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UNICEF Cambodia Child Protection Programme Outcome Evaluation 2019-2023

Author: Kirsten Anderson

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UNICEF Cambodia Child Protection Programmes 2019-2023

Outcome Evaluation

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Exchange Square, 5th floor

Bldg. no. 19&24 Street 106, Sangkot Wat Phnom, Khan Daun Penh, Phnom Penh

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For further information, please contact:

Evaluation Office

United Nations Children's Fund

Three United Nations Plaza

New York, New York 10017

evalhelp@unicef.org

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Child Protection Programme, 2019 – 2023

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Pursat, Ratanakiri and Siem Reap

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Evaluation Team

Kirsten Anderson, Awaz Raoof, Em Poul, Sophea Suong
Supervision: Professor Dame Carolyn Hamilton

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

3PC	Partnership Programme for Protection of Children
C4D	Communication for Development
CCLC	Coram International at Coram Children’s Legal Centre
CCT	Cambodia Children Trust
CBO	Community Based Organisation
COVID-19	Coronavirus 2019
CPIMS	Child Protection Information Management System
CPD	Country Programme Document
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EAPRO	East Asia and Pacific Regional Office
ILO	International Labour Organization
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MoSVY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SITAN	Situation Analysis
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAC	Violence against children
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



UNICEF's Child Protection Programme 2019 – 2023

Cambodia has made notable progress in establishing a child protection system, and the key elements of a system are in place, yet despite this progress, Cambodia's child protection system is still underfunded and understaffed. While there have been significant improvements in establishing systematic coordination mechanisms in preventing and responding to the need of the vulnerable children who are at risk, these systems are still at basic and initial level. UNICEF's Child Protection Programme aims to address key gaps in the child protection system according to three output areas:

1

By 2023, national and subnational authorities have the knowledge, tools, resources and authority they need to formulate and implement the institutional and legal frameworks to strengthen child protection prevention and response interventions in a more enabling legislative, policy and financing environment.

2

By 2023, the broader child protection workforce in the spheres of social work, welfare, justice, health and social protection, has the knowledge, tools, resources and authority it needs to identify vulnerable children and provide child prevention and protection services to reduce violence and exploitation and enhance children's access to justice with priority accorded to urban poor communities and rural poor centres.

3

By 2023, parents, teachers, religious leaders, communities and adolescents have enhanced knowledge, skills and attitudes to protect girls and boys from violence and exploitation through the scaling up of positive discipline, positive parenting and Cambodia PROTECT child protection programmes.

These three outputs are situated within a system building framework: all are key components or elements that need to be in place to ensure that children are increasingly free from violence and exploitation in all contexts, through a comprehensive child protection system. The overall goal of the Child Protection Programme is that girls and boys, including adolescents, living with family and outside of family care are increasing free from violence and the threat of violence in their homes, schools, communities, and institutions.

The logic underpinning the Programme is that interventions aimed at strengthening the functioning of the child protection system will result in reduced levels of violence, abuse and exploitation of children. This logic is embedded within UNICEF's global approach to child protection programming, which shifted towards a systems strengthening approach in 2008, in recognition that this approach avoids the fragmentation and inefficiency of an 'issue-based' approach and instead aims at achieving sustainable coverage of child protection at scale, leading to a more effective and comprehensive approach for children exposed to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.¹



Evaluation purpose and intended use

In June 2022, UNICEF Cambodia engaged Coram International to conduct an Outcome Evaluation of the Child Protection Programme, covering the period 2019 to mid-2022, while taking into consideration the evolution of the Programme since the previous country programmes as well as the formative evaluation conducted in 2018. The Programme is jointly implemented with the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and a diverse range of partners at the national and sub-national levels.

The RGC and UNICEF will use the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, including lessons learned, to inform decision-making processes, including informing the planning processes for the development of the next Country Programme Document (CPD), 2024-2028. In particular, and as stated in the Terms of Reference, the five objectives of the evaluation are to:

1

Review the theory of change of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme including the interlinkages among the Programme outputs and provide an assessment of how far they are based on evidence from programme experiences and approaches that have proven effective in protecting girls and boys in the current country context.

2

Examine the results achieved by UNICEF's Child Protection Programme, enabling and disabling factors, considering aspects of both prevention and response, including capacity development of government institutions at national and sub-national levels, international and national NGOs, development partners as well as the voices of children, adolescents, families and communities.

3

Assess UNICEF's leadership, comparative advantage, ability to leverage resources and partnerships for strengthening the RGC child protection system at national and sub-national levels through advocacy and policy influencing, including utilising knowledge management and evidence-generation to inform policy decisions;

¹ Wulczyn, et. al., 'Adapting a systems approach to child protection: Key concepts and considerations, 2010, UNICEF New York.

4

Assess the opportunities for further accelerating action on child protection in Cambodia with the RGC and partners; and

5

Examine the existing linkages between the outputs of the Child Protection Programme, as well as inter-linkages with Policy and Public Finance for Children, Education, Health and Nutrition, and WASH through the joint work such as positive discipline in schools, child protection service delivery in the health system and communication for development.



Methodology

The evaluation, which used a theory-based approach, drew on a variety of evidence sources to answer evaluation questions pertaining to the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of UNICEF's child protection work, as well as to cross-cutting questions of gender, equity and human rights. Evidence gathered includes extensive qualitative data collection in key UNICEF programming provinces (Phnom Penh, Battambang, Kandal, Ratanakiri and Siem Reap), along with two 'comparator' locations, in which UNICEF has not been engaged intensively (Oddar Meanchey, Pursat). Data collection included an extensive desk review of programming documents, data and research; key informant interviews with 111 key stakeholders and programme implementers (national and sub-national Government, NGO, UN and donor), 12 in-depth interviews relating to individual cases (eight rights holders / beneficiaries and four service providers) and focus group discussions with 81 rights-holders (70 women and 12 men), along with a quantitative stakeholder survey, which received 33 responses (20 from within UNICEF and 13 from NGO and Government partners).



Findings

On relevance

- The Child Protection Programme (CP Programme) was found to be highly relevant to Cambodia's global development commitments and, in utilising a strong systems building framework, was also found to be relevant to UNICEF's global frameworks and priorities. The three output areas of the Programme were found to respond well to existing gaps and needs within the child protection system.
- The CP Programme's multi-tiered approach, involving interventions aimed at strengthening the system at both the national and sub-national levels, responds well to the programming context and the engagement with new stakeholders, in particular, the Ministry of Interior (MOI), was found to be highly relevant to the new decentralised system for social welfare / child protection service delivery.

- While the Programme was found to be highly relevant to Government policies, plans and commitments, some interventions were not fully operationalised, owing to existing capacity gaps at the sub-national level, indicating that more attention should have been given to the phasing and complementarity of the Programme's interventions at the sub-national level.
- With its focus on addressing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children, the Programme was found to be highly relevant to the evidence base on the protection risks and needs of children in Cambodia. However, there was limited systematic engagement of children and adolescents in the programme design and review.
- While some measures were taken to integrate gender and equity into the Programme design, these measures were found to be insufficient, and there is a need to engage more comprehensively with the gender dimensions of child protection issues and more effectively address the protection needs of children with disabilities, in particular.
- The CP Programme was found to have retained its relevance in the changed context brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

On coherence / connectedness

- The CP Programme worked effectively in coordinating the different interventions of development partners, including government and NGO partners through supporting the Child Protection Forum at the national level. The Child Protection Forum brings together UN agencies, Government stakeholders and NGOs to coordinate their work in child protection systems strengthening.
- At the sub-national level, UNICEF ensured the effective coordination of child protection service delivery primarily through the Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children (3PC), which is a collaboration between the government UNICEF and NGOs for the provision of prevention and response child protection services, coordinated by Friends-International.
- The development and maintenance of respectful, open and enduring strategic partnerships were key factors in UNICEF's ability to achieve coherence between the Programme goals and outputs and the work of other agencies.

- However, it was found that work is needed to ensure more effective coordination of interventions by different UN agencies, such as UN Women.
- In terms of coherence within the Programme design, The CP Programme has included a number of other issues under output area 3, including on adolescent and youth engagement, child marriage and online child protection. Stakeholders were clearly supportive of these initiatives, and there is an evidence base to support the focus on these issues (as set out above). However, there is a need to link these initiatives to the systems strengthening framework, to avoid the Programme becoming too 'issue focused' and fragmented.

On effectiveness

- The CP Programme has been mostly effective in achieving results aimed at strengthening the legal and operational environment for child protection (output 1), in particular through the development of the Child Protection Law and Standard Operating Procedures and establishment of a social welfare workforce.
- However, while the roll-out of Primero (the Child Protection case management system) has contributed to some positive outcomes including improving coordinated case management, organisation, data security / privacy and information management, the operationalisation and use of Primero as a case management system has been hampered by insufficient capacity at the sub-national level.
- The evaluation found that that outcomes in relation to the strengthening of the social welfare workforce and child protection service delivery (output area 2) was mainly positive, though critical challenges remain which have reduced the overall effectiveness of interventions. Case management and service delivery appear to be functioning to a reasonable standard in the 'intervention' research locations, particularly in contrast to practices in the 'comparator' research locations, with increased government ownership and improved service delivery achieved through training, coaching and case collaboration processes which pair government social services staff with NGO social workers to build capacity in government case management systems. Service delivery was also improved through UNICEF's efforts in increasing coordination among different government and NGO service providers.
- However, critical gaps remain in child protection service delivery at the sub-national level, including the limited capacity and skills of the social welfare workforce, lack of operational budgets and limited services in some areas (in particular mental health services).

- Some positive outcomes were reported in terms of addressing harmful community beliefs and practices (output area 3), particularly in relation to improved parenting practices and a reduction in the use of violence discipline by parents. However, this evidence was largely anecdotal and there are limited data to establish the outcomes or impacts in terms of attitudinal and behaviour change.
- The CP Programme was effective in adapting to the COVID-19 context through support in providing emergency packages for vulnerable families affected by COVID-19 and technical support to government and NGO service providers in changing to remote working modalities during COVID-19.

On impact

- The CP Programme has had a positive impact on increasing access to services for children exposed to violence and to reintegration services for children in Residential Care Institutions (RCIs); increasing access to diversion for children in conflict with the law; increased institutionalisation of child protection services at the sub-national level through the development of child protection plans; and the reported reduced use of physical violence among parents who underwent positive parenting training.
- It was not possible to examine the impact of the Programme on rates of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation of children, due to limited available data.
- There was found to be a lack of quality / qualitative impact indicators in the CP Programme's results framework, which limits the extent to which the Programme can demonstrate its contribution to the strengthening of the child protection system.

On efficiency

- The CP Programming approach was found to be efficient in the achievement of the desired results in terms of resource utilization and timely delivery. This finding is based on the range of results documented by this evaluation and the programme's relatively modest financial base.
- Based on the overall results achieved, the CP Programme staff were found to be highly competent and efficient in terms of their technical capacity to effect positive change for children and adolescents vulnerable to harm. However, there may be insufficient human resource (in terms of staff numbers and also particular skill sets – e.g. budgeting, financial planning) to support the full implementation of these changes.

- Cambodia's child protection sector has a high-level understanding of the child protection situation, the drivers for children's protection violations and required solutions to overcome these violations. However, a critical gap is the understaffing of the sector and a lack of access to systemised and competency-based learning (focused on applied skills).
- The Government of Cambodia and UNICEF have invested in generating data, evidence and knowledge to better understand the child protection programme environment as well as to improve the quality and reach of critical protection interventions. A critical inefficiency appears to be the limited utilisation of the findings, recommendations and lessons learned of the knowledge generated.

On sustainability

- The CP Programme has taken some important steps toward increasing government ownership over the child protection system. However, more work needs to be done, particularly at the sub-national level, to ensure that essential child protection functions are owned and implemented by government duty bearers.
- At the national level, the CP Programme has supported the institutionalisation of the legal system and operational framework through the development of the Child Protection Law and standard operating procedures (SOPs), through initiatives aimed at embedding a social welfare workforce for child protection and through the incorporation of initiatives into government policies and action plans.
- At the sub-national level, some positive steps have been taken to ensure government ownership over child protection services, for example, through the designation, training and coaching of social welfare staff. However, critical capacity gaps in the system have meant that NGOs still carry out the bulk of child protection case work in practice.



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Conclusion and recommendations

UNICEF Cambodia's CP Programme 2019 – 2023 is a large, multi-component programme that is necessarily ambitious in scope. It has made some significant contributions to the strengthening of Cambodia's child protection system, through a multi-tiered approach that has worked at national and sub-national levels to strengthen legal and policy frameworks, operational frameworks and capacities (particularly capacities of the social welfare workforce), along with addressing harmful norms, practices and beliefs that drive violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children. However, critical gaps in the system remain, including the limited capacity of the social welfare workforce and limited operational capacity at the sub-national level. This has, to an extent, hindered the CP Programme's ability to achieve positive results for children. The following recommendations have been made:

On Programme structure and design

- It is recommended that UNICEF's next CP Programme explicitly align to the new global Child Protection Systems Strengthening articulated by UNICEF HQ in 2021, following a robust systems diagnostic to ensure that the Programme focuses on the areas in which there are clear gaps in the system. The global CPSS Framework provides an evidence-based and well-articulated structure for UNICEF's systems strengthening approach, along with diagnostic tools and monitoring frameworks. These materials would provide very useful for planning the next CP Programme in Cambodia and ensuring that it is embedded within a strong systems strengthening framework. In order to ensure that funding is channelled into systems building initiatives, UNICEF could develop communications materials for implementing partners and donors on how particular issues (e.g. online exploitation and abuse) are connected to and best addressed within a broad systems strengthening framework.
- It is recommended that the next CP Programme continue to use a multi-tiered approach that is focused on both the national and sub-national levels in order to provide a comprehensive systems building framework. When the Child Protection Law and Standard Operating Procedures are adopted, the Programme should shift its focus to supporting national and sub-national duty bearers to implement the Law and SOPs. Consideration should also be given to the role of communes and village leaders and how UNICEF can support their role in the system, for example through increased knowledge, skills and capacity in identifying child protection risks and referral procedures.
- The Programme logic should articulate how the Programme will ensure vertical coordination of child protection services and how national programme interventions link to sub-national interventions.

- The next CP Programme design should also consider the phasing of interventions at the sub-national level and in particular, how more general capacity building interventions can be more effectively joined up with the Primero case management tool (one consideration should be that capacity building on Primero should be embedded within broader case management training and capacity building).

On measuring results

- It is recommended that the next CP Programme consider developing qualitative impact indicators to be incorporated into the results framework. The next CP Programme should also consider the use of intermediary results indicators, particularly for social behaviour change components of the Programme (which typically take more time to demonstrate impact), and it should ensure that equity indicators (gender, location / remoteness, disability and other equity considerations) are comprehensively incorporated into the results framework.

On responsiveness to the needs of rights holders, including girls and boys and children in vulnerable situations

- It is recommended that, in the next CP Programme, a mechanism such as a youth advisory board, is developed to engage adolescents and youth in the design of the Programme both routinely (e.g. through a quarterly forum) and at key point in the Programme's life cycle (e.g. fit for purpose reviews, monitoring and evaluation / assessments etc.). Adolescents and youth could be recruited through the AYRG (as CRC Cambodia supports the AYRG in developing skills and confidence in adolescent and youth participation). It is also important that UNICEF ensure that the advisory board represents a diverse range of adolescent and youth voices from a range of different provinces and that it reserves spaces on the advisory board for adolescents and youth who are in vulnerable situations. UNICEF could consider more innovative ways of engaging with members of the AYRG and beyond (e.g. through UReport communications). Consideration should also be given to extending these youth engagements to cover the whole Country Programme.
- It is recommended that a thorough gender analysis be carried out to inform the development of the next CP Programme to ensure that the gender dynamics of child protection issues are more fully incorporated into the Programme. This should involve a consideration of the ways in which violence against children and violence against women intersect and the ways that child protection programming could incorporate VAW prevention and response initiatives (including how processes like case management can be better aligned).² UNICEF could ensure a strengthened process is in place (management response, accountability framework) to ensure that any recommendations from gender analyses or other relevant studies are incorporated into the CP Programme. Efforts should be made to engage in collaborative work with UNFPA and UN Women on the gender dimensions of the CP Programme.

² This could be guided by recommendations in UNICEF EAPRO, UNFPA Asia and Pacific Regional Office and UN Women Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Ending violence against women and children in Cambodia: Opportunities and challenges for collaborative and integrative approaches, 2020.

- It is recommended that the CP Programme explicitly integrate the needs of children with disabilities into the next CP Programme, including through a specific sub-output / result that is focused on improving services and services delivery for children with disabilities and capacity building of government and NGO service providers in this area (e.g. under an overall output/s on improving service delivery), both in terms of advocating for improved services for children with disabilities at the national level and also through capacity building of service delivery at the sub-national level. UNICEF Cambodia could also improve the way that disability is mainstreamed effectively office-wide. This could include through integrating disability in routine office-wide approval forms etc. to ensure that Programmes systematically consider the needs of children with disabilities in decisions relating to partnerships, design of interventions and implementation of specific initiatives. It should also consider development for staff on disability across sectors to improve their understanding of disability and how it should be incorporated into programme areas and outputs.
- It is recommended that UNICEF carry out an in-depth equity analysis to identify other groups of children and parents / carers who may not fully benefit from the CP Programme (or its components), based on e.g. geographical location, indigeneity, sexual orientation, gender identity, displacement and so on, and integrate this knowledge into the next CP Programme. In particular, it is recommended that the next CP Programme consider how it can apply in the context of children who remain behind, and how particular programme interventions can be adapted. For example, consideration should be given to the delivery of the positive parenting programme to grandparents / other caregivers, rather than restricting this programme to parents (mothers).

On enhancing programme effectiveness

- It is recommended that intensive case management training and coaching be delivered to the social services workforce, and this training / coaching should integrate or link up with training on the Primero case management system. This is important to ensure that Primero is utilised effectively as a case management tool, rather than purely an information management system. Measures to ensure that the training is institutionalised should be continued. Consideration should be given to the development of an online resource that includes follow up / refresher training and resources.
- It is recommended that UNICEF's next CP Programme focus on building capacity for operationalisation of the child protection system, particularly at the provincial, district and commune / village levels. This could involve supporting the operationalisation the SOPs, when they are adopted. Consideration should be given to supporting MoSVY and MOI to carry out a costing of the operationalisation of the CP system as a whole, and UNICEF should prioritise supporting MoSVY, MOI and the sub-national administrations in developing and institutionalising operational budgets for child protection.

- A stakeholder mapping could then be carried out to identify which government Ministry / institution could support each part of the system. The mapping could include the different UN agencies to ensure that programme outputs utilise and align work already being carried out by other UN agencies to avoid duplication and inefficiencies.
- Consideration should be given to supporting MoSVY and MOI to attract and retain quality social workers / social services staff. This could be informed by a study of graduates of the university social work programme in Cambodia to determine their career pathways etc., along with a mapping of analysis of similar interventions that have been demonstrated to have been effective across similar contexts. It could include subsidising or part-subsidising the wages of social workers from NGOs to be placed within the DoSVY and the District Offices for Social Welfare to work more closely alongside existing government staff and build their skills. There is a need for UNICEF to support improved programming in the integration and delivery of mental health services within child protection service delivery.
- It is recommended that a technical inputs from UNICEF's social behaviour change specialist should inform the behaviour change components of the next CP Programme.
- It is recommended that UNICEF consider how to join up programming between different teams, in particular to ensure the same programming districts are selected for both positive parenting and positive discipline programmes.
- It is recommended that the next CP Programme consider how to harness the new modalities that were developed during COVID-19, including for example, online refreshers to support more in-depth face to face training, providing further support to hotlines etc.

On increasing efficiency

- It is recommended that a gap analysis be carried out between the human resources needs of the new CP Programme and the existing resources within the child protection team. A plan for addressing any capacity gaps within the team (e.g. through additional training or recruitment) should be developed.
- It is recommended that UNICEF Cambodia establish an internal process for ensuring that the main findings, lessons learned recommendations from studies are considered and applied. Alternatively, it is recommended that UNICEF build this process into the existing evaluation management response processes.

On ensuring sustainability

- It is recommended that UNICEF develop a full costed operational plan for taking these programmes to scale, including a plan for phasing out UNICEF funding and ensuring full RCG ownership of the programmes, though this would need to be planned gradually over the cycle of the next CP Programme (five years). As part of this, it is recommended that UNICEF support the RCG to develop a costed plan to take full ownership of Primero. This should include inputs necessary to build capacity at all levels of the system to enable it to be fully operationalised. Consideration could be given to developing a long term strategy (15 year +) for full Government ownership of child protection systems and services which contains concrete actions to be achieved in each CP Programme cycle toward the outcome of full Government ownership.
- As part of the stakeholder mapping exercise (see above under 'enhancing effectiveness'), it is recommended that UNICEF determine which programme component should sit with which Ministry, and then develop a sustainability plan together with the key Ministry at national and sub-national levels.



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INTRODUCTION



In June 2022, UNICEF Cambodia engaged Coram International to conduct an Outcome Evaluation of the Child Protection Programme, covering the period 2019 to mid-2022, while taking into consideration the evolution of the Programme since the previous country programmes as well as the formative evaluation conducted in 2018. The Programme is jointly implemented with the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and a diverse range of partners at the national and sub-national levels. The RGC and UNICEF will use the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, including lessons learned, to inform decision-making processes, including informing the planning processes for the development of the next Country Programme Document (CPD), 2024-2028. In particular, and as stated in the Terms of Reference (Annex 1), the five objectives of the evaluation are to:

1

Review the theory of change of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme including the interlinkages among the Programme outputs and provide an assessment of how far they are based on evidence from programme experiences and approaches that have proven effective in protecting girls and boys in the current country context.

2

Examine the results achieved by UNICEF's Child Protection Programme, enabling and disabling factors, considering aspects of both prevention and response, including capacity development of government institutions at national and sub-national levels, international and national NGOs, development partners as well as the voices of children, adolescents, families and communities.

3

Assess UNICEF's leadership, comparative advantage, ability to leverage resources and partnerships for strengthening the RGC child protection system at national and sub-national levels through advocacy and policy influencing, including utilising knowledge management and evidence-generation to inform policy decisions;

4

Assess the opportunities for further accelerating action on child protection in Cambodia with the RGC and partners; and

5

Examine the existing linkages between the outputs of the Child Protection Programme, as well as inter-linkages with Policy and Public Finance for Children, education, health and nutrition, and WASH through the joint work such as positive discipline in schools, child protection service delivery in the health system and communication for development.

The evaluation drew on a variety of evidence sources to answer evaluation questions pertaining to the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of UNICEF’s child protection work, as well as to cross-cutting questions of gender, equity and human rights. Evidence gathered includes extensive qualitative data collection in Phnom Penh, Battambang, Kandal, Oddar Meanchey, Pursat, Ratanakiri and Siem Reap, representing a wide variety of beneficiaries and stakeholders, along with a quantitative stakeholder survey.

On the basis of the activities set out above, this report sets out: relevant information on context, including an overview of the Cambodian child protection system and the environment relevant to child protection in Cambodia; a review of the ‘object of the evaluation’ or what has been delivered under UNICEF’s Child Protection Programme since 2019; the overall purpose, objectives and scope for the evaluation; criteria and evaluative questions; methodology including ethical guidelines; findings and preliminary conclusions; lessons learned; final conclusions and recommendations.



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CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION



Cambodia has a population of around 15.55 million (7.57 million male and 7.98 million female), with a median age of 27.³ Approximately 39.4 per cent live in urban areas and 25 per cent of Cambodia's 3.55 million households are female headed. Children under age 5 years amount to 9.3 per cent of the total population (approximately 1.44 million), while 4.56 million (29.4 per cent) are under the age of 15 years. Youth aged 15-24 account for 17.2 per cent of the population.⁴ Ethnically, 98 per cent of Cambodians are Khmer, though there are eight officially acknowledged ethnic minorities and 17 recognized indigenous groups. The indigenous groups are generally located in Cambodia's North-eastern provinces where socio-economic disadvantage is concentrated.⁵

The development landscape in Cambodia is evolving rapidly with the combined impact of climate change and COVID-19 presenting structural and financial challenges. These changes are causing increased economic hardship at the household level. The frequency and intensity of extreme weather events are increasing, including the severity of droughts and floods, such as those experienced in October 2020. Further, Cambodia has recently transitioned to a lower-middle-income economy.⁶ Understanding these challenges is critically important for managing programming risks and assumptions and for harnessing potential opportunities that these challenges will bring. For example, in 2018, Cambodia had one of the fastest growing economies in the world. The pandemic has put an end to this growth, at least in the short term.



Child protection situation

The current Child Protection Programme was designed in 2018 in response to the then child protection situation as documented in several sources, the main one being A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia,⁷ published by UNICEF Cambodia and the UNICEF Division of Data, Research and Policy, New York. The data in the Statistical Profile is still the most current for the majority of child protection issues, where reliable data is available.

³ Kingdom of Cambodia, National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, General Population Census 2019, National Report on Final Census Results, Phnom Penh, October 2020, pp. x-xi.

⁴ Kingdom of Cambodia, National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning: National Report on Final Census Results, Phnom Penh, October 2020, p. x.

⁵ Minority Rights Group International, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, November 2017. Available at: <https://minorityrights.org/country/cambodia/>.

⁶ World Bank: Available at: <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>, accessed 15 February 2023

⁷ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, 2018.

Violence against children

The most definitive source of data on violence against children remains the 2013 Cambodia Violence Against Children Survey (CVAC), which is almost a decade old. The CVAC revealed that 53 per cent of females and 54 per cent of males aged 18–24 reported at least one incident of physical violence prior to age 18. 25 per cent of children reported having been subjected to emotional abuse, with one in 20 children having been sexually assaulted.⁸ According to a more recent survey in five provinces only, approximately eight per cent of children aged 13–17 years reported having experienced physical violence.⁹ Violence and its transmission from one generation to the next continues to limit the rights of women and children. In 2014, half of all girls and women believed a husband was justified in beating his wife under certain circumstances, compared to around one in four men and boys.¹⁰

According to the Cambodian Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) for 2021–2022,¹¹ a significant proportion of children aged 1–14 years experienced physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month. Overall, 66 per cent of children aged 1–14 have experienced violent discipline with only 23 per cent of children experiencing nonviolent discipline. In addition, 59 per cent of children experienced psychological aggression, 43 per cent experienced any type of physical punishment, and five per cent experienced severe physical punishment such as being ‘hit on the face or head.’¹²

Children in residential care institutions and alternative care

In 2016, around 16,500 children were living in 406 residential care institutions across the country.¹³ In addition, one in ten children were not living with their biological parents even though they had at least one living parent. In 2021, MoSVY published a report on the implementation of the 5-year action plan for improving childcare, showing the overall number of children in residential care institutions had been reduced by 59 per cent while the overall number of actual institutions had been reduced by 43 per cent.¹⁴ The RGC and UNICEF have now shifted their investments in care reform from seeking to reduce the number of institutions and the number of children in them, to ensuring that all children in residential care have care plans to support deinstitutionalisation, which also means ensuring that there are a sufficient number of social workers and allied workers with the necessary capacity to not only prepare the care plans but also to monitor and support their implementation. This is part of broader efforts to improve child protection service provision.

⁸ Kingdom of Cambodia, Steering Committee on Violence Against Children, Findings from Cambodia's Violence Against Children Survey 2013, October 2014, pp. 20–21.

⁹ Kingdom of Cambodia, National Institute of Statistics and UNICEF, Baseline for the Regular Survey to Monitor Violence Against Children in five target provinces 2017, p.5.

¹⁰ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, 2018, p. 39.

¹¹ Kingdom of Cambodia, National Institute of Statistics (NIS) and Ministry of Health (MoH), Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2021–22: Key Indicators Report, 2022.

¹² Kingdom of Cambodia, National Institute of Statistics (NIS) and Ministry of Health (MoH), Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2021–22: Key Indicators Report, 2022, p. 39.

¹³ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, 2018, p. 43

¹⁴ Country Programme Full Approved Report: Cambodia Country Programme (2019–2023). Outcome 0660/AO/06/883 CHILD PROTECTION, Reporting Year: 2021, p. 98

In addition to residential care institutions, there are other forms of alternative care for children including kinship care, foster care, group homes, transit homes, faith-based care and boarding schools.

A 2018 study on the use of alternative care in the community, including pagoda-based care, found that:

“The total number of children in Cambodia who are cared for by somebody other than a parent is not known. Further, there is little evidence on the number of children in kinship care or foster care, though there is evidence of various foster care services across the country, run mainly by NGOs, many of whom belong to the 3PC Partnership.”¹⁵

The study noted that there was a ‘desperate need’ for social workers at the sub national level, for better case management practices and for better regulation of the various forms of care systems.



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¹⁵ Kingdom of Cambodia, Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, Study on Alternative Care Community Practices for Children, 2018, p. 15-16. The Partnership Programme for Protection of Children (3PC) is a collaboration between the government UNICEF and NGOs for the provision of prevention and response child protection services.

Child marriage and teenage pregnancies

The 2014 CDHS revealed that nearly one in five women aged 20 to 24 were married or living with a partner before age 18. It appears that childbearing among girls aged 19 is on the rise, especially among those who are poor, those who have no education or only a primary school education and those who live in rural areas.¹⁶ Although over the long term, child marriage in Cambodia has been in decline, progress in reducing child marriage has recently stalled. Child marriage is concentrated among certain ethnic groups and in certain parts of the country, including in Ratanakiri province. A baseline study of child marriage in Ratanakiri found that: "... many girls are still marrying in adolescence in Ratanakiri province. One in nine female adolescents aged 12-17 years are married. Adolescents in the 15-17-year bracket show a higher rate of marriage than the younger 12-14 years group, which is 19 per cent and 3 per cent respectively."¹⁷

The baseline study made two key recommendations to improve the implementation of the Provincial Action Plan to Prevent Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy. First, the Action Plan should have a greater focus on prevention amongst younger age groups given that adolescent girls are more likely to have partners (married or in union) and give birth as their age increases. Secondly, the Action Plan should provide tailored support to the estimated 884 children aged 12-14 and 15-17 who are already married.

At a national level, of particular concern is that even if the rate of decline in child marriage doubled over the next decade, around one in 10 women would still be married during childhood.¹⁸

Children and adolescents in conflict with the law

In 2016, new juvenile justice legislation was signed into law. Its objectives include to improve access to child-friendly justice for children who come into contact with the law, for example through the provision of diversion and by providing specialized legal aid for children. A detailed three-year operational plan was commissioned to guide the implementation of the law. However, despite this new law, the number of children in detention has increased. In 2017, there were 907 children in detention.¹⁹ By October 2021, the number had risen to 1,420.²⁰ In contrast, between 2010 and 2014, there was a 56 per cent decrease in the number of children in detention.²¹ On a positive note, the percentage of children who are subject to a diversion order and other non-custodial measures increased from 17 per cent in 2019 to 20 per cent by September 2022.²²

¹⁶ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, 2018, p. 43.

¹⁷ Kingdom of Cambodia, Provincial Administration of Ratanakiri, Baseline Study on Child Marriage and Child Mothers among Girls aged 12-17 Years in Ratanakiri, 2019, p. 6.

¹⁸ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, 2018, p. 11.

¹⁹ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, 2018, p. 29.

²⁰ Data provided by UNICEF Cambodia: Number of Children in Detention as of 10 October 2021 (Annex 1.4).

²¹ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, 2018, p. 29.

²² Country Programme Full Approved Report: Cambodia Country Programme (2019-2023). Outcome 0660/AO/06/883 CHILD PROTECTION, Reporting Year: 2021, p. 93.

Children and young people who end up in detention raise significant concerns. In preparation for the Cambodian launch of the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty,²³ a coalition of networks and organisations²⁴ consulted with children and adolescents who had previously been deprived of their liberty and submitted a statement outlining their concerns. A key concern was the lack of access to academic materials in the facilities, along with the poor quality of programmes. Other key concerns included a lack of sufficient and nutritious food, inadequate sanitation and healthcare services. Children and young people reported that in detention they: "... suffer from mental health complications, including emotional distress, depression, trauma, and even suicidal thoughts."²⁵

Child labour

According to available data (2018), one in nine children between the ages of five and 17 were engaged in child labour' more than half of whom worked in hazardous conditions.²⁶ In Cambodia, hazardous work includes work done on construction sites and in factories where there is little oversight or regulation.

