Formative regional evaluation of UNICEF’s contribution to the empowerment and rights fulfillment of adolescents in South Asia

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December 2015
The evaluation was carried out by Asmita Naik (Team Leader) and Katie Tong (Case Study Specialist).

Special credit is due to the following adolescent/youth evaluators and implementing partner staff for carrying out additional spin-off adolescent focus group discussions in specific locations as a contribution to the evaluation report:

- Jharkhand, India: Jaipal Hembram, Niraj Kumar Jha, Dilip Kumar, Pramod Kumar, Sumit Kumar, Kalpana Kumari, Bhimsen Pinguwa, Puroshotam Pradhan, Surya Mani Prasad, Ajay Kumar Sahu, Arjun Sahu, Kartik Sahu, Premchand Yadav, Ranjeet Yadav
- Thimphu, Bhutan: Karma Sonam Lhatshog, Tshewang Jamtsho Tamang

Much thanks are also due to UNICEF staff, partner agencies, community members, and adolescents for facilitating the evaluation as a whole and for sharing their experiences and views with the evaluation team.

Cover photo credit: Rajat K. Mitra, Photo of Adolescent girls’ group in Project MAHIMA, Gumla, Jharkhand, India

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Acronyms

ADAP  Adolescent Development and Participation
A&C  Advocacy and Communication
C4D  Communication for Development
CBO  Community Based Organisation
CEDAW  Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CFLG  Child Friendly Local Governance Programme
CP  Country Programme
CPAP  Country Programme Action Plan
CPD  Country Programme Document
CRC  UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
GBV  Gender-based Violence
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
GEROS  Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (UNICEF)
FGD  Focus Group Discussion
HDI  Human Development Index
HIV/AIDS  Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
HRBAP  Human Rights Based Approach to Programming
IEC  Information, Education, Communication
KGBV  Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (Government of India programme)
LSBE  Life skills in Basic Education Initiatives
LGBT  Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LSE  Life Skills Education
M&E  Monitoring & Evaluation
MDG  Millennium Development Goal
MTSP  Medium-term Strategic Plan
MIC  Middle Income Country
MTR  Mid-Term Review
NGO  Non-Governmental Organisation
PC  Programme Component
PCR  Programme Component Result
RBM  Results Based Management
RKS K  Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKS K)
ROSA  UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia
S4D  Sports for Development
SITAN  Situation Analysis (UNICEF)
SRH  Sexual and Reproductive Health
SP  Strategic Plan
UN  United Nations
UNCT  United Nations Country Team
UNDAF  United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP  United Nations Development Programme
UNEG  United Nations Evaluation Group
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<td>UNODC</td>
<td>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This formative evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF in early 2015 with the aim of gathering learning from around the region in programming for and with adolescents in order to inform future strategy and action. The evaluation covers all eight countries in South Asia and spans a 15 year time frame of 2006 – 2020 covering multiple five year country programmes. The scope of the exercise is broad covering the range of interventions in existence. UNICEF’s country level experience dates back to 2000’s with particularly substantial programmes in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal. These interventions have germinated independently of each other, in different ways and at different times; by the end of the evaluation research, there were known to be at least 145 UNICEF-supported initiatives/groups of initiatives relating to adolescents in South Asia.

The evaluation used a case study approach which involved visits to five countries (eight visits) – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India (States of Assam, Gujarat, Jharkhand), Nepal. The remaining three countries (Maldives, Pakistan Sri Lanka) were reviewed by desk study. The study was carried out by a two member team over a period of 165 person days. Qualitative methods were used primarily consisting of focus group discussions and interviews. UNICEF’s programming was assessed against evaluation questions formulated under the OECD DAC evaluation criteria – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. There was a particular focus on the extent to which UNICEF’s interventions were resulting in the empowerment and rights’ fulfillment of adolescents. Adolescent participation was strongly emphasised: adolescents were consulted extensively and formed the majority of evaluation contributors. Of the 1276 contributors to the evaluation; 785 were adolescents/youths (comprised of 528 females and 257 males). Adolescents were also engaged in an experimental ‘adolescents as evaluators’ methodology whereby the adolescents themselves carried out evaluation research in certain locations.

Summary findings

This is a short summary of the key findings which are further elaborated in the final chapter of this report. (See also Annex 9).

Relevance: UNICEF’s programmes are relevant to the region and aligned with national interests. In terms of grassroots stakeholders, adolescents and communities sometimes emphasised issues such as livelihoods which are not currently a key intervention area for UNICEF as an institution. While UNICEF has to work within its mandate, capacities and resources, it could explore partnerships with other specialist organisations to address such needs – especially as heightened aspirations among adolescents are often a consequence of its own programming. This highlights the need for more research on the needs of adolescents in South Asia and in particular localities.

‘....After joining the club, even the name of the project, ‘I am champion’ gives me such a psychological boost that I can now go about my life with confidence’. Adolescent Boy, S4D project, Jharkhand, India
**Effectiveness:** UNICEF interventions are having a positive effect in terms of strengthening adolescent empowerment. Adolescents around the region are unanimous that UNICEF-supported activities have improved their lives by giving them more confidence, increasing their knowledge and skills and by enabling them to have a greater voice in their families and communities. The testimonies reproduced in this report are but a small sample of the hundreds of positive comments from adolescents in evaluation meetings. UNICEF is also working at higher levels, to improve services and to build enabling environments (policy, community, parents - with the latter being a particularly neglected area). Key findings from UNICEF’s direct work with adolescents include:

- Adolescent participation is mainly being fostered at the grassroots level where it has the potential to be more meaningful. Participation decreases higher up the chain and becomes more tokenistic at policy level. The evaluation found a rich understanding of adolescent participation at field level but this knowledge could be better systematized and consolidated into shared guidance across the region.
- Fun and creativity are key elements in effective adolescent group work.
- Adolescent group work enables adolescents to enjoy their rights to education, protection, health etc. This is a manifestation of what theorists describe as the capability approach, i.e. rights do not exist in a formal sense, they need to be enabled.
- Interventions operating at multiple levels: linking grassroots adolescent group work with interventions at the meso and macro level through capacity building of duty-bearers and policy level activities were considered most effective by evaluation contributors.
- Work with parents is limited and more emphasis is needed on building the capacity of parents as duty-bearers in order to optimise the effects of their work with adolescents.

**Efficiency:** There are significant internal weaknesses which are holding the organisation back from maximising its knowledge and experience of programming for and with adolescents across the region. Alignment to UNICEF global policies is difficult as UNICEF’s country level planning and reporting matrices do not support work on adolescents in the most logical manner. Greater integration of adolescent programming through mainstreaming and convergent approaches is necessitated. Knowledge management is particularly weak and inhibits the flow of good practices and lessons learned around the region. Monitoring and evaluation should better capture the results of UNICEF’s work especially in terms of immediate effects/outcomes as well as longer term impacts. Further capacity building of both UNICEF staff and partners is desirable.

**Sustainability:** The effects on individual lives in terms of increased empowerment are likely sustainable. Projects are developed with sustainability in mind and UNICEF is able to demonstrate success in persuading Governments to scale up its pilots. Nonetheless quality can tail off in scaled up projects suggesting the need for better handover and exit strategies.

‘We talk differently with our parents now….our parents listen more and they are proud when we teach other people’, Adolescent boys and girls, Bangladesh
Impact: The measurement of impacts has received negligible attention to date but current impact evaluations which are starting up promise state of the art methodologies and a rigorous tracking of the impacts of UNICEF’s programming for and with adolescents. Nevertheless, on an ongoing basis, UNICEF needs a more accessible approach to impact evaluation that is more easily replicable by staff.

Equity and human rights:

- There is strong emphasis on gender equality for adolescent girls but insufficient attention in the region to working with adolescent boys – boys tend to be seen as instruments for improving the lives of girls rather than as adolescents with their own rights and needs. The organisation’s policy focus which appears to define gender as meaning equality for girls, coupled with a lack of capacity and know-how in working with adolescent boys, are a constraint.
- Other diversity issues are addressed in a piecemeal way.
- Despite efforts, UNICEF Offices find it a challenge to reach the most disadvantaged. UNICEF interventions are not always reaching the most marginalised, excluded and at-risk adolescents.

Conclusions

UNICEF’s work on adolescents is deeper and more extensive than was known by UNICEF itself at the start of this evaluation. Far from being a new area of work, UNICEF Offices in the region have built up a significant repository of work - the evaluation unearthed an unexpectedly large number and there are likely more to uncover, especially in the many States of India. The significant effect of UNICEF programming on adolescent empowerment was apparent; this was tested time and again in different locations and the findings are consistent. At the same time, UNICEF’s programmes across the region demonstrate considerable inefficiency; they lack integration with other areas of work, they are inadequately monitored and evaluated, and the learning from these experiences is insufficiently codified, shared and built upon across the region. UNICEF’s programmes are highly effective but also highly inefficient at the same time. The two are not irreconcilable findings since while individual programmes are effective, the inefficiencies all relate to the inability to properly capture, assess, disseminate and maximise these successful experiences across the region as a whole. UNICEF’s own internal weaknesses are constraining its ability to capitalize on the strengths of its programming for and with adolescents.

‘I failed in my 10th exam because of that I felt broken, but after coming to the [project], I rebuilt trust in myself, and then developed the self-confidence that I will work hard and pass this exam.’ Adolescent Girl, SABLA project, Gujarat, India
Summary recommendations

Summary recommendations are listed below. The recommendations are organised by target group starting with those aimed at the highest levels of the organisation through to others targeted at the lowest levels i.e. headquarters, ROSA, and then country offices. The recommendations therefore appear in terms of strategic importance ranging from top level policy concerns through to field level programming issues. The final section of this report elaborates on these recommendations with suggested implementation actions.

UNICEF HQ, UNICEF ROSA and UNICEF Country Offices

1. Integrate adolescent issues more systematically into corporate planning documents in order to allow for more consolidated planning and reporting on programmes for and with adolescents.

UNICEF ROSA

2. Improve knowledge management in order to better capture, disseminate and learn from the rich experiences taking place across the region

3. Enhance organisational learning on adolescent participation in order to give staff the tools and practical knowledge to apply these approaches more extensively in programming.

UNICEF ROSA and UNICEF Country Offices

4. Strengthen planning, monitoring and evaluation in order to help improve programming for and with adolescents through evidence-based research.

