

Office of the Secretary of the UNICEF Executive Board

Template for delegations commenting on the draft country programme documents

2022 second regular session

Draft country programme document commenting period: 14 June to 5 July 2022 [18:00 EST]

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: *BELGIUM*

Draft country programme document: *NIGER*

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	<p>The CPD is overall well elaborated and very relevant to the Nigerien context. It responds well to numerous humanitarian and development challenges, including recurrent food and nutrition crises, the consequences of violence and armed conflict, the prevalence of child marriage, child labour and child poverty, as well as high needs in terms of education.</p>	<p>UNICEF acknowledges and appreciates the comments on its draft country programme for 2023-27 from the Government of Belgium and welcomes the opportunity to provide additional information that could not be adequately covered in a 6000 words document.</p> <p>UNICEF Niger is pleased that the draft document meets the expectations of the Belgium cooperation both in terms of standards and priorities and complements the Belgium Development Agency geographic priorities for the education sector in Niger.</p>

	<p>The draft CPD is the result of a rather participative process that involved the <i>Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire et du Développement Communautaire</i> as lead ministry for UNICEF, as well as the different levels of the Nigerien government, communities and other UN agencies. While the donor community was to some extent involved in the strategic reflections on the UNSDCF, donors were not consulted for this specific CPD.</p> <p>The CPD is well aligned with both the new Economic and Social Development Plan (PDES) of Niger and the (draft) UNSDCF, notably its Pillar 2 (human capital) and, to some extent, Pillar 3 (modernisation of the rural sector and climate change). Based on the UNSDCF, the CPD equally pays sufficient attention to the coherence and complementarity with other UN agencies, particularly UNFPA, WFP, FAO and WHO. However, no specific reference is made to complementarity or joint approaches with non-UN actors. Nonetheless, the CPD can be considered coherent with Belgian development cooperation priorities for Niger (especially education and protection of girls against violence) and geographically complementary with Enabel's education activities in Niger.</p>	<p>Regarding consultations with the donor community, we are pleased to share the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UNICEF organised an external moment of reflection in March 2022, which was attended by a few donors. 2. A consultation on the draft CPD with 36 donors, members of the board took place from June 15-30, 2022, including 13 meetings were held with the Ambassadors in country while the non-residents embassies were reached by emails. 3. The Government of Niger will organise at the end of August a meeting with all the donor community to discuss the draft CPD ahead of the Board Meeting in September 2022 <p>Although the document makes no specific reference to the development of partnerships or joint approaches with specific non-UN Actors, UNICEF will continue to nurture and strengthen numerous partnerships with NGOs, CSOs, academic institutions, and the private sector as mentioned in the draft CPD paragraphs 36 page 8 and 43 page 9, and in various indicative outputs of the RRF including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country output for Outcome 2 (page 11/16): Nutrition service providers and community-based organizations are better equipped to facilitate care practices and optimal nutrition for children adolescents and pregnant women. • Country output for Outcome 3 (page 12/16): Service providers and civil society organizations have increased capacity to facilitate good hygiene and sanitation practices in households.
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	<p>The UNICEF CPD could pay more dedicated attention to the specific problem of violence against girls within a school context. The issue remains taboo and despite ample anecdotic evidence, reliable systematic information remains unavailable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country output for Outcome 4 (page 12/16): Service providers and civil society organizations have increased capacity to support children in having equitable access to quality education and skills training in a protective environment. • Country output for Outcome 5 (page 14/16): Communities and their leaders, adolescents, civil society and the media in the regions of Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua, Tillabery and Zinder have increased capacity to promote behaviours that stimulate the elimination of violence and child marriage and promote civil registration • Country output for Outcome 6 (page 15/16): The Government, local authorities, civil society organizations and young people have increased capacity to mobilize public resources and innovative financing, and to efficiently implement and account for budgets allocated to social sectors. <p>These will be detailed in MoUs, rolling annual workplans and PCAs (Partners Cooperation Agreements).</p> <p>UNICEF agrees to the need to pay more attention to the issue of violence against girls within the school context. Therefore, as mentioned in paragraph 15 of the CPD: The vision of the programme is that all girls and boys, from birth through adolescence, survive, thrive, learn, develop to their full potential, are protected from all forms of violence and exploitation, and thus contribute to positive social change in their communities.</p> <p>Currently, UNICEF is working with PLAN, World Vision and WFP to establish a reporting mechanism connected to UNICEF's Rapid Pro to collect data on VGB in schools in real time.</p>
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<p>Comments on specific aspects of the draft country programme document</p>	<p><i>(Delegations providing comments may wish to include details, such as the page number, paragraph number, or page of the annexed results and resources framework.</i></p> <p>Paragraph 29: Belgium welcomes the specific reference to education for nomadic children. This indeed remains an essential issue in the Nigerien context that is, however, seriously underfunded.</p> <p>As regards the education activities in general (CPD p. 7), no specific reference is made to the government’s ambitious plan to construct boarding schools for girls. Belgium recommends UNICEF Niger to consider supporting this important government programme, which particularly aims to contribute to the education and protection of girls. UNICEF could have added value for the initiative through the development of the pedagogical project of the boarding schools as well as by unrolling activities for the protection and empowerment of girls.</p>	<p>Page 7/16, paragraph 29</p> <p>UNICEF welcomes the appreciation of Belgium for this important dimension of our work in Niger and would very much welcome support to leverage funding for this area of work.</p> <p>Indeed, UNICEF recognizes the importance of promoting and empowering children and adolescent, especially girls through quality and accessible education. As stated in paragraph 38, page 8/16: UNICEF will support interventions with gender-sensitive approaches to reduce the causes of exclusion of girls and women. UNICEF will continue to actively participate in the ongoing dialogue with the government around girl’s protection and education within the framework of the National Education Strategy.</p>