Online sexual exploitation and abuse

A 2022 study²⁷ found that children in Cambodia are spending more time online, accelerated by COVID-19 and related lockdowns and other restrictions on social movement and interaction. The study found that more than 80 per cent of girls and boys aged 12 to 17 had used the internet in the previous three months with no reported difference between genders and only minor differences between urban and rural children.²⁸ It found that 11 per cent of internet-using children aged 12 – 17 years had been subjected to acts of online sexual exploitation and abuse in the past year. This included children who were blackmailed into engaging in sexual activities, had their sexual images shared without their permission, or were coerced into engaging in sexual activities through promises of money or gifts.²⁹ According to this survey, the most common platforms for experiencing online exploitation and abuse among children were social media and communications platforms (FaceBook / FaceBook Messenger and WhatsApp). Offenders were people already known to the child, including family members, adult friends, peers or romantic partners. Persons unknown to the child were responsible for around one in five instances of online exploitation or abuse.³⁰

²³ Committee on the Rights of the Child. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc/united-nations-global-study-children-deprived-liberty>, 2019, accessed on 10 November 2022.

²⁴ The statement was issued by the Adolescent and Youth Reference Group (AYRG), Child Advocate Network (CAN), and Cambodian Children and Young People Movement for Child Rights (CCYMCR), with the support of the Child Rights Coalition Cambodia (CRC-Cambodia).

²⁵ Committee on the Rights of the Child. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc/united-nations-global-study-children-deprived-liberty>, 2019, annex 8, pp. 18-20, accessed on 10 November 2022.

²⁶ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, 2018, pp. 21-22.

²⁷ ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF, Disrupting Harm in Cambodia: Evidence on online child sexual exploitation and abuse, 2022, Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

²⁸ ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF, Disrupting Harm in Cambodia: Evidence on online child sexual exploitation and abuse, 2022, Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, p. 6.

²⁹ ECPAT, Interpol and UNICEF. Disrupting Harm in Cambodia: Evidence of online exploitation and abuse. 2022. Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

³⁰ Ibid.



Child protection system structure

In Cambodia, there are several agencies with a mandate for coordination of the child protection system but no one agency responsible for providing the overall structure or coordination functions of the system. In broad terms, these agencies are often referred to as the National Child Protection Coordination Mechanism (NCPCM). Members include the Cambodia National Council for Children (CNCC); National Committee on Child Labor (NCCL); Women and Children's Consultative Committees (WCCC); National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT); Cambodia Human Rights Committee (CHRC) and the National Committee against Torture, Violence, Inhumanity, Persecution or Punishment (NCATVIP), amongst others.³¹ There is also a national coordinating and advisory mechanism for persons with disabilities, the Disability Action Council (DAC).

Cambodia's child protection system is currently governed by a series of laws that are primarily under the jurisdiction of the MoSVY. Within MoSVY, the Department of Child Protection (previously called the Department of Child Welfare) is the lead for child protection, and there are several other departments with mandates for specific aspects of child protection. These include the departments for inter-country adoption; people with disabilities; and youth rehabilitation (juvenile justice), amongst others. Sub-Decree No. 94 (May 2022) re-structured MoSVY and created a new Department of Family Affairs and Department of Victim Protection.

At the provincial level, the Provincial Offices of Child Welfare play a lead role in child protection, along with the Ministry of Interior (MOI). In addition, Child Protection Technical Working Groups (TWG) are being established in all 25 provinces to ensure better coordination, comprised of key government officials and local civil society organisations. Twenty TWGs had been established by the end of 2022.

As part of decentralization process, child protection functions have been devolved to the districts and communes, which are under the MOI. The MOI is responsible for public administration at the national and sub-national levels. Specific activities to strengthen coordination between MoSVY and MOI have been included in the Child Protection Sector Strategic Implementation Plan, which was co-signed by MoSVY and MOI on 29 November 2022.

Cambodia has made notable progress in putting into place key elements of the child protection system; however, significant gaps remain in terms of financing and staffing of the system. Further, there is no overarching legislation establishing the architecture of the system (though a legal framework is currently in development). There is also very limited capacity to implement the system in terms of human and financial resources, and there is still no specific government budget for child protection for individual government agencies or for cross-sectoral child protection activities, such as the multi-sectoral Steering Committee on Violence Against Children.

³¹ Kingdom of Cambodia, Cambodia National Council for Children Baseline Study on Child Protection Mechanism at National and Sub-National Level, Final Draft, 2018. p. 1.

OBJECT OF THE EVALUATION



Conceptual framework and structure

Protecting girls, boys and adolescents from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect, and harmful practices is central to UNICEF's global mandate and a pillar of the UNICEF Cambodia Country Programme. In Cambodia, the Child Protection Programme is designed to ensure that girls and boys, including adolescents, living with family and outside of family care are increasing free from violence and the threat of violence in their homes, schools, communities, and institutions. The initial projected budget for the current five-year programme is USD\$ 22.8 million dollars.³²

The Child Protection Programme is aligned to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). It also engages SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 17 (partnerships for achieving the goals). The Programme is also aligned to Goal Area 3 within UNICEF's global Strategic Plan 2022-2025³³ which seeks to ensure that every girl and boy is protected from violence and exploitation, in both humanitarian and development contexts. This includes all forms of violence, including gender-based violence (GBV), trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse. The duty to protect children from violence and exploitation is enshrined in numerous articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including articles 19, and 34 to 38.

As noted earlier, Cambodia has made notable progress in establishing a child protection system, and the key elements of a system are in place, yet despite this progress, Cambodia's child protection system is still underfunded and understaffed. While there have been significant improvements in establishing systematic coordination mechanisms in preventing and responding to the need of the vulnerable children who are at risk, these systems are still at basic and initial level.

The Programme has one outcome and three outputs.

Table 1: Child Protection Programme outcome and outputs

Outcome: By 2023, girls and boys including adolescents, living with families and outside of family care are increasingly free from violence and exploitation and from the threat of violence and exploitation in their homes, schools and communities and in institutions, including during humanitarian situations.

³² United Nations, Economic and Social Council, United Nations Children's Fund Executive Board, Second regular session 2018, Country Programme Document, Cambodia, 12–14 September 2018, p. 14.

³³ United Nations, Economic and Social Council, United Nations Children's Fund Executive Board, Second regular session 2021, 7–10 September 2021, p. 14.

Output 1: By 2023, national and subnational authorities have the knowledge, tools, resources and authority they need to formulate and implement the institutional and legal frameworks to strengthen child protection prevention and response interventions in a more enabling legislative, policy and financing environment.

Output 2: By 2023, the broader child protection workforce in the spheres of social work, welfare, justice, health and social protection, has the knowledge, tools, resources and authority it needs to identify vulnerable children and provide child prevention and protection services to reduce violence and exploitation and enhance children's access to justice with priority accorded to urban poor communities and rural poor centres.

Output 3: By 2023, parents, teachers, religious leaders, communities and adolescents have enhanced knowledge, skills and attitudes to protect girls and boys from violence and exploitation through the scaling up of positive discipline, positive parenting and Cambodia PROTECT child protection programmes.

These three outputs – further detailed below – are situated within a system building framework: all are key components or elements that need to be in place to ensure that children are increasingly free from violence and exploitation in all contexts, through a comprehensive child protection system. There are four standard indicators and four additional indicators for measuring progress for this outcome.³⁴ Please see Annex 2 for a description of the indicators for the outcome and each output.

The logic underpinning the Programme is that interventions aimed at strengthening the functioning of the child protection system will result in reduced levels of violence, abuse and exploitation of children. This logic is embedded within UNICEF's global approach to child protection programming, which shifted towards a system strengthening approach in 2008, in recognition that this approach avoids the fragmentation and inefficiency of an 'issue-based' approach and instead aims at achieving sustainable coverage of child protection at scale, leading to a more effective and comprehensive approach for children exposed to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation (see information box, below).³⁵

Information box: UNICEF Child protection systems building approach

Historically, UNICEF focused on protecting at-risk and vulnerable child populations, such as displaced children, children in street situations or children in the worst forms of child labour. From 2000, UNICEF accepted that focusing on particular issues rather than building a holistic child protection system led to fragmentation, the development of parallel systems for protecting children and failed to address the needs of all children suffering violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

³⁴ See the Evaluability Assessment for the list of outcome and output indicators and an assessment of their relevance and evaluability.

³⁵ Wulczyn, et. al., 'Adapting a systems approach to child protection: Key concepts and considerations, 2010, UNICEF New York.

This acceptance led to a change of approach, reflected in UNICEF's 2008 Child Protection Strategy (the 2008 Strategy), which has remained the overarching strategic framework driving UNICEF's child protection programming globally. Rather than focussing on issue-based programming (e.g., programmes to address child labour, child trafficking, etc.), the strategy promoted child protection system strengthening.³⁶ According to this approach, a child protection system is composed of seven elements: Legal and policy framework; Governance and coordination structures; A continuum of services; Minimum standards and oversight mechanisms; Human, financial and infrastructure resources; Mechanisms for child participation and community engagement; and Data collection and monitoring systems.

UNICEF's Child Protection Programme Strategy Note³⁷ sets out in detail the programme structure, rationale, theory of change, key deprivations and priority interventions to improve the protective environment for children in Cambodia. At its core, the Programme seeks to address the weak and underdeveloped nature of the child protection system itself, and secondly, to address the problematic trends which expose children to violence / place them at risk.

The programme's results framework (Annex 2) sets out indicators corresponding to outcome and output statements. Where relevant, indicators also include baseline and target figures. These indicators have, where necessary, been further developed, in order to inform the analytical framework and measurements for the evaluation.



Theory of change

The Theory of Change lists the following main deprivations:

1

Children living with families are exposed to violence and severe discipline/corporal punishment in home, school and other settings;

2

Large numbers of children are deprived of their right to family-based care through abusive institutionalization and children outside of family care are exposed to high levels of violence and exploitation, including trafficking, sexual abuse, online sexual exploitation and forced begging; and

3

Children in contact with the law do not have access to child-friendly justice procedures.

³⁶ UNICEF, Child Protection Systems Strengthening: Approach, Benchmarks, Interventions, September 2021.

³⁷ UNICEF Cambodia, Child Protection Programme Strategy Note (Final), 2019-2023, May 2019.

The drivers for these deprivations are listed as ‘intergenerational transmission of violence against both women and children, discriminatory gender norms, the social exclusion of children with disabilities and the undervaluing of adolescents as potential partners in national development.’ Identified bottlenecks include:

- No child protection law to inform and guide the child protection response;
- Limited prevention and response services (quality, reach, access) for vulnerable children and families, country wide;
- Limited efforts to scale-up existing interventions;
- Lack of social workers and limited capacity of the broader social services workforce; and
- Limited skills and knowledge about violence against children among service providers; and limited knowledge on positive parenting among caregivers.

These bottlenecks are aligned to the child protection systems building approach (see discussion above), as each bottleneck addresses different essential components of a system.

In summary, the child protection theory of change is that girls and boys including adolescents, living with families and outside of family care will increasingly be free from violence and exploitation and from the threat of violence and exploitation in their homes, in their schools, in their communities and in institutions: **if** there are coordinated national efforts to scale up existing set of interventions and if services reach the most vulnerable; **and if** parents and communities increasingly demand protection and justice services; **and if** programming with and for adolescents aims to reduce vulnerability to violence and exploitation; **and if** gender responsive programming is resourced and implemented; **and if** quality Government oversight of the alternative care sector including kinship care, fostering and adoption continues; **and if** Government invests in child protection, including human resource planning for social work; and if formal agreements are reached between the welfare and social protection sectors to identify children at risk of harm; **and finally, if** collaboration with UN, donors and development partners is strengthened. A schematic diagram of the theory of change is attached (Annex 3). For an expanded analysis of the theory of change, including the evaluability of the programme logic, please refer to the Evaluability Assessment (Annex 4).



Strategies and interventions

Output area 1: Enabling policy and legal environment

The first stream of work (Output 1) is primarily designed to strengthen the structure, functions, capacities and accountability of the child protection system at both the national and sub-national levels. Specifically, it seeks to ensure that key duty bearers have the knowledge, tools, resources and authority they need to formulate and implement the institutional and legal frameworks to strengthen child protection prevention and response interventions in a more enabling legislative, policy and financing environment. The intermediate outcome statement linked to this output is: “Girls, boys and adolescents are more protected from violence because the legal, policy and financing environment enables and efficient and effective child protection response for all children, everywhere.”

To achieve this output, UNICEF is investing in a range of projects and activities:

Table 2: Output 1 System-based Projects and Activities

Child Protection System Components	Projects and Activities
<p>Functions and structure (a legal and regulatory framework and governance structures)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Law and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). • Child Protection Sector Strategic Implementation Plan with costings. • Provincial Child Protection Plans and Technical Working Groups. • Prakas (regulations) and Procedures on foster care and kinship care. • Guidelines on diversion of children in conflict with the law and on child friendly justice procedures. • Pilot Project for reintegrating of children with disability from residential care institutions to family-base care. • Integration of child protection in police academy curriculum. • Revised Policy on Alternative Care for Children. • Alternative Care Reform Plan 2023 – 2027. • Guidelines on reintegration, transition, and closure of residential care facilities. • Guidebook on the implementation of sub-decree 182, 183, 184 and 34. • Guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of social workers of Municipal, Districts, and Khans. • Assignment of 204 district social affair staff to perform roles of child protection. • Coordination of VAC Action Plan and support for key interventions.
<p>Capacity (Human, financial and infrastructure resources)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primero (a digital case management system). • Social workers (final stage of recruitment by the government) and district civil servants assigned to perform child protection related functions. • Mainstreaming of disability in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Child Protection Law, Alternative Care Policy, CPIMS and Primero. • Appointment of social agent (1 in each province) to handle juvenile justice cases and support capacity building of the sector.

Accountability (minimum standards, data collection and oversight)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of Ethics for social service workforce. • CPIMS Strategic Plan for 2023-2027. • Strengthening of mechanisms to guide the inspection of residential care facilities • Country-led Evaluation of the Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children 2017-2021 (VAC-AP) in Cambodia.
Child Protection in Humanitarian Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (COVID-19, floods, etc.), including Guidelines on Case Management during COVID-19. • MoSVY's Child Protection in Emergency Contingency Plan 2020-2021. • Planning on integration of climate change in relevant child protection work.

Outcome area 2: Child protection services and workforce

The second stream of work (Output 2) is primarily designed to strengthen the capacity of the child protection system by ensuring that the child protection workforce (social work, welfare, justice, health and social protection), has the required ‘knowledge, tools, resources and authority’ to identify and support vulnerable children. Specifically, the goals of these capacity building efforts are to reduce violence and exploitation of children and to improve children’s access to justice with an emphasis on children living in economically deprived urban and rural settings. The intermediate outcome statement linked to this output is: “Girls, boys and adolescents outside of family care or living in multi-dimensional poverty have increased access to age, ability and gender appropriate services and protection. This includes children on the move, children in street situations, and children vulnerable to institutionalisation, trafficking and sexual exploitation, including online sexual exploitation.”

To achieve this output, UNICEF is investing in a range of projects and activities.

Table 3: Output 2 System based Projects and Activities

Child Protection System Components	Projects and Activities
Capacity (human, financial and infrastructure resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing skills and capacity of the social service workforce. • Strategic plan for training of social service workforce. • Training curriculum and development of modules, with integration of cross-sectoral areas including child protection in emergency, IECD, GBV, MHPSS and disability.

- Training of social workers, including on Primero.
- Capacity building of health practitioners on the clinical handbook.
- Business Plan on Investing in Social Service Workforce Cambodia (2021).
- Strategic Plan on Social Service Workforce (2022-2031).
- Mentoring services for government social service workforce through a partnership with Social Services of Cambodia (SSC).

Continuum of services (spanning prevention and response at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels)

- Service provision government agencies and the 3PC Partnership Programme for Protection of Children but also others.
- Expansion of the Partnership Programme for Protection of Children (3PC) to increase provision of MHPSS service as part of child protection in humanitarian action and legal aid services to children in contact with the law.
- Partnership with Child Helpline Cambodia for MHPSS services and educational information to prevent VAC.



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Outcome area 3: Child protection attitudes and behaviours

The third programme stream (Output 3) is primarily designed to strengthen the demand side of the child protection system, including the capacities of children, adolescents, parents and those with a duty of care for the protection of children such as teachers and health workers. Specifically, it is designed to ensure that parents, teachers, religious leaders, communities and adolescents have enhanced knowledge, skills and attitudes to protect girls and boys from violence and exploitation through the scaling up of positive discipline, positive parenting and Cambodia PROTECT child protection programmes. The intermediate outcome statement linked to this output is: “Girls and boys of all ages are nurtured in families that increasingly use positive parenting, attend schools that increasingly apply positive discipline and thrive in communities that increasingly adopt norms that strengthen protective practices.”

To achieve this output, UNICEF is investing in a range of projects and activities.

Table 4: Output 3 System-based Projects and Activities

Child Protection System Components	Projects and Activities
Functions and structure (a legal and regulatory framework and governance structures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of VAC Action Plan and support for key interventions. • Provincial Action Plan to Prevent Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy in Ratanakiri 2017-2021. • Child Protection in School Action Plan 2019-2023. • Action Plan to prevent and respond to online sexual exploitation and abuse 2021-2025.
Child and adolescent participation and community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambodia PROTECT, behaviour change campaign. • Positive parenting. • Positive discipline in schools. • Adolescent engagement and participation. • Online safety campaigns. • Mine risk reduction.³⁸ • National digital campaign on adolescent mental health.
Accountability (minimum standards and oversight)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pagoda Child Safeguarding Policy. • Country-led Evaluation of the Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children 2017-2021 (VAC-AP) in Cambodia.

The campaign was expanded to include other key protection concerns such as child marriage, child online protection, mental health and psychosocial support, and gender-based violence risk mitigation.

³⁸ UNICEF Cambodia ended its mine action engagement in 2021 due to the success of previous sustained multi-year programming. National authorities and civil society partners will now continue this work.

UNICEF partners

To deliver the outcome and three outputs, UNICEF collaborates with the Ministry of Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) and the following government partners: the Ministry of Cults and Religion (MoCR); the Ministry of Interior (Mol); the Ministry of Justice (MoJ); the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA); the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS); and the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MoPTC). Other key partners and networks include the following: Child Helpline Cambodia; Child Fund Cambodia; Family Care First; Friends-International, Plan International; the Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children (3PC), Save the Children, World Vision International, Improving Cambodia's Society through Skilful Parenting (ICS-SP); Social Services Cambodia, CRC Cambodia; and Action Pour Les Enfants (APLE) Cambodia.



Strategic changes to the Child Protection Programme

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, children around the world are facing an increased risk of abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect that are unprecedented in their global reach. Evidence from this pandemic, as well as from previous infectious disease outbreaks such as Ebola, shows that in these situations existing child protection risks are exacerbated, and new ones emerge, from both the disease and from the prevention and control measures put in place to contain it.³⁹

The closure of schools and childcare facilities, increased caregiver stress, and crowded living spaces where families are confined, are contributing to children's heightened risk of violence, neglect, and exploitation. Further, some children are experiencing the death of their caregiver while others are being separated from their families for multiple reasons, including COVID-19 related public health containment measures. As these risks are often hidden within communities, it can become even more difficult to identify vulnerable children without visits or other forms of follow-up by caseworkers under COVID-19-related social distancing measures. Children's sources of support outside of the family, including child protective services, health services and school, are likely to be out of reach for extended periods of time.

Fit for purpose programme review

In response to the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on children, families and communities and the burden it was placing on the delivery of essential services, UNICEF Cambodia undertook a review of all its programmes, including child protection to assess their 'fit for purpose'⁴⁰ in the context of the pandemic.

³⁹ UNICEF, 'Access to Justice for Children in the era of COVID-19: Lessons from the Field', New York, 2020, p. 7-8. <https://www.unicef.org/media/92261/file/Access-to-Justice-COVID-19-Learning-Brief-2021.pdf>.

⁴⁰ UNICEF Cambodia, Reflection on UNICEF Cambodia Child Protection Programme to be 'fit for Purpose', December 2020/January 2021.

For the Child Protection Programme, the purpose of the exercise was to:

“... guide the process of reviewing the current UNICEF Cambodia Child Protection programme and define key adjustments required to reprioritize and reorientate the programme for the period 2021-2023 in a way that the programme will be COVID-19 responsive, more efficient in responding to the pandemic’s impact and able to accelerate results in key priority areas as well as building and nurturing strategic partnerships and collaboration with relevant stakeholders for amplification of results.”⁴¹

The exercise also provided the opportunity for the Child Protection Programme to reflect on its current approach to child protection systems strengthening (CPSS) in light of the new UNICEF HQ global guidance on CPSS, and in particular to more clearly articulate the changes it wanted to see at each level or component of the child protection system. It also provided the opportunity to reorganise the management of several outputs.

Table 5: Child Protection Programme Review

#	System Components	UNICEF Cambodia Priority interventions for the period 2021-2023
1	Legal, regulatory and policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the development, finalisation and approval of the Law on Child Protection;• Finalisation and approval of revised alternative care policy and procedures/regulations for kinship care, foster care and domestic adoption.
2	Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalise the development of the child protection sector national strategic plan and provincial plans for all 25 provinces in Cambodia;• Establish more effective coordination mechanisms at national at sub-national level for child protection services as well stronger collaborations with NGOs and donors and with other sectors, particularly education, health, justice and social protection;• Strengthen coordination and capacity for emergency preparedness and response.

⁴¹ UNICEF Cambodia, Reflection on UNICEF Cambodia Child Protection Programme to be ‘fit for Purpose,’ December 2020/January 2021, p. 1.

3	Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the rollout of Primero nationwide; • Case management collaboration with NGOs social workers (3PC) to build the role of government social workers; • Support the government to test and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures for child protection services and referrals, with the aim of improving the access and quality of child protection services and continuum of services across Social Welfare, Justice, Health and Education; • Define more systemic and sustainable approach for child helpline/ hotlines.
4	Standards and oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development, finalisation, testing, approval and roll out of Standard Operating Procedures for the delivery of Child Protection services and referrals; • Support establishment of clear mechanisms for supervision of social service workforce.
5	Resources and capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support comprehensive workforce strengthening initiatives, including the approval of job description for social workers at provincial and district level, development of social work capacity building strategy and curricula and provision of training for child protection service providers and staff; • Shift focus from ad-hoc to a more coordinated/institutional capacity building of Social Services Workforce. • Finalisation of Code of Ethics and National Strategic Plan for social service workforce; • Advocacy for increased government budget investment in child protection also through costing and financing of child protection key areas, with particular focus on social service workforce strengthening, case management system and scale up of positive parenting and behavioural change campaigns, foster care and diversion/rehabilitation services.
6	Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support child and family participation and community engagement (also involving monks and teachers) through Cambodia PROTECT; • Support and promote platforms for children's and adolescents' empowerment; • Advocate for and support the establishment of complaints mechanisms for children; • Support parents and caregivers engagement through positive parenting, • Support and promote private sector engagement to tackle child online sexual exploitation and abuse.

7	Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support launch and roll out of Child Protection Information Management System (CPMIS), with focus on strengthened data governance (coordination, oversight and secure management); • Advocate and support inclusion of child discipline modules and questionnaires in Cambodia DHS and other relevant data collection plans and mechanisms; support research on factors that affect child protection (prevention and response).
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As part of the fit for purpose exercise, a number of actions were proposed to streamline several standalone projects into larger programming responses.

Table 6: Child Protection Programme Review: Fit for Purpose

#	Intervention	Standalone activities proposed to be streamlined into other programmes
1	Implementation of the Clinical Handbook for Health Workers for Survivors of Sexual Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to the development and implementation of the Standard Operating Procedures for child protection services, in order to strengthen the referrals between child protection and health services.
2	Prevention of child marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include as part of a key area in the national Child Protection Strategic Sector Plan and provincial plans; • Mainstream into the Cambodia PROTECT, the behavioural change campaign; the positive parenting programme; in engagement with adolescents and youth; and through collaborations with the education sector.
3	Pagoda Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve Monks in community engagement activities as part of Cambodia PROTECT and build their capacity as agents for change; • Include Pagodas as part of the referral mechanisms for child protection services and in the development and roll out of SOPs.
4	Mine Risk Education Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End financial investments in Mine Risk Education and only provide technical support.

Many of the proposed actions highlighted above were approved by UNICEF and the RGC at the programme review discussed below.

Programme review

In mid-2021, UNICEF and the RGC proposes a series of strategic changes to the Child Protection Programme as part of the Programme Review of the Royal Government of Cambodia – UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation (2019-2023). The Programme Review noted that while COVID-19 had delayed programme progress in some areas, it had highlighted the critical role of social workers in supporting children and adolescents in times of emergency, particularly in terms of: “helping to strengthen the national social service workforce and increase delivery of child protection services to vulnerable children.”⁴² Despite this positive development the Programme Review noted that there was a need to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus in response to emergencies to ensure greater sustainability of child protection initiatives. In addition, a greater focus was needed on documentation and advocacy for scaling up of good practices at subnational level. Looking forward the Programme Review highlighted several continuing and emerging child protection priorities.

This included the need to continue to focus on child protection system strengthening and sustainability, particularly the legal, institutional and organization framework workforce and service delivery. In particular, greater advocacy efforts were required for the RGC to increase budget investments and to scale up social service workforce strengthening, capitalising on recent developments in the region. The ASEAN Road Map for the Implementation of the Hanoi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work for Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community.⁴³ The vision of the Declaration is: “The Ha Noi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work for Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community sets a clear vision for empowering peoples of ASEAN through building comprehensive social work and delivering multidisciplinary, inclusive and quality social services.”⁴⁴

The Programme Review also identified the need for a more systematic response to the protection of children online. This would include forging partnership with the private sector; supporting increased access to quality services for victims of abuse online; promoting increased reporting of cases; strengthening law enforcement’s ability to bring perpetrators to justice; while conducting victim-focused investigations and empowering children, adolescent and young people to gain the knowledge and skills to protect themselves. Other proposed strategic shifts in programming included fostering greater collaboration between the Child Protection, Gender Based Violence and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support; promoting a more integrated and collaborative approach to address violence against children/adolescents (VAC) and violence against women (VAW) based on the evidence of the VAC Action Plan evaluation and the regional study on VAC/VAW intersections.

⁴² UNICEF Cambodia, Report of the Programme Review of the Royal Government of Cambodia – UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation (2019-2023), September 2021, p. 22.

⁴³ Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN Road Map for the Implementation of the Hanoi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work for Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community, 12 November 2020.

⁴⁴ Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN Road Map for the Implementation of the Hanoi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work for Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community, 12 November 2020, p. 6.



PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION



Purpose and objectives

The main purpose of the outcome evaluation is to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability of the Child Protection Programme in terms of its achievement of results, as well as its contribution towards meeting UNICEF's priorities in knowledge-generation and lessons learned. The purpose of the evaluation is also to inform UNICEF's future strategies and programme development in child protection.

As stated in the TOR (Annex 1), the five objectives of the evaluation are to:

1

Review the theory of change of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme including the interlinkages among the Programme outputs and provide an assessment of how far they are based on evidence from programme experiences and approaches that have proven effective in protecting girls and boys in the current country context.

2

Examine the results achieved by UNICEF's Child Protection Programme, enabling and disabling factors, considering aspects of both prevention and response, including capacity development of government institutions at national and sub-national levels, international and national NGOs, development partners as well as the voices of children, adolescents, families and communities.

3

Assess UNICEF's leadership, comparative advantage, ability to leverage resources and partnerships for strengthening the RGC child protection system at national and sub-national levels through advocacy and policy influencing, including utilising knowledge management and evidence-generation to inform policy decisions;

4

Assess the opportunities for further accelerating action on child protection in Cambodia with the RGC and partners; and

5

Examine the existing linkages between the outputs of the Child Protection Programme, as well as inter-linkages with Policy and Public Finance for Children, education, health and nutrition, and WASH through the joint work such as positive discipline in schools, child protection service delivery in the health system and communication for development.

The knowledge, data and information generated through the outcome evaluation will support learning and decision-making. This in turn will support more sustainable child protection outcomes for children in the future. Further, the evaluation will help to clarify the degree to which the Programme has contributed to changes for children vulnerable to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, particularly historically excluded and marginalised groups of children. At the same time, it will help determine whether UNICEF is making the right strategic choices to ensure that children vulnerable to harm in Cambodia are able to claim and enjoy their rights to protection as enshrined in international conventions and related instruments and in national child protection related legislation and policy.

The evaluation is intended to provide specific and actionable, evidence-based recommendations, based on a detailed analysis of the findings of the evaluation, along with the identification of good practices and lessons learned. The evaluation is a mid-term evaluation and as such, final programme results will not be measured; though the findings will be useful in assessing outcomes achieved so far and will be aimed at generating findings that will be useful in informing how the Programme can work to achieve its end-term results.

The Child Protection Programme's target population is set out in the programme's key outcome: girls and boys including adolescents, living with families and outside of family care, who experience violence or who are threatened by violence, in their homes, in their schools, in their community and in institutions. Other programme target populations, who receive capacity building and technical support through the Programme are set out in the Programme's Results Framework (Annex 2). These include:

Output 1: National and sub-national authorities;

Output 2: The broader child protection workforce (social work, welfare, justice, health and social protection); and

Output 3: Parents, teachers, religious leaders, communities and adolescents.



Key users and intended use of the evaluation

The primary users of the evaluation are UNICEF Cambodia, including senior management and the Child Protection team; RGC line ministries such as the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; the Ministry of Women's Affairs; central agencies such as the Ministry of Planning; multisectoral mechanisms such as the Steering Committee on Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children; NGOs and coalitions such as the Partnership for the Protection of Children (3PC); and the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO). The RGC, line ministries and implementing partners are the key duty bearers. Secondary users are the UN agencies working in child protection and violence against women, justice and labour and partners such as Universities, thinktanks and civil society organisations.

Donors and international development partners include USAID and the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund; the Government of Japan, the Global Partnership for Ending Violence Against Children; UNICEF National Committees in Australia, Germany, and Japan.

The intended use of the evaluation is to inform decision making and provide accountability and learning.



Scope of the evaluation

As per the TOR, the Programme will be evaluated against the strategic intent laid out in the UNICEF Cambodia CPD, 2019-2023, and through a review of its theory of change.

In addition, the evaluation will focus on the linkages with the other elements of the Child Protection Programme, while looking at linkages with other parts of the country programme. Specifically, how the Child Protection Programme links to the policy and public finance for children, education, health and communication for development (C4D). For example, the Programme works closely with the Health Programme in the implementation of the Clinical Handbook for Health Practitioners on violence against children. The Programme also works closely with the Education Programme to scale up the Positive Discipline Programme and to rollout the Child Protection Policy in schools. These linkages are important in ensuring a multi-sector approach to child protection, engaging the necessary key government partners and other stakeholders and ensuring mutually reinforcing and efficient results.

Geographic scope

The geographic scope of the evaluation covers the Programme's work at national, subnational and community levels. Upstream work is undertaken at the national level and centres around child protection systems strengthening, including legislative and policy reform, knowledge generation and planning for service delivery. Midstream protection work is undertaken at the subnational level covering provinces and districts. Downstream protection work is at the community level and includes parents, caregivers, service providers, children, and adolescents.

At the sub-national level, the evaluation will cover six locations (at the Province and District level), including four programme locations and two comparator locations as detailed in section 7.3.1, below (sampling).

Time scope

The time scope for the evaluation is the start of the current country programme in 2019 to mid-2022, while also considering the evolution of the Programme since the previous country programmes as well as the formative evaluation published in 2018.



EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS



Evaluation questions

The evaluation was designed to respond to the following key evaluation questions and sub-questions which were developed to meet the aims outlined above (section 5). These questions were drawn from the TOR, though with some adjustments in order to make the sub-questions more comprehensive and inclusive of the main questions (changes from the original questions in the TOR are italicised in the table below).

