facilitators/ promoters	Education, health, polio, wash, nutrition, child protection, C4D, advocacy	Local influencers support UNICEF in promoting their programme for smooth implementation and contribute in sustainability plans.

ToR – Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

Page 22 of 29



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

Local service providers/frontline workers (teachers, health workers)	Implementation support/ beneficiaries	Education, health, nutrition, polio	Local service providers, such as teachers and health workers, have been supported to strengthen local service delivery.
Local media (radio)	Implementing partner	Polio, nutrition, child protection, C4D, advocacy	UNICEF partners with local radio stations mainly for implementations of advocacy and awareness raising on polio campaign and child rights
Communities members Women and men, girls and boys	Right holders/ beneficiaries	Health, nutrition, polio, education, wash	Recipients of programmes

ToR – Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

Page 23 of 29

TERMS OF REFERENCE***Strategic Positioning Evaluation
of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019*****Annex 2. Background to the evaluation issues****Integration of and positioning for a strengthened humanitarian, development and peace nexus**

The ACP was designed with an emphasis on development approaches with concurrent emergency interventions. At a later stage the ACO shifted emphasis to a more integrated approach in light of the increasing complexity and scope of humanitarian situations, a changing conflict situation, and a policy and programming environment that promoted a stronger triple nexus. The government development agenda for Afghanistan calls for an increased focus of linking humanitarian, development and peace-building policies and programmes. UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2018-2021 also highlights the humanitarian-development nexus as a cross-cutting priority; and together with other guidance documents propose to strengthen resilience elements in UNICEF's work, integrate preparedness and risk-informed approach into programming, focus more systematically on community engagement and accountability to affected populations (AAP), and work in partnership to mobilize additional capabilities and resources.⁹ Understanding the conflict context is considered a first step to more conflict-sensitive programming and supporting peace building.¹⁰

The 2017 MTR of the ACP recommended a strategic shift to a development-resilience humanitarian continuum approach and a need to bring conceptual clarity how to translate it into programming. The MTR also recommended integrating peacebuilding and social cohesion into UNICEF's work. A recent evaluation of UNICEF Afghanistan's Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations finds that UNICEF is well placed, given its dual mandate and expertise, to deliver results in the nexus and much of what UNICEF is already doing can be considered as contributing to the nexus.¹¹ However, it also indicates that opportunities were missed on convergence between humanitarian and development work within its programmes; further conceptual clarity is still needed; and the incorporation of resilience building through its partnerships has had mixed results. Siloed sector-oriented approaches, siloed funding streams and the existing humanitarian and development institutional architecture are not conducive to strengthened humanitarian-development linkages. Furthermore, the evaluation finds that ACO has focused greater attention on identification of risks and preparedness and has taken up conflict-analysis, but the extent to which each programme had risk mitigation strategies and use conflict-analysis to ensure programme conflict-sensitivity was not clear.

Geographical coverage and access to achieve equitable results for children at scale

Geographic prioritization of the CP resulted in the selection of ten focus provinces in order to reach the most deprived areas, promote multi-sectoral convergence and achieve scale. In addition, the programme aimed to support nation-wide access to high-priority interventions. The adherence to the focus province strategy that underpinned the ACP was mixed.¹² To further encourage programme convergence four flagship results were introduced after the MTR, which in 2019 were replaced by an Integrated Programming approach. According to the evaluation of UNICEF's Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations, despite positive examples, convergence across programmes remained limited.

⁹ UNICEF (2018), UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021, Executive Summary. UNICEF (2019) UNICEF Procedure on Linking Humanitarian and Development Programming. UNICEF (2019) Executive Board Update on UNICEF Humanitarian Action with a focus on linking humanitarian and development programming.

¹⁰ UNICEF (2016) Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding, Programming Guide.

¹¹ Itad (2020) Evaluation of UNICEF's Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations: Afghanistan, draft evaluation report.

¹² Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and UNICEF (2017) Mid-Term Review of the Country Programme 2015-2017. Summary Report.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

At the same time, UNICEF has expanded the reach of its humanitarian assistance through growing field presence balancing between achieving scale and reaching places with the greatest needs in hard-to-reach areas.¹³ The evaluation also noted that UNICEF has become increasingly vocal with both state and non-state interlocutors on issues of humanitarian access and response; and the establishment of outposts in areas controlled by anti-government elements is seen as a proactive approach to extend services to people in need beyond government-controlled areas. However, as the ACP is designed exclusively as a programme of cooperation with the recognized government, there's no definitive strategy in place to guide access to areas controlled by anti-government elements. An approach based on community acceptance and the provision of assistance based on humanitarian principles has guided expanded access, although, according to the aforementioned evaluation, the evidence suggested that there was a mixed picture when it came to applying principles in practice.

Optimization of implementation modalities and institutional capacity development

ACO implements its programming through mixed partnership modalities, including using government systems [including secondment of National Technical Assistants (NTAs) to government partners], implementing partnerships with NGOs, institutional contracts with private sector extenders (see Box 1) and third-party monitors (TPM). Due to security risks limiting access across the country, the country programme has utilized extenders and TPM extensively.

The MTR reported that in the programme period 2015-2017 ACO provided support to more than 200 government partners, which represented on average 89% of the financial transfer allocation; the remainder going to various NGO partners. The MTR recommended to assess the rationale, advantages and disadvantages, benefits and costs of different implementation modalities. The evaluation of UNICEF's Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations highlighted that the mix of implementation modalities has enabled to expand coverage at scale, particularly in hard-to-reach areas. However, it also pointed to concerns about capacity, oversight and UNICEF's visibility and proximity to communities. The evaluation recommends engaging more strategically in partner capacity development.

Box 1: Use of extenders

A (field based) extender is a person employed by one of ACO's extender contractors (contracted under an approved Long-term Agreement) to undertake a defined set of duties (set in a Terms of Reference). Extenders enable ACO to deliver a programme in conflict areas and where UNICEF staff cannot gain access. They can also be hired for ad hoc projects where specialist skills and local knowledge are required at short notice.

Source: UNICEF Afghanistan (2019) Office Instruction on Contracting for Extenders

Gender integration into programming and policy advocacy work

Following the recommendation of the MTR, a gender programmatic review was undertaken in 2018. ACO developed a comprehensive gender strategy to guide gender integration in programming and strengthened its organizational gender capacity and office-wide accountability for gender. The evaluation of UNICEF's Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations presented some elements of the gender strategy already implemented, such as staff training on gender mainstreaming, the establishment of a network of gender focal

¹³ Itad (2020) Ibid



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

points across offices and sections, and the introduction of new sex-disaggregated data collection tools. Following the recent increased strategic and organizational attention given to gender, it is worth examining and identifying early lessons learned about how gender integration efforts have been translated into practice in UNICEF's programming and policy advocacy work.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

Annex 3. Preliminarily overview of secondary data

3.1. Documents

- UNICEF strategic documents
 - UNICEF (2013), [UNICEF Strategic Plan 2014-2017](#)
 - UNICEF (2017), [UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021](#)
 - UNICEF (2014), [UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2014-2017](#)
 - UNICEF, [UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2018-2021, Brochure](#)
 - UNICEF (2014), [Afghanistan Country Programme Document 2015-2019](#)
 - UNICEF and Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2014), [Country Programme Action Plan 2015-2019](#)
 - UNICEF (2019), [Update on UNICEF humanitarian action with a focus on linking humanitarian and development programming](#), Executive Board Paper
 - UNICEF (2009), [UNICEF Strategic Framework for Partnerships and Collaborative Relationships](#)
 - UNICEF ACO Programme Strategy Notes (PSN)
 - WASH: PSN 2017-2021
 - Health/Polio: PSN 2020-2021
 - Education: PSN 2019-2021
 - Child protection: PSN 2015-2021
 - Nutrition: PSN 2017-2019
- UNICEF operational documents
 - UNICEF (2016), [Conflict sensitivity and Peacebuilding, Programming Guide](#)
 - UNICEF (2018), [Guidance on Risk-Informed Programming](#)
 - UNICEF (2018), UNICEF Guidance on Field Monitoring
 - UNICEF (2019), UNICEF Procedure on Linking Humanitarian and Development
 - UNICEF (2015), UNICEF Procedure for Country and Regional Office Transfer of Resources to Civil Society Organizations
 - UNICEF (2019), UNICEF Procedure for Country and Regional Office CSO Implementing Partnerships
- Evidence documents
 - UNICEF and Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2017), [Mid-Term Review of the Country Programme 2015-2019](#)
 - UNICEF (2016), [2015 Afghanistan Annual Report](#)
 - UNICEF (2017), [2016 Afghanistan Annual Report](#)
 - UNICEF (2018), [2017 Afghanistan Annual Report](#)
 - UNICEF (2019), [2018 Afghanistan Annual Report](#)
 - UNICEF ROSA (2018), Gender Programmatic Review of the Afghanistan Country Office
 - Itad (2020), Evaluation of UNICEF's Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations, Afghanistan
- Afghanistan relevant documents

ToR – Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

- UN Country Team, [United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Afghanistan 2015-2019](#)
- OCHA (2018), [2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview](#)

3.2. UNICEF information system

- **Vision** (Virtual Integrated System of Information) is UNICEF's integrated enterprise resource planning (ERP) system that captures all business transactions, covering areas such as finance, HR and logistics. It also facilitates programme management, including fund commitments and registration of partnerships and contractual arrangements.
- **InSights** is UNICEF's performance management system. It provides financial and programme management data, including key performance indicator scorecards/dashboards, a results assessment and reporting, and information about risk management, partnerships, finances and human resources.
- **eTools** is a partnership management system that enables UNICEF to strengthen the effectiveness of partnerships with both Government counterparts and CSOs and provides linkage between outputs and partnerships. It captures and consolidates data on UNICEF's partnership life cycles with its implementing partners, both government and civil society organization. It includes a module on third party monitoring that enables to manage programmatic visits by third party monitors and their progress. eTools was introduced in Afghanistan in 2018.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strategic Positioning Evaluation of the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Programme 2015-2019

Annex 3. Outline of final evaluation report

Executive summary

Acknowledgements

Table of content

Abbreviations and acronyms

Map

1. Introduction

2. UNICEF's Country Programme and context

a. Summary of the object of the evaluation (evaluand)

b. Description of relevant country context

3. Purpose, scope and methodology

a. Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, including evaluation questions

b. Evaluation design and methodology

c. Discussion of crosscutting issues (ethics, gender,)

d. Limitations

4. Findings

5. Conclusions and lessons learned

6. Recommendations

Annexes, at the minimum

- Terms of reference

- Evaluation matrix

- Bibliography

- Stakeholders consulted

6.2 Evaluation Matrix

Presented below is the evaluation matrix, consisting of evaluation questions, sub-questions, indicators, data sources and benchmarks.

Focus area ¹⁵¹	EQ	Sub-EQ	Indicators	Evidence and data collection sources	Benchmarks
1. Integration and positioning for a strengthened humanitarian, peace nexus <i>Related DAC Criteria:</i> Relevance (KE1 and KE2) Coherence (KE2) Effectiveness (KE1 and 2) Equity	KEQ 1. To what extent has UNICEF re-positioned itself to contribute coherently to joint humanitarian-development and peacebuilding objectives?	1. To what extent are UNICEF's humanitarian, development and peace strategies mutually reinforcing and/or coherent and can synergies be improved? 2. To what extent have the sectors demonstrated through their implementation and monitoring that UNICEF is well positioned to coherently address joint humanitarian, development and peacebuilding objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which strategies are based on joint assessment or analysis including context-specific gender analysis Extent to which sectors are aligned and results are cross-sectoral/office-wide Extent to which proposals have been based on cross-sectoral strategy assessment and planning, including sex- and age-disaggregated data and strategic gender indicators in accordance with the UNICEF GAP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of cross-sector implementation and monitoring approaches Evidence that preparedness measures are planned, integrated into workplans and monitored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence: ACP, CDP extension document, relevant programme strategy notes (PSNs) (health, education, WASH and CP), project proposals, strategy and planning meeting minutes Data collection: Desk review, KII, survey 	CCC 2.4.1 at Strategic Result Level: Children, adolescents, and their communities benefit from gender-responsive programmes and services. UNICEF Conflict sensitivity and Peacebuilding guide (2016).

¹⁵¹ DAC Criteria are being applied at Focus Area level and still being tested as the EQs are being finalised. Definitions will be provided as part of the draft Inception Report.

				validation, field visits of cross-sectoral and nexus analytical approaches, internal cross-sectoral joint analysis, evidence of convergence in the field	Linking Humanitarian and Development Programming (2019). UNICEF Conflict sensitivity and Peacebuilding guide (2016).
KEQ 2 To what extent is UNICEF strategically well positioned to enhance the humanitarian-development-peace nexus within the national development system to the advancement of children's rights in the country?	<p>1. To what extent is UNICEF operating in its areas of comparative strength and advantage to further the triple nexus considering the array of other actors?</p> <p>2. How well has risk-informed programming—including risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that UNICEF is making the best possible use of its demonstrated capacity and expertise (not limited solely to its mandate), to support the aim of the triple nexus (OECD) How effectively does UNICEF advance collaboration between other UN agencies with overlapping mandates e.g. UNFPA, UN Women, WHO, WFP Extent to which UNICEF has clarified their role on peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACP, PSN, workplans, sitreps, the donor proposals, RAM, notes of joint planning sessions with GIRQA and One UN, planning sessions, and team meetings, case studies, records of management decisions KIIS and external KIIs, survey (external), desk review, meeting minute and agendas 	DAC 2019 Coordination pillar: <i>Evidence of joined up, multi-sectoral programme design spanning humanitarian and development spheres;</i> <i>Evidence of joint assessment and analysis of root causes.</i> One UN Results Framework 2018–21. DAC 2019 Programme Pillar.	