UNICEF Country Offices

5. Foster greater convergence and mainstreaming of programmes for and with adolescents across all sectors of UNICEF’s work in order to expand the reach of UNICEF’s programming to greater numbers and a wider range of issues.

6. Improve knowledge and understanding of issues facing adolescents in the region in order to enhance programming and advisory work on the second decade of life.

7. Enhance the capacity of UNICEF and its partners on programming for and with adolescents so that they are better equipped to understand and respond to the unique challenges of working with this age group.

8. Renew efforts to reach the most disadvantaged adolescents in areas of operation as, despite efforts, the most marginalised, excluded and at-risk adolescents are not always benefitting from UNICEF activities.

9. Place more emphasis on building the capacity of parents as duty bearers in order to ensure adolescents benefit from a supportive enabling home environment.

10. Continue to strive for gender equality in programming for and with adolescents: issues facing adolescent girls are generally well addressed by UNICEF programming, but the needs of adolescent boys are being overlooked.
Guide to the report

The evaluation report, given its breadth of geographical and thematic scope, is inevitably a long document. It has been designed as a navigable report aimed at enabling readers to focus selectively on aspects of interest: the Executive Summary guides the reader to the key issues; there is a detailed contents page; and sub-headings and bolded text are used to allow the reader to pass over items of lesser interest.

The report is organised in four parts:
Part A – Background – regional context in socio-economic and political terms; the situation of adolescents in South Asia; and an overview of UNICEF programming for and with adolescents;
Part B – Evaluation approach – purpose, scope, methodology and other issues pertaining to the planning of the evaluation;
Part C – Findings – divided up in sections by the evaluation criteria (Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability and Impact)
Part D – Conclusions and recommendations – summing up including key conclusions and recommendations for the way forward.

The report also contains boxes of different types which present optional supplementary reading matter:
- ‘Sharing practices’ – blue boxes with descriptions of a selection of projects referred to in the report as well as Practitioners’ Tips;
- ‘Points of interest’ – pink boxes highlighting or deepening the understanding on issues that arose during the evaluation;
- ‘Adolescent Voices’ – boxes with multi-coloured font aimed at bringing to the fore the views and experiences of adolescents participating in UNICEF’s programmes.

Lessons learned are further highlighted in red the text itself.

There are twelve annexes containing the usual information on contributors, documents, visit schedules, data collection tools, evaluation questions and matrices, and workshop materials. In addition, annex 8 is an adolescent-friendly version of the report, annex 7 describes the evaluation findings workshop, and annex 12 comprises a database of 145 initiatives/groups of initiatives identified by this exercise.

‘I want to become a doctor, in this area it is dirty and a lot of people are sick, I want to build a hospital and I want to treat everyone for free’. Adolescent Girl, Assam, India

‘I asked my parents why they were discriminating and why boys were being given more nutritious food. Previously my parents gave milk to my brother but not me, after starting the project, I talked to my parents and now they no longer do that’. Adolescent Girl, Nepal
A. INTRODUCTION

1. Background

1. This evaluation of UNICEF’s contribution to the empowerment and rights’ fulfillment of adolescents in South Asia was commissioned by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) in order to facilitate the mainstreaming and convergence of adolescent programming across all areas of UNICEF’s work; and to strengthen programmes that explicitly address adolescent issues. The evaluation covers all eight countries in the region - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka – and spans an overall time frame of 2006-2020. It was carried out from March to December 2015 by an evaluation team comprised of a Team leader and a Case Study Specialist. This section sets out the regional context followed by an overview of UNICEF regional and country level programming for and with adolescents.

Figure 1 – Map of the South Asia Region

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1 This is the final date at which the current country programmes expire.
2. **Context**

2.1. **Development indicators**

South Asia has experienced robust economic growth which has led to significant achievements in human development. Nevertheless, poverty levels remain high - about 399 million people - 40 per cent of the world’s poor - live on less than $1.25 a day in a region which still suffers from social exclusion, infrastructure challenges and increasing levels of inequality [World Bank, 2015]. The population diversity is huge: India has over a billion people while its smaller neighbours like Bhutan and the Maldives are nearer half a million mark. There is disparity in development terms also. Sri Lanka and the Maldives score higher on human development and gender equality indices (see Table 1) whereas Pakistan and Afghanistan fare worst.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population size</th>
<th>Human Development Index</th>
<th>Gender Inequality Index</th>
<th>Adolescent birth rate 2010/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>31,281,000</td>
<td>0.46 (low)</td>
<td>0.705</td>
<td>86.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>158,513,000</td>
<td>0.558 (medium)</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>746,000</td>
<td>0.584 (medium)</td>
<td>0.4951</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1,296,245,000</td>
<td>0.586 (medium)</td>
<td>0.563</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>369,900</td>
<td>0.698 (medium)</td>
<td>0.282</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>27,140,000</td>
<td>0.540 (low)</td>
<td>0.479</td>
<td>73.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>193,979,000</td>
<td>0.537 (low)</td>
<td>0.563</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>20,684,000</td>
<td>0.750 (high)</td>
<td>0.383</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>1,806,313,900</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.539</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>7,238,183,566</td>
<td>0.702</td>
<td>0.450</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. The political and security situation ranges from stable democracies in India, Bhutan and Sri Lanka, to political instability in Nepal, Maldives, Bangladesh and Pakistan through to outright conflict in Afghanistan:

**Afghanistan** - continues to be torn by conflict resulting in increased numbers of civilian casualties and displacement. The National Unity Government faces internal political pressure with a further deteriorating economic and security environment [UNSG Report on Afghanistan, 2015]. This has wider implications for the

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2 Sources for Table 2
Human Development Index: UNDP, 2014 (For Afghanistan data)
Gender Inequality Indicators, UNDP, 2013, [http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi](http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi) [Defined as gender inequality in three aspects of human development – reproductive health (of particular interest here is that this indicator refers to adolescents and is measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates); empowerment; economic status.
Adolescent birth rate, UNDP, 2013, [http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi](http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi) [Defined as Number of births to women ages 15–19 per 1,000 women ages 15–19]
narrow humanitarian and development nexus, burdening already weak services, including healthcare and education.

**Bangladesh** - history of military rule and, although democracy was restored in 1990, the political scene remains volatile. Most opposition parties boycotted the 2014 elections and political tension often spills over into violence.

**Bhutan** - became a two-party parliamentary democracy in 2008, when the first elections were held in March 2008 and the king remained in the role of constitutional monarch.

**India** - world’s largest democracy, it has a stable Government having entered a period of majority rule following elections in 2014.

**Maldives** - held its first multiparty elections in 2008 following decades of autocratic rule. The current Government came to power in the 2013 elections but controversy continues with the periodic imprisonment of the former president.

**Nepal** – has experienced a turbulent transition to democracy. After years of conflict, elections in 2008 led to the abolition of the monarchy but agreement on a new constitution was only reached on 20 September 2015.

**Pakistan** - democracy has been weakened over the years by a series of military coups. In 2013, for the first time, one elected Government handed over power to another elected Government without military intervention taking place.

**Sri Lanka** - underwent elections in August 2015, the outcome of which offers the prospect of stable Government after several months of minority rule.
Adolescence is the period from 10 to 19 years of age, it is a: “continuum of physical, cognitive, behavioural and psychosocial change that is characterised by increasing levels of individual autonomy, a growing sense of self-esteem and progressive independence from adults” [Adolescent SRH in humanitarian settings toolkit, UNFPA and Save the Children US, 2010]

It is also: “one of life’s fascinating and perhaps most complex stages, a time when young people take on new responsibilities and experiment with independence. They search for identity [and] learn to apply values acquired in early childhood” [UNICEF, ‘Adolescence: A Time that Matters’ 2002]

During adolescence, human beings undergo distinct physical and cognitive/behavioural and psycho-social changes.

Physical: adolescents physically become adults during this stage of their life, growing to full size and undergoing puberty. Many older adolescents look like adults in terms of physical appearance but their cognitive functions are still developing as described below which can lead to a misunderstanding about their capacities and capabilities.

Cognitive / Behavioural / Psychosocial:

Historical references to “teenagers”:

- Aristotle “the young are heated by Nature as drunken men by wine”
- Shakespeare’s The Winter Tale, a shepherd wishes that “there were no age between ten and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting”
- G Stanley Hall, formalised adolescent studies in 1904 “Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education”, suggest this time of “storm and stress” is a throw back to behaviour in less civilised, Neanderthal, times
- Freud – thought adolescence was about psychosexual conflict
- 1990s: National Institutes of Health carried out a series of brain-imaging scanning on adolescent brains and discovered which were written about in a National Geographic article: “brains undergo a massive reorganisation between our 12th and 25th years. The brain doesn’t actually grow very much during this period. It has already reached 90 percent of its full size by the time a person is six, and a thickening skull accounts for most head growth afterwards. But as we move through adolescence, the brain undergoes extensive remodelling, resembling a network and wiring upgrade.” – Including –
  - Axons (long nerve fibres use to send signals between neurons) became more insulated with myelin (brain white matter) boosting transmission speed
  - Dendrites (extensions neurons use to receive signals) grow “twiggier”
  - Critical point: Synapses (chemical junctions) those that are used most, grow stronger and those used least wither (pruning). This means that the outer layer (grey matter) becomes thinner and more efficient
  - Process of cognitive maturation continues throughout adolescence. The cognitive maturation (positive, enabling environment, leading to positive maturation and vice versa) directly correlates to the behavioural and psychosocial maturation of an adolescent.

The means that:

“Compared with adults, teens tended to make less use of brain regions that monitor performance, spot errors, plan, and stay focused—areas the adults seemed to bring online automatically. This let the adults use a variety of brain resources and better resist temptation, while the teens used those areas less often and more readily gave in to the impulse to look at the flickering light—just as they’re more likely to look away from the road to read a text message.....If offered an extra reward, however, teens showed they could push those executive regions to work harder, improving their scores. And by age 20, their brains respond to this task much as the adults’ do. Luna suspects the improvement comes as richer networks and faster connections make the executive region more effective”

2.2. Adolescents in South Asia

4. South Asia is a region of immense political and socio-economic complexity and home to some of the largest numbers of adolescents in the world. Adolescents, defined by the United Nations as persons between the ages of 10-19 years, account for 20 per cent of the total population in South Asia or 329.5 million adolescents in absolute numbers (see Table 2). India alone has 236.4 million adolescents, more than any other country in the world. At the crossroads between childhood and adulthood, adolescents typically face many changes and uncertainties in their lives (see Box 1). Family and community relationships tend to be hierarchical and patriarchal and adolescents are usually not encouraged to have a say in issues affecting their lives. South Asian societies have extraordinarily rich spiritual and cultural traditions which at the same time may foster discriminatory and exclusionary practices. Girls and/or adolescents belonging to low castes, indigenous groups, religious minorities or other socially excluded groups (persons with disability, members of the LGBT community etc.) suffer from multiple types of discrimination.