Table 7: Evaluation Questions

	Key evaluation questions	Sub-questions
Relevance	How relevant and consistent has the Child Protection Programme been to national and international priorities and commitments of UNICEF in considering aspects of violence prevention and response as well as to the needs of the most vulnerable girls and boys in Cambodia? Did the programme retain relevance during the COVID-19 pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How relevant and appropriate has the Child Protection Programme been to the Agenda 2030, and should it been adjusted to align with the SDGs? How relevant is the Child Protection Programme to the priorities and needs of national and sub-national Government stakeholders, including those set out in key national policies, strategies and action plans? [additional question] How relevant and appropriate has the Child Protection Programme been to the priority and conditions set by development partners, especially donors? To what degree is the Child Protection Programme aligned with the new UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the new UNICEF Child Protection Strategy 2021-2030?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the Child Protection Programme ensured that the voices of girls and boys are heard and reflected throughout? • How relevant is the Child Protection Programme to the Cambodia context, including the evidence base on key deprivations and needs of children? • (How) has the Child Protection Programme retained its relevance to changing contextual factors, including COVID-19 in particular? [additional question] • To what extent are the results and indicators used for measuring outcomes relevant to addressing the needs and priorities of children?
<p>Effectiveness</p>	<p>To what degree has UNICEF’s Child Protection Programme contributed to the creation of positive conditions and changes for keeping vulnerable girls and boys in families, supporting their safe reintegration into family care, and protecting them from violence in all settings through institutional and legislative frameworks, quality services, promotion of positive social and gender norms, and a supportive community environment?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent has the Child Protection Programme contributed to a strengthened child protection system in Cambodia? To what extent have planned results been achieved? • To what degree has the National Child Protection System been able to respond to the needs of vulnerable girls and boys, especially the most marginalized, that were at risk of being separated or being exposed to violence? • How satisfied have children and adolescents, and their parents/caregivers, been with the quality of prevention and response services they have received? • How effective have behavioural change campaigns been designed to prevent and to respond to violence and unnecessary family separation (including empowering children and adolescents to demand their rights)? How effective has the positive discipline in schools programme been improving prevention of and response to VAC in schools? How effective has the positive parenting programme been in changing the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of parents / caregivers towards the use of violent discipline?

- To what degree and how appropriately have partnerships been mobilized in a manner that contributes effectively to the Child Protection Programme?
- To what degree has UNICEF's Child Protection Programme contributed to supporting the safe reintegration of children into family care, and protecting them from violence?
- To what degree was the programme effective in addressing child protection issues during COVID-19? To what extent was the programme able to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the programme and to capitalize on opportunities that arose?
- To what degree has the Child Protection Programme integrated UNICEF's commitment to equity, gender equality and human rights, as well as resilience throughout the Programme cycle, and what results have been achieved in relation to these commitments?
- Has sufficient attention been given to measuring, monitoring and reporting results? Has sufficient investment been made/progress been made in the generation of data and evidence that support monitoring of results? How effectively has evidence been used to inform programmatic changes and adjustments?
- What are the major factors that have influenced the Programme's effectiveness? Which strategies have been most effective in achieving positive results under the Child Protection Programme? [additional question]
- Which factors have impeded effectiveness of the Programme? [additional question]

<p>Efficiency</p>	<p>To what extent and how has UNICEF mobilized and used its resources (human, technical and financial) and improved coordination to achieve its planned results for Child Protection?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent did the actual and expected output and outcomes justify the expenditure? • How successful have UNICEF’s efforts in advocacy and policy influencing been in leveraging resources and partnerships? Have they encouraged and contributed to a greater collaborative effort towards child protection? • To what extent have UNICEF resources (human, technical, financial) been sufficient in managing the Child Protection Programme? How adequate are the capacities of UNICEF’s implementing partners? • How effectively have coordination mechanisms been working between UNICEF’s Child Protection Programme and other programme outcomes to create and sustain linkages across sectors, and between child protection actors, as a result of UNICEF’s investments?
<p>Coherence / connectedness</p>	<p>To what extent are there synergies and interlinkages between the Child Protection Programme and other interventions carried out by Government, other key development partners (Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision etc.) as well as UNICEF?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does the Child Protection harmonised and coordinated with other actors’ interventions in the same context, including complementarity, harmonization and co-ordination with others, and the extent to which the intervention is adding value while avoiding duplication of effort? [Additional question] • Are there differences in coordination at national or sub-national levels? • Is there evidence of formation of strategic partnerships between key stakeholders and has this led to increased capacity to achieve results?

<p>Impact</p>	<p>To what extent has the Child Protection Programme led to positive changes in the lives of children, their families and communities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent has the Child Protection Programme led to a reduction in violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children in Cambodia?⁴⁵ • To what extent has the programme reduced family separation and institutionalisation of children? • To what extent has the Child Protection Programme increased access to appropriate systems, services and support for children exposed to violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation? • To what extent has the Child Protection Programme increased access to child friendly justice for children in conflict with the law? • To what extent has the Child Protection Programme achieved a reduction in harmful beliefs, attitudes, norms and practices that support VAC? [Additional questions]
<p>Sustainability</p>	<p>To what extent are the benefits and achievements of the UNICEF-supported programme likely to continue after the programme has ended through national ownership, changes at family and community level, and scalability and use of partnerships for sustainability?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent has the Programme achieved government buy in, ownership and accountability at national and sub-national levels, including through engagement throughout the design and implementation of the Programme? • To what extent has the implementation of the Child Protection Programme thus far contributed to the generation of sustainable capacities at the national and sub-national levels? • To what extent had investment and progress in strengthening the child protection system ensured it was able to respond to the demands during COVID-19? • What would be the resource implications to scale-up the Child Protection Programme, particularly social service workforce strengthening, child protection system strengthening and priority strategies to end violence?

⁴⁵ It is noted that the ability to provide robust findings in relation to this question will be dependent on availability of existing administrative and survey data.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the enabling as well as constraining factors that are likely to influence replication and sustainability?
Gender, equity and human rights	To what extent were gender, equity and human rights principles integrated into the design, implementation and monitoring of the Child Protection programme? ⁴⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent were gender, age, disability, ethnicity and other background characteristics were considered in the design and implementation the child protection programme? [Additional question] • To what extent did children from marginalized communities, children with disabilities, girls and other disadvantaged groups benefit from the child protection programme?



Evaluation matrix

An evaluation matrix was developed (Annex 5), which contains the evaluation questions and sub-questions, and sets out corresponding key indicators, data collection methods, and means of verification for each. The evaluation matrix informed the development of the methodology for the evaluation and guided the analysis. Specifically, the evaluation matrix contains:

- The research questions the evaluation will attempt to answer (across the evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact (outcomes), sustainability and gender, equity and human rights);
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators which emerge from / relate to the evaluation questions, and are informed by the Programme's results framework;
- Data sources for answering research questions and measuring indicators; and
- Any limitations in data or the ability of researchers to analyse it.

⁴⁶ This question is overarching / cross-cutting and we suggest that relevant findings and analysis be integrated throughout the evaluation report to avoid repetition and enrich analysis.

METHODOLOGY



Overall methodological approach

The evaluation applied the standard Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. As requested in the TOR (Annex 1), the evaluation assessed coherence / connectedness between UNICEF's Child Protection Programme and other programmes, priorities and cross-cutting areas, as well as programmes by Government and development partners. It also examined the Programme's gender-sensitivity and equity dimensions, as set out in the TOR. The evaluation methodology was developed according to the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016) and it also incorporated UNICEF's guiding principles on gender equality, equity, and human rights. The evaluation was equity and rights-based, rooted in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) and other key international standards.

Theory-based approach

The evaluation was theory-based and non-experimental. A theory-based approach was considered appropriate, given the need, as set out in the TOR, to assess the Child Protection Programme against the strategic intent laid out in UNICEF's Country Programme for Cambodia 2019 – 2023, through its theory of change. A theory-based approach was also considered appropriate given the complexity and multi-component nature of the Programme, including the multiple partners working on the programme, and the need to examine linkages with other Programme areas. It is also noted that the overall aim was not to generate robust findings on the impacts of specific interventions on individuals; it was rather to assess the outcomes of the programme overall, making a theory-based (as compared to, for instance, an experimental design) most suitable.

A critical component of the theory-based approach to evaluation is the establishment of a theory of change. This is important as it articulates the 'logic model' for how programme activities and strategies will lead from the current situation ('the problem') to the key outcome through a series of steps and enables us to identify the assumptions that the logic model is based on and whether they hold true. As set out above (section 3.4), UNICEF's Child Protection Programme was developed on the basis of a theory of change, which reflects UNICEF's approach to child protection systems building in the current programme cycle (section 4.2).

The theory of change sets out a logic model for the Programme, which articulates how programme interventions and strategies are expected to achieve outputs and outcomes, and ultimately contribute to a broader vision for change in line with the overall outcome: that by 2023, girls and boys including adolescents, living with families and outside of family care are increasingly free from violence and exploitation and from the threat of violence and exploitation in their homes, schools and communities and in institutions, including during humanitarian situations.

The programme's theory of change was subject to an analysis as part of an evaluability assessment that the team carried out to inform the development of the evaluation framework and methodology (Annex 4). This enabled the team to examine the logic and coherence of UNICEF's programme design from an evaluability perspective, including the clarity of intent of the programme and the theoretical coherence of its results chain logic. The evaluability assessment found that the Programme's existing theory of change is sound. In summary, the theory of change adheres to the general guidance provided by UNICEF for the development of a theory of change and is embedded within UNICEF's global child protection systems strengthening framework, which is well articulated globally. The results framework of the programme is clearly articulated, and the outputs and impacts follow a results chain logic. The theory of change articulates risks and assumptions, including actions to mitigate the risks and to fortify the assumptions. The outcomes are clear and realistic, and the proposed programme activities, if implemented effectively and efficiently, should lead to the stated outcome and impact.

Focusing on the logic model set out in the theory of change therefore enabled the team to examine causal links between programme strategies and consequent outputs and outcomes; interrogate the mechanisms, assumptions, risks and (changes in) context that may have supported or hindered progress; and verify the relevance and coherence of the theory itself.

Rights-based and equity informed approach

The evaluation utilised a rights-based framework, which enabled an analysis of the Programme's outcomes in terms of their progress toward the realisation of children's rights. This approach also incorporated equity and gender considerations, which are crucial to a rights-based approach. This helped to ensure that the country programme was comprehensively assessed in terms of its achievement in addressing gender and inequalities and in ensuring outcomes benefit all rights-holders, particularly those that have been 'left behind.'

Systems framework

Given the centrality of systems thinking to the UNICEF Cambodia Child Protection Programme (and the key framework for UNICEF's child protection programming globally), a child protection systems framework was applied to interpreting knowledge, data and information generated through the research. A systems approach recognises that programming toward building and strengthening the child protection system as a whole is crucial to the protection of children and adolescents from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, rather than shorter-term projects or narrow policy changes that do not contribute to strengthening the child protection system itself.

As concluded in the evaluability assessment (Annex 4), the Child Protection Programme's logic model broadly sits within a systems-building framework.

Figure 1: Theory based, outcome harvesting, systems and rights-based approaches



Mixed methods design

The evaluation employed a mixed-method approach to data collection, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. A mixed methodology was used to draw from the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods; to gather data that is rich, accurate and measurable; and, to improve the validity of results through triangulation. A mixed method approach enabled the evaluation team to collect high quality data that is both in-depth and comprehensive, conduct meaningful analysis, and ultimately, render the study of greater use for informing future programming developments.

Quantitative data was used to provide an overall description and numerical measure of programme characteristics and results, and of the context in which the programme operates. Quantitative data sources included:

- Existing (published) collated administrative and survey data to examine the programme context which will be particularly relevant to evaluation questions focusing on relevance and establish outcomes;
- Raw or collated administrative data from programmes supported by UNICEF during the programming phase, which will be used to assess whether outputs have been achieved and the extent to which programme outcomes have been achieved (i.e., have key targets been met?). This was particularly relevant to evaluation questions focusing on effectiveness and impact; and
- Primary survey data collected by the team from UNICEF Programme staff and partners and beneficiaries in order to triangulate data from KIIs and FGDs and allow for the provision of feedback in a robust and confidential way.

Disaggregated quantitative data is (where possible) presented to enable a gender and equity sensitive analysis.

Quantitative data was used to provide deep, explanatory analysis in relation to the evaluation questions. Given the need to engage in a process of critical reflection and learning about the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability of UNICEF's strategies, qualitative data was particularly useful. Qualitative research methods have greater interpretative and explanatory potential than quantitative approaches and provide the best opportunity for exploring how and why particular strategies or approaches have, or have not, worked in the Cambodian context. In particular, qualitative data included:

- Key informant interviews with a range of stakeholders (UNICEF, partners, service providers – see discussion on sampling below);
- In-depth interviews with beneficiaries and rights holders;
- Focus groups discussions with service providers; and
- Case file reviews.

▶ Participatory approach

The evaluation aimed to ensure a consultative and participatory approach with UNICEF, stakeholders, and rights holders. The evaluation team integrated consultations, participatory evaluation techniques and validation sessions throughout the methodology in order to ensure that evaluation methods and outputs were context-appropriate and high quality, and that stakeholders had overall ownership of the process and outputs. It is noted that particular attention was paid to engaging users of the evaluation – UNICEF country and regional offices, key stakeholders, national government ministries and departments, representatives at national and sub-national level, and other UN organisations working in Cambodia.

The evaluation process and outputs were overseen by an Evaluation Reference Group, comprised of the UNICEF Child Protection Chief and Evaluation Specialist; representatives from MoSVY; donor representatives (from USAID, Government of Japan, and the UNICEF Australia National Commission); along with at least two adolescent representatives from the Adolescent Youth Reference Group, in order to ensure the meaningful engagement of adolescents not only as research participants, but also at the broad level of overseeing and steering the evaluation process and outputs.



Data sources and data collection methods

The evaluation drew upon a range of data sources and data collection methods to ensure the reliability of results, promote impartiality, reduce bias, and ensure that the evaluation is based on the most comprehensive and relevant information possible. This included a review and analysis of secondary data (desk review) and the collection and analysis of primary data using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data collection methods set out below were developed to achieve data required to answer the evaluation questions, and measure particular indicators set out in the evaluation matrix (Annex 5).

Desk review

The team carried out a review of programming documents and other research material. This included, in particular: UNICEF Country Strategy and associated reports (such as the Situation Analysis Report, Gender Programmatic Review, Country Programme Document, Programme Strategy Notes, Annual Management Plan, etc); progress reports; UNICEF's Enterprise Resource Planning System reports; mid-year and end-year reviews and annual reports; evaluations; third party monitoring; reports from research and studies undertaken; and the Programmatic Review report. The desk review also included a review of key government documents (laws, policies and action plans) including: the Cambodia National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2019-2023, and key sectoral and thematic action plans relating to VAC and child protection.

The desk review also involved an analysis of existing data sources / databases that contain data on indicators relevant to UNICEF's Child Protection Programme, including baseline, mid-line and endline monitoring reports for particular interventions; service user monitoring data (including (anonymised) case data from Primero); reports and other data records for tracking cases.

In addition, the team has carried out a review of existing administrative and survey data, studies and reports, policies and laws relating to child protection in Cambodia to examine the context for the Child Protection programme, which is particularly important in ensuring a robust assessment of the Programme's relevance and coherence. This included a review of CDHS and CVACS data to measure broad outcomes, according to the indicators largely drawn from the CP Programme's results framework. The survey data was used to provide important contextual information about child protection risks and needs; numbers and types of child protection cases being addressed; types of interventions pursued; outcomes of cases disaggregated by age, gender and other factors, which was useful in assessing the Programme's relevance in particular.

Key informant interviews

Much of the data for the evaluation was collected through in-person and remote (Zoom) key informant interviews of stakeholders at both national and sub-national levels. The aim of these interviews was to obtain detailed and specific information from experts or key informants who have in-depth knowledge in a particular area/s relevant to the evaluation. Individual interviews allowed respondents to engage with evaluators in a private and confidential setting where they were likely to feel more comfortable sharing their experiences and views than they would in a group setting. A semi-standardised approach was adopted, guided by a structured tool, but allowing for a participant and response-directed interaction. The selection process for key informants is set out below (section 7.3). In summary, key informants included UNICEF programme staff (in child protection and also those with aligned programmes or working on relevant cross-cutting issues, such as adolescence, risk and gender), officials and practitioners in the child protection and child justice systems (social services workforce, Police, Prosecutors and Court personnel involved in child protection work), local government officials, implementing partners, other NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) working on child protection, donors, and community leaders.

Group interviews were held in some cases, where it was felt that this would increase the comfort of respondents and enrich the interaction.

Case studies

In order to gain a concrete understanding and to examine, in an in-depth manner, the results or impacts of UNICEF interventions in the programming areas, a number of child protection and child justice 'wrap around case studies' were carried out. This enabled the team to understand, in a concrete and applied way, how the child protection programme has supported case management and child protection service delivery. This enabled the generation of robust findings through triangulation with data collected through KIIs and in-depth interviews. The aim was to select diverse case studies from the full range of UNICEF interventions in each research location. A number of child protection and child justice case studies were also carried out in non-intervention research locations (see section 7.3 below), in order to compare the process and isolate outcomes in child protection case management and service delivery associated with programme interventions.

The case studies will involve a review of the child's file and a selection of interviews with stakeholders involved in the case. The following methods will be used:

In-depth individual interviews with children and their parents / carers

In-depth life history interviews were carried out with children whose cases have been subject to a child protection or child justice intervention by social workers (MoSVY/DoSVY and / or NGO social workers; MoSVY/DoSVY and / or MOI district level social workers), police or other service providers. The team aimed to include a range of case 'types,' for instance: children who have been exposed to violence, abuse or neglect in the home; children who have been exploited (e.g. victims of sexual exploitation or trafficking); children in Residential Care Institutions (RCIs); children who have been reintegrated from residential care; children who have been abandoned or separated; children in conflict with the law who have been subject to diversion; and COVID-affected children.

In-depth interviews with social workers and service providers

The key / allocated MoSVY or NGO social workers were interviewed about the case, including on the process, decision-making, case management and case outcomes, along with questions designed to identify outcomes of the particular inputs provided by UNICEF under its Child Protection Programme and the contribution of these inputs to any changes in case processing.

Question schedules were developed to guide these interviews; however, interviews were semi-structured, in order to ensure that they were participant-led.

Case file reviews

The evaluation team triangulated information gathered from child protection practitioners and clients, through reviewing a sample of files kept by MoSVY / MoSVY social workers concerning individual child protection cases that have been serviced by the child protection system, involved in child protection proceedings, reunified with their families and communities or involved in diversion.

This was done by a read-through of the physical file by a researcher, facilitated by a prompt (question guide) to pull out key information. The aim was to provide a sense of the types of cases which are being brought to or picked up by the case management system, and the response that is being implemented, and to allow the team to examine the implementation of case management systems in a concrete way and assess any changes in practice on the ground, as a result of UNICEF's programme interventions.

Observation file reviews

In order to assess the implementation and operationalisation of Primero in the research locations, researchers carried out a physical read-through of a sample of files logged into the Primero system (in addition to the in-depth case study files reviews mentioned above) at MoSVY / DoSVY offices. The purpose of the file reviews was to examine quality of case file management / data collection along with quality of case management and child protection processes. This also enabled the triangulation of data collected through KIIs with social workers and other key stakeholders. A checklist was developed in order to achieve a systematic file review process.

Participatory focus group discussions with parents and adolescents (prevention-focused)

A series of focus group discussions (FGDs) were carried out with parents / caregivers and adolescents who received prevention-focused interventions under UNICEF's Child Protection Programme. FGDs were considered appropriate for prevention-focused initiatives, as data collection did not require an in-depth life-history approach which is needed to collect data in relation to intensive and individual tertiary / response services (see section Case studies above).

Survey of UNICEF staff and implementing partners

A short, primarily quantitative survey of stakeholders was developed for those directly involved in the implementation of UNICEF's Child Programme (staff members, former staff members, implementing partners – Government and NGO – at the national level⁴⁷). The survey, which was completed on an anonymous basis, enabled the collection of broad, objective data on stakeholders' perceptions of the Child Protection Programme's relevance, effectiveness of programme delivery, enabling factors and barriers to effective implementation and ultimate sustainability of interventions. It also enabled triangulation of data collected through KIIs, and possibly encouraged more open and authentic feedback, given that data was collected on an anonymous basis. The survey was developed and disseminated online using Survey Monkey.

⁴⁷ This was necessary as the survey focused on overarching and broad areas, requiring respondents who have a 'birds eye' view of the CP Programme.

Table 8: Table of research locations and selection criteria

No.	Type of research location	Selection criteria	Proposed Province/ District/ Commune	Reasoning
1	National	National level stakeholders	(Phnom Penh)	(Phnom Penh)
2	Intervention province 1 Intervention district / commune 1	One province and one urban district / commune within this province, with full range of UNICEF CP interventions	Battambang Province (Battambang Municipality)	Full range of CP Programme interventions 3PC partners. Battambang has cross-sectorial work ongoing (positive parenting + positive discipline in schools). Alternative care also here.
3	Intervention province 2 Intervention district / commune 2	One province and one rural district / commune within this province, with full range of UNICEF CP interventions	Ratanakiri Province (O'Chum district)	Full range of CP Programme interventions Government partners and NGO partners. Full range of CP Programme interventions Government partners and NGO partners. Alternative care present though not the strength/focus (recent) Ethnic minorities and geographic spread, integrated early childhood development focus, cross-sectoral work.

4	Intervention province 3 Intervention district / commune 3	One province and one urban district / commune within this province, with most UNICEF CP interventions (alternative care focus)	Kandal Province (Takmao municipality)	Alternative focus. 3PC partner programming.
4	Intervention province 3 Intervention district / commune 3	One province and one urban district / commune within this province, with most UNICEF CP interventions (alternative care focus)	Kandal Province (Takmao municipality)	Alternative focus. 3PC partner programming.
5	Intervention province 4 Intervention district / commune 4	One province and one rural district / commune within this province, with most UNICEF CP interventions (VAC focus)	Siem Reap Province (Pouk district)	Most programme components (including alternative care), though no positive discipline focus. Government and NGO partners. Cross-sectoral work (adolescent development and participation focus).
6	Comparator province 1 Control district / commune 1	One province and one urban district / commune within this province, with no / very limited range of UNICEF CP interventions; comparable to an intervention location in context (location; demographic profile etc.)	Pursat Province (Pursat Town)	Limited interventions: Primero rollout to districts and provincial DoSVY office, RCI-inspection, intake registration of children in RCIs.

7	Comparator province 2; Control district / commune 2	One province and one rural district / commune within this province, with no / very limited range of UNICEF CP interventions; comparable to an intervention location in context (location; demographic profile etc.)	Oddar Meanchey (Samrong district)	Limited interventions: Primero rollout to districts and provincial DoSVY office, RCI-inspection, intake registration of children in RCIs.
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Selection of respondents

Given the qualitative nature of the majority of the data collection methods, the sampling strategies for the selection of participants was primarily purposive and non-random. Purposive sampling prioritised diversity so that respondents of diverse backgrounds and with diverse perspectives are included in the evaluation.

Key informant sampling

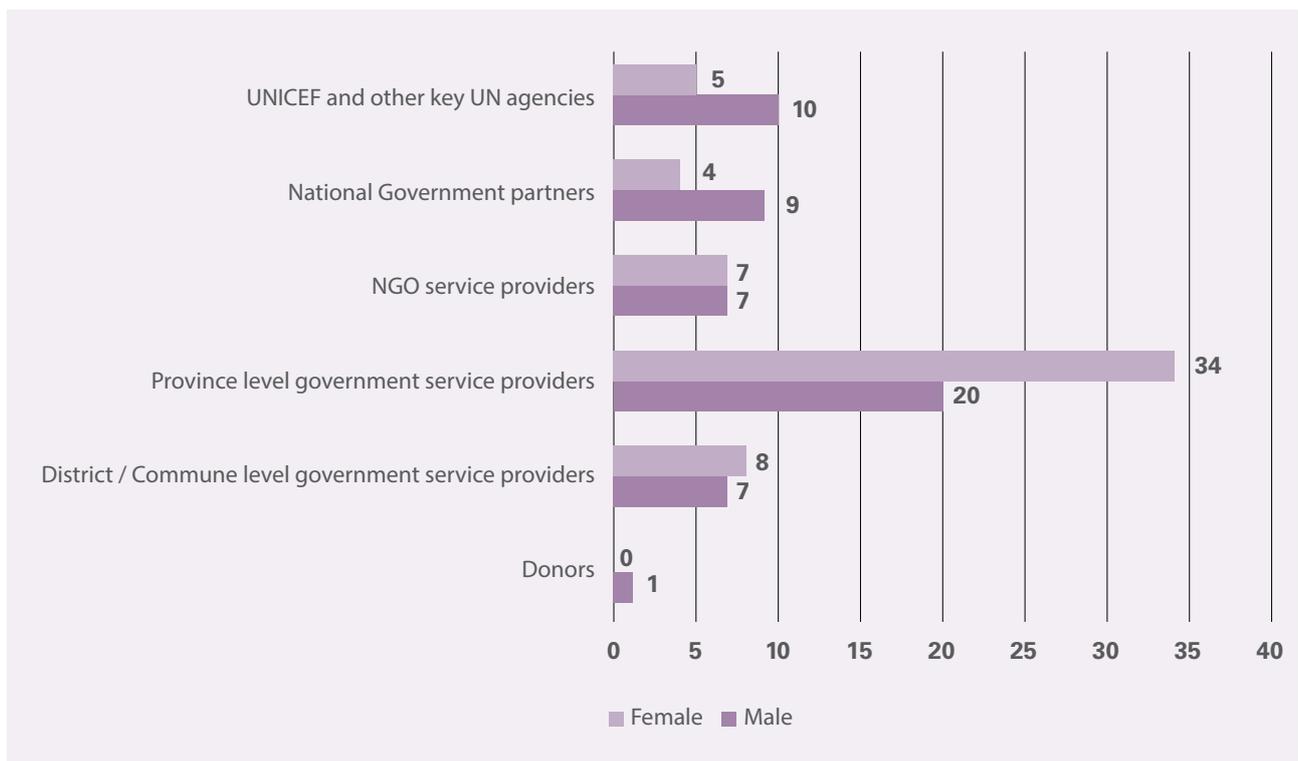
The sampling strategy for key informants was purposive and included key stakeholders at both national and sub-national (provincial, district, commune) level who play a role in the implementation of UNICEF's Country Programme and children's rights in Cambodia more broadly. The purpose of this selection is to obtain particular knowledge, expertise and accurate information in relation to indicators in the evaluation framework from stakeholders with in-depth knowledge of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme and other related programmes (e.g., education, social policy, health). At the national level, the technical leads in each team / agency / department were selected for the interviews. In selecting particular professionals to be included in the research at the sub-national level, the team aimed to select the professional who was specially designated as the professional to work with child or families, and if more than one, the professional who had been with the relevant institution for the longest period of time (and was therefore more likely to have a stronger / more accurate understanding of how child protection cases are handled, along with any changes over the period of implementation of UNICEF's child protection programme). A detailed list of research participants is contained in Annex 6 and summarised below (Table 9 and Figure 3).

Table 9: Research participants (key stakeholders)

Stakeholder type	Selection criteria	Number of interviews
<p>UNICEF and other key UN agencies</p>	<p>UNICEF Cambodia: Child Protection team members; cross-cutting leads / specialists in adolescent participation and development, gender, disability; communication for development; cross-sectoral programme lead/s in Education (integrated early childcare and development; parenting).</p> <p>UNICEF EAPRO: Child protection specialist</p> <p>Other UN agencies who work in partnership with UNICEF Child Protection team: Resident Coordinator's office; UNFPA, WHO; ILO; OHCHR; UN Women.</p>	<p>14 KIIs with 14 UNICEF participants (including current and former) (10 male, 4 female).</p> <p>1 KII with 1 other UN participant (female).</p>
<p>National Government partners</p>	<p>National representatives (relevant leads in child protection / child justice) of: Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Women's Affairs; Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Cults and Religion; the General Secretariat of the National Social Protection Council; Cambodia National Council for Children; Ministry of Post and Telecommunications; and the National Institute of Statistics.</p>	<p>10 KIIs with 13 national government participants (9 male, 4 female).</p>
<p>NGO service providers (national level)</p>	<p>National lead / coordinator of 3PC; child protection leads in NGO implementing partners with national-level focus / coordination function (including Friends-International).</p> <p>Other NGOs working in child protection implementation areas: Save the Children; Plan International; World Vision.</p>	<p>14 KIIs with 14 NGO participants (7 male, 7 female).</p>

<p>Provincial and district / commune service providers (Government and NGO)</p>	<p>Province level government service providers: District Office of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation; Provincial Department of Women’s Affairs; Office of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection; Provincial Commissariat; provincial police; Residential Care Institution directors; social workers; Provincial Council for Women and Children.</p> <p>District / Commune level government service providers: Women and Children’s Consultative Committee; Office of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation; social workers (if available); District / Commune Council for Women and Children; commune police.</p> <p>NGO partner service providers present in each research location.</p>	<p>33 Kills with 54 government service providers (20 male, 34 Female)</p> <p>9 Kills with 15 NGO service providers (7 male, 8 female)</p>
<p>Donors</p>	<p>USAID; UNICEF National Commission of Australia; Government of Japan.</p>	<p>1 Kill with 1 donor (male).</p>

Figure 3: Research participants (key stakeholders), by gender



Sampling for case studies

For case studies, a ‘typical case sampling’ approach was used and the team aimed to conduct three case studies in each of the six research locations. Cases were selected from monitoring data (e.g., from Primero and from 3PC’s / NGO’s database) held by implementing partners to represent typical child protection cases (e.g., where children have received prevention and response services through UNICEF’s programme). Implementing partners were asked to consider what criteria they associated with a ‘typical’ child protection case, for example in terms of how the case was referred, the type of child protection case, and the type of service or intervention received and what the outcomes of the case were. Cases meeting these criteria were selected with a view to achieving diversity in terms of demographic characteristics, such as gender and age, as well as the type of child protection case and the type of service or intervention received. Case studies were unable to be carried out in comparator provinces due to limitations in identifying cases (see limitations section, below).

In total, five case studies were completed involving 12 participants (8 rights holders / beneficiaries and 4 service providers), as follows:

Table 10: Case study research participants

1	Battambang	In-depth interview with caretaker (grandmother); In-depth interview with child (12 year old boy); and Key stakeholder interview with NGO social worker.
2	Battambang	In-depth interview with parents (mother and father); and Key stakeholder interview with District Social Services staff.
3	Rattanakiri	In-depth interview with caregiver (grandmother); and Key stakeholder interview with member of CCWC.
4	Siem Reap	In-depth interview with caregiver (grandmother); and Key stakeholder interview with District Social Services staff.
5	Siem Reap	In-depth interview with parents (mother and father).

File reviews (Primero)

Cases for file review were selected on a random basis (every tenth case in the system, starting from the most recently entered case). The reason for this is that the quality review needed to rely on a random selection of cases in order to reduce selection bias. The team aimed to carry out a review of five files per location, including for intervention sites and comparator sites; however, it was not possible to review the Primero files in the two comparator provinces, owing to limited staff availability and limited ability of staff to open and use the system (please see findings section below for more detail).

Sampling for focus group discussions (FGDs) with parents / caregivers

Parents / caregivers were recruited through UNICEF implementing partners for the participatory FGDs both in intervention and comparator provinces. Participants from intervention provinces included parents who had received Positive Parenting training and community behaviour change messaging. In comparator provinces, participants had not received Positive Parenting training. While the team aimed to include a roughly even gender mix within the sample, this was not possible in practice (particularly as the Positive Parenting training has only been delivered to women). In total, 10 FGDs were carried out, two in each province (it was not possible to carry out FGDs in Kandal province as participants were unavailable due to seasonal work commitments). In total, the FGDs included 12 men and 70 women participants.

Sampling for UNICEF and partner survey

Sampling for the survey was purposive on the basis of the individual having a role within the design or implementation of the Child Protection Programme. This included UNICEF staff members and Government / NGO implementing partners at national level. The team disseminated surveys to stakeholders (through emailing a link to the survey and also by emailing a paper survey in Khmer where required). Responses were closely followed up. In total, 33 responses were received (including 20 from within UNICEF and 13 from outside of UNICEF). Unfortunately, the response rate among national Government stakeholders was very low. Figures 14 and 15 summarise the characteristics of survey respondents.

Figure 4: Survey respondents by category and gender (n = 33)



Figure 5: Survey respondents by age (n = 33)



Data analysis

A systematic review and analysis of all data was conducted, identifying key themes, patterns, discourses, relationships and explanations relevant to the research questions and indicators set out in the evaluation matrix. The evaluation matrix was used as a framework to organise data and guide analysis.

Thematic analysis of qualitative data

All raw qualitative data was reviewed and coded according to themes that corresponded with the evaluation questions. The thematic analysis focused on understanding how the child protection system functions to prevent and respond to violence and child protection violations, and the role of UNICEF's programme within that. The analysis sought to identify both anticipated and unanticipated results of programming, good practices, challenges, levels of capacity and areas where improvements can be made.