		<p>analysis, design, response and monitoring—evolved, strengthened and been systematically operationalised across programme sections and field offices? How can it be improved?</p> <p>3. How well has UNICEF been able to engage, coordinate and partner with other UN and non-UN cooperating actors to support the nexus within the National Development System?</p> <p>4. To what extent has UNICEF been able to take leadership in integrating humanitarian, development and peace to the benefit of vulnerable boys and girls and women (particularly in respect of recognising the impact of agency of women on their children)?</p>	<p>risk-informed and conflict-sensitive humanitarian programmes (CCC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which social cohesion actively considered where relevant and feasible (CCC) <p>3. Evidence of UNICEF coordination with UN and non-UN partners in both Govt.- and hard-to-reach areas (coordination, joint initiatives etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of UNICEF co-lead co-chair to joined-up humanitarian, development and peace planning and programming on the basis of a joined up or joint multi-stakeholder analysis of risks, needs, vulnerabilities, and root causes of conflict for the context as well as indigenous capacities utilising data and/or qualitative analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous evaluations on risk Monitoring reports Perception of risk management at field level KIIs Social cohesion documentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of coordination meetings with CSO partners and UN agencies Minutes from cluster meetings (education in emergency, health, Child Protection sub-cluster and WASH) KIIs, Access unit reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KIIs with participants, meetings agendas, meeting minutes 	<p>Guidance on Risk-Informed Programming (GRIP) of 2016.</p> <p>OECD-DAC 2019 Programme Pillar component 6.</p> <p>One Un Results Framework (2018–21).</p> <p>GAP.</p> <p>UNICEF Procedures on Linking Humanitarian and Development Programming (2019).</p> <p>DAC 2019 6.a. iii.</p>
2. Coverage and Access: geographical coverage and access to	KEQ 3 To what extent have UNICEF's programme strategy and implementation	1. How well has UNICEF been able to balance the dual goals of reducing inequity and increasing programme efficiency and effectiveness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that ACO is progressing towards CCC (2020) commitment 2.2.3 Target and reach the most disadvantaged children and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PSNs Workplans Results frameworks Monitoring data Management reports 	CCCs 2.2.2 Multi-sectoral and Integrated Programming.

achieve equitable results for children at scale Related DAC Criteria: Relevance (incorporating dynamic efficiency KE3), Coherence (KEQ 3 and KEQ 4) Effectiveness (KE4, KE6) Equity (KE3)	coherently and consistently fostered multi-sectoral programming to respond holistically to children's needs at scale and protect the rights of children everywhere	How can UNICEF's approach be improved to achieve the dual goals?	their communities with humanitarian assistance, protection and services. Evidence of the use of disaggregated data, analysis of vulnerability and hard-to-reach data in discussion of trade-offs is taking place (coverage evaluation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIIs • Field visit reports • Possible spot survey 	CCCs 2.2.3 Equity.
		<p>2. To what extent has there been consistency between UNICEF ACO's strategic vision on multi-sectoral convergence, geographical coverage and scale, and the actual programming choices made on the ground? What were the driving factors, including gender, in adjusting any programming approaches?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence programme implementation matches strategic intent • Vision on multi-sectoral convergence, geographical coverage is reflected in PSNs, workplans and results frameworks. Evidence of implementation 	PSNs, ToC, results framework proposals, reports, monitoring data, KIIs	CCC 2.2.2 Multi-sectoral and Integrated Programming.
	EQ 4 How well have UNICEF's programme strategy and implementation effectively and coherently enhanced access to areas controlled by hard-to-reach areas?	<p>1. How effective are current approaches used to accessing and programming in areas controlled by anti-government elements? How well are they institutionalised in ACO's programming and organisation? How can they be improved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of TPM and extenders operating in hard-to-reach areas • Evidence that the five identified access strategies are adjusted and adapted as required and that learning is institutionalised • Evidence of operationalisation—and applicability—of humanitarian principles, and their effects on programming in hard-to-reach areas-controlled areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplans with Taliban, monitoring reports, KIIS used • Access unit reports, UNICEF reporting on activities in hard-to-reach areas 	<i>Note: we considered using the CCC 2.1.4; however, this related to humanitarian access only.</i>

		<p>2. To what extent does UNICEF have the capacity and programmatic agility to respond to needs and risks in hard-to-reach areas – controlled areas, including understanding gender protection concerns? How can it be improved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of UNICEF capacity in hard-to-reach areas • Effectiveness and utility of the risk management system in place in ACO • Needs and risks identified in hard-to-reach areas • Conflict analysis process conducted and utilised • Ability of UNICEF to address gender protection concerns in hard-to-reach areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIIs, spot survey, case studies • Staff and partner presence in hard-to-reach areas • Results data from hard-to-reach areas • Risk registers and analysis • Conflict analysis 	UNICEF GAP.
		<p>3. To what extent have UNICEF's programmes and operations adapted to the changing conflict situation and become more conflict-sensitive, based on adequate and useful conflict analysis and informed in general by evidence on contextual risks, including gendered risks? How can the programme's adaptive capacity to conflict be improved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of adaptive programming • Systems to facilitate adaptive programming in place and being used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIIs • Evaluations, trip reports, reviews • PSN revisions 	Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding Guidelines 2016.
	KEQ 6 How well has UNICEF utilised extenders and TPM to enhance programme delivery?	<p>1. How has the use of extenders and TPM evolved during the programme period and has it become better adapted to changing context and needs – including addressing gender concerns? Is there clarity of purpose and rationale of their use?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of structural changes and coherence of management of contractors in ACO including their particular purpose, geographic differentiation and utility by grouping (i.e. TPM and extenders) and including specifically the gender considerations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management response to audits and internal reviews, contractual adjustments, management • Evaluation reports of contractors, agreed scope of work for extenders 	No benchmark applicable.

		<p>2. How effective are extenders and TPM to respectively contribute to quality programme delivery and quality monitoring? How can their capacity to deliver be further improved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that extenders and TPMs are delivering on their programme objectives • To what extent have quality gains been made through extenders and TPM in the perceptions of UNICEF staff in value of TPMs • To what extent there is evidence on increasing gender-balanced recruitment • Evidence of quality and accountability trade-offs, as well as any adverse or unintended effects, in the use of extenders and TPMs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts, terms of references audits, trip reports, evidence of QA processes in place and being monitored 	No benchmark applicable.
		<p>3. How well have extender and TPM delivery processes, oversight and monitoring been designed and implemented to improve their effectiveness and flexible use?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence on management processes relating to the contracting, briefing and deployment of extenders and TPMs, with special focus on the rapidity, appropriateness and ease of use of these processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As 6.2 	No benchmark applicable.
<p>3. Partnerships and institutional strengthening and CB</p> <p>Related DAC Criteria: Relevance (KE5, KE7)</p>	<p>KEQ 5 How well is UNICEF positioned to ensure effective programme delivery through government and NGO partnerships and coordination with other UN agencies?</p>	<p>1. How effective are UNICEF's partnerships with government for programme delivery, understanding the different needs of boys and girls? How can effectiveness be improved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which government partners are delivering against agreed results • Evidence and lessons learned in partnerships, and their use in driving iterations in partnership strategies • To what extent rolling workplans are gender-equitable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rolling workplans, ram statements and progress reports, KII, meeting minutes from Education Coordination Committee 	UNICEF Documents on Partnerships, strategy, including the 2019 Procedure and UNICEF strategic framework for partnerships and collaborative

<p>Coherence (KE5)</p> <p>Effectiveness (KE5, KE7)</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Subject to availability) Degree to which information is available demonstrating resource allocation to government partnerships disaggregated by geography and sector over time 		relationships (2009). National Education Strategic Plan 3. Citizens Charter. National Health and Nutrition Policy 2012–20.
	2. How effective are UNICEF's partnerships with NGOs for programme delivery, understanding the different needs of boys and girls? How can effectiveness be improved?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which NGO partners are delivering against agreed results Evidence and lessons learned in partnerships, and their use in driving iterations in partnership strategies (Subject to availability) Degree to which information is available demonstrating resource allocation to NGO partnerships is disaggregated by geography and sector over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership agreements, and same as 5.1 	UNICEF Documents on Partnerships strategy, including the 2019 Procedure. UNICEF Guiding Principles for Partnership with Civil Society.
	3 How well has UNICEF aligned its delivery partnerships with key strategic documents and processes such as Afghanistan National Peace and development Plan (ANPDF) and One UN? NPP, SDG alignment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that ACO leadership and staff are well positioned to act in accordance and support the ANPDF Evidence of UNICEF programme alignment with NPP Evidence of alignment with One UN Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting minutes of annual reviews with the Government re NPP contribution and alignment KIIs 	One UN Results Framework. NPP strategies: The Citizen's Charter, Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE), National

					Justice and Judicial Reform, Effective Governance and Human Capital.
	<p>KEQ 7 To what extent has UNICEF contributed to institutional strengthening and government CB in accordance to its comparative strengths?</p>	<p>1. To what extent is there a clear strategy on institutional strengthening and government CB? In which programming areas has UNICEF demonstrated a strong capacity for institutional strengthening and building sustainable government capacities?</p> <p>2. Is UNICEF operating in its areas of comparative strength in terms of institutional strengthening considering the array of other actors? Is ACO an authoritative voice on capacity strengthening in public sector services?</p> <p>3. To what extent has the use of NTAs contributed to government capacity strengthening?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of UNICEF clear strategy and common understanding for capacity development capacity development support aimed at Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) counterparts in the health, WASH, education and Child Protection sectors Evidence of GIRoA capacity uptake, and ownership of joint programmes and interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of other key actors of UNICEF's added value regarding institutional strengthening in functional sectors and approaches Evidence of ACO leading or co-leading in coordination meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trend of number of NTAs disaggregated across government ministries and agencies Trend of gender of NTA re gender equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PSN, Annual Work Plans (AWPs), strategic documents, accountability documents with the government and annual workplans cf. objectives for government CB (outputs and outcomes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KIIs, survey, meeting minutes, consistent coherent appropriate level of presence when leading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KIIs, audit reports, government feedback and government documentation on NTAs. Donor documents 	<p>No appropriate benchmark identified.</p> <p>No benchmark applicable.</p> <p>No benchmark applicable.</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that NTAs are performing CB rather than government functions 		
4. Gender integration into programme and advocacy work <i>Related DAC Criteria:</i> <i>Equity (KEQ 8, KEQ9)</i> <i>Coherence</i>	<p>KEQ 8 Is gender being integrated in programme planning and practice based on evidence generated and lessons learned?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How systematically is UNICEF investing in gender evidence, analysis, and knowledge management? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context-specific gender analysis informs the design and delivery of programmes in all sectors Evidence of investment and mainstreaming in gender analysis via gender tags of ACOs evidence related activities, evolution over time, and across sectors Evidence via monitoring data that gender commitments are being observed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KIIs, workplans strategy notes, GPR report Programme proposals potentially survey, M&E reporting 	<p>CCC 2.1.4 Gender equality and empowerment of girls and women.</p> <p>Context-specific gender analysis informs the design and delivery of programmes in all sectors.</p> <p>Planning, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, as well as reporting, include sex- and age-disaggregated data and strategic gender indicators, in accordance with the UNICEF GAP.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the strategic strengthening of gender at organisation level been translated into more gender-responsive and gender-transformative programming? What are early lessons learned? How can it be improved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes intentionally promote positive behaviour and social change toward gender equality, especially by empowering adolescent girls • Evidence and specific examples by sector of how ACO's comprehensive gender strategy is being translated into programme actions and management decisions • Evidence that programmes are gender-sensitive and address the different needs of girls, boys, men and women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme indicators and monitoring notes • KIIs, evidence that resources have been reallocated and mobilised to support more effective gender-responsive and transformative programming • PSN annual workplans, donor proposals, monitoring and field trip reports. Case study on learning and improvement 	<p>CCC 2.1.4 Gender equality and empowerment of girls and women. Programmes intentionally promote positive behaviour and social change toward gender equality, especially by empowering adolescent girls. Programmes and enabling environment services provided and/or supported are gender-responsive and address the different needs of girls, boys, men and women.</p>
	KEQ 9 How well is UNICEF leveraging its position in strategic partnerships to promote gender in	<p>1. To what extent has UNICEF been effective in promoting, supporting, leading, and building capacity in partners to produce disaggregated data, undertake gender</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of partner programmes, include sex- and age-disaggregated data and strategic gender indicators, in accordance with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals, reports, programme documents, monitoring, KIIs 	<p>GAP 2018–21: Benchmarks: investment of institutional resources in gender</p>

	evidence generation, policies and programming?	analysis, and apply gender considerations for impactful programming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the UNICEF GAP Evidence of partner capacity to produce gender data and to undertake gender analysis 		programming, capacity, and systems-building. Essential role in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework to set system-wide country-level gender priorities.
	2. Is UNICEF operating in its areas of comparative strength and advantages to increase its visibility as an organisation that is committed to gender equality and collaboratively influencing policies and programming related to gender inequality in Afghanistan?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of UNICEF advocacy efforts to change the institutional environment related to women's rights Evidence of active UNICEF positioning across the range of ACO partnerships to support and promote gender equality in the context of the One UN Framework Expenditure data at output level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications, strategic workplans, annual report. Donor and partner KII KIIS with partners and UN peers, meeting minutes, including perceptions of UNICEF demonstrating capacity and expertise relative to other actors where available Selected sample of M&E and other evidence products Expenditure data 	GAP 2018–21: Benchmarks: 15% UNICEF benchmark on programming expenditures allocated to advancing gender equality results; investment of institutional resources in gender programming, capacity, and systems-building One UN strategy (country-level gender priorities).

6.3 Sampling Principles and Guidelines for the Evaluation

Sampling is purposive and is set out below based on three broad sets of analysis: sectoral analysis of existing evidence and relevance; geographical analysis and stakeholder analysis.