5. The advent of adolescence affects boys and girls in different ways. While boys may experience greater freedom, girls may face more restrictions on their movement and the ability to make decisions about their lives. With gender inequality in the region being higher than the global average in all but two countries – Sri Lanka and the Maldives (see Table 2), girls may find themselves exposed to the risks of child marriage, teenage pregnancy, child domestic work, poor education and health, sexual abuse, exploitation and violence. Boys apparently have more freedom but this brings with it pressures to contribute to household incomes leading to school drop-out, exploitative and hazardous work, migration, and risky behaviours such as substance abuse, gambling, and violence. These gender differences have significant implications in terms of education, skills, jobs, health, nutrition, resources and civic participation available to boys and girls.

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3 Caste is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “One of the hereditary social classes in Hinduism that restrict the occupation of their members and their association with the members of other castes”, available at [http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ caste](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ caste)

4 Hulshof K., ‘Building Brighter Futures for adolescents in Asia-Pacific’, presentation to ‘UNICEF Private Sector Reform meeting in Seville 20-22 March 2013.'
Table 2  Key adolescent and youth development indicators in South Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Afghanistan</th>
<th>Bangladesh</th>
<th>Bhutan</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Maldives</th>
<th>Nepal</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
<th>Sri Lanka</th>
<th>Asia - South</th>
<th>World</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent Population (aged 10-19) 2013 (in thousands)</td>
<td>8,05</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>236,4</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>6,45</td>
<td>39,8</td>
<td>3,26</td>
<td>329,5</td>
<td>1,1184</td>
<td>UNICEF, State of the World’s Children, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Unemployed, Ages 15-24, female 2005/2010</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>PRB The World’s Youth 2013 Data Sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Unemployed, Ages 15-24, male 2005/2010</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>PRB The World’s Youth 2013 Data Sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate of Persons Ages 15-24, female 2005-2008 %</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>PRB 2005 Women of Our World. PRB The World’s Women and Girls 2011 Data Sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate of Persons Ages 15-24, male 2005-2008 %</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>PRB 2005 Women of Our World. PRB The World’s Women and Girls 2011 Data Sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School Enrolment, Gross, female 2005/2011 %</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>PRB The World’s Youth 2013 Data Sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School Enrolment, Gross, male 2005/2011 %</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>PRB The World’s Youth 2013 Data Sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents Ages 13-15 Who Use Tobacco, female 2005/2011 %</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>PRB The World’s Youth 2013 Data Sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents Ages 13-15 Who Use Tobacco, male 2005/2011 %</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>PRB The World’s Youth 2013 Data Sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS Among People Ages 15-24, female 2011 %</td>
<td>&lt;0.1</td>
<td>&lt;0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>&lt;0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>&lt;0.1</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>The World’s Youth 2013 Data Sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS Among People Ages 15-24, male 2011 %</td>
<td>&lt;0.1</td>
<td>&lt;0.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>&lt;0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>&lt;0.1</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td></td>
<td>PRB The World’s Youth 2013 Data Sheet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Afghanistan data from different sources on some aspects.

Percent Unemployed, Ages 15-24, 2005/2010 World Bank Data / Youth unemployment refers to the share of the labour force ages 15-24 without work but available for and seeking employment. Recorded at 16.4% in 2013. Human Development Report (Table 3) shows Labour force participation (% ages 15 and older) Female: 15.7% and male 79.7%. Literacy Rate of Persons Ages 15-24, 2005-2008 %

National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA 2008) 26.2 % of the population 15 years and older are literate based on a sampling survey of households. (National Literacy Strategy Afghanistan UNESCO 2013)
Main issues facing adolescents in South Asia are as follows:

6. **Child marriage**: South Asia has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world with 29 per cent of adolescent girls being married. The practice is deeply entrenched in gender norms and expectations about the value and role of girls. While trends have been decreasing in recent decades, child marriage brings with it the risk of school drop-out, early and risky pregnancy, and domestic and gender-based violence. Boys are also affected by child marriage but there is little or no evidence on how child marriage affects boys.

7. **Early parenthood**: Birth rate among adolescent girls (15 – 19 years) is 38.7 per cent in South Asia (Table 3): Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Nepal have the highest rates; Sri Lanka has the lowest; and India and Pakistan appear low in percentage terms but not in absolute numbers (especially in the case of India). The number of adolescent births is a key marker for measuring inequalities between males and females according to the UNDP gender inequality index referred to in Table 2. Adolescent sexual and reproductive health rights are little promoted in the region and adolescent pregnancies are most common among poor girls with limited education living in rural areas. Pregnant adolescents are at increased risk of morbidity and mortality due to complications arising in pregnancy and childbirth such as obstructed labour, preterm labour and spontaneous abortions. Premature parenthood also affects boys where they have been forced into child marriage but the impacts on them appear as yet little explored.

8. **Health-related risks**: Anaemia is an issue in some countries like India where 56 per cent of girls and 30 per cent of boys are anaemic. Anaemia in adolescence increases rates of illness, reduces learning capacity, academic achievements, work capacity as well as the ability to earn an income later in life. Infants born to anaemic mothers have a higher risk of anaemia in the first six months of life. Other health-related concerns include substance abuse (drugs and alcohol) and addictive behaviour, a common problem in the region, especially for boys. For example, tobacco consumption among young adolescents (13-15) is highest in

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7 30 percent of women aged 20-24 year old who are married or in union live in urban areas while 55 percent live in rural areas. 72 percent are from the poorest quintile and 21 percent from the richest quintile. Source: UNICEF, ‘Progress for Children. Achieving the MDGs with equity’, Number 9, September 2010. South Asia has the highest rates of child marriage in the world. Almost half (45 percent) of all women aged 20-24 reported being married before the age of 18. Almost one in five girls (17 percent) are married before the age of 15. Child marriage is declining (63 percent in 1985 to 45 percent in 2010) in South Asia, with the decline being especially marked for girls under 15 (32 percent in 1985 to 17 percent in 2010). The marriage of girls aged 15-18 is still commonplace, so more efforts are needed to protect older adolescents from marriage. See UNICEF ‘South Asia Headline Results – 2015 Progress Report’ available at [http://www.unicefrosa-progressreport.org/childmarriage.html](http://www.unicefrosa-progressreport.org/childmarriage.html)
8 Source not available
10 According to data from 2012, no update available, UNICEF, ‘Progress for Children. A report card on adolescents’, Number 10, April 2012. In addition, a key informant observed that the causes of child marriage may vary depending on the development status of the country concerned. For instance, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal have high rates of adolescent pregnancies usually due to the high prevalence of child marriage. Countries with relatively good education systems such as Sri Lanka and the Maldives have lower rates of child marriage but still have high levels of adolescent pregnancies possibly due to the lack of sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and the taboos around sex before marriage, although the evaluation has no further evidence on this point.
11 According to 2011 source, as no update available to this document, WHO, ‘Preventing Early Pregnancy and Poor Reproductive Outcomes Among Adolescents in Developing Countries’: Geneva, 2011.
13 UNICEF India, ‘Adolescents nutrition’, 2015, [http://unicef.in/WhatweDo/33/Adolescents-Nutrition](http://unicef.in/WhatweDo/33/Adolescents-Nutrition)
Bhutan and Nepal especially among boys but also among girls (Table 3). HIV prevalence among adolescents in general is very low across the region (Table 3) but pertinent to specific at-risk groups (gay and bisexual males, commercial sex workers etc.). Global evidence shows that the strongest determinants of adolescent health are structural factors such as national wealth, income inequality, and access to education and to employment. Overall more evidence is needed on the specific health issues facing adolescents in South Asia.

9. Lack of education: The region has high numbers of school dropouts. 26.5 million adolescents of lower secondary age are out of school in South Asia. Secondary school enrolment is highest in Sri Lanka and lowest in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal (Table 3). Many adolescents do not successfully transit from primary to lower secondary schools, and even less proceed to upper secondary education. Girls may be particularly vulnerable to dropping out at this stage due to child marriage and other customs. However, this is not a given, as Table 3 shows, more girls than boys are enrolled in secondary schools in the Maldives, Bhutan and Bangladesh. The same applies in some states of India, like Assam. Literacy levels of 15-24 year olds are highest in Sri Lanka and the Maldives and lowest in Bangladesh for males and Bhutan for girls (Table 3). There are at least 11.4 million Afghans aged 15 in need of literacy and numeracy skills. It is also difficult to improve female literacy in insecure areas, further compounding the gender gap with only 1% of females being literate in some remote provinces. Poverty, interacting with other factors of exclusion such as gender, is a barrier to adolescents realising their right to education, and may affect boys and girls in different ways.

10. Unemployment: Youth employment is a critical concern. Unemployment rates among 15-24 year olds are highest in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, with rates higher for females than males in both places. Elsewhere unemployment levels are less than global rates but still at concerning levels especially given the high population size and absolute numbers affected for example in India.

11. Violence: adolescents face the risk of violence, abuse and exploitation. Boys and girls may likely be affected differently, for instance, boys may be exposed to more corporal punishment in schools or suffer from gang violence, with girls more at risk of sexual abuse. Although under-reporting by both, and particularly by boys of sexual abuse, also needs consideration, as does violence targeted at LGBT adolescents. Trafficking and unsafe migration, both internal within countries as well as cross-border

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15 In the case of Bhutan, it should be noted that tobacco consumption was prohibited by law from 2010 and the data referred to here is from 2005-2011.
16 The context of the Asia-Pacific HIV epidemic, especially for young key populations is well presented along with key sources in the joint regional evaluation of HIV-related capacity development initiatives on young key populations in Asia and the Pacific (in draft form at the time of writing this evaluation report).
17 Lancet 2012; 379;1641, ‘Adolescence and the social determinants of health’ [authors Russell M Viner, Elizabeth M Ozer, Simon Denny, Michael Marmot, Michael Resnick, Adesegun Fatusi, Candace Currie]
19 Source – key informant interview during Team Leader’s visit to Assam, India
20 National Literacy Strategy Afghanistan 2013
21 Key informant notes that there is some debate about this assertion as causality is not established between child marriage and school drop outs across the board. Many girls may not have been in school anyway. In some countries like Bangladesh, girls from wealthier families may drop out when they marry while girls from poorer families may already have been out of school. This is not to say that girls may be denied education but that the causal link is more tenuous than appears.
between countries, is a key danger.\(^\text{22}\) Deeply rooted harmful practice may involve violence against adolescent boys and girls.