Analysis of quantitative data

Quantitative data from the stakeholder survey was collated using open-source Survey Monkey. Analysis included a descriptive profile of results and the identification of relationships between key variables (e.g., type of respondent / satisfaction ranking of Child Protection Programme). Initial analysis will produce descriptive statistics on the composition of the sample and the overall results, disaggregated by factors of interest.

Content analysis

Content analysis of laws, policies, plans etc. developed as part of the Child Protection Programme against relevant international standards was carried out, as identified in the evaluation matrix (Annex 5). This was considered important to enable quality assessments of programme interventions and outcomes.

Data triangulation

Different types of data and different data sources were triangulated with one another in order to identify any inconsistencies in information, as set out through section 7.2 above. Triangulation helped to ensure the accuracy of findings, analysis and interpretation: drawing on different methods helped evaluators overcome any biases or weaknesses associated with a particular method.

Human rights-based and gender sensitive focus

As previously mentioned, the evaluation applied a human rights lens to data analysis, considering all evaluation findings from a conceptual framework which is normatively based on human rights standards and laws. This entailed the consideration of inequalities and structural forms of discrimination, and the power dynamics that drive these, within the analysis of people's ideas and experiences of the child protection and child justice systems. All data generated was disaggregated, including by gender, ethnicity, age and disability (where this data is available) and a gender and equity sensitive analytical lens was applied to all evidence.



Validation and oversight

The Evaluation Reference Group provided oversight at strategic points in the evaluation process, this included a paper review of the evaluation methodology and a hybrid (in-person / zoom) presentation and workshop to the Reference Group, which elicited important feedback and helped shape the methodology and data collection plan.

The findings and draft recommendations from the evaluation were presented to the Evaluation Reference Group at a virtual workshop in April 2023. Feedback was elicited from participants and incorporated into this final version of the report. Written comments were also provided on the first draft of the report from UNICEF Cambodia and UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office and incorporated into this final version.



Ethical considerations

The evaluation was carried out in line with the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and the Ethical Principles of Research Involving Children,⁴⁸ along with Coram International's own ethical guidelines. A tailored and detailed ethical protocol was developed, and tools, including information sheet, consent forms and checklists and child protection referral protocols were also developed. This protocol and the methodology and tools for the study were submitted to Coram's independent Research Ethics Committee, with approval granted prior to the commencement of data collection. The ethical protocol and tools are attached at Annex 7. In summary, the following principles were applied, in order to adhere to the overarching 'do no harm' principle:

▶ Voluntary participation

Participation in the research was undertaken on a voluntary basis, with researchers explaining to the participant in clear, age-appropriate language that participants are not required to participate and that they may stop participating at any time without negative consequences.

▶ Managing expectations

Researchers carefully explain the nature and purpose of the study to participants, and the role that the data will play in the research project. Participants were informed that the purpose of the participant's engagement is not to offer direct assistance in order to avoid raising unfounded expectations.

▶ Informed consent

Research participants were informed of the purpose and nature of the study, their contribution, and how the data collected from them will be used in the study, through an information and consent form, which was provided in Khmer and English. Researchers explained the contents of the consent form in age-appropriate language, to study participants before commencing the interview. In Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), participants were advised verbally of the purpose of the study and their contribution and verbal consent was provided and recorded before the commencement of the FGD. Where possible, consent was also obtained from the child's parent or caregiver.

▶ Anonymity and confidentiality

Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity is of the upmost importance. The identity of all research participants was kept confidential throughout the process of data collection as well as in the analysis and writing up study findings. Strict data protection and storage protocols were followed to protect the confidentiality of research participants and data.

⁴⁸ UNICEF Office of Research. 2013. Ethical Research Involving Children. <https://childethics.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/ERIC-compendium-approved-digital-web.pdf>

Child safety and protection

A tailored child protection and safeguarding protocol and tools were developed to support the identification and referral of child protection concerns, and all researchers were trained on the protocol. All team members had expertise in carrying out research with a range of stakeholders, including children, young people and vulnerable groups. All the international researchers had been criminal-record checked within the UK through the Disclosure and Barring System.



Consideration of potential constraints and mitigating strategies

Access to respondents

The evaluation relied on the participation of a number of stakeholders and programme rights holders / beneficiaries. While the research team, with the assistance of UNICEF and UNICEF's implementing partners, were able to identify the required number and type of respondent as set out in the study's methodology, there were nonetheless some challenges. In particular, access to children and parents / caregivers and professionals who were able to be identified for inclusion in individual case study research was limited, particularly in the comparator provinces (Oddar Meanchey and Pursat), due to limited case work being carried out in these locations, limited use of the child protection information management system and limited number of NGO implementing partners. Also, for these reasons, the file review of Primero cases was unable to be carried out in these locations. In Kandal, access to participants for the case studies and FGDs was limited due to seasonal work commitments. In these locations, the team relied on other sources, including key informant interviews, focus group discussions and file reviews (Kandal).

Reporting bias:

The evaluation addressed sensitive issues which involved evaluating professionals' work. Given these sensitivities, it was likely that the evidence gathered may have been affected by a degree of reporting bias. Respondents may have been reluctant or unwilling to share sensitive and personal information either about traumatic events in their lives (children and adults) or about aspects of their professional experience which they may have feared might reflect badly either on them or on UNICEF. To mitigate against reporting bias, evaluators carefully explained to all respondents that this is a learning-based exercise, explained that their anonymity will be protected, and no negative personal or professional consequences will result from the information they share. Multiple data sources were used and triangulated (as set out above, section 7.2), in order to identify and mitigate reporting bias.

Recall bias

In addition, given that the evaluation involved speaking with respondents about past experiences, it was likely that the evidence may also be affected by recall bias. This may have potentially led to some inaccuracies where respondents have forgotten or misremembered events that happened previously; and respondents' ideas about when, where how and why such events took place may have been coloured by subsequent events. Evaluators were careful to consider the impact of recall bias in the analysis and interpretation of research data. Evaluators also triangulated objective information through the assistance of other sources of information and documentation (e.g., files, reports, etc.).



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FINDINGS



Relevance

Key research question: How relevant and consistent has the Child Protection Programme (CP Programme) been to national and international priorities and commitments of UNICEF in considering aspects of violence prevention and response as well as to the needs of the most vulnerable girls and boys in Cambodia? Did the programme retain relevance during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Summary of findings on relevance

- The CP Programme was found to be highly relevant to Cambodia's global development commitments and, in utilising a strong systems building framework, was also found to be relevant to UNICEF's global frameworks and priorities. The three output areas of the Programme were found to respond well to existing gaps and needs within the child protection system.
- The CP Programme's multi-tiered approach, involving interventions aimed at strengthening the system at both the national and sub-national levels, responds well to the programming context and the engagement with new stakeholders, in particular, the MOI, was found to be highly relevant to the new decentralised system for social welfare / child protection service delivery.
- While the Programme was found to be highly relevant to national Government policies, plans and commitments, substantial capacity gaps at the sub-national level meant that some interventions were not fully operationalised, owing to existing capacity gaps at the sub-national level, indicating that more attention should have been given to the phasing and complementarity of the Programme's interventions at the sub-national level.
- While there is an evidence base to support the incorporation of certain issues within the CP Programme, including in particular, adolescent and youth engagement, child marriage and online child protection and stakeholders were clearly supportive of these initiatives, there is a need to link these initiatives to the systems strengthening framework, otherwise there is a risk of the CP Programme becoming too 'issue focused' and fragmented.

- With its focus on addressing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children, the Programme was found to be highly relevant to the evidence base on the protection risks and needs of children in Cambodia; however, there was limited systematic engagement of children in adolescents in the programme design and review.
- While some measures were taken to integrate gender and equity into the Programme design, these measures were found to be insufficient, and there is a need to engage more comprehensively with the gender dimensions of child protection issues and more effectively address the protection needs of children with disabilities, in particular.
- The CP Programme was found to have retained its relevance in the changed context brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Relevance of the Programme to the global development agenda (e.g. SDGs) and UNICEF global frameworks and priorities

The CP Programme is very well aligned to Cambodia’s global development commitments, and to UNICEF’s global frameworks and priorities. In particular, the focus of the programme on violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children (VAC) is well aligned with SDG 16.1 (significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths rates everywhere), 16.2 (end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children), 5.1 (end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere) and 5.2 (eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation). The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has expressed strong commitment to the SDGs, which have been integrated into the country’s National Sustainable Development Plan 2019 – 2023. The RGC has also developed a Voluntary Review Process for reporting progress against the SDGs; its first review was submitted in 2019 (with its second review due to be submitted in 2023).⁴⁹

The CP Programme is also well aligned to the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and INSPIRE – a set of seven evidence-based strategies initiated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for countries and communities working to eliminate violence against children. The CP Programme is aligned to the seven evidence-based strategies, including in particular ‘Implementation and enforcement of laws’ (Output areas 1 and 2), ‘Norms and values’ (Output area 3), ‘Parent and caregiver support’ (Output area 3) and Response and support services (Output area 2). The Cambodian Government has indicated strong commitment to the Global Partnership and INSPIRE by becoming a pathfinding country in 2019.

⁴⁹ UNDP, Orientation workshop for the preparation of the 2023 Voluntary National Review, 27 December 2022, available at: <https://www.undp.org/cambodia/speeches/orientation-workshop-preparation-2023-voluntary-national-review>

As part of the process for becoming a pathfinding country, the RGC (MoSVY) made the following commitments, which align with the CP Programme objectives: (1) strengthen laws, policies and regulatory framework and ban all forms of violence against children (Output area 1); (2) Strengthen child protection data and monitoring (Output area 1); (3) Strengthen evidence-based strategies, support parents and caregivers to keep children safe and make schools safe, non-violent and inclusive (Output areas 2 and 3); and (4) Make the internet safe for children (as noted above, this is an emerging area which has been incorporated into the CP Programme after its commencement).

There was general agreement among qualitative research participants with knowledge in this area that the CP Programme was well aligned to Cambodia’s international development goals, and that its systems-based framework was relevant to the Cambodian context, in which gaps and weaknesses in prevention and response systems contribute to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and impairs the ability for the RGC to address the needs of children exposed to violence in all settings. Respondents to this question in the stakeholder survey also felt that the CP Programme was relevant to Cambodia’s international development commitments: 21 out of 23 respondents felt that the Programme was ‘mostly’ (9 out of 23) or ‘completely’ (12 out of 23) relevant to Cambodia’s international development commitments.

The CP Programme also largely aligns with UNICEF’s global frameworks and priorities in child protection, in particular the systems strengthening approach that has explicitly guided UNICEF’s child protection programming since 2008 (see above, section 4.1). The Theory of Change and results framework for the current Programme (2019 – 2023) is based on the assumption that improving the enabling environment and responses to VAC, along with community support for minimising VAC (e.g., through improved parenting and a reduction in corporal punishment) will lead to a reduction in rates of VAC.

Within the systems building approach, the evaluation **found that the Programme is largely responsive to the key gaps in the child protection system** and the broader enabling environment for child protection, which drive different forms of VAC in the country.

In terms of output area 1 (legal frameworks):

One of the core gaps in Cambodia’s child protection system is the lack of a comprehensive law and operating procedures to provide a framework for the system. Currently, child protection-related provisions are spread through different laws, guidance, sub-decrees and Prakas (regulations), leading to gaps and inconsistencies. In the qualitative research, this was noted by research participants who have experience in this area, for instance, according to a national government stakeholder:

² This could be guided by recommendations in UNICEF EAPRO, UNFPA Asia and Pacific Regional Office and UN Women Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Ending violence against women and children in Cambodia: Opportunities and challenges for collaborative and integrative approaches, 2020.

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“There is no specific law in place on child protection. Child protection issues are scattered through many laws – this regulation, that regulation. It is in the Criminal Code, Civil Code and other laws. It means that child protection remains fragmented here and there in different regulations and instruments. So, we needed to prepare a specific law with a specific focus on this particular matter – the issue of child protection...To have the Child Protection Law approved and promulgated is really important. It will protect children in a comprehensive manner.”⁵⁰

In terms of output areas 1 and 2 (operational frameworks and human resources):

Another critical gap in the system is the limited operational frameworks, including key human and financial resources required to implement the system. For instance, the Child Protection Statistical Profile (mentioned above, section) recorded that in 2012, there were only 917 government social welfare workers for children and other vulnerable populations; the majority of whom had no formal training in social work.⁵¹ A multicounty review of the social services workforce, including in Cambodia, reported that there were nearly 4,000 social work positions required in the governmental workforce with around 3,400 national and international agencies involved in the provision of social services in 2014.⁵² According to this review, “The social service workforce would be enhanced by the development of a national strategic plan prioritizing the adoption of professional standards for social work; introduction of a normative framework defining roles and responsibilities and a common accountability framework to increase efficiency and effectiveness; increasing governmental resource allocation for the social services workforce; and strengthening and development of officially recognized, certified in-service and pre-service training.”⁵³

According to the qualitative data, capacity limitations, particularly at the provincial, district and commune levels are a critical gap that impede the ability of Cambodia to implement an effective child protection system. The limited number of social services personnel and their limited knowledge and skills, along with very limited operational budgets are clearly areas of need for a fully functioning system.

⁵⁰ KII with national government stakeholder in child protection (online), 25 November 2022.

⁵¹ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, 2018, p. 30.

⁵² UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office and the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, The Social Service Workforce in the East Asia and Pacific Region: Multi-Country Review, 2019, p. 25.

⁵³ UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office and the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, The Social Service Workforce in the East Asia and Pacific Region: Multi-Country Review, 2019, p. 30.

In terms of output area 3 (Social norms and practices):

Social norms, behaviours and practices, including violent forms of discipline, have been found to have a significant impact on rates of violence against children. For instance, as noted above, according to the CDHS (2021/22),⁵⁴ 66 per cent of children aged 1–14 experienced a violence discipline method with only 23 per cent of children experiencing nonviolent discipline. Of this, 59 per cent of children experienced psychological aggression, 43 per cent experienced any type of physical punishment, and five per cent experienced severe physical punishment such as being ‘hit on the face or head.’⁵⁵ A 2019 baseline survey for Cambodia PROTECT conducted in six implementation provinces recommended that more work was required to “explore barriers to implementing practices to prevent VAC and unnecessary family separation. For example, many respondents reported knowing the importance of positive parenting skills, but only 40 per cent practiced them. Understanding reasons for the discrepancy between knowledge and practices could help to address these issues more effectively.”⁵⁶

The focus on addressing harmful social norms, behaviours and practices was, according to the qualitative data, highly relevant and crucial. For example, according to research participants from UNICEF and from government:

“

“In Cambodia, social norms are everything. They really do dictate how communities deal with issues. There was an informal social norm that RCIs were an appropriate place for kids, and this dates back to the rule of Monks, Pagodas and so on... also, the norm that you have to discipline your kids by beating them...Parenting is something we learn from our parents, and this all got all messed up during the Khmer Rouge time. So we thought we needed a proper strategy to build positive norms and positive parenting – Cambodia PROTECT was built around that.”⁵⁷

“

“Positive parenting is very important in Cambodia currently and in the future. According to our studies and research, we have seen that domestic violence still happens and we have many modules on positive parenting in order to educate parents and also to change the attitudes of parents and caregivers. Regarding violence, we have found that parents and caregivers are the first ones who commit violence against children. So, this programme is very important...all of our target provinces have requested the Ministry [of Women’s Affairs] to expand the programme to other provinces as well, because they acknowledge that positive parenting is very important and a good practice to eliminate violence against children.”⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Kingdom of Cambodia, National Institute of Statistics (NIS) and Ministry of Health (MoH), Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2021–22: Key Indicators Report, 2022.

⁵⁵ Kingdom of Cambodia, National Institute of Statistics (NIS) and Ministry of Health (MoH), Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2021–22: Key Indicators Report, 2022, p. 39.

⁵⁶ UNICEF Cambodia and Angkor Research and Consulting Ltd, Baseline Survey for ‘PROTECT: Communication Strategy to End Violence against Children and Unnecessary Family Separation in Cambodia (Cambodia PROTECT), September 2019, p. 29.

⁵⁷ KII with a Former Chief of Child Protection, UNICEF Cambodia (online), 29 November 2022.

⁵⁸ KII with two representatives of Ministry of Women’s Affairs (online), 12 December 2022.

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“Positive discipline is very important in Cambodia and needed. In older times – e.g., when I was a child, a student, I was hit by my parents and teachers. Old people believed the young ones, to be a good person, they needed to be punished to make them behave in a good way. It was not thought of as violence. When we give training on positive discipline, they try to change the stereotype of teachers and parents.”⁵⁹

While the CP Programme is clearly embedded within the child protection systems building framework, it should be noted that UNICEF’s systems strengthening approach to child protection programming has recently been further clarified and elaborated, based on a global evaluation of UNICEF’s approach to systems strengthening. A suite of tools has been developed to support enhanced systems strengthening programming. The fit for purpose programme review carried out in 2021 (see above, section 4.4.1) considered the structure of the CP Programme in light of this revised and elaborated global CPSS guidance.

It is recommended that UNICEF’s next CP Programme explicitly align to the new global Child Protection Systems Strengthening articulated by UNICEF HQ in 2021, following a robust systems diagnostic to ensure that the Programme focuses on the areas in which there are clear gaps in the system. The global CPSS Framework provides an evidence-based and well-articulated structure for UNICEF’s systems strengthening approach, along with diagnostic tools and monitoring frameworks. These materials would provide very useful in planning the next CP Programme in Cambodia and ensuring that it is embedded within a strong systems strengthening framework.

Relevance of the Programme to the needs and priorities of Government stakeholders and development partners

National government priorities

It is clear that UNICEF’s CP Programme engages very well with national partners, through quality partnerships with key stakeholders, and this has helped to ensure the alignment of the Programme to national Government priorities. The CP Team actively engaged national stakeholders during the design of the Programme and has maintained positive relationships with these stakeholders, as illustrated by one key stakeholder:

⁵⁹ KII with representative of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (online), 1 December 2022.

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“We had a very fruitful workshop in Kampot where we invited all MoSVY people to talk about the project, their plan etc. We got a lot of input on that. The project responded to what is needed. Not just the dreaming of the proposal writer. The project design is based on what we need, and funding is going to support the right activities.”⁶⁰

The current CP Programme also builds on momentum from the previous Programme, which focused heavily on systems strengthening in the context of children in residential care institutions. Following the decentralisation of child protection service delivery, UNICEF has worked to engage new key stakeholders in addition to MoSVY, in particular the MOI. This is highly relevant to the context: the MOI has responsibility for overseeing the District Offices of Social Welfare and engaging with this Ministry to strengthen child protection service delivery has been crucial.

According to the stakeholder survey, perceptions of stakeholders are that the CP Programme is very well aligned to national government needs and priorities and written responses in the survey attributed this to alignment with specific government policies and strategies (these are summarised in information box below) and good working relationships with government partners. In particular, UNICEF continues to work with the government to support the implementation of the country’s Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2017 to 2021), which has been extended to 2029 (NAPVAC). The NAPVAC has been described in a recent evaluation as a ‘consensus document’ that brought together and reflects a wide range of actions and priorities under a single document. Careful consideration was given, in the NAPVAC planning phase, to ensure its alignment to sector actions and priorities, national planning and child protection more generally.

Information box 1: Alignment of CP Programme with key national Government strategies and plans

Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity, and Efficiency: Building the Foundation Toward Realising the Cambodia Vision 2050, Phase IV: ‘Side 4, Rectangle 1’ of the Rectangular Strategy focuses on ‘improving gender equity and social protection’ and this explicitly includes addressing trafficking of and violence against women and children.

National Sustainable Development Plan 2019 – 2023: The Plan contains actions relating to prevention of and response to VAC and VAW, along with actions that address the risk factors to violence (poverty, health, gender inequality, education access and public safety); a focus on addressing the needs of persons with disabilities; and improving justice systems and youth rehabilitation.

National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children 2019 – 2022 (now 2029): The NAPVAC sets out a range of actions under five strategic priority areas: coordination and cooperation; primary prevention; multi-sectoral child protection response; law and policy formulation; and monitoring and evaluation.

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Three technical working groups are in place to steer actions under these strategic areas (Awareness raising and prevention of VAC; Services provision and law enforcement; and Legal and regulatory review, monitoring and reporting), and these groups align strongly with the CP Programme priority areas, indicating a high degree of relevance of the Programme to the structure supporting operationalisation of the NAPVAC.

Child Protection and Schools Policy 2019 – 2023: The Policy explicitly references the need for ‘child safe environments’ and ending VAC in schools.

National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016 – 2025: This over-arching social protection strategy includes action aimed at linking social protection programmes to child protection programming, including in terms of shock-responsive social protection, strengthening families and integrated service delivery.

Cambodia Digital Government Policy 2022 – 2035: This Policy aims to “establish a digital government to improve the citizens’ quality of life and build their trust through better public service provision”, including through the development use of digital government infrastructure.” This Policy signals a commitment to the development and use of digital governance systems, which provides evidence of relevance of the CP Programme’s implementation of digital case management systems (Primer) and digital data collection and monitoring systems (CPMIS).

However, it appears that, at times, rather than aligning with existing or emerging Government priorities, UNICEF’s ability to advocate for particular priorities with government meant that issues on the global (and perhaps donor) agenda were prioritised without necessarily considering whether and how these issues and interventions should be prioritised in the Cambodian context. This may have consequences for the ownership, buy in and ultimately the sustainability of the CP Programme.

An example given by one stakeholder included the issue of online violence and exploitation, which was incorporated into the CP Programme following it emerging as a priority globally and among donors. While it is an issue that does affect children in Cambodia (and also one that has been picked up by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MoPT), it is to be questioned whether this issue should be prioritised considering that the CP Programme utilises a systems building framework (that is, it may be considered a more ‘issue based’ priority, rather than contributing to strengthening the overall child protection system).

² This could be guided by recommendations in UNICEF EAPRO, UNFPA Asia and Pacific Regional Office and UN Women Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Ending violence against women and children in Cambodia: Opportunities and challenges for collaborative and integrative approaches, 2020.

While there is an evidence base to support the incorporation of certain issues within the CP Programme, including in particular, adolescent and youth engagement, child marriage and online child protection and stakeholders were clearly supportive of these initiatives, **there is a need to link these initiatives to the systems strengthening framework, otherwise there is a risk of the CP Programme becoming too 'issue focused' and fragmented.**

Sub-national government priorities

UNICEF's CP Programme aimed at strengthening the child protection system at national and sub-national levels, with interventions targeting national stakeholders, along with stakeholders at the provincial, district and commune levels. **This multi-tiered approach is highly relevant to the Cambodian context and responds well to administrative restructuring within the country,** which has seen responsibility for social welfare services being devolved down to the sub-national (in particular, district) levels pursuant to Sub-Decrees 183 and 184. This multi-tiered design also responds well to the recommendations that arose out of the 2018 Formative Evaluation of the (former) Child Protection Programme. This evaluation recommended shifting the focus of the Programme towards supporting implementation and building a government-owned child protection process at the sub-national levels. It summarised the challenge as follows:

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“Despite ratifying the CRC [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child] 26 years ago, the Government has yet to develop a fully functioning child protection system... Cambodia's child protection system remains under-funded and under-staffed. In addition, the Government has yet to pass primary legislation on child protection and, as a result, there continues to be a reliance on secondary legislation in the form of various Sub-Decrees.”⁶¹

In terms of service delivery, the evaluation went on to note that:

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“Whilst it may be unrealistic for government to provide social work services in child protection cases in the short-term, it is important to establish a government-owned social work case management system that takes responsibility for basic child protection functions, with cases referred to NGOs for specialised services as necessary.”⁶²

⁶¹ Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Children: A Formative Evaluation of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme In Cambodia, Final Report – Volume I, August 2017 – September 2018, Cambodia, p. 5.

⁶² Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Children: A Formative Evaluation of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme In Cambodia, Final Report – Volume I, August 2017 – September 2018, Cambodia, p. 63.

The current Child Protection Programme is designed to overcome these challenges, as explained by a stakeholder from UNICEF during the qualitative interviews: “These Decrees (183 and 184) are about decentralisation. When the government tried to merge all different offices into the district office, it meant having the district office as the main service provider for child protection. We tried to align a lot of our work with this. Interestingly, this fitted with what the 2018 evaluation found: that capacity building should focus on the district level.”⁶³

This approach was clearly appreciated by stakeholders who were involved in the qualitative research. For example, as illustrated by a Government and NGO stakeholder:

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“The thing is that UNICEF doesn’t just help at the central [national] level, but also at the sub-national level. The programme covers implementation of the national strategic plan and the Ministerial strategic plan...in the process of delegation to the sub-national level, we need UNICEF to work with us and build capacity and ensure we have human resources and that they can implement their roles at the grass roots level.”⁶⁴

“UNICEF work not only at the national level, but also at the grass roots level. So they have good information from all levels and it’s holistic, considering where the gaps are for child protection.”⁶⁵

While the multi-tiered approach is highly relevant to the Cambodian context, there appears to be a disconnect in the CP Programme logic (and in practice) in terms of how the national system (and interventions focused on strengthening the national system) connects to the sub-national programmes and processes. This is compounded by the different Government accountabilities for child protection at the national and sub-national levels, with the national system and provincial systems led by MoSVY, while at the point of service delivery – which now rests largely at the district government level – the system is led by the Mol. As noted by a key stakeholder at UNICEF: “we are good at planning and visioning. But I wonder how our vision actually trickles down, especially to the sub-national level. How do we maintain that vision in the work we do, especially at the grass roots level, because that is where the system starts?”⁶⁶

Given the decentralisation of social welfare / child protection services and, within this, the importance of provincial, district and commune / village bodies, a focus on building the system at the sub-national level is clearly relevant to the Cambodian context. However, **the perceptions of stakeholders as to the relevance of the CP Programme to the sub-national context was mixed.** According to the stakeholder survey, the CP Programme was perceived to be less well aligned to sub-national government needs and priorities. According to this survey, all respondents agreed that the CP Programme mostly or completely aligned with the needs and priorities of national government stakeholders, while slightly less agreed with this statement in relation to sub-national stakeholders.

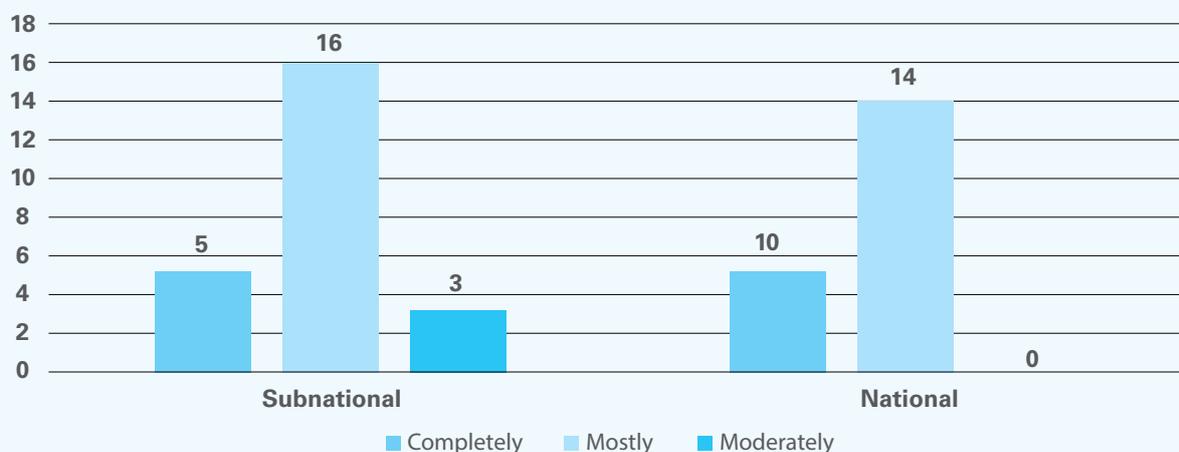
⁶³ KII with Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF Cambodia (online), 14 November 2022.

⁶⁴ KII with two representatives of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, Phnom Penh (zoom), 28 October 2022.

⁶⁵ KII with Deputy Director of Damnok Teok (online), 7 November 2022.

⁶⁶ KII with member of Child Protection Team, UNICEF Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 19 October 2022.

Figure 6: Survey responses to the question ‘To what extent does the UNICEF Child Protection Programme 2019 – 2023 align with the needs and priorities of national v sub-national government stakeholders?’ (n = 24)



While stakeholders in some research locations felt that the Programme responded well to the local context, others felt that the Programme did not respond to the capacities and existing systems on the ground. One of the themes that emerged from the qualitative research was that, while it was considered crucial to focus on capacity building at the sub-national (particularly district) level, **the particular CP Programme interventions were introduced at a time in which there was insufficient capacity (in terms of the number and skills of the social services workforce) to absorb the interventions.** For instance, the introduction of Primero was considered by some participants as not being well aligned to the realities at the district level. This theme emerged particularly strongly in the comparator districts, in which Primero was introduced before implementing more general capacity building initiatives aimed at the social welfare workforce. It also appears to have disconnected the introduction of Primero from more general case management capacity building initiatives, undermining the effectiveness of Primero as a case management tool (see section on effectiveness for more detail).

It is recommended that the next CP Programme continue to use a multi-tiered approach that is focused on both the national and sub-national levels in order to provide a comprehensive systems building framework. When the Child Protection Law and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are adopted, the Programme should shift its focus to supporting national and sub-national duty bearers to implement the Law and SOPs. Consideration should also be given to the role of communes and village leaders and how UNICEF can support their role in the system. The Programme logic should articulate how the Programme will ensure vertical coordination of child protection services and how national programme interventions link to sub-national interventions. It should also consider the phasing of interventions at the sub-national level and in particular, how more general capacity building interventions can be more effectively joined up with the Primero case management tool.

Relevance to the needs of boys and girls, including the most vulnerable

The CP Programme, with its strong focus on VAC, is grounded in a solid evidence base and robust understanding of the key deprivations and needs of programme right holders (including girls and boys who are at risk of or have experienced any form of violence, and their parents / caregivers). According to the evidence (which is set out above in section 3), children in Cambodia are routinely exposed to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, unnecessary family separation and, in some locations (e.g. Ratanakiri), to child marriage and adolescent pregnancy.

Stakeholders involved in the research felt that the Programme was highly relevant to the needs of children in Cambodia. For instance, the vast majority of respondents to the stakeholder survey felt that the CP Programme was relevant to child protection needs in Cambodia: 83 per cent of respondents felt that the CP Programme mostly (16 out of 24) or completely (4 out of 24) 'addressed the most pressing child protection needs in Cambodia.' This was attributed to the development of a robust evidence base, prioritisation exercises, strong partnerships and the adaptability / flexibility of the CP Programme to changing external factors.

However, though various initiatives have been developed to engage adolescents with some aspects of the Programme, **there has been no systematic, meaningful engagement of children, adolescents or parents / caregivers at key points of planning, limiting the extent to which the Programmes can demonstrate relevance and responsiveness to the needs of rights holders.** UNICEF supports the Adolescent and Youth Reference Group (AYRG) – a group of youth and adolescents who are supported through a national NGO (CRC Cambodia) to engage in government law and policy development. The AYRG was involved in various consultations around the design of the current CP Programme, but this engagement appears to have been quite limited and ad hoc. Further, there do not appear to be any records of the results of this engagement and therefore no transparency in relation to the extent to which and how feedback from the adolescent and youth engagement initiatives were incorporated into the programme design. The Programme also did not appear to deliberately facilitate the engagement of adolescent and youth in vulnerable situations in consultations relating to the Programme design (such as adolescents / youth with disabilities, LGBTQI+ adolescents / youth, adolescents / youth who had experience of out of home care and so on).

In addition, there does not appear to be any systematic or routine mechanisms to engage adolescents and youth in review and adjustment of the CP Programme at key points in the implementation phase of the Programme. This limits the ability for the Programme to be responsive to the needs and situation of adolescents and youth. Among research participants, adolescent and youth engagement in the CP Programme was frequently described as 'ad hoc' and not particularly meaningful and systematic. For example: "It happens sometimes, but on an ad hoc basis. We want to do this in a more systematic way...if we want the input of young people at the moment, it would be done in a one-off consultation."⁶⁷

⁶⁷ KII with Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 19 October 2022.

Respondents to the stakeholder survey also expressed limited agreement that the CP Programme effectively ensured the meaningful engagement of children and youth. Just over 50 per cent of respondents (only 13 out of 24) 'completely' or 'mostly' agreed that the CP Programme ensured the meaningful engagement of children and youth in its design and review, and five respondents felt that the Programme either 'did not at all' or only 'somewhat' ensured their meaningful engagement (a further six 'moderately' agreed). Written responses mentioned that adolescents and youth were not effectively engaged at the programme review stage and that there was a need to engage with a more diverse group of adolescents / youth.