Sectoral sampling

All sectors of the ACO will be included as and when they are considered particularly relevant to answer the Evaluation questions both in a results-based approach but also generating evidenced-based recommendations for the 2021 CPD planning process. For sectors that have recently undertaken evaluations and reviews, where relevant, data will be used from these documents rather than replicating with data collection for this SPE.¹⁵²

The sampling criteria were drawn from the sector interventions as articulated in the CPD and the RWPs (Health, WASH, Nutrition, Education, Child Protection, Social Inclusion, Gender and Communications). The criteria used were:

1. Outcome and output foci relevant to the FAs, especially relating to outcomes and outputs focused on human rights approaches (working with rights holders and duty bearers) and gender empowerment
2. Budget ceilings – including weighting of RR, OR and % funding status
3. Geographic coverage (as it is currently understood at a macro level)
4. Programme activities that indicate work on the nexus and multi-sectoral implementation, especially in regard to gender
5. Stakeholder profile (indicated on the stakeholder mapping), cluster activity and contribution to One-UN strategy
6. Use of extenders and TPMs
7. Programmes that are pioneering to address access issues and negotiating space in AGE areas

Based on this criteria, four sectoral FA have been identified to explore in greater depth at national and sub-nation levels:

1. **Health** – (1) Strong focus on Government of Afghanistan (GoA) CB and institutional strengthening (national and sub-national levels) at outcome and outputs levels; (2) largest 2015 -2021 ceiling budget¹⁵³; (3) programme interventions at national and sub-national level with strong links to gender with maternal health (women's agency agenda); (4) evidence of multi-sectoral programming at planning and implementation; (5) Working relationship with sister UN organisations (especially WHO) which is relevant to One-UN; (6) use of TPMs and extenders¹⁵⁴. (7) polio as a pioneer for access/reach and negotiation in AGE-controlled areas.

It is of note that a keen focus will be paid to polio programming during the sampling due to its significance as an entry point for negotiating for access in AGE areas and as an entry point for other sectors to follow.

2. **Education** – (1) Strong focus on GoA CB (outcome and output level) with high use of TA for this purpose¹⁵⁵; (1) explicit output on linking duty bearers and rights holders at community

¹⁵² Examples of recent evaluations and reviews include, inter alia, UNICEF Afghanistan, The Use of Field Extenders in Afghanistan: Lessons learned, internal document, (2017); Evaluation of UNICEF's Coverage and Quality in Complex Humanitarian Situations – Afghanistan (2020); CNBC Process Evaluation in Afghanistan 2018 – 2019 (2020), Evaluation of Afghanistan's Child Protection Action Network; Mid-Term Evaluation of increasing access to basic education and gender equal programme – Afghanistan (2019).

¹⁵³ USD 444,424,000 - OR+RR - ceiling 2015 – 2021 (CPD funding status Feb 2020).

¹⁵⁴ The RSI Third Party Monitoring was piloted in the Southern Region in 2020.

¹⁵⁵ Due to new leadership in the MoE, all UNICEF NTAs at national level have been removed from office in 2020.

level – also linked to criteria 1; (2) second highest 2015 – 2021 ceiling budget¹⁵⁶ with a large percentage of OR which may indicate a strong donor engagement, (3) Very wide geographic interventions across Afghanistan; (4) planned and anecdotal evidence of multi-sectoral programming, evidence of working on the nexus (5) diverse range of implementing partnerships with the GoA, UN agencies and World Bank; (6) use of TPMs and extenders¹⁵⁷; (7) Evidence of access negotiation in AGE-controlled areas.

3. **Child Protection** will be explored with a light touch approach in two areas (1) UNICEF's role in working with the GoA on legal and policy frameworks aligned with child rights conventions, especially UNICEF's contribution to the promulgation of the Law on Protection of Child Rights (2019), (2) Children and Armed Conflict as an enquiry into how UNICEF is able to programme across all three parts of the nexus.
4. **WASH:** Feedback from the Evaluation Managers is that the ET should specifically include WASH as one of the sector FA. WASH is considered as a sector of high importance to the ACO. (1) Elements of GIRoA CB outputs; (2) third highest 2015 – 2021 ceiling budget¹⁵⁸ (3) WASH is an important entry point for the nexus and; (4) WAH has the largest use of extenders of all the sectors in the ACO.

Defining a realistic sampling for the scope and timeline of this SPE has meant that not all sectors and interventions can be covered at the same depth, and there will be trade-offs between depth and breadth in the SPE scope (as described in the preceding sections).

Geographic sampling

Gaining insight into how programmes are being practically implemented at a sub-national level and how they are contributing to the four FAs will be critical during data collection. Furthermore, the vertical and horizontal linkages between the zonal/field offices and the national office will help illuminate the efficiency and coherence of the overall ACO. The unit of sampling at sub-national is at the zonal level. The criteria used to define a geographic scope were:

1. Conflict intensity and humanitarian needs
2. Social/cultural context
3. Progress on UNICEF decentralization agenda e.g., opening of new sub-field offices
4. Access and AGE negotiation profile through the region
5. Implementation profile of the three identified sectoral FA
6. Risk-informed analysis and planning at the zonal level
7. Logistics – travel, access and, research conditions in winter

Based on these criteria, and as a result of orientation meeting consultations, the two regions selected are considered to provide a useful contrast in terms of context, operations and programming:

- **The Southern Region** – High intensity conflict with substantial humanitarian needs; although variation exists across the region – it is considered socially and culturally conservative – especially in regards to women's rights; recent opening of two new sub-field posts in Tirinkot (Urazgon) and Lashkagar (Helmand); operation of polio interventions in the Southern Region are important entry points for health and other sectoral programming; involvement in negotiation for access for

¹⁵⁶ USD 444,424,000 - OR+RR - ceiling 2015 – 2021 (CPD funding status Feb 2020)

¹⁵⁷ The RSI Third Party Monitoring was piloted in the Southern Region in 2020

¹⁵⁸ USD 78,976,776 - OR+RR - ceiling 2015 – 2021 (CPD funding status Feb 2020)

space with the Taliban (especially in regards to polio interventions) and; wide coverage of both health, WASH and education sectors throughout the region.

- **The Eastern Region** – High variance of conflict intensity throughout the region; Nuristan almost inaccessible (hence the importance of extenders and TPMs); large numbers of displaced owing to intermittent expulsion of Afghan nationals from Pakistan; due to urbanization and proximity to the border with Pakistan and proximity to Kabul, the social and cultural context is less conservative than other parts of Afghanistan (especially in Nangahar - Jalalabad); documented and anecdotal evidence of multi-sector programming and implementation of the nexus; on-going access negotiations for greater access into Taliban areas; varied use of extenders on both health and education sectors and; health identified as an important cluster to look at in the region.¹⁵⁹

The Southern Region is comprised of the provinces of Nimroz, Helmand, Urazgon, Zabul and Kandahar. The Eastern Region is comprised of Nuristan, Nangahar, Kunar and Laghman. Each of these regions are exceptionally diverse in terms of AGE activity, access, conflict intensity, humanitarian needs, culture, ethnicity, climate and geography. It is understood that travel will be possible for the ET to Nangahar, Kunar and Laughman in the Eastern Region. There will be a greater reliance on remote Evaluation in the Southern Region.

¹⁵⁹ Orientation meeting 10/01/21

Stakeholder sampling

Inside each of the nine stakeholder groups covered, respondent and informant recruitment took place on the basis of the guidelines below.

Stakeholder Groups	Respondent/Informant Recruitment Guidelines	
	Surveys	KIIs
UNICEF staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit across four sectors and all regions, as per sample sizes set in approach note. Consider relevance of respondent, as reflected in role title and duty station (and time in position where possible). Ensure representative proportion of women and Afghan nationals.¹⁶⁰ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As for surveys, and in addition: Weight further for sector and thematic expertise, as reflected in role title and time in position.¹⁶¹
Other UN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select min. 5 and max. 10 agencies, weighted for relevance and expertise in the four FAs and four Prog. Sectors. For individual respondent recruitment, weight for relevance and expertise in the four FAs and four Prog. Sectors, as reflected in role title and duty station (and time in position where possible). Recruit across four sectors and two regions. Limit individual respondent recruitment to total sample size set in approach note. Ensure representative proportion of women and Afghan nationals.¹⁶² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As for surveys, and in addition: Weight further for sector and thematic expertise, as reflected in role title and time in position.
Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select min. 4 max. 8 donors/dip reps, weighted for country aid budget size or niche sectoral expertise.¹⁶³ (See Annex 2) For individual respondent recruitment, weight for relevance and expertise in the four FAs and four Prog. Sectors, as reflected in role title (and time in position where possible). Recruit across four sectors. Limit individual respondent recruitment to total sample size set in approach note. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As for surveys, and in addition: Weight further for sector and thematic expertise, as reflected in role title and time in position.
GIRoA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select min. 5 and max. 8 line ministries/govt. agency, weighted for specific knowledge of

¹⁶⁰ Gender and nationality disaggregated data needs to be obtained from ACO and other UN Agencies from which respondents will be recruited.

¹⁶¹ The assumption is that ranking and seniority generally correlate with sectoral and thematic expertise; however, this is not used as a hard criteria here, as contextualised knowledge will be actively sought, and may in some cases be more readily obtained from junior staff.

¹⁶² Gender and nationality disaggregated data needs to be obtained from ACO and other UN Agencies from which respondents will be recruited.

¹⁶³ The assumption is made that donors/diplomatic representations will be contributors to the UNICEF country programme; however, this is not a hard criterion.

		<p>UNICEF programme/strategy in the four FAs and four Prog. Sectors.¹⁶⁴ (See Annex 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For individual informant recruitment, weight for relevance and knowledge of UNICEF activities. Recruit across four sectors and two regions. Limit individual informant recruitment to total sample size set in approach note. Weight for gender.¹⁶⁵
NGOs/CSOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select min. 6 max. 12 line NGOs/CSOs, weighted for specific knowledge of UNICEF programme/strategy in the four FAs and four Prog. Sectors.¹⁶⁶ For individual respondent selection, recruit across four sectors and two regions. Weight for relevance and expertise in the four FAs and four Prog. Sectors, as reflected in role title and duty station (and time in position where possible). Weight for gender and nationality.¹⁶⁷ Limit individual respondent recruitment to total sample size set in approach note. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As for surveys, and in addition: Weight further for sector and thematic expertise, as reflected in role title and time in position.
Community influencers/women groups/Shura leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select min. 4. max. 8 communities receiving UNICEF support. Access and communication allowing, communities selected to be spread as evenly as possible between Eastern and Southern regions. Access and communication allowing, aim to select 2/3 rural 1/3 urban communities. For women groups, prefer groups actively engaged in working relationship with UNICEF (IPs, Country Plan recipients, Advocacy or C4D relays). For individual respondent recruitment, weight for relevance and knowledge of UNICEF activities. Weight to achieve 1/3 women in total sample group. Limit individual respondent recruitment to total sample size set in approach note. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As for surveys, and in addition: Weight further for sector and thematic expertise, as reflected in role title and time in position.
Local service providers/frontline workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to further consultation with ACO, select a balanced representation of health (incl. immunisation and nutrition), education and social workers actively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As for surveys, and in addition: Weight further for sector and thematic expertise, as reflected in role title and time in position.

¹⁶⁴ The assumption is made that GiRoA ministries/agencies selected will be directly engaged in operational partnerships with UNICEF; however, this is not a hard criteria.

¹⁶⁵ Degree of weighting to be agreed with ACO.

¹⁶⁶ The assumption is made that NGOs/CSOs selected will be UNICEF partners; however, this is not a hard criterion.

¹⁶⁷ Degree of weighting to be agreed with ACO

	<p>engaged in working relationships with UNICEF: IPs, CP recipients, Advocacy or C4D relays.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible and appropriate, weight for specific knowledge of UNICEF programme and activities. • Access and communication allowing, respondents to be spread as evenly as possible between Eastern and Southern regions. • Access and communication allowing, aim to select 2/3 rural and 1/3 urban respondents. • Weight to achieve 1/3 women in total sample group. • Weight for time in position where possible. • Limit individual respondent recruitment to total sample size set in approach note. 	
NTAs, extenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to further consultation with ACO, select a balanced representation NTAs and Extenders in health (incl. immunisation and nutrition), education, WASH and Child Protection programmes. • Access and communication allowing, respondents to be spread as evenly as possible between Eastern and Southern regions. • Aim to select total 8 NTAs and 12 Extenders across the 4 sectors. • Weigh to achieve 15%–20% women in total sample group (i.e. NTAs and Extenders combined).¹⁶⁸ • Weight for time in position where possible. • Limit individual respondent recruitment to total sample size set in approach note. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As for surveys, and in addition: • Weight further for sector and thematic expertise, where possible.
TPMs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to further consultation with ACO, select a balanced representation of TPMs in health (incl. immunisation and nutrition), education, WASH and Child Protection programmes. • Access and communication allowing, respondents to be spread as evenly as possible between Eastern and Southern regions. • Weight to achieve 15-20% women in sample group.¹⁶⁹ • Weight for time in position where possible. • Limit individual respondent recruitment to total sample size set in approach note. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As for surveys, and in addition: • Weight further for sector and thematic expertise, where possible.

¹⁶⁸ For discussion with ACO: Ideal ratio would be closer to 30%, but very low number of women among extenders and NTAs, as well as access/communication constraints, may not make this possible.

¹⁶⁹ As above.

6.4 Key Informant Question Guide

Focus Area	Related EQ	Related Sub-EQ	Stakeholder Group	Question
1. Integration and positioning for a strengthened humanitarian-peace nexus	KEQ 1. To what extent has UNICEF re-positioned itself to contribute coherently to joint humanitarian-development and peacebuilding objectives?	SEQ 1.1 To what extent are UNICEF's humanitarian, development and peace strategies mutually reinforcing and/or coherent and can synergies be improved?	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, M&E)	Can you provide examples of <u>cross-sectoral, integrated planning</u> across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding spheres? In what programme areas is this type of integrated planning the most visible? Why?
			UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, M&E)	In your opinion, do the following documents, and the implied ACP programme architecture, adequately reflect and enable desired integration across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding spheres? Cite as appropriate: CPAP Summary results matrix (2015–19), <u>ACO Revised Results Framework</u> (March 2020), CP Results Matrix with responsibilities, CPAP/PIDB Integrated Results and Resources Framework mapping matrix (2015–19).
			UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, M&E)	Do you feel that <u>UNICEF guidance on the nexus</u> (specifically the 2019 Procedure on Linking Humanitarian and Development Programmes, and the 2020 Update) has been useful at operational level? Can you provide examples of how this guidance has influenced programming?
			UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, M&E)	Can you give an example of an ACO programme strand that has measurably <u>contributed to peacebuilding</u> ? Where/how has this been documented?
				In a nexus perspective, do you feel that ACO has been able to <u>contribute to peacebuilding</u> without this being expressly stated as an objective in the CPAP? Would it help if peacebuilding was formally included in ACO strategic planning? Are you aware of any peacebuilding tools to enable this programming?