12. **Humanitarian crises:** armed conflicts and natural disasters in the region are leading to ongoing turmoil and making millions of adolescents vulnerable to psycho-social harm, violence, rape, abduction, sexual exploitation and killing. In Afghanistan, for example, the adolescent population has grown-up amidst conflict; the recruitment and the use of children as soldiers remains a concern despite effort by the Afghan government, with the support of UNICEF, to prohibit such practices.\(^\text{23}\) The recent earthquakes in Nepal highlight that adolescents, including those who are unaccompanied, can be vulnerable to protection risks at times of national crisis; these risks may include trafficking, gender-based violence and psychosocial distress.\(^\text{24}\)

**Policy response**

13. Compared to other population groups, adolescents have relatively little visibility or power in many South Asian societies. Their specific needs, in terms of basic social services, are not much taken into account. From the perspective of cultural anthropology, not all countries and communities in the region recognise and accept adolescence as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood.\(^\text{25}\) South Asia States vary in terms of their commitment to establishing adolescent policies, strategic information, sector wide programmes, support for adolescent organisations, and opportunities for adolescent participation in decision making processes. Although there are some efforts by governmental and non-governmental actors to target the specific needs of adolescents and youths, approaches to date have been fragmented and often short term. Current policy frameworks across the region mostly subsume adolescents under youth policy and do not recognise them as a distinct category having particular needs and requirements (see further discussion under section 6.1.).

14. At regional and national levels, there is growing awareness among Governments of the need to focus on adolescents and youth. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)-UNICEF Regional Policy Dialogue on Adolescents in Kathmandu in September 2013, is one such example. The rationale for an increased focus on adolescents is manifold:

- All countries in the region have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and are duty-bound to meet their obligations.
- It makes economic sense given the demographic curve and the high population of adolescents in South Asia.
- Developmentally, a targeted evidenced-based adolescent policy and programme can help accelerate the fight against poverty, socio-economic disparities and challenge harmful social norms, including those related to gender discrimination that especially impact adolescent girls in South Asian

countries. Such a focus can also help consolidate the historic gains achieved for children in the early and middle years of childhood.

- Working with adolescents is an opportunity: adolescents have an evolving capacity to understand, anticipate and decide what is best for them and to support the development of others. They are not young, passive children, but ‘agents’ of change, individuals capable of innovation, strong advocacy and leadership when provided the opportunity.
Box 2 - Sharing Practices
Adolescent Clubs
UNICEF Bangladesh

Bangladesh started girl-focused adolescent clubs with the Kishori Abajan (translation, ‘Adolescent Journey’) in 2006. The learning from this EC-funded 2006-2011 programme set the stage for an expanded, holistic, comprehensive adolescent club programme within the 20 UNDAF/UNICEF districts of implementation in Bangladesh. This expanded approach included working jointly with adolescent boys and girls in the clubs (15 boys and 15 girls in each club), and forming associated mothers’ and fathers’ clubs to complete the support given to and for adolescents. It was clear to the evaluation from speaking to many of the adolescents in the Child Protection adolescent clubs that the programme has been highly effective in empowering adolescents and providing a range of useful life skills. Furthermore it is an important achievement to have adolescent boys and girls together in clubs discussing gender equality, child marriage, puberty, menstrual hygiene, and eve-teasing (amongst other topics) in such a conservative society. Also recognising the clubs have been successful in including adolescents of various religions, and adolescents with disabilities.

According to both UNICEF and community members, these clubs have contributed to reducing school drop-out for girls and certainly all adolescents in the clubs appear confident and self-assured. All adolescents unanimously reported increased knowledge, increased empowerment, and increased ability to discuss issues with parents and participate more fully in decisions made affecting them. Mothers of adolescent girls reported that they are “very proud” of their daughters who are “not shy and have courage” and are very different to how the mothers were when they were young. Through the adolescent clubs and the associated mothers and fathers clubs parents have “become motivated” to keep their children (especially girls) in school and not submit them to early marriage.

It is clear in the adolescent clubs that adolescents of both sexes, varied religions, and adolescents with disabilities all equally access the clubs. All adolescents reported that the clubs do not discriminate although it was mentioned that some might not be able to access due to distance, families not allowing them access, or – in Dhaka in particular – garment factory girls who cannot come because they are working. The Child Protection Adolescent Clubs were originally intended to be mainly for out of school children, although the reality is that its mostly in-school children although cause and effect for this must be considered as over the years the clubs themselves have encouraged school retention for boys and girls. The most obvious exclusion is married adolescent girls (see box 16). The Bangladesh programme from the Kishori Abajan days in 2006-2011 and forward has been a significant success, managing to be inclusive of boys and girls together of all religions and inclusive of children with disabilities, whilst also working with parents and the broader community. The impact of this long-term approach is evident from the conversations with the confident, self-assured, enthusiastic and optimistic adolescents of Bangladesh.
3. UNICEF interventions for and with adolescents

3.1 History

Global level
15. UNICEF has increased its global focus on adolescents in recent years, moving from a narrow policy emphasis on the right to participation in the 2000s to current efforts to mainstream adolescence throughout the work of the organisation:

- The HQ adolescent development and participation unit has accordingly moved from the policy to the programmes division.
- UNICEF’s Global Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 explicitly mentions adolescent concerns with the aim of integrating results across all sectors.
- Other internal policy documents such as the UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2014-2017 also emphasise adolescent-related issues such as ending child marriage and advancing secondary education for girls.

Improvements in the survival and well-being of children under 10, the traditional focus area for UNICEF, has led to this heightened focus on the Second Decade of Life in order to sustain earlier gains. Working with adolescents also requires a different approach in terms of social transformation methods which use adolescents to create change in their own lives and that of others rather than the straightforward delivery of services (immunisation etc.) that the organisation is normally used to in its work with younger children.

Regional level
16. The ROSA regional focus started to increase in 2012, firstly, by drawing on the expertise of the child protection section and then by appointing a full time focal point in early 2013 who was an HIV/AIDS specialist. Various steps were taken to improve coordination and capacity building by setting up a working group in ROSA and through capacity building events. The focal point was replaced by a full-time ADAP regional adviser in March 2014. The post was mainly taken up with setting up of the IKEA Foundation-funded multi-country programme “Improving adolescent lives in South Asia” during the first year which has not left much time for close coordination with the entire region during this initial period.

Country level
17. UNICEF country offices in the region have their own trajectory when it comes to adolescent programming. Many of them carrying out work in this area in the 2000s, with the earliest initiatives documented in Nepal and Bangladesh, long before UNICEF global and regional offices turned their attention to this issue:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Start of Youth Information and Contact Centres (YICC) project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Initial talks with the Ministry of Education on the Life-skills in Basic Education initiative (LSBE) in schools, fully started in 2006 with the UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI). Following piloting and approval from government, the initiative is in the process of being introduced in secondary schools through teacher training. Community-based adolescent programming since 2006, starting with the “Kishori Abajan” programme (translation – “Adolescent Journey”) – see Box 2.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bhutan 2009/2010 - start of ADAP programme.
India/Assam 2007/2008 - start of adolescent programming which has now developed into extensive adolescent child protection and nutrition projects comprising 500 adolescent girls’ groups in the Assamese tea estates.
India/Jharkhand27 2006 - with piloting of the WIFS programme (scaled up by the government in 2013), and various other initiatives, such as support to youth policy (2009/10), Child Reporters (2009/10), HIV Red Ribbon clubs (2010-12), Menstrual hygiene management (2012-2015), support to government programmes like SABLA (2012) and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) and related protection initiatives (From 2009 onwards but intensified since 2011), and the Sports for Development project in 2014.
India/Overall 2000s - The evaluation does not have a full overview of interventions elsewhere in India but there were interventions in other Indian states for adolescents since the 2000s, such as the Deepshika programme in Maharashtra in 2007.
Maldives The Country Office reports that it is now starting to look at adolescents more holistically but ad hoc interventions in the past have touched on adolescent’s issues, such as, support to the youth bill, work on drugs prevention and juvenile justice.
Nepal 2001 - long-standing radio programme initiated (see box 3) along with other interventions in the 2000s for HIV, social policy and the Child Friendly Local Governance programme. ‘Jamarko – The Initiative’ was piloted in 2011 in an effort to bring together small groups of adolescents and young people to develop a comprehensive network. The lessons from this initiative informed the fully-fledged ADAP programme in 2013.
Pakistan 2012 – support to the development of an adolescent strategy by the government of Punjab and also start of the ‘Peacebuilding, education and advocacy programme/Social Cohesion and Resilience (SCR) programme which indirectly targets adolescents.
Sri Lanka The Country Office currently has more of a focus on adolescents though considerable past work with youth.

26 The evaluation considers this from the perspective of the states of Gujarat and Jharkhand which were selected for case study visits rather than India as a whole (see sampling in section 5.1.)
27 As above
Box 3  Sharing Practices  
UNICEF Nepal

‘Saathi Sanga Manka Kura’ (SSMK), a 45-minute weekly radio show which was originally developed by the UNICEF in 2001, has been hosted by Equal Access Nepal (EAN) since 2004 with continued support from UNICEF. SSMK addresses life skills and empowers its young listeners to take control of their own lives and make informed decisions about their future and own happiness. SSMK has won several awards and generated over 7 million listeners, more than 3000 monthly audience responses and hundreds of listener clubs (VaRG report 2010). Since the target audience, the adolescents of Nepal changes every few years as a cohort of adolescents “graduate” and new groups enter as listeners, the show must go on.