It is recommended that, in the next CP Programme, a mechanism such as a youth advisory board, is developed to engage adolescents and youth in the design of the Programme both routinely (e.g. through a quarterly forum) and at key point in the Programme's life cycle (e.g. fit for purpose reviews, mid-term evaluation / assessments etc.). Adolescents and youth could be recruited through the AYRG (as CRC Cambodia supports the AYRG in developing skills and confidence in adolescent and youth participation). It is also important that UNICEF ensure that the advisory board represents a diverse range of adolescent and youth voices from a range of different provinces and that it reserves spaces on the advisory board for adolescents and youth who are in vulnerable situations. UNICEF could consider more innovative ways of engaging with members of the AYRG and beyond (e.g. through UReport communications). Consideration should also be given to extending these youth engagements to cover the whole Country Programme.

Gender and equity

It was found that the CP Programme structure does not fully capture and reflect the gender and equity dimensions of child protection and the intersecting vulnerabilities of children; the way that these vulnerabilities compound child protection risks could be better conceptualized to ensure that the Programme is relevant to the needs of different groups of children.

It was found that the CP Programme design incorporates gender, though only to a limited extent. UNICEF Cambodia has mainstreamed gender across the Country Programme and has appointed a gender focal point, who sits within the education team, though also works office-wide to ensure that gender is incorporated into Programme outputs and monitoring and reporting. The current Country Programme was also the subject of a gender review. UNICEF's gender focal point also sits on a UN-wide gender team, which promotes a more joined up approach to gender across the different UN agencies. The current Programme explicitly incorporates gender into its outputs and results framework, though only to the extent that it disaggregates 'girls and boys', where relevant, in stating outcomes and in monitoring results. The Programme also works explicitly on gender in its child marriage programme under output area 3.

Another way that the CP Programme has incorporated the gender dimensions of child protection (and violence against children / violence against women) in its Positive Parenting Programme, which incorporates sessions on adult relationships as well as relationships between parents and children. To this end, placement of the Positive Parenting Programme with the Ministry of Women's Affairs lends the Programme to an integrated approach in which VAC interventions are able to incorporate issues of violence against women in a comprehensive, holistic way.

While these measures are important, **the design of the CP Programme does not adequately engage with or incorporate the gender dynamics of child protection issues.** This is a critical gap, given the prevalence of domestic violence in Cambodia, which often includes co-occurring instances of violence against children and violence against women.⁶⁸ For instance, the CP Programme does not address social norms that place responsibility on women for raising children and compound structural gender inequalities that are a core driver of violence against women and children. An example of this is that the Positive Parenting Programme appears to have had very limited engagement with fathers / male caregivers. While the Programme incorporates gender dynamics and addresses domestic violence, not engaging with fathers greatly reduces the ability for this Programme to address family violence effectively and to contribute to challenging harmful gender norms. For example:

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“When we delivered community education session, the participants were mainly women. Men often thought that they could do other important things than attending the session. They especially went to their rice field. Well, men tend to think that women and children's issues are women's things. As a man, they don't have anything to do with this.”⁶⁹

The limited focus on gender dynamics in the design of the Programme has also limited the way that gender is addressed in programme and service delivery, with implementing partners tending to take a 'gender-blind' approach to service delivery that does not address the different needs of boys and girls. It was clear from the qualitative data that implementing partners equated gender equality with treating children 'the same / equally,' rather than engaging more fully with gendered dynamics of child protection risks. For example:

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“The support that we receive is not necessarily differentiated specifically for the needs of girls or boys. It is neutral and applicable for all children. We only look at their vulnerability level. For example, related to sexual abuse, we look for legal support, health care, and nutrition support for the victims etc.”⁷⁰

“We do not discriminate against girl or boy. So, our interventions are for both girls and boys.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ KII with CCWC representative, Paoy Commune, Ratanakiri Province, 2 November 2022.

⁷⁰ KII with representative of DoSVY, Ratanakiri Province, 1 November 2022.

⁷¹ KII with CCWC representative, Paoy Commune, Ratanakiri Province, 2 November 2022.

There is a need for the CP Programme to support a more nuanced and in-depth approach to gender, including in the Programme design, interventions and monitoring and results frameworks.

It is recommended that a thorough gender analysis be carried out to inform the development of the next CP Programme to ensure that the gender dynamics of child protection issues are more fully incorporated into the Programme. This should involve a consideration of the ways in which violence against children and violence against women intersect and the ways that child protection programming could incorporate VAW prevention and response initiatives.⁷² Efforts should be made to engage in collaborative work with UNFPA and UN Women on the gender dimensions of the CP Programme.

The evaluation also found that the CP Programme does not adequately respond to the needs of some vulnerable groups of children and in particular, to the needs of children with disabilities. According to the stakeholder survey, while most respondents agreed that the CP Programme was relevant to the needs of children in Cambodia, the strength of agreement that the CP Programme responded to the protection needs of vulnerable children (e.g. children with disabilities) was less. Seven (out of 24) respondents agreed that the Programme only moderately addressed the needs of the most vulnerable groups (e.g., children with disabilities). In the survey, this was attributed to the very limited focus of the Programme on government service delivery for children with disabilities and limited commitment of key government Ministries, including MoSVY.

Some limited work on disability has been carried out under the current CP Programme. For instance, the Programme has supported the inclusion of disability in Primero and in the Child Protection Law and SOPs. Technical assistance on integrating a disability lens into the CP Programme has been provided through the UNICEF Australia National Commission, which is one donor to the CP Programme. However, research participants mentioned the limited work on disability as one of the critical gaps in the CP Programme, given the very limited commitment at all levels of Government to address the protection needs of children with disabilities adequately and the very limited services available at sub-national levels. The gaps in the child protection system for children with disabilities were noted by participants at the sub-national level in particular. For example, according to NGO implementing partners:



“We face many challenges with children with disabilities; there is no NGO that we can refer a child to. This year, we only referred children to the rehabilitation centre...DoSVY has only one option – to send child to rehabilitation centre.”⁷³

⁷² This could be guided by recommendations in UNICEF EAPRO, UNFPA Asia and Pacific Regional Office and UN Women Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Ending violence against women and children in Cambodia: Opportunities and challenges for collaborative and integrative approaches, 2020.

⁷³ KII with representative of SKO (Phnom Penh) (online), 3 November 2022.

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“It’s still a challenge for children with disabilities. It is still very, very challenging. There are not many services available, especially long-term support. There needs to be ‘whole life support’, not just for a few years. Some need 24-hour care, which is long term and is very expensive. It is for the whole life, and we need to have very strong foster families that can support them - those kind of things. It is still very, very limited in Cambodia...Currently, to be honest, in our programme we have two children with disabilities that we cannot find any options for. Now we keep them in foster care, and they are healthy and happy but we worry that one day if the programme collapses – how will they be? We don’t know. That is what we worry about.”⁷⁴

It is recommended that the CP Programme explicitly integrate the needs of children with disabilities into the next CP Programme, including through a specific sub-output / result that is focused on improving services and services delivery for children with disabilities (e.g. within an overall output of strengthening services) and capacity building of government and NGO service providers in this area, both in terms of advocating for improved services for children with disabilities at the national level and also through capacity building of service delivery at the sub-national level.

UNICEF Cambodia could also improve the way that disability is mainstreamed effectively office-wide. This could include through integrating disability in routine office-wide approval forms etc. to ensure that Programmes systematically consider the needs of children with disabilities in decisions relating to partnerships, design of interventions and implementation of specific initiatives.

Many research participants, including government and NGO stakeholders at national and sub-national levels, also mentioned children affected by migration, in particular, those children who remain behind when their parents migrate (typically to Thailand) for work as requiring more focus in the CP Programme. It was mentioned, for instance, that many families are at risk of unsafe migration – even if they know the risks, they have no choice as there are such limited economic opportunities for them in Cambodia. Service providers at the sub-national level reported that they would like to the tools to be able to support these families better and how to provide for children who remain behind when their families migrate. For example, according to stakeholders from MoSVY:

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“Lots of Khmer children are working and begging in Thailand. We want UNICEF to coordinate to provide for those children – UNICEF Thailand and UNICEF Cambodia should find a way to collect these children – referral, repatriation and provide services to the family after they return to Cambodia.”⁷⁵

⁷⁴ KII with Director of Kaliyan Mith, Siem Reap, 26 October 2022.

⁷⁵ KII with two representatives of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, Phnom Penh (zoom), 28 October 2022.

It appears that some programmes do not adequately incorporate the needs of children who remain behind. For example, the positive parenting programme works with parents, and does not include grandparents (who commonly care for children who remain behind when parents migrate) as beneficiaries.

It is recommended that the next CP Programme consider how it can apply in the context of children who remain behind, and how particular programme interventions can be adapted. For example, consideration should be given to the delivery of the positive parenting programme to grandparents / other caregivers, rather than restricting this programme to parents (mothers).

▶ Adaptability of the Programme and relevance to changing contextual factors (e.g., COVID-19)

The evidence indicates that the CP Programme remained relevant in the context of external challenges, including in particular, the changing context brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic substantially altered the programming landscape for much of 2020 and 2021 in Cambodia, where routine lockdowns and restrictions on movement had a significant impact. This is likely to have resulted in increased exposure to VAC/VAW in the home and it also cut children off from systems and services (e.g., schools, child development centres, healthcare facilities etc.) that could support them. Against this backdrop, UNICEF country offices adapted their programme interventions to address the impact of COVID-19 on children.⁶ There was strong consensus among stakeholders involved in the qualitative data that the Programme adapted very well to the COVID-19 context. There was also strong agreement in the stakeholder survey: 21 out of 23 respondents agreed that the CP Programme ‘mostly’ (11) or ‘completely’ (10) adapted to the changing context brought about by COVID-19. This was attributed to strong technical assistance from UNICEF which enabled partners to adapt work methods and modalities to remote ways of engaging rights holders and to flexibility in terms of budget utilisation. For example, as illustrated by an NGO implementing partner: “For me, with UNICEF funding, we [are always able to] use all the funding and we are happy with it. We used to get funding from other donors and other projects, like during COVID, we had one donor and they did not allow us flexibility. So, we returned 20 – 30% of funding to them as we could not do anything.”⁷⁷ More detail is provided in the section on effectiveness – see section 8.3.

⁷⁶ UNICEF Child Protection's adaptive programming was used as a case study on programme pivot in response to COVID 19 See: <https://www.unicef.org/eap/not-going-back?fbclid=IwAR3g2q9fz4vEHxVL3taYF1YTOZfjLNY1BTdJiVx30XOWnedOiwAX3S9aXvw>

⁷⁷ KII with Director of Kaliyan Mith, Siem Reap, 26 October 2022.



Coherence / connectedness

Key research question: To what extent are there synergies and interlinkages between the CP Programme and other interventions carried out by Government, other key development partners (Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision etc.) as well as UNICEF?

Summary of findings on coherence / connectedness

- The CP Programme worked effectively in coordinating the different interventions of development partners, including government and NGO partners through supporting the Child Protection Forum at the national level. The Child Protection Forum brings together UN agencies, Government stakeholders and NGOs to coordinate their work in child protection systems strengthening.
- At the sub-national level, UNICEF ensured the effective coordination of child protection service delivery primarily through the 3PC network, which is a collaboration between the government, UNICEF and NGOs for the provision of prevention and response child protection services.
- The development and maintenance of respectful, open and enduring strategic partnerships was a key factor in UNICEF's ability to achieve coherence between the Programme goals and outputs and the work of other agencies.
- However, it was found that work is needed to ensure more effective coordination of interventions by different UN agencies, such as UN Women.

Extent of coherence / harmonisation of the Child Protection Programme to other interventions in the same context

The UNICEF CP Programme has ensured good coordination among different stakeholders, and this has been achieved through the development and support of the Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children (3PC) and the forging of good relationships with the Family Care First network (along with support to Government-led coordination mechanisms - this is discussed in detail below under 'effectiveness').

These networks coordinate interventions of different NGOs to ensure absence of overlap and good coordination at the level of service delivery. The network was highly regarded among stakeholders at national and sub-national levels, and it appears to be a crucial way to coordinate efforts of different actors toward an overall systems strengthening framework and common goals. At the national level, UNICEF also supports the Child Protection Forum, which meets every two months, along with technical working groups to guide specific activities, such as the development of the Child Protection Law, bringing UN agencies, Government stakeholders and NGOs together to coordinate their work in child protection systems strengthening.

At the sub-national level, coordination of development partners and Government service providers is largely achieved through the 3PC network, which works to coordinate the activities and services of different NGOs to ensure that a comprehensive range of services are available for children and also to limit the degree of overlap and inefficiency, for example, by coordinating the particular districts in which NGOs work. For example, as reported by an NGO stakeholder in Battambang:

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“UNICEF also provides funding to other NGOs and government. But it is not overlapping – there is no double service to the cases since we have devised the implementation mechanism – Child Futures International in particular districts, other organisations in other districts. So it’s not like a double service...we can give full support to children (though coordination with other NGOs).”⁷⁸

There was also strong support among respondents to the stakeholders survey for the assertion that UNICEF’s CP Programme harmonised and coordinated with other development partners – seven and 14 respondents agreed that UNICEF either completely or mostly harmonised with other development partners working in child protection (out of 24 responses).

The evaluation found, however, that coordination among different UN agencies could be improved. For example, in terms of the Positive Parenting Programme, it was reported that UN Women also implement a parenting programme, and it seems quite distinct and disconnected from the UNICEF programme. It uses a different, but similar, modality: UNFPA’s Parenting Programme is based on ‘SASA!’ which is a community mobilization intervention that seeks to achieve primary prevention of family violence through building communication and relationship skills, while UNICEF’s Parenting Programme is based on Parenting for Lifelong Learning programme – an evidence-based open source parenting programme.

It is recommended that UNICEF improve coordination with different UN agencies to ensure that programme outputs utilise and align work already being carried out by other UN agencies to avoid duplication and inefficiencies.

⁷⁸ KII with Technical Director, Children’s Future International (Battambang) (online), 10 November 2022.

Formation of strategic partnerships

The evaluation found that very good partnerships have been established under the CP Programme, and this has clearly helped align the activities of UNICEF's CP Programme to the broader systems strengthening agenda in Cambodia. It has also been a crucial factor in the Programme's effectiveness (see section 8.3 for more details). UNICEF works strategically with a range of partners at the national and subnational levels.⁷⁹ UNICEF works with MoSVY on the development of the Child Protection Law, the Child Protection Strategic Sector Plan, provincial plans, the CPIMS, Primero, and on social service workforce strengthening. UNICEF works with Mol on the development of the Child Protection SOPs, the assignment of district social welfare workers for child protection, the provision of services, and contributions to the CPIMS (which involves 14 Government Ministries). UNICEF also supports MOI to provide oversight of district offices of social welfare. UNICEF works with MOWA on the implementation of rollout of the Positive Parenting programme and with the MOE on the making classrooms safer for children. UNICEF works with the Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children (3PC) on service delivery, SOP testing, provincial plan development, Open Source Case Management and Record Keeping (OSCaR) and interoperable with Primero where possible. UNICEF works with Family Care First Cambodia on the development of provincial plans for child protection, and integration of OSCaR with Primero. The partnerships with religious leaders have also been key to its work under output 3 in addressing harmful social norms and behaviours (this is discussed further in section 8.3).

At both the national and sub-national levels, stakeholders tended to express their relationship with UNICEF as a 'partnership,' within which they were able to help shape priorities and have a meaningful dialogue about institutional needs, which has helped ensure alignment between UNICEF's CP Programme and the priorities and needs of Government and NGO stakeholders. However, a minority of Government stakeholders expressed the view that UNICEF tend to dominate the child protection agenda in Cambodia, which has at times, undermined productive relationships with Government partners and perhaps 'steps on' the roles of some stakeholders. For example, according to one national stakeholder:

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“UNICEF is very powerful and can delegate the role of stakeholder [to another institution], rather than to the Government. UNICEF should realise the work of other stakeholders as well...UNICEF is part of the UN and have power and money and the budget, but they do not respect other stakeholders in performing their role.”⁸⁰

However, it should be noted that this view was expressed by a small minority of research participants.

⁷⁹ UNICEF Cambodia, UNICEF UMBRELLA AGREEMENT-II7200GH21IO000004, Six Month Update (UNICEF Cambodia- USAID), August 2022, p. 4.

⁸⁰ KII with representative of UNICEF Australia National Commission (online), 25 November 2022.

According to the qualitative research, UNICEF’s respectful and enduring relationships with key government partners is a factor to achieving positive outcomes under the CP Programme.

For instance, according to one of UNICEF’s donors, the main factor contributing to successful outcomes under the CP Programme is:

“

“The persistence of UNICEF – not giving up in the relationship [with government partners]; understanding the local dynamics and manoeuvring through the complexities of working with government... In the Cambodia setting, you have to do back door negotiations and working, there has to be the persistence of always being there. Changing norms within government, for example in relation to RCLs – it’s about slowly chipping away over time to change norms and attitudes. It’s not an event, but a bit by bit, gradual chipping away that you can only achieve with a good relationship.”



Effectiveness

Key research question: To what degree has UNICEF’s Child Protection Programme contributed to the creation of positive conditions and changes for keeping vulnerable girls and boys in families, supporting their safe reintegration into family care, and protecting them from violence in all settings through institutional and legislative frameworks, quality services, promotion of positive social and gender norms, and a supportive community environment?

Summary of findings on effectiveness

- The CP Programme has been mostly effective in achieving results aimed at strengthening the legal and operational environment for child protection (output 1), in particular through the development of the Child Protection Law and Standard Operating Procedures and establishment of a social service workforce.
- However, while the roll-out of Primero (the Child Protection case management system) has contributed to some positive outcomes including improving coordinated case management, organisation, data security / privacy and information management, the operationalisation and use of Primero as a case management system has been hampered by insufficient capacity at the sub-national levels.

² This could be guided by recommendations in UNICEF EAPRO, UNFPA Asia and Pacific Regional Office and UN Women Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Ending violence against women and children in Cambodia: Opportunities and challenges for collaborative and integrative approaches, 2020.

- The evaluation found that that outcomes in relation to the strengthening of the social welfare workforce and child protection service delivery (output area 2) was mainly positive, though critical challenges remain which have reduced the overall effectiveness of interventions. Case management and service delivery appears to be functioning to a reasonable standard in the 'intervention' research locations, particularly in contrast to practices in the 'comparator' research locations, with increased government ownership and improved service delivery achieved through training, coaching and case collaboration processes which pair government social services staff with NGO social workers to build capacity in government case management systems. Service delivery was also improved through UNICEF's efforts in increasing coordination among different government and NGO service providers.
- However, critical gaps remain in child protection service delivery at the sub-national level, including the limited capacity and skills of the social services workforce, lack of operational budgets and limited services in some areas (in particular, mental health services).
- Some positive outcomes were reported in terms of addressing harmful community beliefs and practices (output area 3), particularly in relation to improved parenting practices and a reduction in the use of violence discipline by parents. However, this evidence was largely anecdotal and there are limited data to establish the outcomes or impacts in terms of attitudinal and behaviour change.
- The CP Programme was effective in adapting to the COVID-19 context through support in providing emergency packages for vulnerable families affected by COVID-19 and technical support to government and NGO service providers in changing to remote working modalities during COVID-19. Other interventions included mental health and psychosocial support through community campaigning and messaging.

Extent to which and how results have been achieved and contributed to a strengthened child protection system in Cambodia

The effectiveness and impact of the CP Programme are considered in light of the progress in implementing the Programme outputs, along with the outcomes derived from these programme outputs in terms of their contribution to strengthening the child protection system.

Output area 1: Enabling legal and operational environment

The CP Programme has been mostly effective in achieving results aimed at strengthening the legal and operational environment for child protection.

Progress / outputs

According to the desk review, progress in relation to this output area is largely on track. Key progress from 2019 to 2021 included the launch of the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) dashboard. The dashboard enables the various coordination mechanisms at national and sub national levels to track key indicators and interventions. Measurable progress was made in the development of the Child Protection Law and Standard Operating Procedures. This law will provide the architecture for the national child protection system. In addition, existing district level civil servants of social welfare and social affairs were designated as 'social service workers' and appointed in all 204 districts. Specific job descriptions have been developed for these positions. Child protection plans were developed in ten provinces to bring a unity of purpose to the disparate child protection activities in those provinces.

In 2021, UNICEF supported the mainstreaming of disability inclusion in all new legal and policy documents, such as the child protection law, alternative care policy and as part of Primero, the digital case management system. In the area of children's access to justice, the guidelines on diversion and child-friendly justice procedures were developed and approved by the Minister of Justice.

Table 11 summarises the evidence on the outputs of the CP Programme according to the programme results framework. Evidence includes that collected by UNICEF for its programme monitoring and reporting requirements.



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Table 11: Summary of outputs against indicators in CP Programme’s results framework: Output 1

Output indicator	Evidence from desk review
<p>Country has a functioning, national, multi-sectoral, multistakeholder coordination mechanism tasked with overseeing national plans or strategies to prevent and respond to violence against children and adolescents, with child and adolescent participation (quantitative).</p>	<p>Child protection coordination mechanisms are operational in 20 provinces. UNICEF has reported that the establishment of the national coordination mechanism has been postponed until after the launch of the Child Protection Sector Strategic Plan, which is scheduled later in 2022.⁸²</p>
<p>Existence of procedures and services for children in contact with law that are applied and delivered in line with international norms (qualitative).</p>	<p>The existence of procedures and services for children in contact with law that are applied and delivered in line with international norms, primarily includes the guidelines on diversion of children in conflict with the law and child- friendly procedures. These have been endorsed by the Deputy Prime Minister-Minister of Interior and they have been disseminated nationwide by Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice and MoSVY.⁸³ As of December 2022, the guidelines on diversion and child-friendly procedures were being implemented in four provinces.⁸⁴</p>
<p>Development and adoption of Child Protection Law and extent of compliance with international standards (qualitative).</p>	<p>A draft Child Protection Law was completed in 2022 and submitted to the Council of Jurists and the RGC (the Inter-Ministerial Technical Working Group) endorsed the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The Law and SOPs are comprehensive and, as evidenced through the development of a comparative matrix,⁸⁵ consistent with international child rights standards. The SOPs are currently undergoing a piloting phase before they are finalised.</p>

⁸² UNICEF Cambodia: 2022 UNICEF Mid-year Assessment Presentation Section: Child Protection, Cambodia Country Programme 2019-2023, slide 4.

⁸³ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/883 CHILD PROTECTION, 2021, p. 103.

⁸⁴ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 92.

⁸⁵ Internal document sighted by the author.

<p>Quality inter-operable information management system supports and tracks case management, incident monitoring, and programme monitoring and extent of cases properly entered into the system (qualitative).</p>	<p>In 2020, the baseline was that routine data collection system on violence, exploitation and abuse of children were not in place. By the end of 2021, there was an operational database of child protection issues operation through CPIMS and the annual CPIMS Data forum conducted and CPIMS dashboard being updated with 2019 and 2020 data, to be completed by end of 2021.⁸⁶</p> <p>Primero has been rolled out to all Provinces; however, the system is not yet being fully utilised in all Districts.</p>
<p>Degree of Development of the Quality Assurance System for Social Work (qualitative).</p>	<p>The key measures for this indicator are the mechanisms for licensing and registration, defined in both Business Case on Social Service Workforce which was endorsed by Minister, and in the National Strategic Plan for Strengthening Social Service Workforce.⁸⁷ This is part of larger effort to strengthen the SSW. For example, the Business Case on Investing in SSW and Strategic Plan on SSW in Cambodia 2022-2031 provided the framework for the MoSVY to assign civil servants to undertake child protection work. It has also contributed to the process for establishing a Human Resource Information Management System (HRMIS).⁸⁸</p>
<p>An alternative care policy in line with the 2009 Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children is available in the country (qualitative).</p>	<p>At the end of December 2021, UNICEF was reporting that the revised Alternative Care Policy had been drafted and was being reviewed to ensure full alignment with the draft law on Child Protection and related SOPs before being submitted for final review by the government in 2023.⁸⁹</p>

⁸⁶ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/883 CHILD PROTECTION, 2021, p. 100.

⁸⁷ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/883 CHILD PROTECTION, 2021, p. 101.

⁸⁸ UNICEF Cambodia, UNICEF UMBRELLA AGREEMENT-II7200GH21IO00004, Six Month Update (UNICEF Cambodia- USAID), August 2022, P. 2.

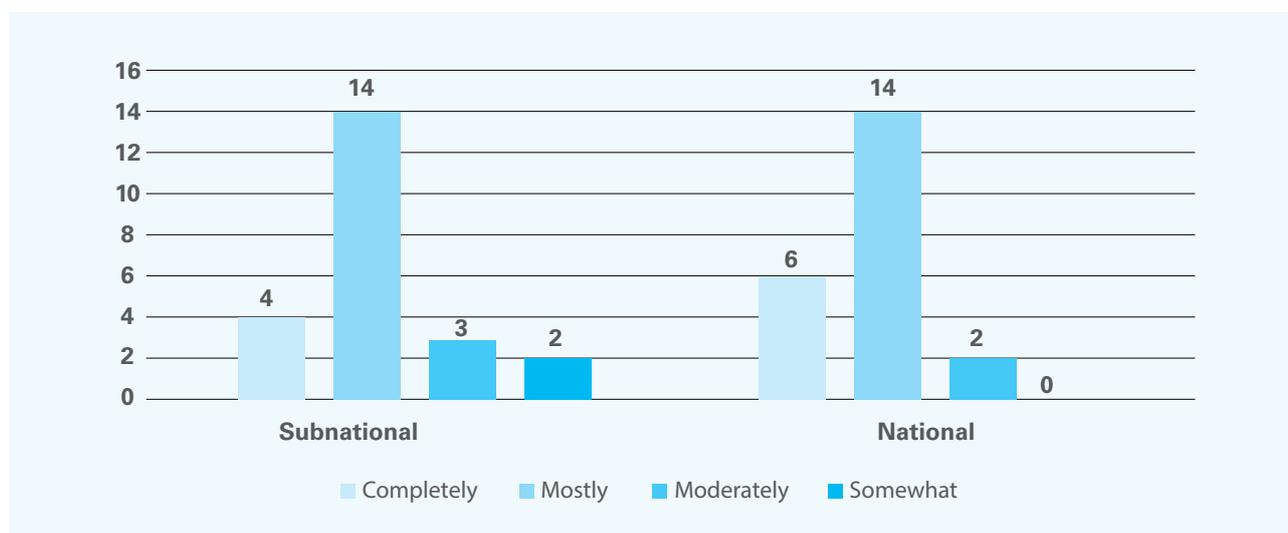
⁸⁹ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/883 CHILD PROTECTION, 2021, p. 101.

Outcomes: Law and policy framework

The development of the Child Protection Law and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are a key achievement of the CP Programme. The introduction of the Law and SOPs, when adopted, will fill a critical gap within the child protection system and provide the overarching framework for the system and its operationalisation. It is also an enduring achievement: the Law and SOPs will remain in place after UNICEF ceases to support their development. Stakeholders involved in the qualitative research tended to express very strong support for the Law and SOPs; and saw these developments as necessary elements in strengthening the child protection system and a development that brought together and built consensus among a range of different government and NGO stakeholders. For example, according to representatives of MoSVY, the Law will provide a strong architecture for the system, and will lead to the allocation of key human and financial resource commitments required to ensure the system functions effectively: “We have a draft child protection law and when the law is endorsed, the law will be the top guidance; there will be more allocation of human resources and budgets to ensure that we implement this law. So that is another thing to be optimistic about in the future.”⁹⁰

Among respondents to the stakeholder survey, there was strong agreement that the CP Programme has been successful in contributing to a strengthened child protection law and policy framework at the national level (see Figure 7, below). However, stakeholders were slightly less supportive of the assertion that the Programme has made a positive contribution to strengthening laws and policies at the sub-national level. At the national level, 20 respondents out of 22 agreed that the Programme had either mostly (14) or completely (6) contributed to a strengthened legal and policy framework. At the sub-national level, while 18 respondents (out of 22) agreed that the Programme either mostly or completely contributed to strengthened legal and policy frameworks, five respondents felt that UNICEF had only been ‘somewhat’ (2) or ‘moderately’ (3) successful.

Figure 7: Survey responses to the question ‘To what extent has UNICEF’s Child Protection Programme 2019 – 2023 contributed to a strengthened legal and operational framework for child protection in Cambodia at the national v sub-national level?’ (n = 22)



⁹⁰ KII with two representatives of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, Phnom Penh (zoom), 28 October 2022.

However, some concerns were expressed that the current draft of the Child Protection Law, while comprehensive, contains some gaps, for example relating to child witnesses. It was also felt by a small number of stakeholders that the Law was not yet adequately adapted to suit the Cambodian context. For example, according to one stakeholder:

“It seems like the current draft of the Law has taken a model of the law from the west, so it could be a little hard to implement here in our country. For instance, in the case of parents who fail to send their children to school, they will be criminalised or punished in by the Law...so it will be hard for poor parents who already can't send their children to school.”⁹¹

It should be noted though, that the Child Protection Law is based on international child rights standards and evidence of good practice, as indicated in the matrix accompanying the development of the Law. It was also developed through a process of collaboration with a wide range of key Government stakeholders in order to ensure that it was properly contextualised.

Outcomes: Operational frameworks

The CP Programme has made substantial progress in operationalising the child protection system at the national and sub-national levels, though some challenges remain. One of the biggest achievements was the development and professionalisation of social workers and the development of a social services workforce. This was made possible after long-term advocacy, investment support, capacity building and through the development of a business case on investing in a social services workforce.⁹² In 2021, social service workers with clear job descriptions were appointed in all 204 districts and child protection plans were developed in 10 provinces.⁹³ A Strategic Plan on Social Service Workforce in Cambodia (2022 – 2031) was approved by MoSVY in March 2022 and the Strategic Plan for Training the Social Service Workforce focusing on Child Protection (2021 – 2025) was signed by MoSVY in February 2021. These developments followed initial investments made under the previous Programme to support the social services workforce to carry out family- and community-based reintegration of children from residential care. Later, their roles were expanded to address other child protection concerns in their communities, including responding to those affected by COVID-19. According to stakeholders who participated in the qualitative research, the recognition of the need for social workers and developments aimed at professionalisation of the social welfare workforce were major achievements. For example, according to two representatives from MoSVY:

⁹¹ KII with national Government stakeholder in child protection (online), 25 November 2022.

⁹² UNICEF Cambodia, Child Protection Quarterly Report, October - December 2021, pp. 1-2.

⁹³ UNICEF New York, GOAL AREA 3, Every child is protected from, violence and exploitation, Global Annual Results Report 2021, p. 44.

“

“There is now recognition of the role and function of the social welfare workforce. Before, we had no idea of what the social work workforce really was and why it is important. Now there is recognition of its importance – there’s been a lot of support at national and sub-national levels to strengthen this workforce. We now have laws, guidelines and policy – we are starting to recruit existing officers [from other areas] to become part of the social welfare workforce.”⁹⁴

As set out below (in relation to output 2), the designation of social welfare staff in each district was highly valued by stakeholders and has supported improved child protection identification and service delivery at the provincial and district levels (though with some significant remaining gaps as discussed below). For example, as explained by a representative at DoSVY in Siem Reap:

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“One of the biggest issues we faced before the UNICEF Child Protection Programme [in 2019] was that we already had a plan, but it was only on paper, there was no action. There was no technical support. We didn’t have professional social workers, we were just learning by doing...we needed certified, qualified social workers, but we didn’t have that. Now, social workers can be efficient, and they know what to do. Without this, we could not achieve. The extent to which we could work was limited – we could only do lower-level work.”⁹⁵

Another achievement of the CP Programme was the establishment, in collaboration MoSVY, 14 other government ministries and NGO networks, of the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS). It provides data on 50 indicators, including the situation of highly vulnerable groups, such as children living in poverty.⁹⁶ This addresses one of the critical bottlenecks to the effective operation of the child protection system - the lack of robust data collection systems.

The roll-out of the Primero – the digital child protection case management system – was another major output of the CP Programme, though results from the Primero roll-out were mixed. While some stakeholders recognised the benefits of Primero in terms of improving coordinated case management, organisation, data security / privacy and information management, there were found to be many bottlenecks to its effective use within the child protection system. This appears to have stemmed largely from the system being rolled out at a time in which there was insufficient capacity at the sub-national (district and provincial) level to absorb the new system effectively. Insufficient numbers of social welfare staff, inadequate case management skills and high staff turnover, including the designation of very inexperienced staff as ‘social welfare workers’, impeded the uptake of the system. In all research locations, it appears that Primero is mainly being used quite narrowly as an information management system, rather than for its intended use, which is to support improved, coordinated and holistic case management practices.