		SEQ 1.2 To what extent have the sectors demonstrated through their implementation, and monitoring that UNICEF is well positioned to coherently address joint humanitarian, development and peacebuilding objectives?	UNICEF (Senior management, Field management, Sector leads, M&E)	Do you feel that the <u>current programme structure</u> (i.e. with 11 thematic sectors) is generally conducive to the achievement of programme integration across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding spheres?
			UNICEF (Senior management, Field management, Sector leads, M&E)	In terms of operational set-up and countrywide <u>organisational or decision making structures</u> , which changes or reforms have been conducted in recent years with the aim of improving the feasibility of the nexus at programme level? What were these changes specifically? (e.g. planning or planning processes, assessment processes, decision making mechanisms, budget delegation, M&E, information management, training and development, etc.)
			UNICEF (Senior management, Field management, Sector leads, M&E)	Do <u>cross-sectoral results frameworks</u> exist to monitor and evaluate progress towards integration and synergies across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding spheres? If yes, when were they put in place? Are they consistent across all geographies and all sectors? (If not covered in 1.1) Do cross-sectoral results frameworks collect and analyse age, sex, disability disaggregated data?

		UNICEF (Senior management, Field management, Sector leads, M&E)	<p>Do you feel that the <u>UNICEF Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response (2020)</u> adequately allows for programme crossover between emergency/humanitarian response and recovery/development programming? If so, <u>how</u>?</p>
--	--	---	--

			UNICEF (Senior management, Field management, Sector leads, M&E)	How is <u>preparedness activity monitored</u> (apart from the Annual Audit or as part of programme evaluations)? How is the monitoring data <u>used</u> to inform management decisions and budget decisions, in order to ensure that emergency and recovery are not siloed? Please provide examples.
KEQ 2 To what extent is UNICEF strategically well positioned to enhance the humanitarian-development-peace nexus within the national development system to the advancement of children's rights in the country?	SEQ 2.1 To what extent is UNICEF operating in its areas of comparative strength and advantage to further the triple nexus considering the array of other actors?	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Advisors,) UN, NGOs, GIRQA, Donors	Does <u>One UN</u> (or UNDAF as appropriate) provide a <u>good basis</u> for UNICEF's system-wide engagement on the nexus? What other platform(s), if any, are available for UNICEF system-wide engagement on the nexus? On these platforms, has UNICEF played a discernible role in <u>peacebuilding</u> , or positioned itself as an actor in this area? Do you consider that this role is appropriate and in line with UNICEF's mandate?	
		GIRQA, NGOs, UN, Donors	In your view, can lessons be drawn from <u>UNICEF's dual mandate</u> that can be <u>applied in its system-wide engagement</u> on the triple nexus? What are these lessons? Can you provide examples of where/how they have been applied?	
		UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Advisors,) UN	How do you assess <u>UNICEF's contribution to the nexus across the UN system</u> ? Can you provide examples? Across the range of actors involved in the ON-UN process, would you say that UNICEF plays one of the more prominent roles or not? Why?	
		UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Advisors,) UN	What actions, if any, has ACO undertaken to support bilateral engagement and programme coherence with other dual mandate actors (prompt UNFPA, UN Women, WHO, WFP)? Can you give examples? Which mechanisms have worked well/not so well and why? Have they been effective at capital and field level?	

		<p>SEQ 2.2 How well has risk-informed programming—including risk analysis, design, response and monitoring—evolved, strengthened and been systematically operationalised across programme sections and field offices? How can it be improved?</p>	UNICEF (Field management, Sector leads)	<p>Do you feel that UNICEF guidance on risk-informed and conflict-sensitive programming has been useful at operational level? Are you familiar with this guidance, and have you used it yourself in the course of your work?</p>
			IPs	<p>How have ACO/IP staff been introduced to risk-informed and conflict-sensitive programming? Have learning & development events been organised to mainstream these practices? Is advisory support available in-country?</p>
			UNICEF (Field management, Field staff, Sector leads)	<p>Are you able to explain how the notion of risk is understood in reference to social cohesion, and what mitigation measures would normally be called for in this specific case/example? In the context of ACO programmes, how are risk management measures documented and where? Can you give an example of where social cohesion analysis or monitoring has influenced the design of a programme?</p>
			IPs	<p>What does UNICEF expect from partners with regard to risk assessment, analysis and monitoring and conflict sensitivity monitoring? How and where is this documented? How often is this updated during a year?</p>

		SEQ 2.3 How well has UNICEF been able to engage, coordinate and partner with other UN and non-UN cooperating actors to enhance access to hard-to-reach areas?	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Field management), IPs, NGOs, UN	What platforms are in place for development, humanitarian and government actors to engage and coordinate over increasing access to hard-to-reach areas? In your estimation, how useful is the Saving Lives Together Framework in enabling ACO to engage in a multi-agency approach to security and access? What platform(s) and mechanisms are in place to operationalise SLT in Afghanistan, and how engaged is ACO in them?
		SEQ 2.4 To what extent has UNICEF been able to take leadership in integrating humanitarian, development and peace to the benefit of vulnerable boys and girls and women (particularly in respect of recognising the impact of agency of women on their children)?	UNICEF (Senior management), GIRoA, UN, NGOs, Donors	Can you give an example of how UNICEF has used One UN or other system-wide platforms to successfully and measurably support nexus progress for the benefit of women, girls and boys? What were the challenges and opportunities involved? What data sources were used to support and document related actions?
2. Coverage and Access Geographical coverage and access to achieve equitable results for children at scale	KEQ 3 To what extent have UNICEF's programme strategy and implementation coherently and consistently fostered multi-sectoral programming to respond holistically to children's needs at	SEQ 3.1 How well has UNICEF been able to balance the dual goals of reducing inequity and increasing programme efficiency and effectiveness? How can UNICEF's approach be improved to achieve the dual goals?	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Field management), IPs, Donors	In your view, has <u>geographic prioritisation</u> enabled ACO to achieve the best possible balance between programme effectiveness and equity? Were the criteria that led to the selection of the 10 prioritised provinces sound and justified?

	scale and protect the rights of children everywhere?	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Field management), IPs, Extenders, Community	What, if any, are the <u>limitations</u> in achieving UNICEF's commitment to equity in development and humanitarian programming in your area/sector? Please provide examples. To what extent does the current <u>Integrated Programming approach</u> contribute to a balance between programme effectiveness and equity?
	SEQ 3.2 To what extent has there been consistency between UNICEF ACO's strategic vision on multi-sectoral convergence, geographical coverage and scale, and the actual programming choices made on the ground? What were the driving factors, including gender, in adjusting any programming approaches?	UNICEF (Sector leads, Field management), IPs, Extenders, Community	In your view, was the <u>Focus Province Strategy</u> that underpinned the ACP successful overall? If not, why was it not adhered to more broadly, and what could have been done for its better application? Are there any examples of where monitoring for equity and use of disaggregated data, especially gendered data, has influenced management decisions and programme changes?
		UNICEF (Sector leads, Field management, Advisors), IPs, Donors, UN, Community	Is UNICEF implementing multi-sectoral programme activities in your arear/sector? If yes, please provide examples. What are the implications in terms of programme coverage (equity) and quality?
		UNICEF (Sector leads, Field management, Advisors), IPs, Donors, UN, Community	What are the main challenges to planning multi-sectoral convergent approaches? Please provide examples.
		UNICEF (Senior management, Field	What are the main challenges to implementing multi-sectoral convergent approaches? Please give examples.
			Has ACO's decentralisation process improved the implementation of its strategic vision on sectoral convergence and geographical coverage?

			management, Advisors, Sector leads)	
			UNICEF (Sector leads, M&E), TPMs, IPs	Is the monitoring of multi-sector programme convergence unified (i.e. conducted on a multi-sectoral basis)? Are the tools and approaches used for this (e.g. multi-sectoral results frameworks) appropriate? In your view, has monitoring allowed lessons to be learned and improvements to be made in convergent programming?
EQ 4 How well have UNICEF's programme strategy and implementation effectively and coherently	SEQ 4.1 How effective are current approaches used to accessing and programming in areas controlled by hard-to- reach areas? How well are they institutionalised	UNICEF (Senior Management, Sector Leads, Advisors, Field Management), IPs, Extenders, Community	What strategies/approaches are used to gain programme access in hard-to-reach areas? Are these informal or institutionalised strategies? Please give examples. What is the most effective strategy/approach?	

	enhanced access to areas controlled by hard-to-reach areas?	in ACO's programming and organisation? How can they be improved?	UNICEF (Sector leads, Field Management), IPs, Extenders, Community	Are Extenders able to increase access into hard-to-reach areas? Please give examples.
	SEQ 4.2 To what extent does UNICEF have the capacity and programmatic agility to respond to needs and risks in hard-to-reach areas-controlled areas	UNICEF (Sector leads, Field Management), IPs, Extenders	Does UNICEF have a risk management system in place for programming in hard-to-reach areas-controlled areas? Is this an informal or formalised system? How decentralised is it?	

	<p>including understanding gender protection concerns? How can it be improved?</p>	UNICEF (Sector leads, Field Management)	Has ACO decentralisation and establishment of new sub-offices enhanced UNICEF ability to respond to needs and risks in hard-to-reach areas?
		UNICEF (Field Management), Extenders, IPs	In the past 12 months, how many incidents or adverse events have occurred which have or could have adversely affected UNICEF programming in hard-to-reach areas? Of these, how many were identified as risks before they occurred? In your view, was the impact of these events on programmes successfully managed and mitigated? What were the challenges and areas for improvement?
		UNICEF (Sector leads, Advisors, Field Management), Extenders, IPs	Are gender protection concerns factored into risk planning, monitoring and management? If so, how is this done? Please provide examples.
	SEQ 4.3 To what extent have UNICEF's programmes and operations adapted to the changing conflict situation and become more conflict-sensitive, based on adequate and useful conflict analysis and informed in general by evidence on contextual risks, including gendered risks? How can the programme's adaptive capacity to conflict be improved?	UNICEF (Sector leads, Field Management, Field staff), Extenders, TPMs, IPs, Community	What do you understand by conflict-sensitive programming? Have you received any training on conflict sensitivity? How is conflict sensitivity being planned and implemented in your sector/project/activities? Please provide examples.
		UNICEF (Sector leads, Field Management), IPs, Extenders	Are you using conflict analyses to inform your work? Do you think conflict analyses are useful? Please provide an example.
		UNICEF (Sector leads, Field Management), IPs, Extenders, TPMs	Can you provide an example of when you have had to adapt your activities in response to changing risks? How much support/guidance did you receive from senior management, and was it appropriate?

	KEQ 6 How well has UNICEF utilised extenders and TPMs to enhance programme delivery?	SEQ 6.1 How has the use of extenders and TPM evolved during the programme period and has it become better adapted to changing context and needs – including addressing gender concerns? Is there clarity of purpose and rationale of their use?	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Advisors), Contractors, IPs	Are UNICEF procurement and management procedures for Extenders and TPMs optimal in terms of recruiting well-qualified personnel, and ensuring their performance as desired?
			UNICEF (Sector leads, Advisors), Contractors, IPs	Is UNICEF able to address quality issues with Extenders and TPMs in a timely manner? What is the process?
			UNICEF (Sector leads, Advisors), Contractors, IPs	Are gender and inclusion issues factored into contractual agreements? If yes, how? If not, why?
			Extenders, TPMs	What was the procurement/ recruitment process for your employment under UNICEF? What worked well/not so well?

			Extenders, TPMs	Does UNICEF have a quality assurance process? If so, what criteria are you required to follow?
			Extenders, TPMs	Were gender and inclusion issues factored into your contractual agreement?
	SEQ 6.2 How effective are extenders and TPM to respectively contribute to quality programme delivery and quality monitoring? How can their capacity to deliver be further improved?	UNICEF (Sector leads, Advisors), Extenders, TPMs	What are the benefits/challenges for using Extenders in your project/sector/area?	
		UNICEF (Sector leads, Advisors), Extenders, TPMs	What are the benefits/challenges for using TPMs in your project/sector/area?	
	SEQ 6.3 How well have extender and TPM delivery processes, oversight and monitoring been designed and implemented to improve their effectiveness and flexible use?	UNICEF (Sector leads, Advisors), Extenders, TPMs	Are systems in place to ensure a gender balance in the recruitment/use of TPMs and Extenders? What, if any, improvements in terms of gender and inclusion could be made in the recruitment/use of Extenders and TPMs?	
		UNICEF (Sector leads, Advisors), Extenders, TPMs	Do Extenders and TPMs have a clear line management (external Contractors to UNICEF management)?	
		UNICEF (Sector leads, Advisors), Extenders, TPMs	Do Extenders and TPMs have clear ToR outlining their roles and responsibilities?	

			UNICEF(Sector leads, Advisors), Extenders, TPMs	Is the work of Extenders and TPMs monitored? If so, how is this done? What is working well/not so well?
3. Partnerships, institutional strengthening and capacity building	KEQ 5 How well is UNICEF positioned to ensure effective programme delivery through government and NGO partnerships and coordination with other UN agencies?	SEQ 5.1 How effective are UNICEF's partnerships with government for programme delivery, understanding the different needs of boys and girls? How can effectiveness be improved?	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Advisors, Field Management)	In your opinion, how suitable is the UNICEF Strategic Framework for Partnerships and Collaborative Relationships (2009) in providing a framework for partnerships with GIRoA? In the Afghan context, what are the specific shortcomings and limitations of this strategy? Why?
			UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads), GIRoA, UN	To what extent is UNICEF's approach to partnerships with GIRoA aligned with those of other UN actors? How much inter-agency consultation occurs to ensure alignment and common approaches?
			UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads), GIRoA	Does ACO have a standard approach to assessing GIRoA ownership of, and commitment to, joint programmes? Are there differences in ownership and engagement between ministries? In your view, do NTAs help to foster GIRoA ownership or not? Please give examples.
			UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads), Field management, IPs, GIRoA, NGOs	Is there a general understanding among GIRoA partners of the different needs of boys and girls? How are gender issues approached in the context of partnerships with GIRoA? Please give examples.
			UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Advisors), GIRoA	What are the areas of improvement and/or fine-tuning for partnerships with government? Are these being considered? How are these addressed in the context of partnerships with GIRoA? Please give examples.