The revised goal of SSMK is to inform, educate and capacitate stakeholders in the survival, protection, participation and development of the rights of children, adolescents and women for social change. Along with a national-level weekly program in Nepali language, SSMK will be produced in local languages by local people in the selected 15 districts, which rank low in deprivation indices and which are also priority districts of UNICEF. The radio programmes will be guided by Content Advisory Groups (CAG) both at the national and local levels. To develop local versions of SSMK, EAN will build the capacity of selected FM stations. EAN will also conduct social media mini-workshops, provide fellowships to youth reporters, and mobilize local clubs and groups. EAN will link listeners and their pertinent issues with policy-makers and other related duty-bearers. EAN has developed and will follow its strategy to reach the hard-to-reach adolescents who are isolated due to geographic, economic, gender or other social and cultural reasons. The feedback of listeners from SMS, emails and letters will be looped back into future radio shows to incorporate major concerns of the listeners. With the production of local versions of the radio programs and innovative new activities such as social media mini-workshops, SSMK will help in the survival, protection, participation and development of many more children and adolescents of Nepal.

3.2.  Overview

18. UNICEF’s work on adolescents is not a well-defined and finite programme as indicated by the historical evolution described above; rather it comprises of regional and country level activities which have germinated independently of each other, in different ways and at different times.

19. At regional level, UNICEF adolescent activities include:
   
   • Emphasising programming with and for adolescents in policy documents *inter alia*, in UNICEF South Asia’s 2014-2017 Regional Office Management Plan; and the drafting of Regional Adolescents’ Strategic Framework which was presented and discussed at the adolescent focal points and staff from the region at the October 2015 ADAP Regional Network Meeting;
   
   • Increasing technical support through *inter alia* the appointment of a Regional Advisor Adolescent Development and Participation;
   
   • Coordination and strategic guidance towards the IKEA Foundation-funded multi-country programme “Improving adolescent lives in South Asia”;
   
   • Providing strategic and technical guidance to the eight countries in the region;
• Reinforcing intellectual leadership and knowledge management in the field of adolescent work in South Asia.

20. At country level, programming for adolescents varies considerably from one place to the next and between sectors. The mapping exercise carried out by this evaluation (Box 4) identified 145 initiatives/groups of initiatives ranging from complex multi-sectoral and multi-country projects through to ad hoc pieces of technical advice. These initiatives were largely unknown at regional level or shared between UNICEF offices but are now documented and analysed in the database submitted with this report (Annex 12). The following pattern of programming emerges from this analysis:

• Spread of interventions: India has the highest number of interventions, followed by Nepal. The remaining initiatives are evenly spread between the other countries of the region (see Annex 12, ‘Analysis sheet’, Table I).

• Explicit vs. implicit interventions: The majority of interventions are explicit in the sense that they use the terminology of adolescence in their programming, as compared to implicit programming which does not call itself adolescent programming but in effect benefits the 10-19 year age group. (see Annex 12, ‘Analysis sheet’, Table II).

• Timeframe: Most interventions are ongoing with a handful of prospective interventions. There is little detail on past interventions; this is not a surprise, given the lack of institutional record-keeping. (see Annex 12, ‘Analysis sheet’, Table II).

• Level of intervention: The data records whether interventions are operating at macro level (policy; engagement with other organisations/agencies in adolescent-related activities), meso level (capacity building of implementers), or micro level (adolescents and communities). Macro level activities constitute a significant proportion of UNICEF’s work and comprise technical advice to policy-makers on legislation, guidelines, national strategies, assessments etc. Work at the micro level is not happening in isolation and tends to form part of an overall package along with macro/meso interventions. It usually consists of group formation or training programmes for adolescents aimed at enhancing life skills and vocational/educational opportunities. A more holistic approach of combined high level policy, capacity building and grassroots services can be seen in places where UNICEF has dedicated funding for actual projects. (see Annex 12, ‘Analysis sheet’, Table II).

• Links with UNICEF’s Strategic Plan (SP): In terms of sectoral links to the SP, most adolescent programming examined, as anticipated, is linked to child protection, followed by education. Health, HIV/AIDS, WASH and nutrition appear with less frequency, and social inclusion appears least of all, possibly because it is not seen as a distinct sector in a number of offices. ADAP programmes are cross-cutting and do not fit exclusively in one sector. In addition, some of the interventions are multi-sectoral; as such the total number of interventions by sector here does equate to the overall number (145) of interventions/groups of interventions in the Adolescent Initiatives database Annex 12, ‘Analysis sheet’, Table III).

• Links to ROSA’s adolescent regional strategic framework: ROSA’s draft regional strategy on adolescents identifies three tracers (child marriage, anaemia, secondary education) as there a single target is not relevant to all countries in the region. The data shows that these tracers are not applicable to all countries; child marriage and anaemia are not defined as current priority issues for three of the countries in the region (Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka). Recognising this, the idea behind the draft regional strategy is that at least one tracer can be applied to any South Asian country. (see Annex 12, ‘Analysis sheet’, Table IV).
• **Financial expenditure:** The database does not record UNICEF’s financial expenditure on programming for and with adolescents. These funds cannot be isolated, the interventions are too diffuse and the information embedded deep in country programme documentation and financial records.

• **Types of interventions:** UNICEF’s programming for adolescents is extensive and multi-faceted, common interventions by SP outcome area across the region include:
  o **Health** – support to Adolescent Friendly Health Services
  o **HIV/AIDS** – prevention work with at-risk groups through changes in policy, and improved access to services and awareness-raising.
  o **Child protection** – prevention of child marriage through work at multiple levels (policy through to grassroots); violence against children, child labour, adolescent empowerment and juvenile justice reform are also common interventions.
  o **Education** – life skills training, non-formal education and vocational training.
  o **Nutrition** – iron folic supplementation
  o **WASH** – menstrual hygiene management
  o **Social inclusion** – civic engagement and adolescent participation initiatives
  o **Cross-sectional** - Some initiatives such as the SABLA programme in Gujarat, India cover multiple components. Much of the adolescent empowerment work, including life skills enhancement falls under the cross-sectoral theme of communications for development. Social inclusion may also be dealt with as a cross-cutting theme.

• **Theories of change:** UNICEF’s disparate interventions do not have a common theory of change and in fact most do not have one at all. Theory of change can refer to a spectrum of programme planning tools ranging from an overarching theoretical framework through to log frames and results frameworks28. Only 11/145 of the interventions/groups of interventions report having a theory of change (Annex 12); some have a log frame; and the majority use the country programme results matrix as their planning tool. The evaluation was able to obtain six of the eleven theories of change that were said to exist and summarised these in Annex 12 ‘Analysis sheet’ Table V. These theories situate the adolescent in the surrounding environment and refer to the chains of influence to varying degrees. Aside from that, no common threads that can be drawn from these examples. Further observations on these theories are made later in the ‘Evaluabilty of object - section 4.3.’ ‘Evaluation criteria and questions – section 4.5.’ and ‘Findings section 8.4. ‘Monitoring and evaluation’.

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28 This evaluation refers to the following description of a ‘theory of change’: “A ‘theory of change‘ explains how activities are understood to produce a series of results that contribute to achieving the final intended impacts. It can be developed for any level of intervention – an event, a project, a programme, a policy, a strategy or an organisation. A theory of change can be developed for an intervention: • where objectives and activities can be identified and tightly planned beforehand, or • that changes and adapts in response to emerging issues and to decisions made by partners and other stakeholders. Sometimes the term is used generally to refer to any version of this process, including a results chain, which shows a series of boxes from inputs to outputs, outcomes and impacts (see figure 1), or a logframe, which represents the same information in a matrix”. UNICEF, Rogers. P, ‘Theory of Change’ 2014, available at [http://devinfolive.info/impact_evaluation/img/downloads/Theory_of_Change_ENG.pdf](http://devinfolive.info/impact_evaluation/img/downloads/Theory_of_Change_ENG.pdf)
3.3. Stakeholders

21. The stakeholders of UNICEF interventions for and with adolescents include:

- **Adolescents** themselves as the direct beneficiaries of UNICEF programmes. The chief modality for working with this age group appears to be group work; as such adolescent programming may have more grassroots beneficiary involvement as compared to other types of programming.

- **Community members** comprise of parents, relatives/siblings and members of local community structures such as mothers’ groups, school teachers, religious leaders, community mobilisers and other village level functionaries like health centre or nursery workers (known as aanganwadi workers in India) and members of child protection committees, village development committees and political structures, school management boards etc. Such stakeholders may benefit from UNICEF interventions, for instance, through capacity building events, or indirectly, through improvements in the community.

- **Civil society** groups are often at the frontline of UNICEF interventions, often tasked with delivering the project on the group. They may also benefit from UNICEF’s capacity building activities.

- **Private sector** may also be occasional implementation partners; seen in one location visited by the evaluation (Assam). Otherwise they may feature in UNICEF programmes as donors, counterparts or advocacy targets.

- **Government** at all levels from national, through to district and beyond is a critical stakeholder for UNICEF. Government may be involved in implementation and also benefit from UNICEF’s intervention through capacity building but it is also the main target for policy advocacy. Typical counterparts in Government include ministries and departments for health, youth affairs, HIV/AIDS, AIDS, drugs, police, social welfare, development and gender.

- **International agencies** do not appear as a common stakeholder for UNICEF’s programming for and with adolescents. Aside from UNFPA, the only other agencies mentioned were UNDP, UNESCO and IOM. Where such relationships exist, they are based on collaboration and occasionally joint project implementation, for instance, the planned child marriage work in India with UNFPA. or the previous adult literacy work in Afghanistan with UNESCO.

- **UNICEF staff** are central stakeholders themselves with all parts of the organisation involved (headquarters, regional and country offices), all sectors, and all levels of staff from high level representatives to field project officers.

- **Other** partners are reported to the media and information, communication and telecoms providers. Academics/experts do not appear much as a stakeholder for UNICEF’s programming for and with adolescents.

