Office of the Secretary of the UNICEF Executive Board

Template for delegations commenting on the draft country programme documents

2022 annual session
Draft country programme document commenting period: 22 March to 11 April 2022

Delegations are kindly invited to use this template to share their comments on the draft country programme document being presented to the Executive Board during the forthcoming session.	

Delegation name: *DG NEAR B1*

Draft country programme document: *UNICEF - Syria*

In accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1, draft country programme documents are considered and approved in one session, on a no-objection basis. All comments received by the Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board before the deadline stated above will be posted on the Executive Board website, and considered by the requesting country, in close consultation with UNICEF.

	Delegation's comments	**Response(s)**
General comments	- The number of sectors addressed and the CPD strategies described for each under "Program priorities" remain very wide-ranging. They seem to be less Syria-specific, but rather covering more or less everything that could be undertaken in any context within UNICEF mandates. This could lessen the usefulness and relevance of this CPD as a programming document. As a result, it seems questionable whether the ambition of the CPD for a 2.5 year period is not too high. It is understood that such a broad framework warrants flexibility and allows UNICEF to implement whatever it would have the funds for. A genuine and contextualised prioritisation of potential interventions, which would be all the more critical in a context of decreasing funding, seems necessary. - The elevated attention, in each sector covered, to systems strengthening and revisions or development of laws, policies or	Currently, the primary priority for UNICEF through this CPD is to secure conditions to provide principled, on-the-ground assistance to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of children and population in Syria and fulfil their rights and protection, prevent a further escalation of needs, and build the resilience of vulnerable children and their families and communities. Due to the limitation of the CPD, which is meant to provide a broad framework with strict word limit, it is difficult to further elaborate. The CPD for the Syrian Arab Republic, as is the case for other CPDs and in line with the QCPR and UNDS reform requirements, is aligned with and derived from the Strategic Framework, as validated by the Resident Coordinator. As rightly acknowledged, the CPD provides a broad framework developed in line with UNICEF Strategic Plan. At

national plans, seems premature in the current context. It would go against the red lines of most UNICEF donors – hence, how realistic is it? Also here, references to conflict-sensitivity/do-no-harm approaches are necessary, which are essential and fundamental when aiming to address systemic issues, and legislative and policy matters.

- In general, it is important to make the CPD and UNICEF's "strategies" more clearly inclusive and benefitting all children in a non-discriminatory way regardless of the geographical area they live in.

- The CPD could further benefit from tangible and concrete interventions. For example:

> * What about civil documentation for children e.g. birth certificates? It would make sense to, at least, include an indicator in the log-frame, which measures this basic right.

> * What is done concretely to help the young "lost generations"? – youth and adolescents.

- It should be considered to better describe the "integrated, mult-isectoral social and behaviour change communication strategy" (pt. 30). As it stands, it remains too vague. Modifications should include a reference to how this strategy would encompass different sectors. If carefully elaborated it could be a valuable approach to complement and supplement the current focus on delivery of basic services.

the same time, prioritization of programme implementation is undertaken based on needs, which derive from the humanitarian needs assessments, other UN-wide assessments, as well as UNICEF's independent Monitoring and Evaluation System. Hence, better defined interventions will be designed and implemented once the CPD is approved by the Executive Board. Also, UNICEF will continue to contribute substantively to UN joint programmes / joint programming, as well as the Humanitarian Response Planning through which it will coordinate with other sector partners to prioritize implementation as per UNICEF's comparative advantages and extensive field presence and reach the most vulnerable children and communities with a focus on resilience and early recovery.

UNICEF support to ensure adherence to international commitments, especially on critical issues that require strengthening laws and policies for vital areas, such as grave violations or abuse and exploitation against children. Overall, strengthening protection systems at local level and multi-sectoral levels are essential for Syria to provide critical social services through proper case management to address children's and communities' needs and vulnerabilities through enhancing their resilience while also promoting social cohesion and strengthening the protection of children's rights.