		SEQ 5.2 How effective are UNICEF's partnerships with NGOs for programme delivery, understanding the different needs of boys and girls? How can effectiveness be improved?	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Advisors)	In your opinion, how suitable is the UNICEF Procedure for Country and Regional Office CSO Implementing Partnerships (2019) in providing guidance for partnerships with CSOs? In the Afghan context, what are the specific shortcomings and limitations of this guidance? Why?
			UNICEF (Sector leads, Advisors), IPs, Community	What are the main strengths and weaknesses of UNICEF – and your programmatic sector's – partnerships with implementing partners?
			UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Advisors), IPs, Community	What benefits, if any, have these partnerships attained? Do you have any examples? Are there differences between local and international NGOs?
			UNICEF (Sector leads, Advisors), NGOs	What are the main benefits/challenges in the processes for selecting implementing partners? Is it effective?
			UNICEF (Sector leads, Field management, Advisors), IPs, NGOs, Community	Is there a general understanding of the different needs of boys and girls among NGO partners? If yes, what are they? Are there differences between local and international NGOs?
			UNICEF (Sector leads, Field management, Advisors), IPs	What, if any, are the areas of improvement and/or fine-tuning for partnerships with local and international NGOs? How are these addressed in the context of partnerships with INGOs/CSOs?
		SEQ 5.3 How well has UNICEF aligned its delivery partnerships with key strategic	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads), IPs, UN, Donors	What roles do UNICEF ACO and its sectors play in inter-agency coordination, and how are these roles perceived? What is working well/not so well in these roles?

		documents and frameworks such as ANPDF, One UN, NPP and SDG?	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads), GIRoA, UN, Donors	How well are programmes aligned to GIRoA's strategies and plans (ANPDF and NPPs)? Do you have any examples? What are the main challenges? For example, how are humanitarian principles (including independence) balanced with support of and alignment with GIRoA programmes?
			UNICEF (Senior management), GIRoA, UN, Donors	How well is UNICEF ACO and its sectors effectively contributing to the 'One UN' approach? What are the challenges? Please give examples.
	KEQ 7 To what extent has UNICEF contributed to institutional strengthening and government capacity building in accordance with its comparative strengths?	SEQ 7.1 To what extent is there a clear strategy on institutional strengthening and government capacity building? In which programming areas has UNICEF demonstrated a strong capacity for institutional strengthening and building sustainable government capacities?	UNICEF (Sector leads, Advisors)	Is there a strategy – for ACO and/or your programmatic sector – guiding UNICEF's approach to strengthening institutional capacity, including coordination capacity? If not, why, and how are the sectors harmonising their approaches? If yes, are there examples that it is working?
			UNICEF (Sector leads, Advisors), GIRoA	In your sector, what is the average duration of capacity building programmes, and to what degree do they contribute to the sustainability of GIRoA services or activities over time? How is capacity building performance measured? How are programme trajectories corrected for improved outcomes? Please give examples.
			UNICEF (Sector leads, Advisors), GIRoA	In your sector, what are the main challenges and areas of improvement for UNICEF's contribution to institutional strengthening and government capacity building?
			UNICEF (Senior management,	How distinct are capacity building approaches across the range of sectors covered by the ACP? Are lessons learned and exchanged

			Sector leads, Advisors), GIRoA	across sectors? How formal is this process, and how effective is it at allowing lessons learned to inform programme design?
	SEQ 7.2 Is UNICEF operating in its areas of comparative strength in terms of institutional strengthening considering the array of other actors? Is ACO an authoritative voice on capacity strengthening in public sector services?	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Advisors), GIRoA, UN, NGOs, Donors	In the specific Afghan context, does UNICEF have an added value and a comparative strength to other actors for institutional strengthening in specific sectors? In which sector and why? Please provide examples.	
		GIRoA, NGOs, UN, Donors	What is the perception of other actors regarding UNICEF's role in institutional strengthening in specific sectors?	
		UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads), GIRoA, UN, NGOs, Donors	What evidence is there that UNICEF ACO's leading and co-leading role in specific sectors contributes to institutional strengthening in a sustainable way?	
	SEQ 7.3 To what extent has the use of National Technical Assistants contributed to government capacity strengthening?	UNICEF (Sector leads), GIRoA, NTAs	What has been the role of the NTAs embedded within government offices? How has it evolved over time? What, if any, are the patterns? Are there differences between sectors?	
		UNICEF, GIRoA, NTAs	Has UNICEF ACO been able to adapt NTAs utilisation to the evolving context and GIRoA's needs? Please provide examples.	
		UNICEF (Sector leads), GIRoA, NTAs	Do you have any examples of UNICEF measurably contributing to institutional strengthening strategies and processes without performing government functions?	
		UNICEF, GIRoA	Has UNICEF ACO been pursuing a target for gender balance between NTAs? If yes, what is it? If not, why? What are gender trends among NTAs, generally and by sector?	

4. Gender integration into programme and advocacy work	KEQ 8 Is gender being integrated in programme planning and practice based on evidence generated and lessons learned?	SEQ 8.1 How systematically is UNICEF investing in gender evidence, analysis and knowledge management?	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads)	How useful and widely consulted is UNICEF programme guidance on gender integration? To what extent is this guidance reflected in programme design and implementation, and integrated in ACO programme planning? Do UNICEF staff receive training on gender? What advisory support is available to them?
		SEQ 8.2 How has the strategic strengthening of gender at organisation level been translated into more gender-responsive and gender-transformative programming? What are the early lessons learned? How can it be improved?	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Advisors)	How does UNICEF ensure that gender analysis properly informs quality gendered programming? What are the main challenges/areas for improvement?
			UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Advisors, Field management), GIRoA, UN, NGOs, Donors, Community	How well/not so well is gender integrated into UNICEF programme planning and implementation? Please give examples.
	KEQ 9 How well is UNICEF leveraging its position in strategic	SEQ 9.1 To what extent has UNICEF been effective in promoting, supporting, leading and	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads, Advisors), GIRoA, UN, NGOs, Donors	Over the last two years, has UNICEF improved how gender is integrated in programming? If so, how? If not, why?
			Gender Advisors	Does UNICEF programming reach gender-responsive or gender-transformative goals? Please provide examples.
			UNICEF (Gender Advisors, Sector leads)	In integrating gender into programming, what, if any, contextualised evidence is used. How? Please provide examples.
			IPs, GIRoA	Has UNICEF supported you in building capacity for integrating gender in programming/policies? For example, with the use of disaggregated data, and gender analysis? Do you have any examples? What have been the benefits/challenges?

	partnerships to promote gender in evidence generation, policies and programming?	building capacity in partners to produce disaggregated data, undertake gender analysis and apply gender considerations for impactful programming?	IPs, Community	Are there other organisations that support more than UNICEF in terms of gender? How could UNICEF improve?
			UNICEF (Gender Advisors, Sector leads), IPs, Community	How, if at all, has UNICEF promoted and monitored progress towards its gender equality aims (for example, use of disaggregated data, gender analysis, etc.) – with all programmes and partners (CSO, NGO, government)? What has worked well/not so well?
	SEQ 9.2 Is UNICEF operating in its areas of comparative strengths and advantages to increase its visibility as an organisation that is committed to gender equality and collaboratively influencing policies and programming related to gender inequality in Afghanistan?	IPs, Community	IPs, Community	Is UNICEF perceived to be a leader in promoting gender within your partnerships for evidence, for policies, and for programming? [adapt based on specific stakeholder] . If so, are there any examples?
			UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads), GIRoA, UN, NGOs, Donors, Community	Do you perceive UNICEF as a leading agency/champion of gender equality? If so, why? If not, why not?
		UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads), GIRoA, UN, NGOs, IPs, Donors	UNICEF (Senior management, Sector leads), GIRoA, UN, NGOs, IPs, Donors	Is UNICEF a leader in promoting gender in external partnerships across evidence, policies, programming etc? If so, why? If not, why not? Who do you consider to be a leader in gender?
		UNICEF, GIRoA, UN, NGOs, Donors, Extender, TPM, Community	UNICEF, GIRoA, UN, NGOs, Donors, Extender, TPM, Community	Do you think that ACO, when playing a leadership role in a multi-agency context, has generally been able to successfully support women and increase their role in decision making about children? Can you give examples?

6.5 List of Key Informant Categories and Interviewees

The tables below detail the different stakeholder groups covered by the KIIs. In compliance with UNICEF reporting standards, we have not included the names of the interviewees but rather their position and their organisation.

Stakeholder Groups
Other UN
Donors
GIRoA
NGOs/CSOs
Community influencers/Women Groups/Shura leaders
Local service providers/frontline workers
NTAs, Extenders
TPMs

Title & Organisation	Location (UNICEF only)
National	
Internal UNICEF	
Deputy Representative Operations	UNICEF ACO
Director Health	ROSA/HQ
Regional Child Protection Advisor	ROSA/HQ
Regional Emergency Advisor	ROSA/HQ
C4D Manager	UNICEF ACO
Regional Security Manager	ROSA/HQ
Chief Health	UNICEF ACO
Deputy Director	ROSA/HQ
Chief (Planning and Monitoring)	UNICEF ACO
Regional Education Advisor	ROSA/HQ
Regional Gender Advisor	ROSA/HQ
Chief Nutrition	UNICEF ACO
Chief Field Operations *	UNICEF ACO
Regional Health Advisor	ROSA/HQ
Chief WASH	UNICEF ACO
Resource Mobilisation Manager*	UNICEF ACO
Communication, Advocacy & Civic Engagement	UNICEF ACO

Senior Advisor Gender	ROSA/HQ
Chief Child Protection	UNICEF ACO
Chief Social Policy (SPEAR)	UNICEF ACO
Deputy Regional Director	ROSA/HQ
Regional WASH Advisor	ROSA/HQ
Security Advisor	UNICEF ACO
Evaluator, UNICEF Adolescent Programme	ACO
Gender Programme Specialist*	UNICEF ACO
Government partners	
MoE	
MRRD - Gender focal point	
Ministry of Justice (MoJ) - Director of Civil Law	
MoE - OIC for General Director of Teacher Education	
MRRD - CLTS Manager (WASH)	
UN partners	
UNDP - Country Representative	
DACAAR - Project Manager (WASH)	
UN Women - Deputy Country Representative	
Save the Children - Country Director (Education)	
WHO - Programme Manager	
WCUK - Programme Manager (Child Protection)	
Save the Children - Education in Emergencies Advisor	
UNFPA - Deputy Representative	
International Rescue Committee - Deputy Director Programmes (acting) (Education)	
Afghanistan Independent Human Rights commission - National Child Rights Coordinator	
UNFPA - Spotlight Coordinator	
World Bank	
Donors	
USAID - Regional Advisor	
Denmark - Head of Development and Cooperation	
USAID - Humanitarian contact point for UNICEF	
ECHO - Technical assistant	
SIDA - First Secretary, Development Cooperation	
EU - Head of Development Cooperation	
Other	

Director of Afghanistan Analysts Network		
Eastern Region		
Education Extender (WADAN)	Laghman Province	
Head of M&E Dep. Of Education	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Headmaster Shaikh Misri CB School	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Director DOE	Laghman Province	
Focal Point Polio UNICEF	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
CB Focal Point, Dep. Of Education	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Head of Nutrition UNICEF	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Provincial coordinator, HNTPO	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Director of Health Unit Sokai District of Kunar	Sokai district Kunar	
Health Extender Supervisor	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Head of CDC Pacheer Agam	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Head of CDC Pacheer Agam	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Field Coordinator DACAAR	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
CBE Teacher	Laghman Province	
Headmaster Jooy-e-11 CB School	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Head of CDC Dari Noor	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Gender Focal Point UNICEF	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Head of WASH UNICEF	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Principal Mastora Girls High School	Laghman Province	
Secretary CDC Shingam	Kunar Province	
Health Specialist UNICEF	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Hygiene and Sanitation Supervisor, DACAAR	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Head of UNAMA Office	UNAMA Office Jalalabad	
Headmaster Marwatzai village CB School	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
OIC DRRD	Kunar Province	
Director of Public Health	DoPH Office Jalalabad	
Education Officer UNICEF	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Treasury CDC Shingam	Kunar Province	
Health Extender (WADAN)	Laghaman Health Facility	
Deputy Head CDC Shingam	Kunar Province	
Chief of Field Office UNICEF	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
Social Mobiliser	Sokai district Kunar	
Female Mobiliser Vaccination	UNICEF Office Jalalabad	
P&M Officer UNICEF	On the Road to Laghman	
Coordination of CBS DoE	Laghman Province	

Head Admin Finance DRRD	Kunar Province
Head of Teacher Training	Laghman Province
Head of OCHA Sub-Office	UNOCHA Office Jalalabad
Health Practitioner	Sokai district Kunar
Social Mobiliser	Sokai district Kunar
CBE Teacher	Laghman Province
Southern Region	
Head of Adam Darmal Health Facility	Adam Darmal Health Facility
Child Protection Officer	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Animator, HRDA	Spin Boldak Health Facility
Social & Development Manager. MRRD	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Security Associate UNICEF	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Nurce Spin Boldak Mobile Team Head	Spin Boldak Health Facility
CoAR, WASH Specialist	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Vaccinator	Spin Boldak Health Facility
Programme Associate/Gender Focal Point	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Principal Malik Kabir School	Spin Boldak Health Facility
Monitoring and Planning Officer	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Head of Sub-Office WHO	WHO Office Kandahar
Medical Mobile Unit Supervisor	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Communication for Development Officer UNICEF	Spin Boldak Health Facility
Head of Mirwais Regional Hospital	Mirwais Regional Hospital
Health Promotion Officer Adam Darmal Health Facility	Adam Darmal Health Facility
Medical Officer WHO	WHO Office Kandahar
Health Specialist UNICEF	UNICEF Office Kandahar
CAHD officer DoPH	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Education Extender	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Social Mobiliser	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Head of CDC, Tahir Village	Spin Boldak Health Facility
NTA, WASH Officer MRRD	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Technical Extender Child Protection (DOLSA)	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Communication Officer MoE	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Nutritionist Spin Boldak Mobile Team	Spin Boldak Health Facility
Social Mobilisation & Development Manager	UNICEF Office Kandahar
WASH PO UNICEF	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Health Extender	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Humanitarian Affairs Officer UNOCHA	UNOCHA Office Kandahar