22. This identification of stakeholders is based on the list of persons consulted for the evaluation (Annex 1). The evaluation began a process of mapping all relevant stakeholders in the inception phase but this became an impractical exercise for most country programmes given the complexity of implementation structures. The main observation that can be made is that grassroots stakeholders (adolescents and community members) play a particularly predominant role in programming for and with adolescents, alongside government, civil society and UNICEF staff.
B. EVALUATION APPROACH

4. Evaluation parameters

4.1. Evaluation purpose and objectives

23. This formative evaluation is carried out as UNICEF begins to develop its Adolescent Strategic Framework in South Asia and to invest substantial resources in adolescent-related work. The principle aim is to help develop UNICEF’s programming with and for adolescents in the region; and to generate evidence on UNICEF’s performance in directly and indirectly promoting the empowerment and other rights’ fulfillment of adolescents. The evaluation is expected to contribute to mainstreaming an adolescent perspective in sectoral programming, enhance convergence across sectors and strengthen initiatives that explicitly focus on programming with and for adolescents.

The TOR (Annex 6) sets out the objective as follows: “the evaluation will assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of existing UNICEF programmes in mainstreaming or explicitly addressing adolescent-related issues. The evaluation will also examine if the programmes currently being rolled out or in the pipeline are evaluable. Specifically, it should be determined whether or not the programmes are adequately defined and their results verifiable. The evaluation will identify lessons learned and provide recommendations on how to strengthen adolescents programming and mainstreaming or convergence approaches in the countries of the region.”

24. Users of the evaluation are primarily:

- UNICEF project and field staff, along with frontline partners may find useful programmatic learning and tips from other experiences in the region.
- UNICEF country office staff may use the findings and recommendations to shape strategies and actions with and for adolescents in conjunction with line ministries and other national partners. Learning on internal efficiencies may also help with future planning.
- UNICEF ROSA may utilise the evaluation to promote evidence-based programming and strengthen linkages between country offices and other institutions engaged in the development of programme strategies.
- UNICEF HQ and staff in other regions may use the evaluation to consolidate learning on UNICEF’s global experience in working with and for adolescents.

25. The evaluation is primarily a learning opportunity for UNICEF and does not pose apparent risks to staff, UNICEF or stakeholders. It is not an accountability evaluation but nonetheless as an exercise committed to generating objective evidence on UNICEF’s work with adolescents, some of its findings may question assumptions and practices which some users could find challenging.

4.2. Scope of evaluation

26. The TOR (Annex 6) sets out a wide scope which was narrowed during the course of the evaluation in a number of ways.
**Geographic scope:** UNICEF programme initiatives related to adolescents in all eight countries of South Asia (Figure 1) but with a focus on sample interventions (see below section 5.1. ‘Sampling methods’).

**Time frame:** Two of the most recent country programme cycles in each country giving an overall time span of 15 years (2006-2020). The focus is on current/recent initiatives due to time constraints and the lack of an institutional record but past and future initiatives are also taken into account.

**Thematic field:** All sectors with a conscious effort made to go beyond child protection, which is seen as the traditional domain of adolescent-related initiatives.

**Interventions:** Aside from a few well-known adolescent interventions, the number and range of adolescent programmes in the region was not known at the outset by ROSA. Part of the evaluation task as set out in the TOR was to scan interventions for and with adolescents in all eight countries (Box 4). A sample of interventions were identified for more in-depth review and field visits.

**Levels:** Regional, country, and municipal levels.

**Unit of analysis:** The specific initiatives/interventions/projects are of varying scale.

**Population groups:** Adolescents, people between the ages of 10-19, are the clear focus along with youth (15-24), also sometimes referred to as ‘young people’ (10-24). In practice, activities may comprise overlapping categories i.e. older children, youth and young people (terms sometimes used interchangeably in UN definitions to mean people aged 15 – 24)29 but the main focus was on adolescents.30

### 4.3. Evaluability of object

27. As described, the **object of the evaluation** is UNICEF’s programming on adolescents across all eight countries in South Asia and at the regional level. As is now known at the end of the evaluation process, this means at least **145 initiatives/groups of initiatives** ranging from complex multi-sectoral and multi-country projects through to ad hoc pieces of technical advice (Annex 12 dataset). These initiatives have germinated in idiosyncratic ways and are variable in terms of their objectives, time periods, budgets, geographic scope, implementation phase, and references to human rights, gender and equity.

28. Evaluability is defined by OECD-DAC (2010) as **“The extent to which an activity or project can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion”**. The initiatives/groups of initiatives identified by this report are evaluable to some degree since they all, at the very least, come under a country programme results framework and have inputs and outputs defined. The sheer number of initiatives however poses a challenge. The TOR set a wide breath and scope since the evaluation is required to help UNICEF expand its work on adolescents which necessitates an understanding of the existing stretch of the work. The evaluation

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30 It is also worth noting that as the evaluation spans a long period from 2006, some country offices expressly focused on youths (15 to 24) partly because at global level the emphasis was on ‘youths’ rather than adolescents in earlier years. For instance, the Sri Lanka and Maldives country offices had a ‘Child Protection and Youth Development’ section under previous country programmes. The evaluation may therefore gather some information that pertains to youths and in effect encompasses older adolescents (15-19).
therefore had to find a balance between achieving a breadth of scope while at the same time, a depth of understanding of specific interventions i.e. figuring out what to evaluate and how within the existing time and resource limitations.

29. As it was clearly impossible to evaluate all the initiatives in the region, sample interventions were selected for case study visits (see section 5.2) but these were still too many in number to allow for a full evaluation of any particular project. It was necessary to visit several initiatives in each week long case study visit in order to assess the range of UNICEF’s interventions as the alternative would have been to visit one known intervention only which would be too limiting.

30. The evaluation faced with multiple initiatives, all operating under different results matrices/theories of change, and no ready-made measurement framework applicable to all, approached this difficulty by using the evaluation questions themselves as a results framework. The ‘effectiveness’ questions (2.1 to 2.3) set up expectations for UNICEF programming (adolescent empowerment, improved services, and enhanced enabling environments) and are general enough to cover a range of possible outcomes. This in effect created a results matrix that was applied to each intervention under review: it enabled verification of specific aspects of different interventions; comparisons across different interventions (and countries) and therefore general conclusions relevant to UNICEF programming for and with adolescents as a whole.

31. The TOR recognised that the lack of an overarching and explicit theory of change posed a challenge in terms of the evaluability since clear results and corresponding indicators were not defined. It suggested that retrofitting a theory of change might help understand the explicit and implicit approaches used. The evaluation did not find it necessary from a methodological point of view to know the theory of change/logframe/results framework in advance in order to carry out the evaluation. A ‘goals-free’ approach i.e. looking for effects/causes/drivers without pre-empting what these might be was considered a legitimate evaluation methodology especially as it avoids the problem of the evaluation being constricted or misguided by weak logframes. In fact, the evaluation did impose a results framework based on the TOR questions so it was not entirely ‘goals-free’. This approach was found suitable for a formative evaluation focused on processes, what is working well, what is not working well and the factors affecting programme implementation, rather than a ‘summative evaluation’ intent on validating pre-established results.

4.4. Evaluation focus

32. The TOR emphasised an interest in assessing “UNICEF’s contribution to the empowerment and rights’ fulfillment of adolescents”. One of the evaluation questions specifically concerned the effectiveness of programming for and with adolescents in contributing to the empowerment of adolescents. As there was no pre-existing commonly used UNICEF definition of empowerment, the evaluation developed its own meaning to refer to adolescents having more confidence, knowledge and skills, a greater say in their lives, an ability to change their behaviour/situations, and better access to services. This meaning was systematically

32 A commonly used pre-existing UNICEF definition of ‘empowerment’ was not found so the evaluation developed its own meaning during the inception phase. There are various definitions being used around the region which are broadly similar to the definition adopted by the evaluation.
33 Access to services appears as a separate question to ‘empowerment’ in the Evaluation TOR questions.
integrated into questionnaires for adolescent focus groups and other stakeholders (Annex 4) and applied throughout the evaluation. It is worth noting that seeing empowerment as a result in itself is different to the usual approach in UNICEF where empowerment or participation interventions are mostly seen as an approach/methodology for achieving goals or sectoral results in UNICEF (i.e.: improving adolescent girls empowerment is seen as one of the strategies for decreasing anaemia in adolescent girls) rather than results. There is no specific and recognised indicator to measure “participation/empowerment” in the UNICEF global results framework. This evaluation assesses empowerment as an end in itself.

33. ‘Rights’ fulfillment is taken to mean rights pertaining to adolescents (age 10-19) which derive from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 (applicable to children under 18) or other international treaties applicable to both adults and children, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). There is no framework for ‘adolescent rights’ as such, rather all adolescents benefit from the range of human rights standards applicable to all persons whereas those aged 10 upwards to the end of their 17th year, also benefit from the rights ascribed under the CRC.

34. All rights under the CRC are relevant to this evaluation. However, it is not feasible for the evaluation to use the CRC as a measurement framework given that the linkages between the evaluation object and the international human rights framework are very many; and since the evaluation is already operating under multiple frameworks, namely UNICEF’s SP; OECD/DAC criteria; and the concept of ‘empowerment’. Instead, the evaluation addresses the question of rights by looking at UNICEF’s human rights-based approach to development and by seeing how human rights, gender and equity are considered in relation to the key components of that definition by taking the following steps:

(1) “The ultimate aim of all UNICEF-supported activities is the realization of the rights of children and women, as laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women”:

- Reviewed whether UNICEF interventions explicitly referred to child rights. (criteria in developing the database - Annex 12)
- The TOR consistently emphasised adolescent rights and equity issues, these references were further enhanced by the evaluation team’s amendments to the evaluation questions (see Section 4.5).