⁹⁴ KII with two representatives of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, Phnom Penh (zoom), 28 October 2022.

⁹⁵ KII with representative of DoSVY, Siem Reap Province, Siem Reap, 25 October 2022.

⁹⁶ Kingdom of Cambodia, MoSVY. Available at: <https://cpims.mosvy.gov.kh/post/a4c9f2fa-d357-46b9-98cd-1d44513a7eed>

The Primero system clearly has advantages in Cambodia. The move from paper to digitalisation is in line with the RGC's commitment to moving to a digital service delivery model. It also is more scalable than the paper-based system, with changes / adjustments easier to scale. It ensures increased data protection (compared to paper-based files, which may be difficult to keep secure) and it facilitates more efficient case referrals, particularly between districts and provinces. It also helps to ensure government ownership over child protection cases, and follows the model proposed in the 2018 Formative Evaluation which recommended that case management should be owned by government service providers, who could engage NGOs to deliver particular services where required. It also helps to standardise systems and integrates different types of cases into one case management system. Stakeholders frequently reported that they valued Primero as a system, which they recognised as a quality case management system. For example:

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“In the past, all work was paper based. Now all work is digitised, we have a database and system available at the sub-national level. Everyone inputs the data, we can quickly get information, manage cases better and do interventions easier and faster. It makes the work easy and fast, the move to the digital system.”⁹⁷

“The Primero system is...helpful and modern. Before, we had hard copies and we sent it on, but now we can see in real time when cases are entered. The system is modern but social workers are not modern.”⁹⁸

However, many stakeholders expressed the view that the implementation of Primero is very challenging in the Cambodian context, given limited case management and technical skills among the social welfare workforce. For example:

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“A lot of people [in the social services workforce at local level] don't even know how to turn on a tablet, let alone fill in a form. There are internet connectivity issues, limited electricity. With Primero, it has to be contextualised, not just country to country, but to each single province and district...The bottom line is – there is a barrier that is partly linked to the technical part. Another barrier is related to case management capacity. That is why we keep training on case management.”⁹⁹

“Because the capacity of DoSVY is very limited – some are just new and some of them are just doing their work on paper still. Sometimes, they don't know how to use computers, how to access the system and use Primero. Some MoSVY staff provide training and orientation on using the Primero system, but the capacity and ability of DoSVY is not really capable to do it.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ KII with two representatives of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, Phnom Penh (zoom), 28 October 2022.

⁹⁸ KII with representative of DoSVY, Siem Reap Province, Siem Reap, 25 October 2022.

⁹⁹ KII with member of Child Protection Team, UNICEF Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 19 October 2022.

¹⁰⁰ KII with representative of SKO (Phnom Penh) (online), 3 November 2022.

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“It’s not really used effectively. I can say the Primero system is a very good system, and I see this – because I have training jointly with government staff. They provide Primero training from MoSVY and it is very clear and easy to use. For referrals and also for referring to partners for services. But even though the system is very good, if the people are not really using it properly, it is no good. So I see that, even though they have training, during the training they say ‘yes we can do this’ – they understand. But when it comes to the practice, they are feeling confused. They need more training. They still have limited capacity to use Primero.”¹⁰¹

Particularly at the district level, limitations in technical capacity were typically attributed to the merging of personnel from other offices into the District Offices of Social Welfare which meant that a lot of persons with very limited or no knowledge and skills in child protection or social welfare have been appointed to do social services work. This, in practice, means **that Primero was rolled out to personnel who did not have the required skills in case management practices**. Technical barriers were also reported, including that the system being difficult to use for persons with limited technical skills, problems with internet connectivity, and that it does not synch properly when going offline to online.¹⁰²

Other stakeholders mentioned a range of technical challenges that hindered their use of Primero, including internet connectivity issues, data being ‘wiped’ in the process of reconnecting to the internet and also technical issues with the tablets used to enter data into the system. As illustrated by one stakeholder involved in a case study:

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“To use Primero, it is problematic. It mainly relies on the internet connection. Sometimes, we entered all the information and data through phone or tablet. Then when the network disconnected, we needed to do everything all over again. The tablet’s sensor is not well functioned. Only entering through data through a computer is smooth. Working on Primero is a waste of time for us and the victims. Primero freezes often when we are entering information. The current update version is better but still problematic.”¹⁰³

Delays in MoSVY granting approval for the case data entered into the Primero system also caused challenges in Siem Reap.¹⁰⁴

According to the review of Primero files in the research locations (which involved a review of five randomly selected files that had been entered into Primero),¹⁰⁵ **it is clear that Primero is not yet being used effectively as a case management tool**. There was very limited data on each case and only basic information was entered (on the child, referral, sometimes their family situation). Where risk assessments were completed, risk was categorised but not explained.

¹⁰¹ KII with Technical Director, Children’s Future International (Battambang) (online), 10 November 2022.

¹⁰² KII with Child Protection Officer, Siem Reap Field Office, UNICEF Cambodia, Siem Reap, 24 October 2022.

¹⁰³ KII with District Social Services Officer, Siem Reap, date.October 2022.

¹⁰⁴ KII with District Social Services Officer, Siem Reap, date.

¹⁰⁵ This involved selecting every tenth file starting from the most recently entered. It should be noted that it was not possible to review Primero files in the two comparator locations – Oddar Meanchey and Pursat.

There were no care plans in the cases reviewed, no follow-up dates or notes from family visits etc. There were no supporting documents attached to any of the files (e.g., interview notes, medical documents etc.). In Siem Reap, the Social Workers at DoSVY explained that they have a large pile of files that are awaiting entry into the system but have not been entered yet. They reported that they had not been able to use Primero for three months due to a technical problem. They had reported the problem to MoSVY and were awaiting assistance. The process appears to involve the social workers completing the six MoSVY paper forms and handing these to another social worker which is charged with entering the data into the system. At one of the District Offices for Social Welfare in Siem Reap, it appears that one of the two social services staff members has been informally appointed as the Primero focal point. He enters cases into the database from hard copies of the six MoSVY forms. Therefore, Primero does not appear to be used as a case management system- it is used primarily for data entry and reporting.

Also, **social services staff in some locations appear to be logging all cases into Primero – including tier 1 and 2 cases, which was not the intention.** It is intended to be used as a case management system for child protection response services (not for prevention services). Many of the cases in the system appear to be secondary prevention or basic social welfare cases, like the provision of food and other material assistance for COVID-affected families. However, in Siem Reap and Battambang, social services staff explained that they no longer enter Tier 2 cases into the system.

There is a clear need – to ensure effective use of Primero – for in-depth face to face training and ideally coaching, which integrates training in Primero within broader case management training. Data from the comparator locations indicates that Primero is not being adequately utilised where basic, online training has been the only form of training provided (noting that this was necessary due to COVID-19 related restrictions). For example: “The Primero system has a lot of problems. The teaching is not good – we only had one day training online and no practice. We know almost nothing. I asked my colleagues in another five districts / towns and they told me they could not use Primero.”¹⁰⁶

It is recommended that UNICEF support and institutionalise in-depth training and coaching of social welfare staff on Primero in a way that integrates Primero training into broader case management training and coaching (see below), to ensure that Primero is able to be utilised effectively as a case management tool.

¹⁰⁶ KII with Chief of the Office of Social Welfare, Krong Samrong, Oddar Meanchey, 15 November 2022.

Output area 2: Child protection services and workforce

Progress / outputs

UNICEF is reporting that implementation of this output area is on track. Key progress from 2019 to 2022 included the finalisation of the Strategic Plan for training the social service workforce 2021-2025 and the development of the national training curriculum and training modules. Progress was reported in strengthening the capacity of the social service workforce at provincial and district level on the use of the Primero digital case management system.

As part of the COVID-19 response, the provision of child protection services was expanded to respond to the needs of children infected and affected by COVID-19. Key interventions included the provision of family emergency support, hotline/helpline services and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS). As reported in UNICEF's 2021 Annual Report, this meant that a total of 53,423 children received services from 2019 – 2021. Further evidence of progress during this period included advocacy to ensure that national and sub-national COVID-19 preparedness and response planning included the protection of children in alternative care; adapting case management guidelines and practices to address COVID-19; and deploying additional social workers in 25 provinces.

Table 12: Summary of outputs against indicators in CP Programme's results framework: Output 2

Output indicator	Evidence from desk review
Number of Children suspected or accused of a crime and child victims of crime who benefited from legal aid and (quality) legal representation during the year, through UNICEF-supported programme (quantitative).	The number of children suspected or accused of a crime and child victims of crime who benefited from legal aid and (quality) legal representation during the year, through UNICEF-supported programmes increased from a baseline of 0 in 2018 to 309 in December 2022. ¹⁰⁷
Number of children and adults that have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse (quantitative).	The number of children and adults that have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse has increased from 11,851 in 2020 to 27,766 as at December 2022. ¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 111.

¹⁰⁸ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 111.

<p>Number of women, girls and boys accessing GBV risk mitigation, prevention or response interventions (quantitative).</p>	<p>The number of women, girls and boys accessing GBV risk mitigation, prevention or response interventions has increased from a baseline of 310 in 2020 to 26,734 by December 2022.¹⁰⁹</p>
<p>Number of unaccompanied and separated children accessing family-based care or a suitable alternative (quantitative).</p>	<p>The number of unaccompanied and separated children accessing family-based or other suitable alternative care was 2,638 at December 2022.¹¹⁰</p>
<p>Number of children [and caregivers] accessing mental health and psychosocial support (quantitative).</p>	<p>The number of children and caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) increased from a baseline of 361,818 in 2020 to 1,259,618 in December 2022.¹¹¹ By December 2022, a total of 16,300 children (including 8,002 girls) and 13,478 youth and adults (including 6,657 females) received professional counselling and psychiatric treatment.¹¹²</p> <p>This is one of the main UNICEF Child Protection Programme interventions adapted and scaled up in response to COVID-19.</p>

Outcomes

The evaluation found that that outcomes in relation to the strengthening of the social welfare workforce and child protection service delivery under output area 2 was mainly positive, though critical challenges remain which have reduced the effectiveness of interventions.

Some stakeholders who participated in the research reported that case management practices had improved as had coordinated service delivery at the sub-national level as a result of UNICEF's interventions. However, many stakeholders reported that, while practices had improved, critical bottlenecks in the system at the sub-national level including the limited number of social welfare staff members, lack of qualifications and skills, staff turnover, lack of operational budgets and the enduring reliance on NGOs for basic case management services had limited the outcomes achieved in strengthening child protection systems and services at the local levels.

¹⁰⁹ Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 111.

¹¹⁰ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 112.

¹¹¹ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 111.

¹¹² UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 109.

There was only moderate support expressed in the stakeholder survey in relation to the Programme's contribution toward increasing access to systems and services for children at risk. While 14 out of 24 respondents stated that the CP Programme had mostly / largely contributed to increased access to appropriate systems, services and support for children exposed to violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation, nine respondents agreed that the Programme had only 'moderately' contributed to this objective (one further respondent selected that the Programme had 'completely' contributed to this objective). Results in relation to the question of whether the CP Programme had contributed to improved case management in child protection were more mixed: five respondents stated that the Programme had 'moderately' contributed, 11 stated that it had 'mostly / largely' contributed and four stated that it had 'completely' contributed to this objective (three further respondents selected 'not applicable'). There was reasonably strong support for the assertion that the CP Programme has contributed to supporting the safe reintegration of children into family care among stakeholders who completed the survey: 17 responded the Programme had mostly contributed to the safe reintegration of children, while six responded that contribution in this area had been 'moderate.'

However, in the qualitative data, the contribution that UNICEF's CP Programme has made to the strengthening of a CP system at the sub-national level was particularly evident when examining the systems and processes in place in districts / provinces in which UNICEF has worked intensively compared to those in which UNICEF has not worked intensively. **Case management and service delivery appears to be functioning to a reasonable standard in the 'intervention' research locations, with increased government ownership and improved service delivery, though with some challenges as set out below.** In the 'comparator' research locations, it was reported that many child protection cases are simply not reported and referred at all and when they are, there appears to be a tendency to place children into RCIs without considering other community-based options (and / or perhaps due to the lack of community-based options available in these provinces). For example, according to stakeholders from Oddar Meanchey and Pursat (the 'comparator' locations which have so far received only very minimal intervention from UNICEF):

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“The [social services] team sometimes ignore the cases that are happening...I think there has been many cases that have been hidden by people in the community or lower levels, due to limited resources and lack of commitment or other reasons.”¹¹³

“For big cases, such as those involving drug abuse or addicted children, abandoned children, orphan children, street children – we cannot solve them effectively due to the lack of the members' capacities and resources. For those cases, we really need the support from outsiders to address the cases. There are some RCIs and NGOs working in the province, but their support is very limited.”¹¹⁴

¹¹³ KII with representative of WCCC, Oddar Meanchey province, 15 November 2022.

¹¹⁴ KII with Chair of WCCC, Pursat province, 4 November 2022.

In the ‘intervention’ research locations, **UNICEF interventions in building the capacity of the social services workforce appear to have led to some positive changes in case management practices and service delivery.** The case studies that were carried out in Battambang, Rattanakiri and Siem Reap demonstrated that some positive outcomes had been achieved through improved case management processes. UNICEF support appears to have contributed to improved assessments, the ability to carry out case management and follow ups in relation to child protection cases, family tracing and reintegration and improved coordination in the delivery of services and support. For example, according to a District Social Services Officer involved in the case studies, case management processes had improved following UNICEF support:

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“For all cases, there is a significant change, a positive change [following UNICEF support]...Sometimes, they invite us to attend a meeting and solve problems together with them. We can conduct home visits. We can do assessment about the family before integration. If the family cannot afford to strengthen themselves, there would be some contribution from different NGOs based on their available resources to help the family. We also follow up with the family if they are stable or not.”¹¹⁵

In contrast to the comparator provinces, in which child protection cases – when they are actioned (and it seems many are not) – appear to be referred to RCIs as a matter of course, **in intervention locations, children are able to be provided with a range of services, typically through cooperative working with NGOs.** For example, one case in Battambang involved a 12 year old boy who had been placed at a Pagoda and then an RCI since he was a baby, following the death of his mother. The case had been referred from DoSVY to an NGO in 2016 as part of a reintegration programme. The NGO assessed and managed the case through the OsCAR system (NGO case management system). Initially, the child was placed in a supported foster care placement while his family was traced. After attempts were made to identify family members who had capacity and were willing to care for the child, the child was placed in a more long-term supported foster placement. According to interviews with the boy and his foster carer, the placement was supporting him very well – he was in school, had basic needs met, had access to medical care, and he reported to be happy with carer. However, there appears to have been limited involvement of government social services workers and very limited access to non-material support and services (e.g. counselling services).

The method of case collaboration appears to have contributed to these improved practices in intervention provinces. The case collaboration process involves a social worker from an NGO partner coaching the social welfare staff at the Provincial and District levels by jointly carrying out case management in response to reported child protection cases, as illustrated by several key stakeholders involved in the qualitative research:

¹¹⁵ KII with District Social Services Officer, Siem Reap, date.

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“Responsibility for case management is with the focal point for social affairs. They put it into the Primero system...We help each other, for example, to find a safe centre for the case, like a temporary shelter, and we need to know about the case profile...Mostly, we identify services together. They [the district social services workforce] have the skills already. So it’s about the intervention – they need us to support them, to [build] capacity to negotiate a safe place for them etc.”¹¹⁶

“OSVY [District social services workforce] or the CCWC in the commune identifies the case and they do an assessment using the MoSVY forms. If they are identified and if the case involves violence or sexual abuse, the CCWC refers the case to the district office of social affairs for prevention or support. We know each other and already work together with them, so they will contact our social workers to work with them to respond to the issues of the children. Sometimes, it’s not going through CCWC but sometimes it gets picked up by our outreach workers. They see a case of violence and they contact OSVY to work together to assess and prevent the violence.”¹¹⁷

According to key stakeholders, **case collaboration has helped to support better case management practices by building skills and increasing commitment among government service providers.**

It has also supported improved access to services through building / maintaining strong connections to NGO service providers. For example:

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“We have found that some of the actors in government, they have started to be active, and victims get support, they trust the service. Because they can do a holistic service. We can come up with different sources of support – there is more resource mobilisation in their Ministry. So we have reached more victims, the government is more active, there is more identification and more trust from victims and their families.”¹¹⁸

“They have improved. With the case collaboration, the government structure always changes...they don’t know what case management means. Because our NGO works with them, even though they do not yet get the training from the government, by training and coaching from us, we can see their skills...They have improved on how to identify child risk and help more children. Before, you can say that they would make the referral and always dealt with the case as fast as possible – they would make the referral to the NGO and ask for support for bicycles and other things but some families have their strengths and have their abilities but the requests that were coming were based on what the family wants, not what they need. But now, they [district social welfare staff] can assess the risks and needs. It’s not only based on what the family wants.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ KII with representative of Friends-International, Phnom Penh (online), 14 November 2022.

¹¹⁹ KII with Technical Director, Children’s Future International (Battambang) (online), 10 November 2022.

Example of improvements in case management through case collaboration

“For example, if it’s a sexual abuse case, we told them that the top priority is to get the children safe. Then we start to think about and know if the case needs to go to the hospital. It’s important that we can protect the child within 48 hours in these cases. They need a medical check-up. All the activities we support – they are all going together. The government has a role to facilitate and invite all stakeholders to attend a discussion of the case (a case conference) and our team will show them something they need to check and need to agree the next priority. We teach them about the process. They fill in forms and local government and DoSVY sign the case as open and then we follow through on the support. We consider a medical check, do they need counselling etc.? It is an ongoing process of supported case management until we agree that the case is done and we then close it.

But from the beginning it is difficult when they identify a case. They ask me to go alone and say “I’m busy, I have no gas / transport”, etc. but my team has a strong commitment and they say, “if you don’t have gas, we can pick you up on the motorbike” etc. UNICEF also support some costs for them to do the case management – gas etc. to enable them to go see the cases. Some cases are not close to their house. The government still does not have budget to support this kind of thing yet.”¹²⁰

However, **the way the case collaboration process works appears to vary by province / district** – in some, it appears to be working quite effectively at building the capacity of the government social services workforce, for example, in Battambang: “The social services staff commit to work with us and always come to the field to see the case, and we come back and discuss with them how to support and what the workplan will be etc. So for us, we don’t have any serious challenges.”¹²¹

However, in some other locations, the case collaboration is not functioning effectively and case collaboration involves the government social services workforce simply referring the management of the case to an NGO partner, reportedly due to the limited capacity of the social welfare workforce at the district level. For example, according to an NGO partner in Phnom Penh: “At the moment, DoSVY is the one who will be responsible for the case management; but actually, we are the ones to hold the case management. Our team has Oscar [case management system] and the government has Primero. We have been doing Tier 1 cases and putting the cases into the Oscar system...and we input this into the Primero system through Oscar [interoperability]...we do the case management in practice.”¹²² It was also reported that, in Phnom Penh, DoSVY has only input a couple of cases into Primero so far – the rest have gone into the Oscar system.

Another barrier in some locations is the perception that NGOs will continue to do the bulk of the work in child protection cases, including in terms of case management, which has hindered the extent to which cases are ‘owned’ by government. This is illustrated by a stakeholder from an NGO implementing partner:

¹²⁰ KII with Director, Kalyian Mith, Siem Reap, 26 October 2022.

¹²¹ KII with Executive Director, Kumar Rekrey NGO (Battambang) (online), 11 November 2022.

¹²² KII with representative of SKO (Phnom Penh) (online), 3 November 2022

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“They think ‘well, [the NGO] can do this by themselves’ and therefore there is no need to post the case into Primero...I think one challenge is the capacity of DoSVY – they are limited on how to use computers and systems. Sometimes they depend on the NGO partner as they don’t have enough time to post the case into the system. They have many tasks to complete and not just in child protection...this and next year is elections for the commune. They have a busy schedule – they cannot go and interview cases with us and do the case work. This is the challenge we have.”¹²³

In addition, several stakeholders reported that some NGOs are keen to retain ‘ownership’ of cases and enter them into their own case management systems in order to demonstrate case numbers to meet donor targets, which is a problem when their case management system is not compatible with Primero.

In addition to case collaboration, UNICEF’s support in training and coaching the social services workforce has contributed to positive outcomes. Training and coaching are delivered by an NGO, Social Services Cambodia, with support from UNICEF. Training is provided to officials in Phnom Penh, followed by observations and coaching sessions on site. However, there were some challenges: “Social workers do not provide direct services – they just cooperate with partner organisations. They don’t apply what they have learnt in the training and don’t learn new things from the training.”¹²⁴ Nonetheless, the enhanced knowledge and skills gained through the training and coaching were reported by stakeholders in the intervention locations as being important inputs that had improved their work in child protection case management and service delivery.

The institutionalisation of knowledge has been a key challenge, particularly in light of staff turnover, which limits the ability for institutional retention of knowledge. Training initiatives appear to have been short term, with staff in the district social welfare offices tending to move between departments frequently. The staff who have been provided with training are moved out of social welfare / child protection, and incoming staff tend not to have been trained, with many from other backgrounds and lacking in basic social work skills. However, it appears that this is now being addressed by UNICEF. The business case and Strategic Plan for training the social services workforce has led to the development of a standardised national curriculum for the social welfare workforce. Training modules that correspond with different ‘levels’ of the workforce (para-social worker (level 1); para-professional (levels 2 or 3); professional Social Worker (level 4)) will help to systematise and institutionalise the delivery of training. **This is a positive development and UNICEF should work to ensure that the curriculum is adopted and rolled out.**

One other challenge is that, as mentioned above, general case management training and coaching is disconnected from Primero training: the NGO partners providing training and coaching to district social services workforce do not train on Primero and the organisation does not appear to be very knowledgeable on Primero.

¹²³ KII with representative of SKO (Phnom Penh) (online), 3 November 2022.

¹²⁴ KII with Social Worker, Social Services Cambodia NGO (online), 4 November 2022.

This indicates that case management and Primero are not linked up in training / coaching. This may serve to reinforce the idea that Primero is not a case management tool, but a data collection system that is disconnected from case management processes. There is a need to ensure that Primero and case management training are linked together. Case management and Primero training and coaching should be delivered intensively and primarily in a face to face modality. Stakeholders in ‘comparator’ research locations noted that online training on Primero (which was necessary during COVID restrictions) were inadequate. However, consideration should be given to utilising the improved capacity for online training modalities gained during COVID restrictions, for example, through providing online refresher or follow up training, resources and materials for the social welfare workforce.

It is recommended that intensive case management training and coaching be delivered to the social services workforce, and this training / coaching should integrate or link up with training on the Primero case management system. This is important to ensure that Primero is utilised effectively as a case management tool, rather than purely an information management system. Measures to ensure that the training is institutionalised should be continued. Consideration should be given to the development of an online resource that includes follow up / refresher training and resources.

Other inputs that have contributed to improvements in case management include the provision of funding by UNICEF to be used as operational budgets for the social services workforce and also the provision of technical assistance in relation to individual (typically more complex) cases. The workforce lacks a government budget to operationalise child protection service delivery (e.g. to support travel for field visits, small disbursements etc.) (see below for a fuller discussion), and the provision of budgets to facilitate case management practices has helped to support improved processes in the ‘intervention’ locations. For example:

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“Everything has improved, especially the capacity of officials and social workers. Awareness has also improved. The training on case management, working procedures and we also have tablets for data collection. In what ways has awareness improved? Awareness of case management and how to deal with the case and the whole working procedures, as we have received training and support from UNICEF. Training has improved capacity and awareness. When there is a case in the community, we have funds from UNICEF so we can visit the case on time and deal with it on time we also provide training and raise awareness at the district level and in local authorities on case management, communication and writing reports, so that they can help.”¹²⁵

¹²⁵ KII with Director, DoSVY, Battambang Province, Battambang, 25 October 2022.

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“UNICEF not only gives money, but they give technical support and other than that, they also facilitate the government side. It makes the system strong...We don't really have any power and enough value to advocate and invite DoSVY and provincial to do something. With support from UNICEF to facilitate if something is struggling – e.g., a case that has many problems, UNICEF always attends the case conference meeting and facilitates if we need to support to MoSVY and report to top of Government. It makes the project strong and successful for me.”¹²⁶

Efforts by UNICEF to improve coordination among government and NGO service providers has also led to positive outcomes in child protection service delivery. UNICEF's support for the 3PC network and other initiatives aimed at coordinating the system at the local level (e.g., through provincial Child Protection Technical Working Groups and development of Provincial Child Protection Plans) was also valued by stakeholders involved in the research. The 3PC network has been effective in ensuring NGO service providers are coordinated, including through the central management and distribution of funding, standardised monitoring and evaluation frameworks and knowledge generation. For example, according to NGO and Government stakeholders:

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“They [UNICEF] are very good in coordinating and collaborating in having a cohesive approach. NGOs do all different things – I have no idea how they are a network. With UNICEF, they pull us together towards government strengthening, aligned with government priorities and bringing everyone else with them...UNICEF makes sure we're all at the same level of understanding and allows everyone to be part of that. And we all take a turn. We're all very much aligned with where we're going, and it's thanks to UNICEF for that one.”¹²⁷

“We have monthly, trimester and yearly meetings and all organisations that operate the activities in the province. We have an MOU with DoSVY and they are all members of the Provincial Child Protection Committee. When we developed the action plan, we sat down and mapped out which organisation does what.”¹²⁸

Remaining challenges

However, challenges in strengthening the child protection system at the sub-national levels remain and will need to be addressed to ensure that the system is able to operate effectively. First, **the very limited capacity at the sub-national levels continues to hamper progress in strengthening child protection service delivery.** While some progress has been made in designating staff at the provincial and district levels in the social welfare workforce, there are still very limited numbers of personnel.

¹²⁶ KII with Director, Kalyian Mith, Siem Reap, 26 October 2022.

¹²⁷ KII with 3PC Technical Coordinator, Friends-International, Phnom Penh (online), 4 November 2022.

¹²⁸ KII with two representatives of DoSVY, Siem Reap Province, Siem Reap, 25 October 2022.

In the research locations, there were only two Social Workers at the Provincial level and a further two designated staff members (who have been provided with varying amounts of training but are not qualified social workers) at the district level. Many social workers appear to be employed by NGOs and this has limited the ability for UNICEF to ensure government ownership of the child protection system and child protection cases. It has also limited the ability for the government to provide quality child protection services, as illustrated by Government and NGO stakeholders who participated in the research:

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“The challenge is that capacity is limited and also, there is a limited number of staff to implement the programme. MoSVY has a lot of responsibilities and different roles, but there are not enough people to handle it all...When we delegate responsibilities to the sub-national level, they don't have capacity, they can't do it and they need training and capacity building.”¹²⁹

“The [child protection] focal points have lots of different tasks – children, the elderly etc. – and lots of child protection cases when you look at the seven categories of cases that we cover. They [the district social welfare workforce] cannot cover their cases. The focal point will normally pass on the case to the CCWC who will then work with the 3PC partner on the ground. They don't have the capacity to be trained all the way through within the model. Sometimes the district focal points put the children at risk.”¹³⁰

“The problem is about the social worker. They seem to be overworked – they have other work to do. Most of them are not interested in social work. They say it is the responsibility of the organisation [NGO], not their official responsibility. We have to find partner organisations to refer children to services e.g., if child is abandoned and need a centre for the children, it is hard to find one for the children. Like an institution? Safe place, shelter, a child needs to stay there 1 or 2 nights and then find partner organisation which is hard to find. The government does not have a safe place shelter for the child...right now, around 90% of cases, CCT [Cambodian Children's Trust] runs by itself. The cooperation from authorities is limited.”¹³¹

The lack of operational budgets at the sub-national level is a critical challenge. Financial support for case management is still very donor driven, with a high reliance on NGOs. This has made operationalising case management processes and supporting government ownership of cases very difficult. This is illustrated by research participants from UNICEF and Government:

¹²⁹ KII with two representatives of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, Phnom Penh (zoom), 28 October 2022.

¹³⁰ KII with 3PC Technical Coordinator, Friends-International (Phnom Penh) (online), 4 November 2022.

¹³¹ KII with Social Work Manager, Cambodian Children's Trust, Battambang, 15 November 2022.

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“The Government said they [districts, communes] need to allocate X% of their budgets for social services, but they don’t know how. They have had no training about that. If we go to the district social welfare offices, they ask about their budget and how to use it for case support – travel, phoning families etc. They have no budget for this. So what they say is they only have a salary, and no operational budget.”¹³²

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“Participants like the village chief and such cannot afford the cost of transportation for travelling to their village to the meeting venue in provincial downtown area. The meeting venue is far from their home, not to mention that the road condition is terrible...We do not work in our own geographic area. We need to travel all around to other areas. So, the expense for us is travel. We are located in hilly areas, so the cost of transportation is more expensive than in flat areas. We need to spend more for the gasoline. If we are going to work in a village or community, we need to spend all day there.”¹³³

It is recommended that UNICEF’s next CP Programme focus on building capacity for operationalisation of the child protection system, particularly at the provincial, district and commune / village levels. This could involve supporting the operationalisation the SOPs, when they are adopted. A stakeholder mapping could then be carried out to identify which government Ministry / institution could support each part of the system. Consideration should be given to supporting MoSVY and MOI to attract and retain quality social workers / social services staff, including through subsidising or part-subsidising the wages of social workers from NGOs to be placed within the DoSVY and the District Offices for Social Welfare to work more closely alongside existing government staff and build their skills.

While UNICEF provides support for operationalising child protection case management in some provinces, this is not sustainable (see section on sustainability, below). There is a need for UNICEF to prioritise supporting MoSVY, MOI and the sub-national administrations with costing child protection service delivery and in developing and institutionalising operational budgets for child protection.

Another gap in child protection service delivery is that there appears to be only a limited understanding of the emotional consequences of child abuse. For example, according to one of the CP Programme donors:

¹³² KII with Child Protection Officer, UNICEF Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 24 October 2022.

¹³³ KII with Representative of Inspection Police, O’Chum District Inspection Office, Ratanakiri Province, 31 November 2022.

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“They will take them [the child] to the doctor, get medication then bring them back to school. Then, everything is good. There is none of that understanding and sensitivity around emotional impacts. We need more focus on that and understanding emotional consequences...we need better capacity on emotional abuse.”¹³⁴

There are also reported to be limited service providers in mental health – e.g. in Battambang, according to a representative of DoSVY: “...there are not many service providers who can give psychological consultations. Even NGO employees and service providers, their capacity is still limited for psychological consultations...it is hard to find qualified workers to give consultations to them.”¹³⁵

There is a need for UNICEF to support improved programming in integration and delivery of mental health services within child protection service delivery.

In summary, there is a critical need to understand and respond to gaps at the sub-national (particularly district level) that are continuing to hamper quality child protection service delivery. This includes the need to focus on public financing and budgeting and improved human and financial resourcing at these levels. Capacity building, particularly in terms of skills in case management, should also be prioritised in the next programme cycle, along with capacity building at the village and commune levels in order to improve referrals of child protection cases.



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¹³⁴ KII with representative of UNICEF Australia National Commission (online), 25 November 2022.

¹³⁵ KII with Director, DoSVY, Battambang Province, Battambang, 25 October 2022.

Output area 3: Child protection knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours

Progress / outputs

According to the desk review, UNICEF is reporting that this output is on track. Key progress from 2019 to 2021 was that the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of parents, teachers, religious leaders, communities, and adolescents were enhanced to protect children from violence, both online and offline, through on the ongoing scaling up of the national communication for development campaign, *'Cambodia PROTECT: A Communication Strategy to End Violence against Children and Unnecessary Family Separation in Cambodia'*, which was led by MoSVY in collaboration with other Government Ministries and Departments and NGOs. The Strategy seeks to address the social and cultural norms that legitimize violence against children and normalize the belief that residential care facilities are beneficial to a child. Other core prevention programmes supported by the RGC include a positive parenting programme, positive discipline in schools programme and a prevention programme focusing on Pagodas.