	<p>Belgium would also welcome a dedicated reflection on the specific challenges for education in emergency situations and how UNICEF aims to link with existing government initiatives in this regard (for instance the <i>Centres de Regroupement</i> in the Tillabéri region). This point is currently not mentioned in the CPD.</p> <p>Belgium welcomes the support foreseen for the revision of legislation governing the age of marriage and encourages UNICEF to do this in full synergy with UNFPA’s work on social norms and behavioural change regarding child marriage, notably through the mobilisation of traditional and religious leaders.</p>	<p>The country programme document pays a special attention to the humanitarian and development nexus approach across all sectors and programmes, including education. Ensuring access to education in emergency affected areas is a key priority for UNICEF in support to the Ministry of Education and in collaboration with the Local Education Group. For example, to ensure continuity of education in emergency-affected areas, UNICEF has supported (i) the back-to-school campaign in xxxx year, (ii) the learning and Education through the Airwaves (ASTROD) initiative, (iii) the training of facilitators of listening clubs attended by 3,660 children including 1,810 girls, (iv) the implementation of the World Bank’s “Lire project” through the creation of temporary learning centres (440 by the end of 2022) and the provision of a safe environment to 22 000 out-of-school children in the regions of Diffa, Zinder, Tillabery, Tahoua and Maradi; (iv) the implementation of the National Strategy on the Reduction of the Vulnerability of the Educational System (SNRV) through the REVE project aimed at ensuring schools are kept open.</p> <p>As mentioned above, UNICEF is supporting a few initiatives. The reflection continues within UNICEF, with the Government of Niger and partners on how to further improve access to education for children living in area affected by emergencies.</p> <p>UNICEF is already working in close collaboration with UNFPA and the Platform to End Child Marriage within the framework of the Global Program and Spotlight Initiative and will continue to do so within the framework of the UNSDCF (pillar 2: Human capital which is co-led by UNICEF and UNFPA). In addition, as agreed during the Young Girl Summit that took place in Niamey in November 2021, UNICEF and UNFPA will work closely with the</p>
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		<p>Government of Niger and key partners and Donors to take forward some key recommendations on Girls' Rights.</p> <p>These key recommendations include:</p> <p>(i) Strengthening national child protection systems through the investment in the capacity of the frontline workers to have the knowledge and skills set for early detection and early action of harmful practices at all levels; the provision of mental health and psychosocial support of children and young people and bring an end to abuse, gender-based violence, and neglect in childhood; (ii) Encouraging the member states that do not yet have the legislation in place to enact sound laws and policies for the protection of children in all settings from harmful practices; (iii) Strengthening the sustainable and consistent engagement of traditional, cultural and religious leaders in the planning, implementation, monitoring and coordination, capacity building of programmes and strategies particularly for early detection, prevention and response to VAWG and HPs; (iv) Establishing and strengthening strategic partnerships involving local and national authorities, religious and traditional leaders to empower girls and young women including those further marginalized such as persons with disabilities.</p>
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