34 ‘Rights-fulfillment’ was not defined in the TOR or other commonly used UNICEF documents and the evaluation developed its own approach.
35 The evaluation uses the terminology of ‘adolescent rights’ from time to time despite the anomaly that there are no specific and unique rights in international law pertaining only to this group; the term is used to denote adolescents as an age group being able to enjoy a range of rights in various statutes. Moreover, while there may be overlaps with the concept of empowerment which can link to a range of protection and participation rights, the evaluation keeps a separate focus, in order to reflect the aims and understanding of the numerous ‘empowerment’ activities in the region.
36 There are 42 rights under the CRC, all of which may be relevant in the context of this evaluation. Some directly relate to UNICEF’s seven outcome areas: e.g. article 24 (health), article 28 (education), article 2 (social inclusion) whereas other UNICEF sectors relate to a number of articles e.g. child protection refers (at least) to articles 19 (violence, abuse and neglect), 32 (child labour), 34 (sexual exploitation), 35 (abduction, sale and trafficking), 36 (other forms of exploitation), 37 (inhumane treatment and detention) etc. This report refers only to rights under the CRC; these apply to the vast majority of adolescents being considered by this evaluation and it is not possible to disaggregate evaluation findings applicable to those who are 18 and 19 years only.
37 Definition used by UNICEF http://www.unicef.org/rightsresults/
“Human rights and child rights principles guide our work in all sectors – and at each stage of the process. These principles include: universality, non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to survival and development, the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, accountability and respect for the voice of the child”:

- Reviewed UNICEF activities in light of these principles as appropriate. For instance, the evaluation consistently tested whether UNICEF programmes were reaching the most disadvantaged. With regards to gender equality, the evaluation gathered information on whether data is gender disaggregated (Annex 12 database) and considered how programmes interacted with boys and girls differently. The evaluation noted from the outset, the strong emphasis of UNICEF programming, with good reason, on addressing inequalities facing adolescent girls, but at the same time, looked at how issues facing adolescent boys, particularly the most disadvantaged, were being addressed.
- Applied these principles to the evaluation itself, for instance, by ensuring respondents in meetings and focus groups represented the diversity present in the programmes; by giving voice to adolescents in the evaluation process etc. The evaluation team was too small (two persons) to take account of gender composition, but in any case, the overall support structures were gender-balanced taking into account UNICEF staff, interpreters, managers, reference groups etc.

UNICEF programmes of cooperation support those who have obligations to respect, protect and fulfill rights, by helping them develop their capacities to do so. And UNICEF helps those with rights to develop their capacity to claim their rights.

- Reviewed to what extent UNICEF interventions are supporting duty-bearers and rights holders and the balance between these two components. In particular considerable focus was given to relevant questions of the TOR which look at support to rights claimants (Question 2.1.) and the capacity building of duty bearers (Question 2.2. and 2.3.)

4.5. Evaluation criteria and questions

35. The OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact\(^{38}\) are used as interpreted by the TOR. In addition, the evaluation questions set out in the TOR were amended during the inception phase through discussions with UNICEF to bring clarity and to raise new issues. All the questions were retained to the extent possible since they represent the key interests of the stakeholders although with the proviso that it would not be possible for the evaluation to respond to them all in equal depth. While this is not a summative evaluation, it considers outcomes and outputs insofar as they relate to the evaluation questions.\(^{39}\) Revised evaluations:

\(^{38}\) Notably the OECD criteria on ‘impact’ has a limited meaning for this evaluation; nor is a ‘cost analysis’ required. ‘Efficiency’ is taken by the evaluation to cover a wide range of internal organisational issues.

\(^{39}\) As the TOR does not define these terms; here are the definitions used by the evaluation: Outputs are the specific products, goods or services, that an activity is expected to deliver as a result of receiving the inputs. Output measures refer to outputs as far as possible and cover availability and accessibility of services; Outcomes, which generally refer to peoples’ responses to a programme and how they are doing things differently as a result of it. Outcome measures refer to utilization; Impacts, which are the effects of the project/programme on the people and their surroundings. These may be economic, social, organisational, health, environmental, technical or other intended or unintended results of the project or programme. Impacts are long-term effects while outcomes are shorter-term effects relating to objectives. Impact measures to the condition of children and women in the target area; Results can be at output, outcome or impact level. Taken from http://preval.org/documentos/00473.pdf
1. Relevance: In assessing both existing programmes and looking at plans for future programming, the evaluation will examine the extent to which UNICEF’s work on adolescents is aligned with national and UNICEF priorities. It will also assess the relative importance of existing and planned initiatives in empowering and fulfilling the rights of adolescents, particularly those facing socio-economic discrimination or exclusion, and examine UNICEF’s comparative advantage in engaging in this field. Related evaluation questions include:

1.1. What strategies have been followed within UNICEF to promote the empowerment and other rights’ fulfilment of adolescents, particularly those facing socio-economic discrimination or exclusion?

1.2. What strategies/approaches have not been followed in a given context and why?

1.3. What implicit or explicit theories of change have informed these strategies?

1.4. What strategic advantages does UNICEF have in supporting the empowerment and rights’ fulfilment of adolescents in South Asia?

1.5. To what extent is UNICEF’s South Asia programming with and for adolescents aligned with the UNICEF Global Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and other relevant plans such as the Gender Action Plan (2014-2017)?

1.6. To what extent is UNICEF’s South Asia programming with and for adolescents aligned with the national priorities of programme countries?

1.7. What are the priority needs of adolescents in the context in question? Who is addressing them and what role can UNICEF play in addressing these needs?

2. Effectiveness: In assessing existing programmes, the evaluation will examine the extent to which UNICEF has contributed to empowering and creating positive changes in adolescents’ lives, particularly among adolescent girls and adolescents facing other types of discrimination or exclusion, whether through improved enabling environments or directly through improved service delivery. Related evaluation questions include:

2.1. To what extent do UNICEF South Asia programmes, past and present, contribute to the empowerment of adolescents, particularly girls and those from other discriminated or excluded groups? To what extent do UNICEF programmes empower adolescents through participation in its own programme design, implementation and evaluation?

2.2. To what extent do UNICEF programmes, past and present, foster better access to and use of quality adolescent-oriented services, particularly among girls and other discriminated or excluded groups?

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40 New question
41 Question separated out from first question
42 Added at suggestion of evaluation reference group.
43 New question, also modified in response to comment from evaluation reference group.
44 Wording modified here and in subsequent questions to remove speculative enquiry about future programmes.
45 Question developed in response to comment by evaluation reference group.
2.3. To what extent do UNICEF programmes, past and present, build enabling environments (at political, policy, legal, social, economic, family and community levels) for the fulfilment of adolescents’ rights in South Asia?

2.4. How is programming with and for adolescents in UNICEF South Asia addressing equity and diversity issues among adolescents, including reaching the most disadvantaged, and differences in sex, gender, ethnicity, race, caste, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity etc.? 46

2.5. How effective or ineffective is the programme as a whole? Which other effects or results are there from UNICEF programming with and for adolescents, both positive and negative? 47

2.6. Which factors, besides UNICEF’s programming with and for adolescents, are contributing to the types of changes described here? 48 What are the reverberations of the programme, how does it affect other programmes in UNICEF and the country? What are the intended and unintended consequences of a programme that has a focus defined by one age group? 49

2.7. Why has/has not UNICEF programming for adolescents been effective/ineffective? 50

3. Efficiency: Two sets of efficiency-related issues will be examined. One relates to the efforts made by UNICEF in mainstreaming an adolescent perspective in programming at the country office level. Another pertains to the establishment of monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems that cover UNICEF’s work (in cooperation with its partners) on adolescents. The evaluation is not required to carry out a cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis. 51 Related evaluation questions include:

3.1. To what extent are programming with and for adolescents approaches, including the allocation of human and financial resources by UNICEF, appropriate to, and commensurate with, the political and operational contexts within which UNICEF works in South Asia?

3.2. What is the experience in UNICEF of adolescent-specific programming vs mainstreaming or convergence approaches? 52

3.3. To what extent has UNICEF put in place guidelines and procedures to build the capacity of staff in order to support the mainstreaming of an adolescent perspective in programming or to adopt participatory methods and approaches?

3.4. To what extent have monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems, including theories of change, been set up for UNICEF programmes that explicitly or implicitly address adolescents with a

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46 Expanded to include equity issues and different forms of diversity.
47 Added to capture any other types of effects or unintended consequences.
48 New question
49 New question suggested by evaluation reference group and to be addressed to the extent feasible.
50 New question and edited ambiguity in wording following comment from evaluation reference group.
51 Clarification inserted.
52 New question
53 Consideration of monitoring and evaluation frameworks to involve checking if results are defined, when are results measured (baseline, mid-term, endline), what data is collected (gender; age disaggregation); what methods are used; what human resources are there; is there a logframe/theory of change/results matrix. It was noted at inception stage that the evaluation could not commit to a fuller assessment of the quality of individual M&E frameworks, for example, commenting on the appropriateness of specific
view to generating evidence on UNICEF performance? Are participatory methods and approaches included in the design of M&E frameworks for interventions aimed at adolescents?

3.5. To what extent do UNICEF partnership strategies and practices at different levels support the delivery of results for adolescents in South Asia, in particular for the most discriminated or excluded groups?

3.6. To what extent is UNICEF able to advocate for explicit adolescents programming, both within the organisation as well as vis-à-vis development partners, in a possible context of competing priorities?

4. Sustainability: The extent to which UNICEF-supported initiatives relating to adolescents can be scaled up by governments or taken forward by civil society and other development partners is critical for UNICEF. The evaluation will assess both ongoing and planned initiatives with a view to ascertaining the extent to which they have or expect to put in place exit strategies, while generating sufficient momentum amongst key stakeholders to sustain related initiatives independently.

4.1. To what extent and in what way are UNICEF programmes sustainable?

4.2. To what extent has UNICEF been able to ensure that the policies and programmes of its partners (governments, civil society and other development partners) address adolescent needs, especially those facing socio-economic discrimination or exclusion, in a sustainable way?

5. Impact: Impact, in the sense of either long-term benefits to adolescents, particularly girls and those facing socio-economic discrimination or exclusion, or in the sense of directly attributable changes resulting from UNICEF initiatives, will not be assessed in the context of ongoing initiatives. However, the evaluation will examine the extent to which new or planned initiatives are likely to lend themselves to achieving impacts in the future.

5.1. To what extent is UNICEF embedding evaluation in programming, particularly of pilot initiatives, with a view to demonstrating attributable impacts for male and female adolescents, as well as for adolescents from discriminated or excluded groups, that could be used in policy advocacy and upscaling of approaches?

36. Two aspects merit further explanation:

- The object of the evaluation is **UNICEF’s contribution** to the promotion of adolescent rights. Initiatives must be linked to UNICEF in some way; this is not a situation analysis, nor is it a review of

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indicators or wording, due to the lack of time and resources needed to acquire the depth of understanding of the projects concerned.

54 Wording on ‘public sector performance’ is removed here to emphasise that this is an evaluation about UNICEF as explained above in section 1.3. ‘Object of evaluation’.