A vital component of the campaign is the promotion of positive social and gender norms, and the promotion of positive discipline in homes and schools. According to UNICEF's global annual results report (2021), this involved: *"an expansion of training in school-based positive discipline, with a specific focus on GBV to over 12,000 teachers and school directors in some 1,400 schools, benefiting 429,300 boys and girls. UNICEF Cambodia also supported a multimedia campaign, 'Do it today, Don't Wait for Tomorrow' to promote children's safe return to school, reaching 8 million people nationwide."*¹³⁶ It was also reported that around 4,300 girls and boys who experienced violence received services from social/welfare, health and law enforcement workers and around 185,000 girls and boys benefited from the training of parents/caregivers, teachers and monks on parenting skills and positive discipline.¹³⁷

The campaign was expanded to include other key protection concerns such as child marriage, child online protection, mental health and psychosocial support, and gender-based violence risk mitigation. In 2021, UNICEF reported that at least eight million people were reached with messages on prevention of violence against children, including over one million through adolescent-led communication activities. In 2020, Cambodia PROTECT was expanded to promote the Pagoda Child Safeguarding Policy. UNICEF reported that in 2020, at least 10 million people were reached with key messages on prevention of violence against children and prevention of COVID-19, including three millions with video messages by monks, three millions with the Cambodia PROTECT campaign and four millions through existing programmes and partners.

¹³⁶ UNICEF New York, GOAL AREA 3, Every child is protected from, violence and exploitation, Global Annual Results Report 2021, p. 36.

¹³⁷ UNICEF New York, GOAL AREA 3, Every child is protected from, violence and exploitation, Global AnnualResults Report

Table 13: Summary of outputs against indicators in CP Programme’s results framework: Output 3

Output indicator	Evidence from desk review
<p>Percentage of parents/primary caregivers reached by the national behaviour change campaign (<i>quantitative</i>).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The percentage of parents/primary caregivers reached by the national behaviour change campaign (Cambodia PROTECT) increased from a baseline of 0 per cent in 2018 to 94 per cent at the end of December 2022.¹³⁸
<p>Number of parents and caregivers reached through parenting programmes (<i>quantitative</i>).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of parents and caregivers reached through parenting programmes has increased from a baseline of 10,000 in 2018 to 59,208 in December 2022.¹³⁹ Further, as at June 2022, the positive parenting toolkit (level 3) was distributed to relevant stakeholders at national and sub-nation levels. Additionally, 6,254 parents and caregivers (3,867 mothers and female caregivers) in eight provinces were reached by positive parenting programme (levels 1 and 2), benefiting 9,049 children.¹⁴⁰
<p>Number of children and adolescents reached with information and skills to stay safe online (<i>quantitative</i>).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By December 2022, 1,101,616 children and adolescents were reached with information and skills to stay safe online.¹⁴¹
<p>Number of children studying in classrooms with teachers trained in gender responsive positive discipline (<i>quantitative</i>).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of children studying in classrooms with teachers trained in gender responsive positive discipline has decreased from a baseline of 315,000 in 2020 to 352,608 as of December 2022.¹⁴² It can be assumed that the decrease rather than a decrease was due to the closure of schools for much of 2020 to 2021 as a result of COVID-19.

¹³⁸ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 115.

¹³⁹ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 115.

¹⁴⁰ UNICEF Cambodia: 2022 UNICEF Mid-year Assessment Presentation Section: Child Protection, Cambodia Country Programme 2019-2023, slide 6.

¹⁴¹ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 115.

¹⁴² UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 114.

Outcomes

In terms of output area three, some positive outcomes were reported in terms of addressing harmful community beliefs and practices. However, this evidence was largely anecdotal and there are limited data to establish the outcomes or impacts in terms of attitudinal and behaviour change, aside from data presented below in section 9.5 on changes in attitudes on physical punishment as a result of the Positive Parenting Programme. Social behaviour change is inherently long-term, with impact-level results not necessarily able to be achieved within a five-year programming cycle. It is therefore important to develop intermediate outcome indicators to measure social behaviour change and the next CP Programme could consider development of intermediate outcome indicators. **It was also suggested that the CP Programme (along with the Country Programme as a whole) could benefit from integrating a stronger technical approach to social behaviour change.**

It is recommended that a technical inputs from UNICEF's social behaviour change focal point should inform the next CP Programme.

In general, data from the focus group discussions (FGDs) indicated that **participants in locations in which UNICEF had been actively engaged were more aware of child protection risks and where to access support than those in comparator provinces**, though this typically included the Police Post, CCWC and village / commune chief and a number of NGOs. Knowledge of Social Workers / Social Services Officers was very limited and participants did not typically know about District or Provincial Social Services Officers. For example:

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“NGOs that use the word “Child Protection” with us include Care or UNICEF. CCWC also mentioned it. It means to make children better off, both physical and emotional support. It also means no violence against children. Children know about their rights and can report to the village or commune when anything happen to them.”¹⁴³

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“UNICEF talk about care for children, enrolling children to school, no violence against children and so on. We have village chief, deputy village chief, CCWC, Provincial Department of Women's Affairs... that work on protecting children.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ FGD with 3 males and 3 females, 18 – 24 years old, Rattanakiri, 3 November 2022.

¹⁴⁴ FGD with 2 male and 6 female parents / caregivers, Kechong Commune, Rattanakiri, 3 November 2022.

In comparator provinces, there was a very limited understanding of child protection and participants typically defined child protection as being **limited to protection from mosquito bites, sickness, accidents etc. without any mention of violence**. They also identified very limited options for accessing support for child protection issues, typically reporting that the village chief was the only option for seeking support. For example: “We heard about that [child protection] but we don’t know what it means exactly...to me it means we protect children from dangers, accidents, falling down from a high bed or hammock...”¹⁴⁵ While these data are quite limited, it does indicate that participants from ‘intervention provinces’ had improved understanding of child protection risks and how to access support (and likely better options for accessing support) than those in provinces in which UNICEF has not been actively engaged.

Stakeholders who participated in the survey were largely supportive of the statements that the CP Programme had contributed to positive changes in parenting, school discipline and beliefs and attitudes relating to VAC (see Figure 8). Written responses tended to focus on the impacts of the Positive Parenting Programme as making a positive contribution, while it was also noted that the evidence to demonstrate behaviour change was limited.

Figure 8: Survey responses to the questions ‘To what extent has UNICEF’s Child Protection Programme 2019 – 2023 contributed to positive changes to parenting, school discipline and beliefs, behaviours and attitudes to violence, abuse and neglect of children?’ (n = 24)



Key informants who participated in the qualitative research clearly valued the Positive Parenting Programme and reported that it had improved attitudes towards parenting and parenting practices. Participants also generally expressed support for the school positive discipline programme. For example, according to stakeholders, the positive parenting programme had helped parents reflect on the way that violent forms of discipline can harm children and had also helped to improve other aspects of parenting. For example:

¹⁴⁵ FGD with 1 male and 7 female parents / caregivers, Samrong Sangkat, Oddar Meanchey, 18 November 2022.

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“I attended the positive parenting courses. I can see that there are many women who change the way of treating their children. Before, they were only breastfeeding, there was no additional food or nutrition for their children. Some of them used to use violence and they have stopped. Some that used to hit their children, sometimes the parents cry during the session – they feel sad and guilty and use bad words to their children/ during the session, we group them during the break out session. E.g., we group pregnant women; one for women with small children; etc. and allow them to ask each other what problems they have, e.g., ‘do you hit your children?’ and some of them cry during that activity. The children have rights from the day they are born. The other interesting thing is that I can note when the children come to the meeting, and during that we have some food, snack, refreshments, they clean or wash hands before eating. Before, they did not do this. Children are dressed properly now, not nude. They wash their hand before eating food. This is the result from the training on positive parenting as well.”¹⁴⁶

“

“Now [following participation in the Positive Parenting Programme], parents are kind of listening and sharing story back with us. So, it is reducing violence. We created more space for them to talk. Previously, they always hit their children even for a small issue. And now, they want more of such kind of training.”¹⁴⁷

“

“We got feedback from families saying, ‘I used to hit my children to educate them and make my voice very strong with them. I didn’t hit them very hard, and I used to think that it’s not violent but after the training, I think it’s not right to educate my children like this’, so they understand the ways to educate their children by positive parenting. It’s very important – it’s not only one time or one training to change the minds of the community – you need to take time and work with them over time to change their mind.”¹⁴⁸

Participants in the FGDs in Battambang, Rattanakiri and Siem Reap also reported that the Positive Parenting sessions had helped them (and they had seen it help other parents / carers in their community), in particular in **learning to communicate better with their children and avoid verbally abusive language.**

The positive parenting programme appears to be quite embedded at the local level and is a good example how national and sub-national work is connected to achieve positive outcomes. Positive parenting is included in a national strategy under MOWA. Master trainers are trained and training is cascaded down to the sub-national levels (local representatives of the CCWC and village leaders) by the master trainers. The next step will reportedly be to support incorporation of positive parenting training into commune budget plans, but, reportedly, it is not easy to find a human resources base in local authorities.

Feedback from some participants was that the positive parenting materials still require contextualisation – the materials are thought to be quite academic and text-heavy and require further contextualisation to ensure that they are useable in communities.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ KII with Chair and Deputy Chair, CCWC (Dauneko Commune), Siem Reap, 27 October 2022.

¹⁴⁷ KII with Provincial Office for Women’s Affairs, Kandal Province, 21 November 2022.

¹⁴⁸ KII with Executive Director and Technical Director, Children’s Future International, Battambang, 26 October 2022.

¹⁴⁹ KII with 3PC Technical Coordinator, Friends-International, Phnom Penh (online), 4 November 2022.

Also, according to one Government stakeholder, one challenge is that the different UNICEF programming teams are not adequately joined-up, which minimises the positive outcomes that are able to be derived from the positive parenting and positive discipline programmes: *“We provide training to the schools, but the parents, community members, they do not understand, so it is very, very challenging. The children go to school and the school doesn’t use violence or violent discipline, but when they go back home, the parents use corporal punishment, so it is very challenging.”*¹⁵⁰

It is recommended that UNICEF consider how to join up programming between different teams, in particular to ensure the same programming districts are selected for both positive parenting and positive discipline programmes.

The provision of technical support by UNICEF’s CP Programme in the development and implementation of the Pagoda Policy was also highly valued by relevant stakeholders, including the Ministry of Cults and Religions. Given the central role of Pagodas and religious leaders in Cambodian society, engaging with religious leaders to help shape social norms and behaviours is a positive initiative: *“The [Pagoda] Programme is very important, holistic and popular as it can prevent and protect children from violence and other types of abuse in the Buddhist temples and in the communities. The knowledge gained by monks, achars and the followers as well as parents and caregivers in the communities around the Pagoda may be changed. Gradually, their bad behaviour and negative habits of disciplining their children and their subordinate monks using violence and beating will be changed to positive discipline, like reading Buddhist lessons, bringing water from the pond, cleaning around the Pagoda and so on. Therefore, violence will reduce gradually...As the Cambodian people believe deeply in the Buddhist religion, when the Monks tell them, they believe and they follow up on the Monk’s advice. So the message about violence against children, then rights of the child spread out by the Monks or Achar and that is more effective than when other people do it.”*¹⁵¹

Example of positive outcome from Pagoda programme

“Last year, in one pagoda in Sihanoukville, it was reported that the leader of monks educated three child monks and five young adult monks by beating them at least five times per week because they swam in the pond. When I met him, I asked him ‘why do you beat them?’ He told me it was because they don’t respect the rule of the Pagoda. He added that beating is allowed by Buddha’s rule. I asked him to show where Buddha’s rule says that. He said he just heard from other monks. I told him that Buddha’s rule is never said that. I showed him about the Buddha’s rule as well as explained to him about the bad habits of disciplining the monks, especially the child monks. I trained him and showed him some points of national law and international law including on the rights of child. After that, he listened and saw all points I showed him, he confessed that he did big mistakes in the past and he apologized to me about what he had done towards the monks and appreciated me for giving him clear knowledge about the right discipline for child monks and adults monks.”¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ KII with representative of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (online), 1 December 2022.

¹⁵¹ KII with representative of Ministry of Cults and Religions, Phnom Penh, 31 October 2022.

¹⁵² KII with representative of Ministry of Cults and Religions, Phnom Penh, 31 October 2022.

In addition to the positive parenting, school discipline and social behaviour change programmes, the CP Programme has incorporated a number of other issues under output area 3.

Adolescent and youth engagement

The CP Programme supported adolescent and youth participation through the Adolescent Youth Reference Group (AYRG). The AYRG increased to 471 members, covering seven provinces during the current CP Programme. In addition, 117 adolescent and youths received capacity building and participated in awareness raising and community-based engagement.¹⁵³ However, as noted above, it is recommended that more effort is made to involve youth in vulnerable situations in the AYRG.

Child marriage programme

UNICEF supported the Department of Women's Affairs in Ratanakiri province and the CCWC to create a Plan of Action to Prevent Child Marriage (2017). Under the current CP Programme, the action plan (i.e. actions to prevent child marriage) have now been incorporated into the provincial investment plan. This is a positive example of outcomes derived from advocacy and a focus on particularly vulnerable groups of children and a good example of UNICEF's support in ensuring its programme interventions are durable and sustainable.

Online child protection

Following UNICEF's support for the study, *Disrupting Harm* (see above), the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MoPT) is aiming to develop a guideline for the telecommunications industry which applies to ICT companies in Cambodia as well as global companies that have operations in Cambodia. MoPT reached out to UNICEF to support this initiative – guidelines were drafted, with technical support from UNICEF, and the MoPT representative who participated in the qualitative research noted that they valued the network of experts that UNICEF gave them access to.

¹⁵³ UNICEF Cambodia: 2022 UNICEF Mid-year Assessment Presentation Section: Child Protection, Cambodia Country Programme 2019-2023, slide 6.

Extent to which the CP Programme has enabled monitoring, review and adaptation to external contextual factors (in particular, COVID-19)

The evaluation found that the CP Programme successfully adapted to the changed context brought about following the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting movement restrictions. In response to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF Cambodia adjusted its programme structure to include priority indicators for COVID-19. The Child Protection Programme included new indicators (Number of social service workers trained on specific knowledge and skills to deliver essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic with UNICEF support in the reporting year; and the number of children and adults that have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse). COVID-19 delayed the implementation of some programmes and demanded the adaptation of others, especially in utilising more virtual modalities. For example, delays occurred in the finalization of revised Alternative Care Policy and the development of the Child Protection Law.

To enhance the care and protection for children infected and affected by COVID-19, UNICEF provided technical support to MoSVY and the Ministry of Health to develop and implement specific guidelines for health staff for improving child protection response and referrals, with a focus on children in quarantine facilities and treatment centres. This included the capacity building of frontline workers. In total, 2,173 Provincial COVID-19 Committee and Quarantine Centers officials received trainings on how to protect people in quarantine.¹⁵⁴ Programme adaptation in response to COVID-19 enabled social workers of the DoSVY and 3PC partners to provide emergency family support packages to children affected by COVID-19.

Also, as reported by UNICEF: *“Adapting to the reality of COVID-19 containment measures, UNICEF worked with MoWA to transform lessons on positive parenting and child online protection into a video learning E-Course, consisting of seven lessons and two videos to be broadcast on social media and converted into DVDs for use by community-based facilitators.”*¹⁵⁵ As a member of the IOM-led UN Migration Network in Cambodia, UNICEF engaged in the Global Compact of Migration review process, which involved working with other UN agencies and government counterparts to address the protection of children affected by migration, with a particular focus on returning migrants from Thailand during COVID-19.

UNICEF’s support in providing emergency packages for vulnerable families affected by COVID-19 was a welcome initiative that was clearly valued by stakeholders. Stakeholders particularly noted that the flexibility within UNICEF’s financial support enabled them to respond effectively to the changed needs of families during COVID-19. In addition, **UNICEF’s technical support to government and NGO service providers in changing to remote working modalities during COVID-19 was also a crucial intervention.** This included channelling more referrals through hotlines, the provision of online training (though noting that online modalities were not found to be particularly effective for supporting case management practices and the operationalisation of Primero). For example:

¹⁵⁴ UNICEF Cambodia, ‘RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/883 CHILD PROTECTION, 2021, p. 90.

¹⁵⁵ UNICEF Cambodia, ‘RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/883 CHILD PROTECTION, 2021, p. 114.

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“When COVID came, parents lost their jobs, children didn’t want to go into lockdown, so we diverted funding into an emergency package providing labour support and food support. We changed the way we do work, like virtual trainings and meetings.”¹⁵⁶

“

“They [UNICEF] responded very quick on the COVID situation, on emergency support. When something happens like that, UNICEF provides a budget to NGOs which can identify families affected by COVID and can provide emergency support like rice support, support for health etc...Also, UNICEF had a quick response to case management during COVID – to the local authority, to NGOs. Everything changed to working remotely, providing training online.”¹⁵⁷

“

“In Siem Reap, it was very challenging for 2021, because there was the long lock down and we are 80% dependent on tourists. Everything was gone, it was difficult to survive, even for me. All businesses closed (95% of them). Luckily, we got top up funds and also the flexibility that we can go one by one and online flexibility for online training and online formats etc. They were very helpful during that time...they were not only focused on NGOs, but also focused on supporting at national and sub-national level to implement the new development guidelines, this kind of thing.”¹⁵⁸

“

“We had a flexible budget [during COVID] – we could go online, ensure key information still reached the children and youth in different provinces. We were flexible on some activities – we could change activities based on the real situation in Cambodia. They were flexible on engagement of partners to connect to regional platforms and to give youth and AYRG members capacity building.”¹⁵⁹

“

“During COVID, thanks to UNICEF being flexible, especially with regard to emergency support, the response was quick and fast and was able to provide quickly the support. All staff were working from home. We had online meetings, trainings. We provide [anti] VAC training to local authority. We had group chats with them and send a link so they can join. Also, we provide training to the family also online. We contact and chat to them on how to use it. Some families we interviewed by phone, for 15 or 20 minutes, or sometimes 2 hours I see our social workers on the phone to them, educating them. We provide food by working with the local authority during lockdown.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ KII with Child Protection Officer, Siem Reap Field Office, UNICEF Cambodia, Siem Reap, 24 October 2022.

¹⁵⁷ KII with Technical Director, Children’s Future International (Battambang) (online), 10 November 2022.

¹⁵⁸ KII with Director of Kaliyan Mith, Siem Reap, 26 October 2022.

¹⁵⁹ KII with Director, CRC Cambodia, 10 November 2022.

¹⁶⁰ KII with Technical Director, Children’s Future International (Battambang) (online), 10 November 2022.

It is recommended that the next CP Programme consider how to harness the new modalities that were developed during COVID-19, including for example, online refreshers to support more in-depth face to face training, providing further support to hotlines etc.



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Impact

Summary of findings on impact

1

The CP Programme has had a positive impact on increasing access to services for children exposed to violence and to reintegration services for children in RCIs; increasing access to diversion for children in conflict with the law; increased institutionalisation of child protection services at the sub-national level through the development of child protection plans; and the reported reduced use of physical violence among parents who underwent positive parenting training.

2

It was not possible to examine the impact of the Programme on rates of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation of children, due to limited available data.

3

There was found to be a lack of quality / qualitative impact indicators in the CP Programme's results framework, which limits the extent to which the Programme can demonstrate its contribution to the strengthening of the child protection system.

Reported impacts of the CP Programme

This section examines the impact of the CP Programme, according to indicators from the Programme's results framework (Annex 2). According to the Programme's results indicators (those that were able to be measured). It should be noted that **the overarching impact indicators relating to reduction in experiences of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children were not able to be measured, due to limited availability of data.** The CVACS (2014) and the CDHS data on physical violence (2021/22) did not contain sufficiently comparable questions to enable meaningful comparison, and the full results of the 2021/22 CDHS data are not available (therefore, it was not possible to report on impacts relating to experiences of sexual violence and child marriage against findings in the 2017 CDHS).

A number of other Programme indicators were unable to be included in this section, due to a lack of data that could be used to measure results.

Impact indicator 1: Number of girls and boys who have experienced violence reached by health, social work or justice/law enforcement services (baseline: 24,000; target: 70,000).

Based on UNICEF's programme monitoring data, it appears that access to systems and services for children exposed to violence has increased substantially. The number of girls and boys who have experienced violence and reached by health, social work or justice/law enforcement services has increased from a baseline of 24,000 in 2019 to 69,401 (48 per cent girls) by December 2022.¹⁶¹ These services are primarily delivered through district level paraprofessional social workers and NGOs, and in particular, the 3PC network.¹⁶²

Impact indicator 2: Percentage of girls and boys in residential care with a case plan, reviewed every three months, with the aim of supporting permanent family placement of the children (baseline 0%, target 100%).

Access to reintegration and care planning for children residing in RCIs also increased during the Programme period. The percentage of girls and boys in residential care with a case plan, regularly reviewed, with the aim of supporting permanent family placement of the children increased from 0 per cent in 2018 to 100 per cent in December 2022.¹⁶³ With a substantial reduction in the number of residential care institutions and the number of children in them, the current UNICEF programme made the strategic shift to focus on quality of care in the current programme. This shift was warranted given that the previous programme had demonstrated it was possible to move the system from a focus on institutional care to community-based care. For example, in 2016, there were approximately 16,500 children were living in 406 residential care institutions.¹⁶⁴ In 2021, MoSVY reported that the number of children in residential care institutions had been reduced by 59 per cent while the overall number of actual institutions had been reduced by 43 per cent.¹⁶⁵

Impact indicator 3: Proportion of districts, Kahn and Krong that have local protocols in place for the protection of children from violence, abuse and neglect.

As an indication of the Program's impact in institutionalising the child protection system at the sub-national level, UNICEF reports that the proportion of districts, Kahn and Krong that implement local protocols for the protection of children from violence, abuse and neglect increased from a baseline of 0 in 2018 to 100 per cent in December 2022.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 92.

¹⁶² UNICEF Cambodia: 2022 UNICEF Mid-year Assessment Presentation Section: Child Protection, Cambodia Country Programme 2019-2023, slide 5.

¹⁶³ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, 2018, p. 43

¹⁶⁴ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, 2018, p. 43

¹⁶⁵ Country Programme Full Approved Report: Cambodia Country Programme (2019-2023). Outcome 0660/AO/06/883 CHILD PROTECTION, Reporting Year: 2021, p. 98

¹⁶⁶ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 92.

Impact indicator 4: Percentage of girls and boys in conflict with the law who are subject to a diversion order or alternative measure as opposed to a custodial sentence (baseline 0%, target 30%).

Use of diversion has increased for children in conflict with the law and appears to be on track to reach the target 30 per cent by the end of 2023. The percentage of girls and boys in conflict with the law who are subject to a diversion order or alternative measure as opposed to a custodial sentence increased from a baseline of 0 in 2018 to 21 per cent in December 2021 (though it dropped to 20 per cent in 2022).¹⁶⁷ Diversionary measures were being implemented in five provinces by June 2022.¹⁶⁸ This is a significant development given that in 2017 there were 907 children in detention,¹⁶⁹ but by October 2021, the number had risen to 1,420.¹⁷⁰ In contrast, between 2010 and 2014, there was a 56 per cent decrease in the number of children in detention.¹⁷¹

Impact indicator 5: Percentage of men and women who think that physical punishment is necessary to raise/educate children (baseline 26%, target 20%).

According to two recent studies, **the parenting programme appears to have had a positive impact on beliefs and practices and contributed to a reported reduction in the use of physical violence among programme beneficiaries.** An impact evaluation of parenting programmes in Cambodia¹⁷² found positive results achieved in a programme designed to prevent violence against children through improving positive parenting during COVID-19. The evaluation found that 59 per cent of participants reported using less physical abuse while 54 per cent reported using less emotional abuse. Overall, 90 per cent of participants reported more parent engagement and play; 82 reported being more confidence in having positive relationships with children; 89 per cent reported more confidence in protecting children from sexual abuse; while 73 per cent reported have increased capacity to cope with parenting stress. One parent quoted in the study said that as a result of the parenting programme: "I have spent time with the children playing with them, engaging with fun activities such as drawing, doing physical exercise, watch TV and share with them the COVID-19 messages." These results are based on 125 retrospective surveys conducted by the University of Oxford and Parenting for Lifelong Health.

¹⁶⁷ UNICEF Cambodia, 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/883 CHILD PROTECTION, 2021, p. 93; UNICEF Cambodia, , 'RAM Report: Outcome: 0660/ A0/06/800 CHILD PROTECTION, 2022, p. 92.

¹⁶⁸ UNICEF Cambodia: 2022 UNICEF Mid-year Assessment Presentation Section: Child Protection, Cambodia Country Programme 2019-2023, slide 4.

¹⁶⁹ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, 2018, p. 29.

¹⁷⁰ Data provided by UNICEF Cambodia: Number of Children in Detention as of 10 October 2021 (Annex 1.4).

¹⁷¹ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia, 2018, p. 29.

¹⁷² UNICEF Cambodia, COVID-19 Parenting Impact Evaluation: preventing violence against children through improving positive parenting in the time of COVID-19, (undated), p. 1.

A 2020 UNICEF supported study¹⁷³ sought to determine the progress of the Positive Parenting Programme being implemented by *Improving Cambodia's Society through Skillful Parenting (ICS-SP)*, and whether it had reached the intended results for children whose parents had participated in it. A key finding of study was that participating parents demonstrated increased knowledge of positive parenting techniques, including positive discipline and family communication. Further that parents were able to provide increased protection of their children from harm: *"In general, parents displayed increased knowledge of positive parenting techniques, including positive discipline, family communication, providing children with warmth and care, stress management and child protection."*¹⁷⁴ The study reported that effective parent-child communication was perceived as an important way to exchange and share information, solve problems, and for children to express their emotional distress. Further, parents understood praise and rewards to be acceptable forms of positive discipline, and a means for positively reinforcing children's obedience and good behaviour.

Unfortunately, the CP Programme results framework (Annex 2) does not include sufficient impact indicators that relate to quality – e.g. indicators of quality service delivery; quality of case management outcomes for children and families; content / comprehensiveness of laws, policies and plans; content / quality and outcomes of diversion measures etc. This limits the extent to which the Programme can demonstrate its contribution to the strengthening of the child protection system.

It is recommended that the next CP Programme consider developing qualitative impact indicators to be incorporated into the results framework. The next CP Programme should also consider the use of intermediary results indicators, particularly for social behaviour change components of the Programme (which typically take more time to demonstrate impact).



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¹⁷³ *Improving Cambodia's Society through Skillful Parenting (ICS-SP), Positive Parenting Programme: The Impacts on Behavioural Change Among Parents or Caregivers, 2020.*

¹⁷⁴ *Improving Cambodia's Society through Skillful Parenting (ICS-SP), Positive Parenting Programme: The Impacts on Behavioural Change Among Parents or Caregivers, 2020, p. 7.*



Efficiency

Key research question: To what extent and how has UNICEF mobilized and used its resources (human, technical and financial) and improved coordination to achieve its planned results for Child Protection?

Summary of findings on efficiency

1

The CP Programming approach was found to be efficient in the achievement of the desired results in terms of resource utilization and timely delivery. This finding is based on the range of results documented by this evaluation and the programme's relatively modest financial base.

2

Based on the overall results achieved, the CP Programme staff were found to be highly competent and efficient in terms of their technical capacity to effect positive change for children and adolescents vulnerable to harm. However, there may be insufficient human resources to support the full implementation of these changes.

3

Cambodia's child protection sector has a high-level understanding of the child protection situation, the drivers for children's protection violations and required solutions to overcome these violations. However, a critical gap is the understaffing of the sector and a lack of access to systemised and competency-based learning.

4

The RGC and UNICEF have invested in generating data, evidence and knowledge to better understand the child protection programme environment as well as to improve the quality and reach of critical protection interventions. A critical inefficiency appears to be the limited utilisation of the findings, recommendations and lessons learned of the knowledge generated.

Cost-effectiveness and adequacy of UNICEF resources (human, technical, financial)

A key finding is that although the Child Protection Programme has efficiently mobilised and used its resources (financial, human, technical) to achieve its planned results for child protection, as demonstrated by the range of results achieved, resource gaps remain.

Financial resource sufficiency

The initial projected budget for the current five-year programme was US\$ 22.8 million dollars, comprised of US\$ 3.6 million dollars in regular resources and US\$ 19.2 million dollars in 'other resources'.¹⁷⁵ The per year average in 'other resources' is US\$ 3.84 million dollars. This is an increase of US\$ 840,000 (28 per cent) per year compared to the two previous country programme cycles. However, this may be attributed to the COVID-19 response. It is likely that emergency resources will reduce, following the end of COVID-19 related restrictions and lockdowns.

Table 14: Summary budget table for child protection for three programme cycles

Year	Regular Resources	Other Resources	Other Resources Annual Average	Total
2019 - 2023	\$3,600,000	\$19,200,000	\$3,840,000	\$22,800
2016 - 2018	\$2,800,000	\$9,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$11,800
2011 - 2015	\$3,500,000	\$15,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$18,500

Given the ambitious scope of the current programme, which is warranted, it is not clear that this increase is sufficient to deliver the programme outcomes. While US\$ 19.2 million dollars in other resources is a significant investment of resources over five years, it is less significant when compared to the US\$ 53.14 million dollars, which is the 'other resources' budget for the education programme. Output three is designed to reduce violence against children in households, in schools and in the community, by supporting the government to take to scale three child protection programmes: positive parenting; positive discipline; and Cambodia PROTECT. However, the desk review did not sight any detailed costings of the three programmes, or any operational plans for achieving scale, or for defining scale. **Such a costing is needed along with a strategy for mobilising the required resources**, which is likely to be more than the current budget could cover and more akin to the level of resources needed in other sectors such as the education sector.

¹⁷⁵ United Nations, Economic and Social Council, United Nations Children's Fund Executive Board, Second regular session 2018, Country Programme Document, Cambodia, 12–14 September 2018, p. 14.

It is recommended that UNICEF develop a full costed operational plan for taking these programmes to scale, including a plan for phasing out UNICEF funding and ensuring full RCG ownership of the programmes.

Notably, the CP Programme is promoting a more cost-effective way of achieving the same child protection results. Specifically, it is advocating for the government to increase its budget investments in child protection, particularly for the implementation of the three programmes proposed for scaling. This advocacy should lead to greater efficiencies in national child protection programming as the cost of this effort shifts from development partners to government.

UNICEF's focus on scale is a highly efficient approach. In its early phase, it involves the development of a model and then the testing of the model in a number of diverse settings. As one donor noted:

“

“This approach of having models that are piloted – e.g. the clinical handbook and pagoda programme – they were piloted and then extended. UNICEF Cambodia tends to do this. I think that is efficient and high value for money. Rather than focusing broadly across a province or country, testing and extending is more efficient and encourages donor support. If successful and shown to be successful, donors will get on board.”¹⁷⁶

Human resource sufficiency

Based on the overall results achieved, the **CP Programme staff were found to be highly competent and efficient in terms of their technical capacity to effect positive change for vulnerable children and families.** One donor that supports projects in a number of UNICEF country offices in the region noted: *“In Cambodia, there is high capacity, both in terms of technical capacity and human resources.”¹⁷⁷* However, there may be insufficient human resource capacity within the child protection team (in terms of numbers and skill sets) to support the full implementation of these changes. As noted above, scaling of key programmes is a worthy ambition but specific competencies are required in operational planning to support scaling of these programmes as well as to support the implementation of new legislation and policy and institutionalising the interventions – for example, expertise in budgeting and public finance management. The desk review did not see any plans for how scale would be achieved.

As noted above, it is recommended that the next CP Programme focus heavily on operationalisation of the CP Law and SOPs, and that it addresses remaining gaps within the system for example, in terms of supporting a focus on mental health services for children and families, the incorporation of the needs of children with disabilities, the absence of operational budgets for child protection service delivery and so on. **Consideration should be given to addressing any capacity gaps within the child protection team in terms of these technical areas of focus.**

¹⁷⁶ Individual stakeholder interview with a donor agency, 25 November 2022.

¹⁷⁷ Individual stakeholder interview with a donor agency, 25 November 2022.

It is recommended that a gap analysis be carried out between the human resources needs of the new CP Programme and the existing resources within the child protection team. A plan for addressing any capacity gaps within the team (e.g. through additional training or recruitment) should be developed.

Technical sufficiency

UNICEF and the RGC have invested in generating data, evidence and knowledge to better understand the child protection programme environment as well as to improve the quality and reach of critical protection interventions. **A critical inefficiency appears to be the limited utilisation of the findings, recommendations and lessons learned.**

Figure 9: The central challenge for the UNICEF Cambodia Child Protection Programme

UNICEF CP is very efficient in generating new data, evidence, knowledge and lessons learned about the child protection situation and about how to improve the quality and reach of programming and other interventions.

UNICEF CP is less efficient in demonstrating how this new knowledge is being applied.