Midwife Spin Boldak Mobile Team	Spin Boldak Health Facility
Field Coordinator DACAAR	UNICEF Office Kandahar
Education Specialist UNICEF	UNICEF Office Kandahar

6.6 Survey Questions

UNICEF SPE – STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS QUESTION SETS: ENGLISH-SPEAKING RESPONDENTS

STAKEHOLDER GROUP: UNICEF STAFF					
Self-ID Questions	Responses				
Where do you currently work?	Kabul	Field/Zonal Office	Outpost	Outside Afghanistan	
What is/are the programme sector/s you primarily work in?	Health	Education	Child Protection	Water & Sanitation	Other/ Multiple sectors
What is your current category and level within the UN System?	P2 or 3	P4 or 5	P6 or 7	NOC/NOB	Other
What is your gender?	Male	Female	Prefer not to say		
How long have you been in your current role?	0–1 year	1–2 years	2–3 years	3+ years	
How long have you been working with UNICEF in or on Afghanistan?	0–1 year	1–2 years	2–3 years	3+ years	

No.	UNICEF STAFF – Main Survey Questions	Responses				
1	UNICEF demonstrates a good practical understanding of how best to integrate <u>humanitarian and development</u> objectives at programme level. If asked, I would be able to give examples of this.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2	In my programme sector or area of work, UNICEF staff generally know what the nexus is, and would be able to explain what it means in terms of programme design and implementation.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3	Compared to other agencies, UNICEF has strong, demonstrated capacity to link humanitarian and development programming.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4	In my programme sector or area of work, UNICEF has good, practical understanding of how to integrate <u>peacebuilding objectives</u> at programme level. If asked, I would be able to give examples of this.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	In my programme sector or area of work, the way ACO has prioritised provinces makes sense, and strikes a good balance between addressing the most acute needs and assisting the greatest possible number of people.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

6	In my programme sector or area of work, UNICEF strategy and guidelines have been useful to guide multi-sectoral programming on the ground. This has allowed my sector and other programme sectors to work well together in support of children, adolescents and women.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7	In my programme sector or area of work, current approaches to accessing areas controlled by anti-government elements are generally effective. Little or no further improvement can be made in those approaches.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8	In my programme sector or area of work, UNICEF have good capacity to respond to the needs of children, adolescents and women in areas controlled by anti-government elements. Little or no further progress can be made to improve this, at least not without raising current levels of funding and resources.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9	In the past year, UNICEF programmes in my sector or area of work have generally adapted well to the changing conflict situation and related risks.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10	In my programme sector or area of work, Extenders and TPMs are useful in contributing to quality programme delivery and monitoring.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11	In my programme sector, the systems in place to recruit, task and supervise Extenders and TPMs are good, and not much room exists for improvement.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12	In my programme sector or area of work, UNICEF's partnerships with NGOs/CSOs generally take measures to differentiate between the different needs of boys and girls. Nothing much can be improved in this regard, at least not without raising current levels of funding and resources.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
13	In my programme sector or work area, UNICEF's partnership with NGOs/CSOs are generally effective at delivering the agreed results.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
14	In my programme sector or area of work, UNICEF ACO has a clear strategy on institutional strengthening and government capacity building. If asked, I would be able to explain how this strategy applies to my programme sector.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15	In my sector or area of work, UNICEF has strong demonstrated capacity in institutional and systems strengthening compared to other development actors. If asked, I would be able to give examples of this.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
16	In my programme sector or area of work, the use of National Technical Assistants has been useful to build the capacity of government.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
17	In my programme sector or area of work, UNICEF does a lot to enable a better understanding of gender issues through evidence, analysis and knowledge management.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
18	In my programme sector or area of work, ACO's gender strategy has been useful to shape and guide programme design and implementation.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

19	In my programme sector work, UNICEF has been effective in helping its partners to improve their understanding of gender, and to reflect this in their programme design. If asked, I would be able to give examples of this.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----	--	----------------	-------	---------------------------	----------	-------------------

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS: UN AGENCY STAFF, INGO/CSO STAFF, DONOR REPRESENTATIVES						
Self-ID Questions		Responses				
How would you describe yourself?		UN staff	INGO/CSO staff	Donor representative	Other	
Where do you currently work?		Kabul	Afghanistan (other than Kabul)	Outside Afghanistan		
What is/are the programme sector/s you primarily work in?		Health	Education	Child Protection	Water & Sanitation	Other/ Multiple sectors
What is your gender?		Male	Female	Prefer not to say		
In the course of your current or past work, how much have you been exposed to UNICEF activities in Afghanistan?		Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	Almost exclusively	

No.	UN AGENCY STAFF, INGO/CSO STAFF, DONOR REPRESENTATIVES – Main Survey Questions	Responses				
1	UNICEF demonstrates a good practical understanding of how best to integrate <u>humanitarian and development objectives</u> at programme level. If asked, I would be able to give examples of this.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2	Compared to other agencies, UNICEF has strong demonstrated capacity to link humanitarian and development programming.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3	UNICEF has good, practical understanding of how to integrate <u>peacebuilding objectives</u> at programme level. If asked, I would be able to give examples of this.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4	UNICEF plays a recognised leadership role on the nexus, in the context of One UN, ANPDF and other multilateral platforms or frameworks.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	UNICEF's approach to selecting locations for its programmes (at provincial and district levels) allows it to strike the best possible balance between focusing on the most acute needs and assisting the great possible number of people.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

6	UNICEF's approach to multi-sectoral programming has produced good results in terms of enabling a combined approach to the diverse needs of children, adolescents and women.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7	Generally, UNICEF's approach to accessing areas controlled by anti-government elements is as effective as possible, given circumstances.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8	Generally, UNICEF's approach strikes a good balance between working with GIRoA on joint service delivery and maintaining enough independence to enable good humanitarian access and coverage in areas controlled by anti-government elements.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9	UNICEF has generally demonstrated a good capacity to adapt its programmes to the changing conflict situation and to mitigate related risks.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10	Generally, UNICEF has successfully aligned its programme partnerships (with both Line Ministries and NGOs/CSOs) with GIRoA's strategies and plans (ANPDF, National Priority Programmes).	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11	UNICEF contributes measurably to the One UN approach at both policy and programme levels.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12	Compared to other development actors, UNICEF has strong demonstrated capacity in institutional and systems strengthening. If asked, I would be able to give examples of this.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
13	UNICEF is an authoritative voice on public sector capacity development.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
14	UNICEF does a lot to enable a better understanding of gender issues through evidence, analysis and knowledge management.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15	Gender is well integrated into ACO's own programme planning and implementation.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
16	UNICEF has demonstrated good leadership in multi-agency efforts to integrate gender in the system-wide UN response.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
17	UNICEF is widely recognised as a champion of gender equality.	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
18	UNICEF has demonstrated its capacity to achieve progress on gender through partnerships with local actors (GIRoA or CSOs).	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion/ Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

QUESTION SETS: PASHTU/DARI RESPONDENTS**STAKEHOLDER GROUPS: EXTENDERS, NTAs, FRONTLINE WORKERS**

Self-ID	Responses				
Where do you currently work?	Mostly at district level	Mostly in provincial capital	Mostly in Kabul		
How are security and access conditions where you work?	Very good	Good	No opinion/ Prefer not to say	Bad	Very bad
What is/are the programme sector/s you primarily work in?	Health	Education	Water & Sanitation	Child Protection	Other/ Multiple Sectors
What is your gender?	Male	Female	Prefer not to say		
How long have you been active in an area of work that involves UNICEF?	0–1 year	1–2 years	2–3 years	3+ years	

EXTENDERS – Main Survey Questions (Note: Where relevant, questions to be preceded by: 'In your area of work or sector – Health, Edu, CP, WASH')					
1. Does your position involve working across more than one UNICEF programme sector (WASH, education, health, child protection, nutrition)?	Yes	No			
2. Do you work in areas which only Extenders can access, and which are not accessible to other UNICEF staff?	Yes, those are the only areas in which I work	Yes, but I also work in areas accessible to UNICEF staff	No opinion/ Don't know	Yes, but I mostly work in areas accessible to UNICEF staff	No, never
3. If there are areas that only you can access: Are the needs in those areas higher than in areas which other UNICEF staff can access (e.g. relating to WASH, education, health, child protection)?	Yes, much higher	Yes, generally higher	No opinion/ Don't know/ Not applicable	No, not really higher	No, they are generally lower
4. If there are other service providers in the areas where you work (GIRoA, UN), do you feel that UNICEF programming (e.g. in WASH, education, health, child protection) complements these providers well?	Yes, very well	Yes, generally	No opinion/ Don't know/ Not applicable	No, not really	No, not at all
7. Do you feel that you have a good understanding of the responsibilities and tasks that come with your position?	Yes, very good	Yes, quite good	No opinion/ Don't know	No, not really	No, not at all

5. Have you received training/guidance from UNICEF on how to include all members of the community, including women, in discussions on programmes (e.g. in WASH, education, health, child protection)?	Yes	No			
5a. If you answered 'yes' to 5 above: Was the training/guidance you have received clear and understandable?	Yes, very clear	Yes, generally clear	No opinion/ Don't know	No, not really clear	No, not clear at all
5b. If you answered 'yes' to 5 above: How easy or difficult is it to put this training/guidance in practice?	Very easy	Quite easy	No opinion/ Don't know	Quite difficult	Very difficult
6. Do you consider that addressing gender issues is an important part of your work?	Yes, very much	Yes, generally	No opinion/ Don't know	No, not really	No, not at all
7. How easy or difficult is it to take into account the different needs of boys and girls in your sector or area of work (e.g. WASH, education, health, child protection)?	Very easy	Quite easy	No opinion/ Don't know	Quite difficult	Very difficult
8. Has your job description and/or work location changed since you started to work with UNICEF?	Yes	No			
8a. If you answered 'yes' to 8 above: Do you feel that these changes were justified and in line with UNICEF programming needs?	Yes, very much	Yes, mostly	No opinion/ Don't know	No, not really	No, not at all
9. How good is your working relationship with your UNICEF manager?	Very good	Good	No opinion/ Don't know	Not so good	Not good at all
10. How good is your working relationship with your local CDC/GIRoA authorities?	Very good	Good	No opinion/ Don't know	Not so good	Not good at all

NTAs – Main Survey Questions (Note: Where relevant, questions to be preceded by: 'In your area of work or sector – Health, Edu, CP, WASH')					
1. How easy or difficult is it to ensure that GIRoA has a good understanding of the different needs of boys and girls?	Very easy	Quite easy	No opinion/ Don't know	Quite difficult	Very difficult
2. Do you feel that there is good alignment between UNICEF programmes and the NPPs?	Very good	Good	No opinion/ Don't know	Not so good	Not good at all
3. Do you feel that your role in capacity building is well understood by your GIRoA counterparts (WASH, education, health, child protection)?	Yes, very much	Yes, mostly	No opinion/ Don't know	No, not really	No, not at all
4. In your view, is your actual role working with GIRoA mainly about filling a capacity gap, or mainly about helping to improve existing capacity?	Much more about filling a gap	Generally more about filling a gap	Equally about filling a gap and improving capacity	Generally more about improving capacity	Much more about improving capacity
5. Since you have started in this role, do you feel that your GIRoA colleagues have become more able to take on responsibilities and make decisions without you?	Yes, very much	Yes, mostly	No opinion/ Don't know	No, not really	No, not at all
6. Do you feel that your support fully matches the needs of the GIRoA?	Yes, very much	Yes, mostly	No opinion/ Don't know	No, not really	No, not at all

7. If you were assigned to another job tomorrow, would the capacity that you have helped to build in your current job remain intact after you leave?	Yes, very much	Yes, mostly	No opinion/ Don't know	No, not really	No, not at all
8. Do you consider that addressing gender issues is an important part of your position?	Yes, very much	Yes, generally	No opinion/ Don't know	No, not really	No, not at all
9. Do your GIRoA counterparts consider that addressing gender issues is an important part of your joint activities?	Yes, very much	Yes, generally	No opinion/ Don't know	No, not really	No, not at all
10. Was the training/guidance you have received from UNICEF clear and understandable?	Yes, very clear	Yes, mostly	No opinion/ Don't know	No, not really clear	No, not clear at all
11. How easy or difficult is it to put this training/guidance in practice?	Very easy	Quite easy	No opinion/ Don't know	Quite difficult	Very difficult