Approaches to system-building include UNICEF's support to localized, integrated and multi-sectoral approaches at community level to ensure resumption and no disruption of basic social services and create demand for these services, such as the engagement of community and health workers in creating demand and undertaking immunization as well as preventive nutrition interventions. In the case of WASH, UNICEF's system building approach also includes the

		capacity building of the local operators, technicians and private sector.
		In order to reach the most vulnerable children at scale and in a sustainable manner, UNICEF must work through pre-existing systems. Capacity development of national institutions will focus on the capacities that are strictly necessary to improve the direct provision of essential services to people and children in need and to support adherence to international commitments.
		UNICEF strives and works to reach all children in Syria, wherever they are.
		UNICEF has significantly expanded its reach over the past period to have sustained presence in areas such as the Northeast of Syria, through a transparent approach, in an effort to provide assistance to the most vulnerable and hard to reach children in the country in an equitable manner.
		UNICEF focus in the CPD as mentioned in (paragraph 24) is that all children, regardless of their sex, socioeconomic status, geographic area, level of ability and other dimensions, gain increased access to resilient services, and that no child is left behind.
		The text, "different locations", has been added to the CPD (Paragraph 4) to reflect the fact that humanitarian actors, including UNICEF, work in different locations in Syria.
		UNICEF will continue to invest in monitoring systems that generate information on children's evolving needs and vulnerabilities as well as context sensitivity to ensure that services and programmes are needs-based, in particular the most vulnerable children and communities and address inequities in a manner that protects human rights.

		Due to the limitation of the CPD, which is meant to provide a broad framework with strict word limit, it is difficult to further elaborate in the document.
		As rightly suggested, the need to focus is critical and part of UNICEF Syria office approach. In line with the developed strategy for child protection programme at the end of 2021, following the high-level assessment mission of UNICEF global and regional child protection senior experts to Syria, the birth/civil registration and legal identity are considered a thematic priority for UNICEF, while recommending to consider the development of this programme through an incremental evidence-based approach. Birth registration and civil documentation will remain protection priorities for children in Syria in the years to come as in most conflict affected countries. The recent available evidence produced by others partners clearly confirms that limited civil documentation compounds vulnerability. Under the current context, UNICEF programme will include getting a better understanding of the situation with respect to birth registration and in coordination with partners, as well as scoping the best approach to adopt for addressing and improving performance in this critical area for children".
		UNICEF considers the integration and multi-sectoral approach an essential approach across key programmes. Specifically, the education programme provides multi-education pathways, learning platforms and life-skills development for children while the integration of adolescent development and participation programme within the education programme will help adolescent and young people transition from learning to earning. At the same time, child protection and social and behaviour change communication programmes will also be embedded in these efforts.
		UNICEF fully agrees that social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) strategy is a valuable approach to complement and supplement the delivery of basic services.

		Hence SBCC has been mainstreamed into programmes that UNICEF Syria supports, for example, Back to Learning Initiative and immunization campaign. Also, building onto the extensive experience through leading the risk communication and community engagement for the response to COVID-19, UNICEF is integrating SBCC strategy, particularly in reaching out to people at community level. Yet due to the limitation of the CPD, which is meant to provide a broad framework with strict word limit, it is difficult to further elaborate.
Comments on specific aspects of the draft country programme document	- p. 5 theories of change. Which ones? (pt. 20). What is the difference with the vision of change mentioned on p. 6 (pt. 24)? Are they related to the 6 change strategies mentioned under pt. 27? Which changes are really aimed at?	Theories of Change mentioned on Page 5 refer to a results chain for each of the six programmes. Those theories of change were developed as part of the situation and causality analyses to inform the Country Programme and formed the basis for the Results Framework included as annex to the CPD. This is different from the "the vision of change" on Page 6 (Paragraph 24) which describes the overall vision for the Country Programme as a whole. To avoid confusion, UNICEF has revised the CPD narrative to state, "The vision ~~of change~~ is that all children…". Change strategies (Page 6, Paragraph 27) are those that UNICEF aims to employ as strategies to accelerate the achievements of intended results.