Investments in generating new data, knowledge and information and lessons learned are potentially wasted.



It is important to note that there are several examples of where the Child Protection Programme has applied the findings of previous studies and evaluations. For example, the lack of a comprehensive case management system owned and implemented by RGC was identified as a critical gap by the 2018 UNICEF Child Protection Formative Evaluation. In response to that finding, UNICEF has supported the RGC to adapt *Primero* and use it as the national case management system. *Primero* was launched in July 2020¹⁷⁸ and is being rolled out nationwide, as noted above. Another positive example is *A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia*,¹⁷⁹ published by UNICEF Cambodia and the UNICEF Division of Data, Research and Policy, New York. This study was used to strengthen child protection data management systems in Cambodia.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ UNICEF, *Primero – Digital Case Management System for Social Workers: Cambodia Experience*, April 2022, slide 3.

¹⁷⁹ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, *A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia*, 2018.

¹⁸⁰ UNICEF Cambodia and Division of Data, Research and Policy, *A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia*, 2018.

Despite these positive examples, **the evaluation team could not identify any systems or processes being used to ensure that knowledge generated was systematically applied in practice.** For example, UNICEF has invested in generating knowledge about good practices in alternative care. A 2019 study¹⁸¹ documented good practices and lessons learned from programmes that support family preservation and the prevention of family separation. The evaluation did not find any documentation explaining how the recommendations of the study were being implemented. Another study found that knowledge and practices about the harmful effects of residential care appeared to be poorer in Siem Reap compared to other surveyed provinces.¹⁸² The same study made several recommendations to strengthen positive community child rearing practices:

“

*“UNICEF Cambodia and other organizations are recommended to explore barriers to implementing practices to prevent VAC and unnecessary family separation. For example, many respondents reported knowing the importance of positive parenting skills, but only 40% practiced them. Understanding reasons for the discrepancy between knowledge and practices could help to address these issues more effectively.”*¹⁸³

Again, no evidence was sighted indicating how this knowledge, including the recommendations, were being applied.

Another study on parenting¹⁸⁴ sought to determine the progress of the Positive Parenting Programme being implemented by *Improving Cambodia's Society through Skillful Parenting (ICS-SP)*, and whether it had reached the intended results for children whose parents had participated in it. A key finding of study was that participating parents demonstrated increased knowledge of positive parenting techniques, including positive discipline and family communication. The study recommended that there was a need to better design parenting interventions based on a better understanding of children's social and emotional/psychological development and the different need of parents and the different needs of children at various developmental stages. The evaluation team was unable to locate any evidence that this recommendation had been considered.

Globally, UNICEF has a process and template for ensuring that the main findings and recommendations from evaluations are considered by the country office management team and monitored.

It is recommended that UNICEF Cambodia establish an internal process for ensuring that the main findings, lessons learned recommendations from studies are considered and applied.

¹⁸³ Angkor Research and Consulting Ltd, Baseline Survey for PROTECT: A Communication Strategy to End Violence against Children and Unnecessary Family Separation in Cambodia (Cambodia PROTECT), September 2019, p. 29.

¹⁸⁴ Improving Cambodia's Society through Skillful Parenting (ICS-SP), Positive Parenting Programme: The Impacts on Behavioural Change Among Parents or Caregivers, 2020.

Effectiveness in leveraging resources and partnerships

Capacity building of partners is a core strategy of the Child Protection Programme. The evaluation found that **the CP Programme works in a strategic and collaboratively way with other child protection development actors and its strategies and interventions have been informed by, and is consistent with, the broad direction of the sector** (see section 8.2). Further, the evaluation found that while the CP Programme has complemented or added value to the efforts of other development partners in several ways, there is room for improvement.

Two case management systems

UNICEF has supported the RGC to adapt Primero, as a national case management system for use by government social workers. There is another case management system, OSCAR, for use by NGOs, led by Family Care First/REACT network of Save the Children. Although Primero is interoperable with OSCaR, stakeholders expressed confusion about the two case management systems and their functions. Compounding the situation, Primero also serves a dual function, providing national statistics on child protection services to the Child Protection Information Management System for policy makers and implementers. **Stakeholders expressed concern that Primero was primarily a data collection system rather than a case management system.**

One programme area where a duplication of effort was highly probable but avoided was in relation to the health system response to violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC). UNFPA is the lead UN agency for supporting the health system to implement the clinical guidelines for VAW whereas UNICEF is the lead UN agency for supporting the health system to implement the clinical guidelines for VAC. As one partner noted:

“

... there is a different clinical handbook for VAW and handbook for VAC. We continued to roll out those protocols we developed under the National Maternal Child Health Centre. So we roll out the manual - we are UNFPA so we develop the strategy to roll out the manual on health sector response. We try to complement with UNICEF – UNICEF handle the response to children cases part.”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Individual stakeholder interview with a UN agency, 12 December 2022.

Several stakeholders raised concerns about UNICEF's new engagement strategy at the sub-national level, which includes supporting Provincial Administrations to develop child protection plans. While stakeholders valued UNICEF's work at the national level and in particular in its strong advocacy for MoSVY to be more accountable for child protection, they expect a more collaborative approach to be adopted in programming at the sub-national level:

“

“UNICEF works directly with government stakeholders so it is very useful already. If UNICEF wants to work directly with local authorities and direct delivery and implementation, it would be good if UNICEF does an assessment of each organisation and sees our strategy and especially local NGOs working on prevention and child abuse response.”¹⁸⁶

▶ Collaboration across the UN system

Stakeholders reported that the CP Programme promoted a collaborative approach to its work with partners. However, it appears that the concept of child protection systems building is not well understood within UN agencies, which could be a barrier to efficient collaboration.

One stakeholder from a UN agency, while speaking highly of UNICEF's approach to partnerships, questioned the need for UNICEF to support the development of a stand-alone law on child protection rather than supporting child protection to be built into an existing law on domestic violence: *“...it is important to have a law on Child Protection but maybe it would be better to include it the law on domestic violence ... and you just capture the section on the child. Better than to have different law, different ministry responsible, etc.”¹⁸⁷*

What this reflects is a broader challenge for UNICEF, not only in Cambodia but globally, in which other UN agencies often do not see child protection as a system response or as a development intervention. This stakeholder clearly understood the gender-based violence dimension of child protection but not the broader meaning of child protection. Greater efficiencies would be gained in collaboration across UN agencies if there was an agreed understanding of child protection as a systems response to addressing violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children.

¹⁸⁶ Individual stakeholder interview with an NGO, 2 November 2022.

¹⁸⁷ Individual stakeholder interview with a UN agency, 12 December 2022.

Programme synergies within UNICEF

The UNICEF Cambodia Country Office was one of the first offices in the region to mainstream violence against children into other UNICEF programmes. For example, the Child Protection Programme collaborates with the health section in the implementation of the clinical handbook for health practitioners on violence against children and the prevention of child marriage and teenage pregnancies. It collaborates with the education section to scale up the positive discipline programme and to rollout the child protection policy in schools. It collaborates with the social policy section on strengthening the social services workforce at the sub-national levels. **These linkages are important in ensuring a multi-sector approach to child protection, engaging the necessary key government partners and other stakeholders and ensuring mutually reinforcing and efficient results.** However, this initial burst of innovation and success during the previous country programme appears to have waned and no new approaches were identified by the evaluation.

As noted above, **one challenge in ensuring efficiency through joined up programming is that at times, programmes that are complementary are not being implemented in the same locations** (e.g. the positive discipline and positive parenting programmes).



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Sustainability

Key research question: To what extent are the benefits and achievements of the UNICEF-supported programme likely to continue after the programme has ended through national ownership, changes at family and community level, and scalability and use of partnerships for sustainability?

Summary of findings on sustainability

1

The CP Programme has taken some important steps toward increasing government ownership over the child protection system; however, more work needs to be done, particularly at the sub-national level, to ensure that essential child protection functions are owned and implemented by government duty bearers.

2

At the national level, the CP Programme has supported the institutionalisation of the system legal and operational framework through the development of the Child Protection Law and SOPs, through initiatives aimed at embedding a social welfare workforce for child protection and through the incorporation of initiatives into government policies and action plans.

3

At the sub-national level, some positive steps have been taken to ensure government ownership over child protection services, for example, through the designation, training and coaching of social welfare staff; however, critical capacity gaps in the system have meant that NGOs still carry out the bulk of child protection case work in practice.



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Extent that the CP Programme has achieved government buy-in, ownership and accountability at the national level

At the national level, the CP Programme has ensured government buy-in through maintaining productive partnerships with key stakeholders, evidence generation and sustained advocacy efforts. This has allowed it to institutionalise and scale some key components of the CP Programme. For instance, the development of the Business Plan on Investing in Social Service Workforce Cambodia (2021) and the adoption of the Strategic Plan on Social Service Workforce (2022-2031) resulted in the institutionalisation of a child protection / social services workforce and designation of social services staff at Provincial and District levels. This is an essential step toward ensuring that government buy-in and ownership of the operational framework for child protection. The development of the Child Protection Law and SOPs is a key factor in ensuring that UNICEF's work on child protection systems strengthening will be sustained. These instruments establish a comprehensive framework and process for child protection; one that is inherently sustainable as laws place legal mandates on key government duty bearers. However, in order to achieve outcomes for children under the Law and SOPs, it is important that UNICEF's advocacy continues after the enactment of legislation, in particular, to support operationalisation and implementation of the laws.

According to a representative from MOWA, the positive parenting programme has been incorporated into the Plan of Action and budget of MOWA. This is used to train focal points of the Department of Women's Affairs at the district and municipal levels.¹⁸⁸ With technical support from UNICEF, MOWA supported the incorporation of positive parenting into the state plans of action in order to ensure that a budget was allocated to positive parenting programmes. This is a good result derived from sustained advocacy by UNICEF. The MOWA appears to be very supportive of the Positive Parenting Programme and will reportedly give consideration to placing the Programme into the NAPVAW in order to ensure it is institutionalised within the broader government strategy on VAW. UNICEF should support this initiative – as noted above, placing the Positive Parenting Programme within MOWA will help to ensure that it effectively integrates VAW and VAC prevention initiatives, which is relevant to the context.

Another example is capacity building on data collection and reporting. The CP Programme has worked to ensure that the RGC is able to collect routine data on child protection through initiatives aimed at institutionalising data collection into existing processes, such as through the incorporation of a module on physical violence and discipline into the CDHS. Additionally, the CPMIS generates data to support planning and policy implementation. It provides data on key child protection indicators and creates a holistic, systematic process, replacing the fragmented and partial data collection practices that existed prior to this. The government has reportedly taken ownership of this system. For instance, according to a key stakeholder from UNICEF: *“Before, we were going to ask them for data, but now they are providing it to the public. They are now looking at publishing the data. they are starting to work to improve accountability through data sharing. When they share data, they own it and recognise it as their responsibility. Rather than UNICEF leading it, it is the government doing it.”*¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ KII with two representatives of Ministry of Women's Affairs (online), 12 December 2022.

¹⁸⁹ KII with Child Protection Officer, Phnom Penh, 24 October 2022.

Important steps were taken to increase government ownership of the Primero case management system, including building knowledge of the system among the Child Protection Department in MoSVY and appointing two system administrators at MoSVY; supporting MoSVY to take on role of communicating with MoTP, to advocate for them to host the system; and ensuring that the system is able to be run on minimal cost (essentially through the use of open source software). However, **the pathway to full government ownership of the Primero is not clear, and challenges remain, including the limited technical capacity within government institutions:**

“

“The big question on Primero is sustainability. It comes with a cost – maintenance costs – it relies on a capacity I don’t yet see in the country...it’s a good system, but whether it will be the system that the government take over fully is another story...it’s not owned by the government. Any glitch, upgrade, anything – it will always go through UNICEF unless we find a way for the system to be managed at country level.”¹⁹⁰

UNICEF stores the Primero data and the data is not owned by or stored on a Government server; however, the digitisation of services in the RGC is quite new: there is a lack of IT professionals in Government Ministries and the Government is quite new to digital data management (it purchased its first server this year). In addition, while there is a basic level of commitment from national government, **this has not yet filtered down to the sub-national level**. As noted above, this is in large part due to the very limited capacity at the provincial and district levels to fully operationalise Primero:

“

“We have the full support at the national level in terms of developing the tools, capacity building the workforce on how to use it etc. But when it comes to fully owning the system and the tool, it is a challenge for them as they don’t have the staff who have capacity to run the system. They still rely on us, on UNICEF, to complement the technical gaps they have. They don’t have the capacity to provide technical support when it comes to social work and case management.”¹⁹¹

It is recommended that UNICEF support the RCG to develop a costed plan to take full ownership of Primero. This should include inputs necessary to build capacity at all levels of the system to enable it to be fully operationalised.

¹⁹⁰ KII with member of Child Protection Team, UNICEF Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 19 October 2022.

¹⁹¹ KII with Child Protection Officer, UNICEF Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 28 October 2022.

In addition to Primero, it is unclear how other programme components will be government-owned and it appears that **limited planning has been undertaken to ensure that the RCG can ultimately take ownership and scale all of the CP Programme components** (e.g. coaching of social welfare staff, positive school discipline initiatives).

It is recommended that UNICEF carry out a stakeholder mapping to determine which programme component should sit with which Ministry, and then develop a sustainability plan together with the key Ministry at national and sub-national levels.

Extent that the CP Programme has achieved government buy-in, ownership and accountability at the sub-national level

At the sub-national level, the CP Programme has not been as effective in facilitating sustainability of its interventions. While some positive steps have been taken to ensure government ownership over child protection services, for example, through the designation, training and coaching of government social welfare staff, critical capacity gaps in the system have meant that NGOs still carry out the bulk of child protection case work in practice. According to the stakeholder survey, 10 out of 22 respondents felt that the CP Programme had only ‘somewhat’ (one) or ‘moderately’ (nine) contributed to ‘strengthened government ownership over the social welfare workforce and case management processes.’ According to the qualitative research, limited ownership at the sub-national level was expressed as a key gap. For example:

“

“There is a parallel NGO system that exists. NGO Social Workers have more experience than government Social Workers...There are already many NGOs and they have been in Cambodia many years and they do a good job. So this slows it all down. There is no urgency [for the Government] to invest in social workers. They also see NGOs as ‘this is their role.’¹⁹²

“

“At the sub-national level, they [UNICEF] tend to substitute what the government is doing, rather than supporting it.”¹⁹³

¹⁹² KII with representative of UNICEF Australia National Commission (online), 25 November 2022.

¹⁹³ KII with member of Child Protection Team, UNICEF Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 19 October 2022.

It was also noted that, without UNICEF funding, sub-national social welfare staff would not have a budget to carry out case work: “What UNICEF has supported us are well aligned with our priorities and plan. However, for us, we do not have sufficient budget to implement our plan or what we supposed to do. We can do it when we have NGOs support to deliver our tasks.”¹⁹⁴

Apart from some good initiatives (e.g. collaborative case work), it is unclear how the work of NGOs is supporting the government in strengthening a sustainable child protection system. As noted above, the working conditions for NGO social workers are often a lot better than for the government social services workforce, and there tends to be a deferral to NGOs – to carry out even basic case management functions which should be owned by government duty bearers.

It is recommended that UNICEF carry out a robust analysis looking into how to attract and retain qualified social workers in the government system.

It is also recommended that the next CP Programme focus on supporting the government, including through technical support on public finance management, to operationalise the child protection system at the sub-national level.



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¹⁹⁴ KII with representative of CCWC, Paoy Commune, Ratanakiri Province, 2 November 2022.

CONCLUSIONS



UNICEF Cambodia's CP Programme 2019 – 2023 is a large, multi-component programme that is necessarily ambitious in scope. It has made some significant contributions to the strengthening of Cambodia's child protection system, through a multi-tiered approach that has worked at national and sub-national levels to strengthen legal and policy frameworks, operational frameworks and capacities (particularly capacities of the social services workforce), along with addressing harmful norms, practices and beliefs that drive violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children. However, critical gaps in the system remain, including the limited capacity of the social services workforce and limited operational capacity at the sub-national level. This has, to an extent, hindered the CP Programme's ability to achieve positive results for children. The next CP Programme should focus on addressing these bottlenecks and in (further) supporting the operationalisation of the system, including the Child Protection Law and SOPs (when adopted). It should also consider how to increase and support government ownership of essential child protection functions.



Relevance

The CP Programme was found to be highly relevant to Cambodia's global development commitments and, in utilising a strong systems building framework, was also found to be relevant to UNICEF's global frameworks and priorities. The three output areas of the Programme were found to respond well to existing gaps and needs within the child protection system. The CP Programme's multi-tiered approach, involving interventions aimed at strengthening the system at both the national and sub-national levels, responds well to the programming context and the engagement with new stakeholders, in particular, the MOI, was found to be highly relevant to the new decentralised system for social welfare / child protection service delivery. The CP Programme was found to have retained its relevance in the changed context brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the Programme was found to be highly relevant to national Government policies, plans and commitments, substantial capacity gaps at the sub-national level meant that some interventions were not fully operationalised, indicating that more attention should have been given to the phasing and complementarity of the Programme's interventions at the sub-national level. With its focus on addressing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children, the Programme was found to be highly relevant to the evidence base on the protection risks and needs of children in Cambodia; however, there was limited systematic engagement of children in adolescents in the programme design and review. While some measures were taken to integrate gender and equity into the Programme design, these measures were found to be lacking, and there is a need to engage more comprehensively with the gender dimensions of child protection issues and more effectively address the protection needs of children with disabilities, in particular.



Coherence / connectedness

The CP Programme worked effectively in coordinating the different interventions of development partners, including government and NGO partners through supporting the Child Protection Forum at the national level. At the sub-national level, UNICEF ensured the effective coordination of child protection service delivery primarily through the 3PC network. The development and maintenance of respectful, open and enduring strategic partnerships was a key factor in UNICEF's ability to achieve outcomes under the Programme. However, it was found that work is needed to ensure more effective coordination of interventions by different UN agencies, such as UN Women.



Effectiveness

The CP Programme was found to have been mostly effective in achieving results aimed at strengthening the legal and operational environment for child protection (output 1), in particular through the development of the Child Protection Law and Standard Operating Procedures and establishment of a social welfare workforce. However, while the roll-out of Primero has contributed to some positive outcomes including improving coordinated case management, organisation, data security / privacy and information management, the operationalisation and use of Primero as a case management system has been hampered by insufficient capacity at the sub-national levels.

The evaluation found that outcomes in relation to the strengthening of the social welfare workforce and child protection service delivery (output area 2) were mainly positive, though critical challenges remain which have reduced the effectiveness of interventions. Case management and service delivery appears to be functioning to a reasonable standard in the 'intervention' research locations, particularly in contrast to practices in the 'comparator' research locations, with increased government ownership and improved service delivery through training, coaching and case collaboration processes which pair government social services staff with NGO social workers to build capacity in government case management systems. Service delivery was also improved through UNICEF's efforts in increasing coordination among different government and NGO service providers. However, critical gaps remain in child protection service delivery at the sub-national level, including the limited capacity and skills of the social services workforce, lack of operational budgets and limited services in some areas (in particular mental health services).

Some positive outcomes were reported in terms of addressing harmful community beliefs and practices (output area 3), particularly in relation to improved parenting practices and a reduction in the use of violent discipline by parents. However, this evidence was largely anecdotal and there are limited data to establish the outcomes or impacts in terms of attitudinal and behaviour change. The CP Programme has included a number of other issues under output area 3, including on adolescent and youth engagement, child marriage and online child protection. Stakeholders were clearly supportive

of these initiatives, and there is an evidence base to support the focus on these issues. However, there is a need to link these initiatives to the systems strengthening framework, to avoid the Programme becoming too 'issue focused' and fragmented.

The CP Programme adapted well to the COVID-19 context through support in providing emergency packages for vulnerable families affected by COVID-19 and technical support to government and NGO service providers in changing to remote working modalities during COVID-19.



Impact

The CP Programme has had a positive impact on increasing access to services for children exposed to violence and to reintegration services for children in RCIs; increasing access to diversion for children in conflict with the law; increased institutionalisation of child protection services at the sub-national level through the development of child protection plans; and the reported reduced use of physical violence among parents who underwent positive parenting training. It was not possible to examine the impact of the Programme on rates of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation of children, due to limited available data. There was found to be a lack of quality / qualitative impact indicators in the CP Programme's results framework, which limits the extent to which the Programme can demonstrate its contribution to the strengthening of the child protection system.



Efficiency

The CP Programme approach was found to be efficient in the achievement of the desired results in terms of resource utilisation and timely delivery. This finding is based on the range of results documented by this evaluation and the programme's relatively modest financial base. Based on the overall results achieved, the CP Programme staff were found to be highly competent and efficient in terms of their technical capacity to effect positive change for children and adolescents vulnerable to harm. However, there may be insufficient human resources to support the full implementation of these changes. Cambodia's child protection sector has a high-level understanding of the child protection situation, the drivers for children's protection violations and required solutions to overcome these violations. However, a critical gap is the understaffing of the sector and a lack of access to systemised and competency-based learning. The RGC and UNICEF have invested in generating data, evidence and knowledge to better understand the child protection programme environment as well as to improve the quality and reach of critical protection interventions. A critical inefficiency appears to be the limited utilisation of the findings, recommendations and lessons learned of the knowledge generated.



Sustainability

The CP Programme has made taken some important steps toward increasing government ownership over the child protection system; however, more work needs to be done, particularly at the sub-national level, to ensure that essential child protection functions are owned and implemented by government duty bearers. At the national level, the CP Programme has supported the institutionalisation of the system legal and operational framework through the development of the Child Protection Law and SOPs, through initiatives aimed at embedding a social welfare workforce for child protection and through the incorporation of initiatives into government policies and action plans. At the sub-national level, some positive steps have been taken to ensure government ownership over child protection services, for example, through the designation, training and coaching of social welfare staff; however, critical capacity gaps in the system have meant that NGOs still carry out the bulk of child protection case work in practice.



LESSONS LEARNED



The evaluation of UNICEF's Child Protection Programme 2019 – 2023 generated several broader lessons learned which have relevance to child protection programming – particularly programming within the system framework - in Cambodia and elsewhere.

1

In decentralised administrative systems, a multi-tiered approach to child protection programming, which focuses on building / strengthening frameworks at the national level while providing support at the local / service delivery level to operationalise these frameworks is crucial. UNICEF Cambodia's CP Programme aimed at strengthening the child protection system at national and sub-national levels, with interventions targeting national stakeholders, along with stakeholders at the provincial, district and commune levels, which helped to support improved service delivery on the ground by addressing gaps at the national level and sub-national levels. However, in multi-tiered programmes, there is need to ensure strong vertical coordination between the national and sub-national levels and link national level inputs with local outcomes.

2

It is important to ensure that inputs aimed at strengthening the child protection system are properly phased. In particular, inputs should respond to existing capacities and existing systems on the ground. One of the key findings of the evaluation was that some of the CP Programme interventions were introduced at a time in which there was insufficient capacity (in terms of the number and skills of the social services workforce) to absorb the interventions. An example is the introduction of Primero which appears to have been rolled out at a time in which there was insufficient capacity at the sub-national (district and provincial) level to absorb the new system effectively. Insufficient numbers of social welfare staff, inadequate case management skills and high staff turnover, including the designation of very inexperienced staff as 'social welfare workers,' impeded the uptake of the system and reduced the ability for the Programme to achieve results.

3

In contexts such as Cambodia, in which there are a large number of NGOs and development partners working in the child protection space, initiatives to coordinate the work of these organisations at national and sub-national levels can help create a properly coordinated system. The UNICEF Cambodia CP Programme has ensured good coordination among different stakeholders through the development and support of the Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children (3PC). This enabled the different child protection services to be coordinated around individual cases and helped to coordinate different actors at the national level around a systems framework. However, care must be taken to ensure that the child protection system is owned by government mandate holders (utilising NGO service providers on a case by case basis).

4

The method of case collaboration – in which NGO social services workers coach Government social workers by working together closely on individual child protection cases - appears to have contributed to improved practices in case management. This was particularly important in Cambodia as the Government social welfare workforce has limited knowledge, skills and experience in case management.



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RECOMMENDATIONS



Recommendations have been set out throughout the findings section of this report, and they are also presented below.

On Programme structure and design

- It is recommended that UNICEF's next CP Programme explicitly align to the new global Child Protection Systems Strengthening articulated by UNICEF HQ in 2021, following a robust systems diagnostic to ensure that the Programme focuses on the areas in which there are clear gaps in the system. The global CPSS Framework provides an evidence-based and well-articulated structure for UNICEF's systems strengthening approach, along with diagnostic tools and monitoring frameworks. These materials would provide very useful for planning the next CP Programme in Cambodia and ensuring that it is embedded within a strong systems strengthening framework. In order to ensure that funding is channelled into systems building initiatives, UNICEF could develop communications materials for implementing partners and donors on how particular issues (e.g. online exploitation and abuse) are connected to and best addressed within a broad systems strengthening framework.
- It is recommended that the next CP Programme continue to use a multi-tiered approach that is focused on both the national and sub-national levels in order to provide a comprehensive systems building framework. When the Child Protection Law and Standard Operating Procedures are adopted, the Programme should shift its focus to supporting national and sub-national duty bearers to implement the Law and SOPs. Consideration should also be given to the role of communes and village leaders and how UNICEF can support their role in the system, for example through increased knowledge, skills and capacity in identifying child protection risks and referral procedures.
- The Programme logic should articulate how the Programme will ensure vertical coordination of child protection services and how national programme interventions link to sub-national interventions.
- The next CP Programme design should also consider the phasing of interventions at the sub-national level and in particular, how more general capacity building interventions can be more effectively joined up with the Primero case management tool (one consideration should be that capacity building on Primero should be embedded within broader case management training and capacity building).

On measuring results

- It is recommended that the next CP Programme consider developing qualitative impact indicators to be incorporated into the results framework. The next CP Programme should also consider the use of intermediary results indicators, particularly for social behaviour change components of the Programme (which typically take more time to demonstrate impact), and it should ensure that equity indicators (gender, location / remoteness, disability and other equity considerations) are comprehensively incorporated into the results framework.

On responsiveness to the needs of rights holders, including girls and boys and children in vulnerable situations

- It is recommended that, in the next CP Programme, a mechanism such as a youth advisory board, is developed to engage adolescents and youth in the design of the Programme both routinely (e.g. through a quarterly forum) and at key point in the Programme's life cycle (e.g. fit for purpose reviews, monitoring and evaluation / assessments etc.). Adolescents and youth could be recruited through the AYRG (as CRC Cambodia supports the AYRG in developing skills and confidence in adolescent and youth participation). It is also important that UNICEF ensure that the advisory board represents a diverse range of adolescent and youth voices from a range of different provinces and that it reserves spaces on the advisory board for adolescents and youth who are in vulnerable situations. UNICEF could consider more innovative ways of engaging with members of the AYRG and beyond (e.g. through UReport communications). Consideration should also be given to extending these youth engagements to cover the whole Country Programme.
- It is recommended that a thorough gender analysis be carried out to inform the development of the next CP Programme to ensure that the gender dynamics of child protection issues are more fully incorporated into the Programme. This should involve a consideration of the ways in which violence against children and violence against women intersect and the ways that child protection programming could incorporate VAW prevention and response initiatives (including how processes like case management can be better aligned).¹⁹⁵ UNICEF could ensure a strengthened process is in place (management response, accountability framework) to ensure that any recommendations from gender analyses or other relevant studies are incorporated into the CP Programme. Efforts should be made to engage in collaborative work with UNFPA and UN Women on the gender dimensions of the CP Programme.

¹⁹⁵ This could be guided by recommendations in UNICEF EAPRO, UNFPA Asia and Pacific Regional Office and UN Women Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Ending violence against women and children in Cambodia: Opportunities and challenges for collaborative and integrative approaches, 2020.

- It is recommended that the CP Programme explicitly integrate the needs of children with disabilities into the next CP Programme, including through a specific sub-output / result that is focused on improving services and services delivery for children with disabilities and capacity building of government and NGO service providers in this area (e.g. under an overall output/s on improving service delivery), both in terms of advocating for improved services for children with disabilities at the national level and also through capacity building of service delivery at the sub-national level. UNICEF Cambodia could also improve the way that disability is mainstreamed effectively office-wide. This could include through integrating disability in routine office-wide approval forms etc. to ensure that Programmes systematically consider the needs of children with disabilities in decisions relating to partnerships, design of interventions and implementation of specific initiatives. It should also consider development for staff on disability across sectors to improve their understanding of disability and how it should be incorporated into programme areas and outputs.
- It is recommended that UNICEF carry out an in-depth equity analysis to identify other groups of children and parents / carers who may not fully benefit from the CP Programme (or its components), based on e.g. geographical location, indigeneity, sexual orientation, gender identity, displacement and so on, and integrate this knowledge into the next CP Programme. In particular, it is recommended that the next CP Programme consider how it can apply in the context of children who remain behind, and how particular programme interventions can be adapted. For example, consideration should be given to the delivery of the positive parenting programme to grandparents / other caregivers, rather than restricting this programme to parents (mothers).

On enhancing programme effectiveness

- It is recommended that intensive case management training and coaching be delivered to the social services workforce, and this training / coaching should integrate or link up with training on the Primero case management system. This is important to ensure that Primero is utilised effectively as a case management tool, rather than purely an information management system. Measures to ensure that the training is institutionalised should be continued. Consideration should be given to the development of an online resource that includes follow up / refresher training and resources.
- It is recommended that UNICEF's next CP Programme focus on building capacity for operationalisation of the child protection system, particularly at the provincial, district and commune / village levels. This could involve supporting the operationalisation the SOPs, when they are adopted. Consideration should be given to supporting MoSVY and MOI to carry out a costing of the operationalisation of the CP system as a whole, and UNICEF should prioritise supporting MoSVY, MOI and the sub-national administrations in developing and institutionalising operational budgets for child protection.

- A stakeholder mapping could then be carried out to identify which government Ministry / institution could support each part of the system. The mapping could include the different UN agencies to ensure that programme outputs utilise and align work already being carried out by other UN agencies to avoid duplication and inefficiencies.
- Consideration should be given to supporting MoSVY and MOI to attract and retain quality social workers / social services staff. This could be informed by a study of graduates of the university social work programme in Cambodia to determine their career pathways etc., and an analysis of similar interventions that have been demonstrated to have been effective across similar contexts. It could include subsidising or part-subsidising the wages of social workers from NGOs to be placed within the DoSVY and the District Offices for Social Welfare to work more closely alongside existing government staff and build their skills. There is a need for UNICEF to support improved programming in the integration and delivery of mental health services within child protection service delivery.
- It is recommended that a technical inputs from UNICEF's social behaviour change specialist should inform the behaviour change components of the next CP Programme.
- It is recommended that UNICEF consider how to join up programming between different teams, in particular to ensure the same programming districts are selected for both positive parenting and positive discipline programmes.
- It is recommended that the next CP Programme consider how to harness the new modalities that were developed during COVID-19, including for example, online refreshers to support more in-depth face to face training, providing further support to hotlines etc.

On increasing efficiency

- It is recommended that a gap analysis be carried out between the human resources needs of the new CP Programme and the existing resources within the child protection team. A plan for addressing any capacity gaps within the team (e.g. through additional training or recruitment) should be developed.
- It is recommended that UNICEF Cambodia establish an internal process for ensuring that the main findings, lessons learned recommendations from studies are considered and applied. Alternatively, it is recommended that UNICEF build this process into the existing evaluation management response processes.

On ensuring sustainability

- It is recommended that UNICEF develop a full costed operational plan for taking these programmes to scale, including a plan for phasing out UNICEF funding and ensuring full RCG ownership of the programmes, though this would need to be planned gradually over the cycle of the next CP Programme (five years). As part of this, it is recommended that UNICEF support the RCG to develop a costed plan to take full ownership of Primero. This should include inputs necessary to build capacity at all levels of the system to enable it to be fully operationalised. Consideration could be given to developing a long term strategy (15 year +) for full Government ownership of child protection systems and services which contains concrete actions to be achieved in each CP Programme cycle toward the outcome of full Government ownership.
- As part of the stakeholder mapping exercise (see above under 'enhancing effectiveness'), it is recommended that UNICEF determine which programme component should sit with which Ministry, and then develop a sustainability plan together with the key Ministry at national and sub-national levels.







For further information, please contact:

Hadrien Bonnaud

(Chief of Communication)

E-mail: hbonnaud@unicef.org

Marianna Garofalo

(Chief Child Protection)

E-mail: mgarofalo@unicef.org