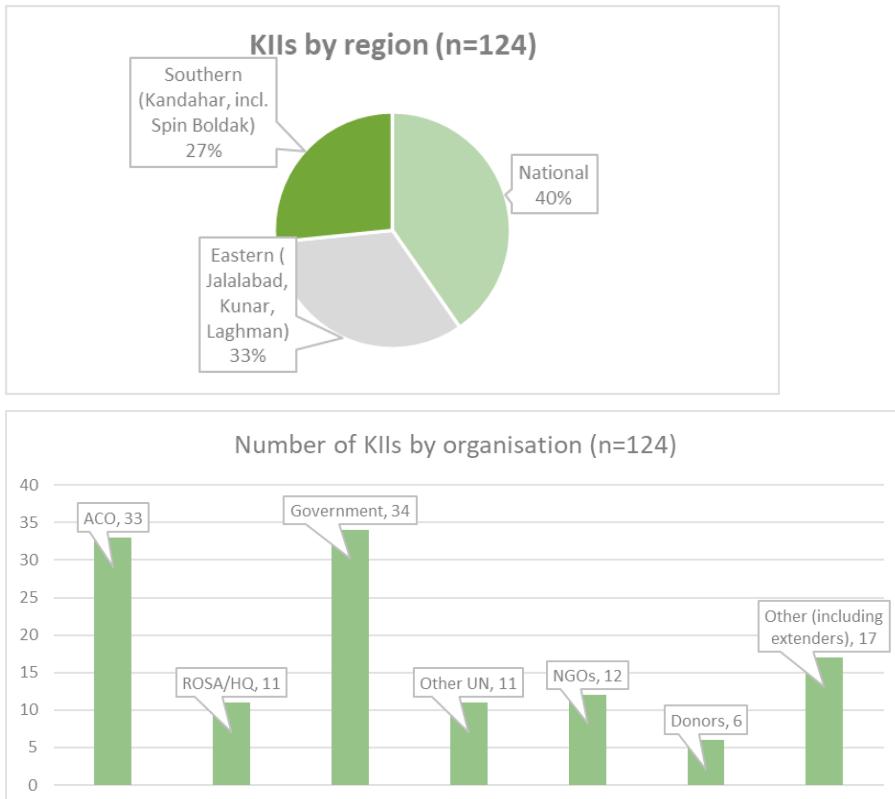
Frontline Workers – Main Survey Questions (Note: Where relevant, questions to be preceded by: ‘In your area of work or sector – Health, Edu, CP, WASH’)					
1. Does your position involve working across more than one programme sector (WASH, education, health, child protection nutrition)?	Yes	No			
2. If there are other service providers in the areas where you work (GIRoA, UN), do you feel that UNICEF programming (e.g. WASH, education, health, child protection) complements these providers well?	Yes, very well	Yes, generally	No opinion/ Don't know/ Not applicable	No, not really	No, not at all
3. How easy or difficult is it to take into account the different needs of boys and girls in your sector or area of work (WASH, education, health, child protection)?	Very easy	Quite easy	No opinion/ Don't know	Quite difficult	Very difficult
4. Have you received UNICEF training/guidance on how to include all members of the community, including women, in discussions on programmes (WASH, education, health, child protection)?	Yes	No			
5. If you answered ‘yes’ to 4 above: How easy or difficult is it to put this training/guidance into practice?	Very easy	Quite easy	No opinion/ Don't know	Quite difficult	Very difficult
6. Have you received training/guidance from UNICEF on any other aspects of your work?	Yes	No			
7. If you answered ‘yes’ to 6 above: Was the training/guidance you received clear and understandable?	Yes, very clear	Yes, mostly	No opinion/ Don't know	No, not really clear	No, not clear at all
8. Do you consider that addressing gender issues is an important part of your work?	Yes, very much	Yes, generally	No opinion/ Don't know	No, not really	No, not at all
9. How good is your working relationship with your local CDC/GIRoA authorities?	Very good	Good	No opinion/ Don't know	Not so good	Not good at all
10. How good is your working relationship with UNICEF’s local implementing partner?	Very good	Good	No opinion/ Don't know	Not so good	Not good at all

11. How helpful is UNICEF in supporting the work you do?	Very helpful	Helpful	No opinion/ Don't know	Unhelpful	Very unhelpful
---	-----------------	---------	---------------------------	-----------	----------------

6.7 Disaggregation of Respondent Sample

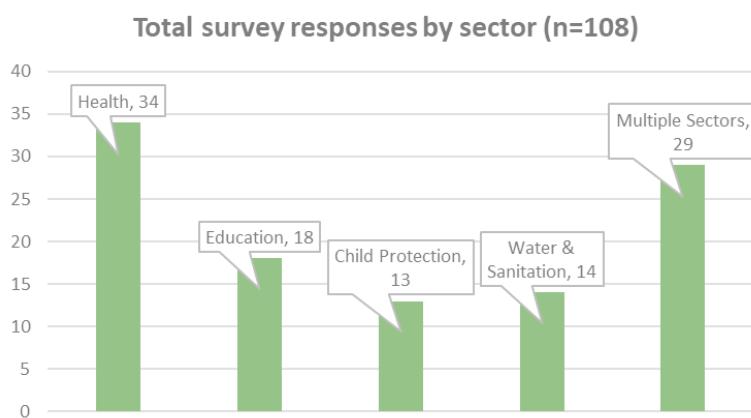
Key informant interviews

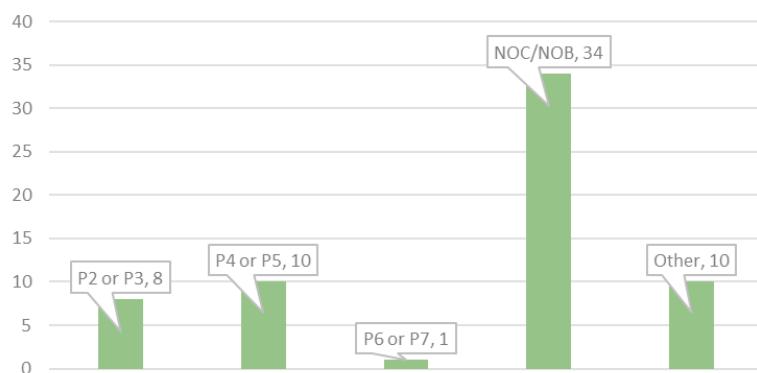
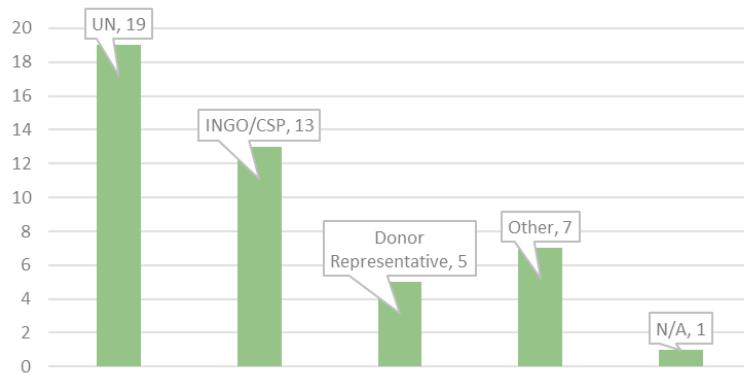
The team conducted 124 KIIs among UNICEF Sector Leads, Country Reps and Deputy Reps in NGOs and other donor agencies, and other relevant sector specialists.



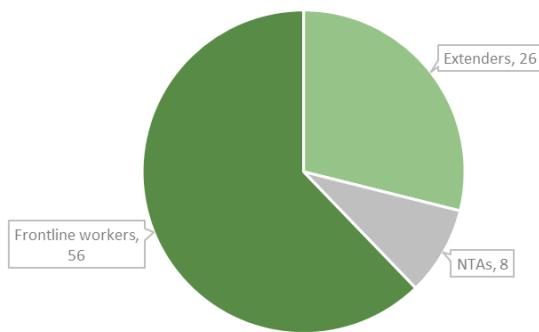
English language surveys

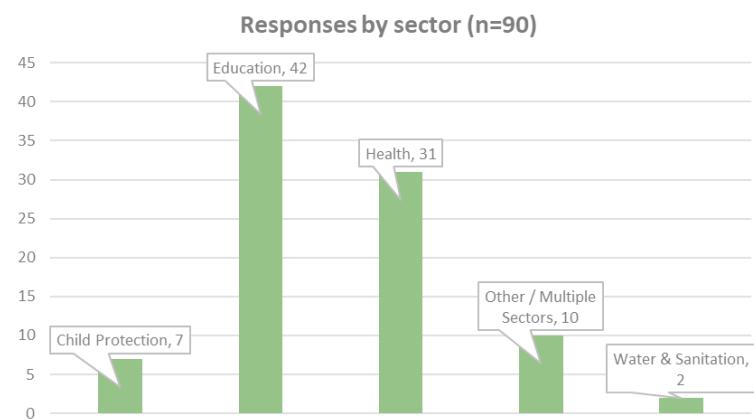
The team targeted UNICEF managers and sector specialists in other organisations through a SurveyMonkey online questionnaire. Of total survey responses, 71% were by men and 27% by women (2% of respondents preferred not to state their gender).



UNICEF respondents by rank (n=63)**Responses by organisation (n=45)****Dari and Pashto surveys**

The team administered 90 email or phone surveys in Dari and Pashto to extenders, NTAs and frontline workers. Men made up 56% of respondents and women 44%. In terms of the typical place of work of respondents, 63% work at district level, 31% in provincial capitals and 6% in Kabul.

Responses by respondent type (n=90)



6.8 Budgetary Categorisation of ACP Outputs

The table below represents the budgetary categorisation the ET used to understand budgetary balance between humanitarian and development outputs.

Output Statement	ET Rating
Health	
Deprived provinces and other focus areas have skilled healthcare workers, especially females, to provide quality and equitable MNCH services that meet minimum national standards.	Humanitarian
Polio vaccines are effectively managed and communities are adequately mobilised towards interruption of wild polio virus transmission.	Other
Deprived provinces and other focus areas have qualified EPI service providers (including primary healthcare workers for outreach, especially females) for quality and equitable immunisation services that meet minimum national standards.	Humanitarian
Health facilities in deprived provinces and other focus areas have cold chain, vaccine and adequate infrastructure to provide routine immunisation services.	Humanitarian
National and subnational procurement and supply chain management system for pharmaceuticals, vaccines and equipment improved to manage stock –outs.	Other
Individuals, families and communities, especially from deprived provinces and other focus areas, have the relevant knowledge, demand key MNCH services and appropriate behaviours.	Development
National capacity is increased for polio vaccine management and social mobilisation to maintain sustained interruption of wild poliovirus transmission.	Development
National and provincial implementing partners have the capacity to collect, analyse and disseminate data relevant for development and monitoring of the health and immunisation programme.	Development
Increased country capacity for evidence-based policy dialogue and advocacy, with special focus on improving coverage and quality of MNCH and immunisation.	Development
Increased national and subnational capacity for resilience plan and to deliver health services for preventing excess mortality among children and women in humanitarian situation.	Development
Capacities and systems at national and subnational levels related to maternal, newborn and child health outcomes are strengthened, data-driven and relevant for improved policy, programmes, dialogue and advocacy.	Development
National and subnational capacity is increased for the provision and demand of timely essential health services for women, girls and boys affected by humanitarian situations, and emergency services are delivered, in line with the CCCs.	Humanitarian

MNCH: Quality maternal, newborn and child health services are available and demanded by families to ensure mothers and girls and boys are healthy, especially in the most deprived areas.	Development
EPI: Quality expanded programme of immunisation (EPI) services are available and demanded by families to protect women, girls and boys from vaccine-preventable diseases, especially in most deprived areas.	Development
ER: M&E – training, meetings & transportation.	Other
Health COVID-19 response.	Humanitarian
Excess mortality among girls, boys and women in humanitarian crisis is prevented.	Humanitarian
WASH	
Strengthened capacity of government departments at all levels to cost-effectively deliver sustainable drinking water and sanitation services.	Development
Increased access and use of improved drinking water supply and sanitation facilities by deprived and vulnerable populations.	Humanitarian
Deprived and vulnerable populations demonstrate improved hygiene behaviour (washing hands at critical times, safe disposal of child faeces, safe handling and storage of food and use of smokeless stoves). UNICEF-supported programmes (polio, nutrition and education).	Humanitarian
Impact on child health, nutritional status and education is optimised through increased convergence of WASH programming within WASH and in other UNICEF-supported programmes (polio, nutrition and education).	Other
Increased access for gender-sensitive and integrated WASH services in schools and health centres.	Humanitarian
Increased national and subnational capacity for resilience plans and delivery of services to children and women for protected and reliable access to sufficient safe water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in humanitarian situations.	Development
Relevant government ministries at national and subnational levels have increased capacity and commitment to manage equitable and sustainable WASH programmes.	Development
Deprived communities, schools and health facilities have increased capacity to ensure open defecation-free status, access to and use of a safely managed drinking water supply, and individual and collective adoption of appropriate hygiene practices.	Development
Communities and schools have strengthened capacity to ensure adequate information on, and appropriate facilities for, menstrual hygiene for adolescent and pre-adolescent girls.	Development
Effective coordination for a timely humanitarian WASH response at national and subnational levels, and emergency services are delivered, in line with the CCCs.	Humanitarian
WASH COVID-19 response.	Humanitarian

Girls, boys and women have protected water, and reliable access to sufficient sanitation and hygiene facilities.	Humanitarian
Education	
Access to primary education for girls and boys in deprived provinces and other focus areas scaled up to meet the minimum defined standards for Afghanistan.	Humanitarian
National and subnational education authorities (MoEs) have management and financial capacity to progressively manage community-based education and ensure higher transition rate from grade 3 to grade 4 for girls and boys (including EiE).	Development
GPE in Afghanistan leveraged for resources and results to meet national education objectives.	Other
Strengthened national and subnational capacity to implement child-friendly schools (CFS), especially in targeted schools in deprived provinces and other areas.	Development
National capacity strengthened to develop and operationalise a system for monitoring of learning achievements and setting of national standards in core subjects for primary grades.	Development
Girls' education and community-based early childhood care and education developed and demonstrated in selected communities in deprived provinces and other focus areas.	Humanitarian
Education authorities have increased capacity in evidence-based national and decentralised sector analysis, planning, coordination and management.	Development
Education authorities have increased capacity in evidence-based national and decentralised sector analysis, planning, coordination and management.	Development
Education stakeholders at national and subnational levels have increased capacity to implement at scale sustainable programmes to improve equitable access for the most disadvantaged children, especially girls.	Development
Education duty bearers and rights holders at national and subnational level have increased capacity to plan for, implement and monitor a child-friendly education environment and develop and monitor student learning outcomes.	Development
By end 2021, the operationalisation of an intersectoral strategy and action plan for all girls in school has significantly contributed to a more conducive policy environment, mobilisation of civil society, increased girls' enrolment, learning and retention, and decreased drop-out rates of girls at every age.	Development
National and subnational education authorities have increased capacity to mitigate, prepare for and respond to emergencies, and emergency services are delivered, in line with the CCCs.	Humanitarian
Education COVID-19 response.	Humanitarian
Girls and boys have access to safe and secure education and critical information for their own well-being in humanitarian situations.	Humanitarian

Child Protection	
National and subnational institutional management capacity strengthened for CP systems and services for most vulnerable children.	Development
Key stakeholders participate in and contribute to strengthened coordination towards a multi-sectoral CP system/programme.	Other
Government and non-government functionaries and caregivers in contact with children have the responsibility to prevent and respond to violence, abuse and exploitation of children.	Development
Monitoring, reporting and referral capacity within CP system for children affected by humanitarian situations including armed conflict is improved and fully functional.	Development
Responsible national and subnational entities have increased capacity to enact and operationalise implementation of the legal and normative framework aligned with international child rights conventions and child protection standards.	Development
Statutory service providers have increased authority, resources and knowledge to provide quality child protection services to the most vulnerable boys and girls in Afghanistan.	Humanitarian
Community members and leaders are better able to prevent and respond to harmful practices and violence against girls and boys within their communities.	Development
Girls and boys affected by humanitarian crises, including children affected by armed conflict, displacement and unsafe migration, are assisted, reintegrated and provided appropriate support as per CCCs.	Humanitarian
Child Protection COVID-19 Response.	Humanitarian
Girls' and boys' right to protection from violence, abuse and exploitation is sustained and promoted in humanitarian situations.	Humanitarian

6.9 Bibliography

- A Strategic Review of UNICEF Gender Capacity Building & Credentialing Initiatives Report, Social Development Direct, 2020
- Afghanistan - Country Programme Snapshot 2020-2022, Spotlight Initiative
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Communication, Advocacy, and Civic Engagement Annual Workplan 2020-2021
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Communication, Advocacy, and Civic Engagement Annual Workplan 2020-2021 - Budget
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Gender Section 2020 Annual Work Plan, UNICEF, 2020
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2015-2021, Rolling Workplan 2020-2021 - Child Protection
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2015-2021, Rolling Workplan 2020-2021 - Child Protection - Budget
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2015-2021, Rolling Workplan 2020-2021 - Education
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2015-2021, Rolling Workplan 2020-2021 - Education - Budget
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2015-2021, Rolling Workplan 2020-2021 - National Health
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2015-2021, Rolling Workplan 2020-2021 - National Health - Budget
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2015-2021, Rolling Workplan 2020-2021 - Nutrition
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2015-2021, Rolling Workplan 2020-2021 - Nutrition - Budget
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2015-2021, Rolling Workplan 2020-2021 - WASH
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2015-2021, Rolling Workplan 2020-2021 - WASH - Budget
- Afghanistan - UNICEF Programme of Cooperation 2015-2021, Rolling Workplan 2020-2021 - WASH - Targets
- Afghanistan Annual Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, UN, 2019
- Afghanistan Country Office Results Compacts: 2019 - 2021: Nutrition - May 2019, UNICEF
- Afghanistan Law on Protection of Child Rights 2019, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Justice, 2019
- Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF II) 2021 to 2025, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Finance
- Afghanistan Partnership Framework, Afghanistan Conference in Geneva November 2020
- Afghanistan Top Donors, One UN for Afghanistan, UNICEF UN OECD DAC, 2020
- Analysis of current and projected conflict trends to inform UNICEF's engagement in Afghanistan, Afghanistan Country Office, 2020
- Audit of Afghanistan Country Office, Summary of Draft Observations, OIAI, 2019

- Child Marriage in Afghanistan: Changing the Narrative, UNICEF, 2018
- Community Based Nutrition Package Process Evaluation in Afghanistan 2018-2019, Final Report, UNICEF, 2020
- Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action - What's New, UNICEF, 2020
- Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF, 2020
- CPD Funding Status, Updated Feb 2020
- Education Joint Sector Review, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Education, 2018
- Enhancing Gender in Humanitarian Response UNICEF ROSA, Presentation, 2018
- Evaluation of Improving Adolescents Lives in Afghanistan, Midline report, C4ED, 2019
- Evaluation of UNICEF's coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations: Afghanistan, UNICEF, 2020
- GAP Results and indicators matrix, Indicators on integrated gender results, Goal Area 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, UNICEF
- Gender Action Plan 2018-2021, UNICEF, 2018
- Gender Equality and Rights: Gender Programmatic Review Afghanistan Country Office 2018, UNICEF, 2018
- Gender Expenditure Markers and Gender Expenditure, UNICEF, Webinar April 2020
- Gender Programmatic Review Toolkit, UNICEF, 2018
- Gender Strategy for the Afghanistan Country Office 2019-2021, UNICEF, 2019
- Guidance on Staffing for Gender Action Plan (GAP) Results, Revised, UNICEF, 2019
- HO UNICEF Nexus Inception Report Version 3 COVID Final, 2020
- Humanitarian Action for Children, Afghanistan, reports from 2019 and 2020
- Humanitarian Needs Overview - Afghanistan, 2019 and 2020
- Humanitarian Response Plan Year End Report- Afghanistan, 2018 and 2019
- Internal Audit of the Afghanistan Country Office, OIAI, 2019
- Mid term review of UNICEF Afghanistan Country programme 2015-2019, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and UNICEF, 2017
- Mid-Term Evaluation of Increasing Access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Programme (Afghanistan) 2015-2019, USAID, 2019
- One UN for Afghanistan 2018-2021, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United Nations, 2018
- One UN for Afghanistan Results Framework 2018-2021
- Quality Assurance Checklist for Gender Integration in Country Programme Documents, UNICEF, 2018
- Resource Mobilisation Strategy 2015-2021, UNICEF Afghanistan, 2019
- Results Assessment Module 2019 End-Year Reporting - Child Protection, UNICEF Afghanistan, 2019
- Results Assessment Module 2019 End-Year Reporting - Education, UNICEF Afghanistan, 2019
- Results Assessment Module 2019 End-Year Reporting - Health and Polio, UNICEF Afghanistan, 2019
- Results Assessment Module 2019 End-Year Reporting - Nutrition, UNICEF Afghanistan, 2019

Results Assessment Module 2019 End-Year Reporting - Operations Effectiveness, UNICEF Afghanistan, 2019

Results Assessment Module 2019 End-Year Reporting - Programme Effectiveness, UNICEF Afghanistan, 2019

Results Assessment Module 2019 End-Year Reporting - SPEAR UNICEF Afghanistan, 2019

Results Assessment Module 2019 End-Year Reporting - WASH, UNICEF Afghanistan, 2019

Security Risk Management Manual - Annex E Reflecting Acceptance in SRM, March 2019

Summary of the Child-Centered, multi-hazard risk analysis, UNICEF Afghanistan, 2020

Summative Evaluation and Randomized Control Trial of the Adolescent Women's Leadership Initiative Project in Afghanistan, UNICEF, 2020

Third Party Monitoring (TPM) of UNICEF Programs, Rahman Safi International, Presentation June 2020

UNICEF Afghanistan Annual Management Plan, reports from 2019 and 2020

UNICEF Afghanistan Annual Report, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019

UNICEF Afghanistan Child Protection Programme Strategy Note (2017-2019), UNICEF, 2018

UNICEF Afghanistan Education Programme Strategy Note (2017-2019), UNICEF, 2018

UNICEF Afghanistan Health and Polio Programme Strategy Note (2017-2019), UNICEF, 2018

UNICEF Afghanistan Nutrition Programme Strategy Note (2017-2019), UNICEF, 2018

UNICEF Afghanistan Office Instruction, AFGH-CO-2019-031 SOP-Extenders, 2019

UNICEF Afghanistan Programme Action Plan (2015-2019) ANNEXES, UNICEF, 2014

UNICEF Afghanistan Programme Action Plan (2015-2019), UNICEF, 2014

UNICEF Afghanistan SitRep studies, September 2019 and Year End 2020

UNICEF Afghanistan Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programme Strategy Note 2017-2019, UNICEF, 2018

UNICEF guidance on Field Monitoring, FRG/GUIDANCE/2018/001, UNICEF, 2018

UNICEF Organogram (Proposed), Afghanistan Country Office and Office of the Representative, June 2020

UNICEF SICs by goal and gender tag, 2020

UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021, Executive Summary, UNICEF, 2018

Update on UNICEF humanitarian action with a focus on linking humanitarian and development Programming, UNICEF Board Session Feb 2019

What is Gender-transformative Programming? Gender Section, PDHQ, UNICEF, 2020

6.10 Itad Principles and Values

This Statement of Ethical Principles sets a standard to which all Itad staff, consultants and partners aspire when working on Itad-managed evaluations. Itad evaluators operate in accordance with international human rights conventions and covenants to which the United Kingdom is a signatory, regardless of local country standards. They will also take account of local and national laws.

Itad takes responsibility for identifying the need for and securing any necessary ethics approval for the study they are undertaking. This may be from national or local ethics committees in countries in which the study will be undertaken, or other stakeholder institutions with formal ethics approval systems.

The conduct of all those working on Itad-managed evaluations is characterised by the following general principles and values:

- **Principle 1: Independence and impartiality of the researchers.** Itad evaluators are independent and impartial. Any conflicts of interest or partiality will be made explicit.
- **Principle 2: Avoiding harm.** Itad evaluators will ensure that the basic human rights of individuals and groups with whom they interact are protected. This is particularly important with regard to vulnerable people.
- **Principle 3: Child protection.** Itad follows the code of conduct established by Save the Children (2003) which covers awareness of child abuse, minimising risks to children, and reporting and responding where concerns arise about possible abuse. Itad evaluators will obtain informed consent from parents or caregivers and from children themselves. Children will not be required to participate even if their parents consent.
- **Principle 4: Treatment of participants.** Itad evaluators are aware of differences in culture, local customs, religious beliefs and practices, personal interaction and gender roles, disability, age and ethnicity, and will be mindful of the potential implications of these differences when planning, carrying out and reporting on evaluations.
- **Principle 5: Voluntary participation.** Participation in research and evaluation should be voluntary and free from external pressure. Information should not be withheld from prospective participants that might affect their willingness to participate. All participants have a right to withdraw from research/evaluation and withdraw any data concerning them at any point without fear of penalty.
- **Principle 6: Informed consent.** Itad evaluators will inform participants how information and data obtained will be used, processed, shared and disposed of, prior to obtaining consent.
- **Principle 7: Ensuring confidentiality.** Itad evaluators will respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. They will also inform participants about the scope and limits of confidentiality.
- **Principle 8: Data security.** Itad is registered under the UK Data Protection Act 1998 and has a data protection policy which includes procedures on data retention and confidentiality. Itad evaluators will guard confidential material and personal information by the proper use of passwords and other security measures. Itad evaluators have an obligation to protect data and systems by following up-to-date recommendations to avoid damage from viruses and other malicious programs. There is also a duty to state how data will be stored, backed up, shared, archived and (if necessary) disposed of.
- **Principle 9: Sharing of findings.** Itad evaluators are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.

6.11 Overview of Itad's approach to QA

Our four-stage QA process will lead to concrete actions before and throughout the Evaluation. These are summarised below.

Table 3: QA approach

	What?	How?	Who?
Stage 1: Establishing quality ex ante	Select the right team	When preparing a bid, we put a lot of effort in carefully selecting team members on the basis of their Evaluation competencies, skills & sector (matching the ToR) as well as their interpersonal and managerial skills. We also strive to make sure that the competencies and experience of different team members are complementary to each other and that all the requirements of the ToR are exhausted by the presented team	Business Development and Bid lead/ Project Director
	Set the preconditions for successful delivery	All team members will be assigned clear technical roles and responsibilities based on their respective areas of expertise	Project Director, Team Leader
	Ensure the best Evaluation design, within resource constraints	When preparing the bid and again during the inception phase our Project Director/Quality Assurer provides advice on how to best tailor the Evaluation design to the budget and time resources available	Team Leader and Quality Assurer
	Selection of the most appropriate and robust methodology and tools	During the inception phase, the ET will refine together the methodology under the TL's direction. Our Project Director/Quality Assurer will then review them and assure their quality	Team Leader, and Quality Assurer
	Realistic planning	The Project Director, together with the Project Officer, will periodically review the Evaluation budget and workplan making sure that delivery is within budget and planning for next phases realistic	Project Director, Project Manager, Project Officer
	Timely delivery	The Evaluation design (KIs sample size, survey sample size, depth of analysis etc.) will be tailored to ensure delivery within deadlines. The Project Director, together with the TL, will periodically review the Evaluation workplan making sure that delivery is on track and planning for next phases realistic	Project Director, Team Leader
Stage 2: Quality of the Evaluation process	Adherence with UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation	Our team members are highly experienced evaluators with several years of expertise in this field. They uphold the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and Code of Conduct for Evaluation and are fully committed to respect them. In particular, they will:	All team members, TL, Project Director and Quality Assurer

		<p>Be independent, express their opinion in a free manner and avoid conflict of interest.</p> <p>protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. We will provide maximum notice, minimise demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. We will respect respondents' right to pull out of interviews at any time. We will respect people's right to provide information in confidence and ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source (through data management, analysis, reporting and dissemination).</p> <p>Be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders</p>	
Stage 3: Quality of the end product	Challenging the deliverables	This is a key QA function. The Project Director/Quality Assurer will review each deliverable	Project Director, Team Leader and Quality Assurer
	Making sure they are written in clear language and contain no typos or grammar mistakes	One of our professional proof-readers will be proofreading all the deliverables	Proof-reader
Stage 4: Improving quality ex- post	Making sure that deliverables are properly edited	The proof-reader will also carefully edit deliverables that will be shared with external stakeholders to ensure that they are in the right format and properly formatted	Proof-reader
	Securing feedback on quality of the project and the team from Client	Throughout the project, the team will be seeking feedback from UNICEF on quality of delivery. Upon project completion, the Project Director will be seeking feedback on how to improve our services	Team Leader and Project Director
	Closing the feedback loop – acting on feedback	Upon completion, the project will undergo an internal Project Review and findings will be translated in concrete actions and lessons learned for the future	Project Director and Project Manager



Itad is a global organisation. Our strategy, monitoring, evaluation and learning services work to make international development more effective. We generate evidence on important issues – from malnutrition to migration – to support our partners to make informed decisions and improve lives.

Itad.com

 @ItadLtd

mail@itad.com

Itad Ltd

Preece House
Davigdor Road Hove,
East Sussex UK
BN3 1RE

+44 (0) 1273 765250

Itad Inc

c/o Open Gov Hub
1100 13th St NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC, 20005
United States

+1 (301) 814 1492