55 New question in response to comment from evaluation reference group.

56 Moved from ‘Sustainability’ section

57 New question

58 Revised question and duplicate question deleted.
work done solely by other organisations on adolescent issues. In assessing ‘effectiveness, the evaluation captures external factors/players/constraints but focuses on delineating UNICEF’s role in the causal chain to see what it can do better. For instance, in situations where UNICEF is involved in programmes implemented by national counterparts\textsuperscript{59}, the evaluation does not have the means or the mandate to evaluate entire national programmes; instead it teases out UNICEF’s own learning from these experiences.

- The evaluation responded to the TOR emphasis on ‘evaluability’ of current and future interventions by producing an overarching analysis of all 145 initiatives/groups of initiatives to see whether UNICEF’s M&E frameworks allow projects to be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion. The revised evaluation question 3.4. required the collection of data on each intervention as follows: whether results are defined, when results are measured (baseline, mid-term, endline), what data is collected (gender; age disaggregation); what methods are used; what human resources there are; whether a logframe/theory of change/results matrix exists. The data so collected is stored in the database of initiatives (Annex 12) and the analysis presented in section 8.4.\textsuperscript{60}

5. **Evaluation Methodology**

5.1. **Data collection**

5.1.1. **Methods**

37. The evaluation used qualitative methods i.e. desk reviews and documentary analyses, stakeholder consultations, interviews and focus group discussions which were broken down into the inception and implementation phase as follows.

**Methods/activities in inception phase:**\textsuperscript{61}

(1) Desk review and portfolio scan involving documentary review of global, regional and country programme documents uploaded by UNICEF ROSA and the country offices to a drop box facility as well as internet research (Annex 3).

(2) Skype calls between the evaluation team and the evaluation focal points in each of the country programmes; planning meetings between the team leader and case study specialist; liaison with the Evaluation Management Team about preparation.

(3) Visit to Nepal and India 18 April to 2 May 2015 by the Team Leader for two purposes: to carry out inception meetings with ROSA in Kathmandu and with the India Country Office in Delhi; and to pilot the evaluation methodology in a case study of Nepal. (Annex 2 for schedule of visits) The Nepal earthquake struck on the 25 April 2015 during the Kathmandu inception visit and directly affected both the Team Leader

\textsuperscript{59} It is noted that countries are working in different ways, some with more direct hands on support to adolescents, others more indirectly, providing organisational development to partners who then devise their own activities for adolescents. This point is made here to ensure both levels are captured depending on the country situation.

\textsuperscript{60} The TOR mentions projects in the pipeline. Few prospective projects were mentioned, 15/145, and even then there was barely any information on them except for the major projects in the region e.g. Global Child Marriage project or IKEA Foundation-funded ‘Improving Adolescent Lives in South Asia’. These projects are included in the data analysis but the evaluation team could not justify diverting additional time to analysing the M&E frameworks of these projects since they already benefitted from intense specialist M&E support and the evaluation team was not in a position to add any further value.

\textsuperscript{61} Further detailed in the inception report
and UNICEF ROSA staff. This led to some rescheduling of evaluation plans as the Nepal case study had to be completed at a later date through skype interviews and with the assistance of a local consultant but the overall timeframe remained the same. The implementation phase concluded with an inception report which comprised data collection on contexts; a plan for mapping initiatives; stakeholder identification and analysis; and plans for further case study visits.

**Methods in implementation phase:**

39. Case study approach based on visits to five countries - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India (States of Assam, Gujarat, Jharkhand), Nepal – already visited as above - and desk-based reviews for the remaining three countries (Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka). The visits were deliberately staggered to allow for piloting in the first case study (Nepal - which was disrupted by the earthquake), followed by five visits, and then concluding with the final visit to Assam after the draft report was prepared. This worked well for formative evaluation as it allowed the evaluation team to build on learning from previous visits.

40. The evaluation question and response matrix (Annex 5) links each evaluation criteria/question to one or more of the following sources/methods to ensure triangulation of information at different levels: between sources in a particular project site; between project sites; and between countries. Indicators for the evaluation questions were developed in the inception phase but as the evaluation was using qualitative methods where the forthcoming information was unpredictable, the indicators were further refined during the analysis phase. The answers to evaluation TOR questions are shown in the matrix and also in footnotes throughout the text.

41. Each case study involved the following:

- **Documentary reviews.** Key sources of information comprised (i) programme and project documents and results frameworks, monitoring and financial reports, evaluations, as well as key project outputs, and (ii) policy or strategy documents relating to specific initiatives. The documentary sources are listed in Annex 3.

- **Consultations and interviews.**
  - In countries visited – semi-structured interviews with key informants (staff, Government, NGO counterparts, international organisations, academia) and implementing partners; and focus group discussions with adolescents and communities members (parents, family, teachers, community members etc.) (Annex 2 for itineraries).
  - In countries not visited – a limited number of semi-structured telephone/skype interviews were carried out with UNICEF staff and with partners where facilitated by the Office.

- **Mapping of initiatives.** This aspect began in the inception phase with a desk scan but was only concluded at evaluation end. The full extent of initiatives was not known at the beginning either by the regional office or between countries and a central database of initiatives was lacking. A key initial task set by the TOR was to carry out a desk-scanning exercise during the inception period to find relevant interventions. However, this proved more challenging than anticipated due the sheer scale, range and dispersal of ‘adolescent’ activities. The evaluation eventually identified 145 initiatives/groups of initiatives which are documented in the database submitted with this evaluation (Annex 12). Box 4 explains the mapping methodology.

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62 Ms. Radha Koirala was co-opted by the evaluation team to assist with the task of completing outstanding face to face interviews.
Box 4 – Point of interest
Evaluation mapping of initiatives

The full extent of programmes for and with adolescents were not known at the outset of this evaluation by UNICEF. A key task for the evaluation was to identify relevant initiatives; this proved more challenging than anticipated due the sheer scale, range and dispersal of ‘adolescent’ activities and took the entire evaluation period to complete. Information was hard to track down through decentralised structures and information systems, especially in a very large country programme like India where individual State offices administer their own activities. Eventually, the mapping could only be done through a direct conversation between the evaluation team and programme staff responsible for each of the sectors in all eight countries and was completed just days before the submission of the draft evaluation report in September. This resulted in a database (Annex 12) comprised of 145 initiatives/groups of initiatives ranging from complex multi-sectoral and multi-country projects through to ad hoc pieces of technical advice and covers as much data as was possible to collect within the 15 year time span covered by the evaluation (2006 to 2020.) The database records the following information per initiative to the extent possible:

- **General information** – name; location; timeframe; intervention level; evaluation method; and explicit or implicit programming (the former overtly targeting adolescents, the latter not self-identifying as being adolescent specific but where the main target group fell in the adolescent age range of 10 to 19 years).
- **UNICEF strategy** – links to UNICEF SP outcomes (Health, HIV/AIDS, Child Protection, Education, Nutrition, WASH, Social Inclusion, other); convergent programming; cross-cutting issues (gender; child rights, C4D, A&C)
- **M&E frameworks** – definition of results; measurement schedule; evaluation reports; disaggregation of data by age and sex; methods; human resources; planning tools (theory of change/logframe/results matrix)

This is the first time that so much detail has been captured on UNICEF’s adolescent work in South Asia. Nevertheless the dataset is not exhaustive; the information on India is incomplete (the evaluation has details on the three States visited, for the rest it only has information on child protection initiatives and not other sectors); some UNICEF offices grouped initiatives together as they found it unfeasible to separate out multiple interventions; and finally the accessibility of information across countries was inconsistent.

5.1.2. **Data collection tools**

42. Data collection tools (Annex 4) consisted of six different tools for interviews with UNICEF staff; interviews with key informants; interviews with implementing agencies, focus groups with adolescents; and focus groups with communities, focus groups conducted by adolescents as evaluators. Key features of the interview/focus group tools were as follows:

- All tools followed a semi-structured format to allow the evaluator the flexibility to adapt questioning to the context and needs of the situation. For instance, tools for key informants started with an open question and then went on to specific prompts to enable stakeholders, particularly those at a high level and with limited time availability, to prioritise their own responses rather than be asked highly structured questions.
- The tools mainly asked open-ended qualitative questions to avoid leading interviewees. In the case of adolescents (particularly) and communities and implementing partners, there were a few quantitative questions, largely used as a participatory technique rather than for yielding data for analysis.
- The questions related to specific TOR evaluation questions with the link shown by the use of a coding system (see Annex 5 also).
- The wording was adapted to each target group to make the questions understandable, and was further adapted as necessary by the evaluator (additional versions of the questionnaires were produced, for instance, for UNICEF staff in desk review rather than case study countries).63

5.1.3. Adolescent participation in evaluation

43. The TOR emphasised a particular interest in finding out how UNICEF programmes are fostering adolescent participation, and required the evaluation itself to seek information directly from adolescents and to respect their voice. Several provisions in the CRC reflect children's right to participation, for example, Article 12 of the CRC states that children have the right to participate in decision-making processes that may be relevant in their lives and to influence decisions taken in their regard—within the family, the school or the community:

- The principle affirms that children are full-fledged persons who have the right to express their views in all matters affecting them and requires that those views be heard and given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity.
- It recognises the potential of children to enrich decision-making processes, to share perspectives and to participate as citizens and actors of change.

44. This evaluation drew on the thinking of Roger Hart (see Diagram 1) in order to analyse the extent to which UNICEF’s programmes facilitate participation from a tokenistic involvement at the bottom rung through to adolescent-led initiatives at the top.

63 The wording of the questions in the UNICEF staff interview tool were identical to the evaluation questions, whilst it was appreciated that they may not necessarily be easily understood by all staff, the evaluation team considered it necessary that UNICEF, at least, tackled the evaluation questions head on.
45. The evaluation gave top priority to adolescents in field visits and they formed the largest number of evaluation contributors (785 out of 1276). The focus groups involved the use of a focus group questionnaire (see Annex 4) and interactive methodologies (for instance, ice-breakers, dancing, singing etc.), and was carefully designed to elicit response from all present (for instance quantitative questions were used purely for facilitation rather than analytical purposes to engage each individual adolescent present in the room).

46. The evaluation also trialled a more enhanced model of participation which went beyond consulting adolescents to actually engaging adolescents in data collection and analysis i.e. ‘adolescents as evaluators’. The intention was to take adolescent participation to higher levels (see diagram 1) and to pursue an innovative approach that could add some learning to offices in the region. While it was not possible to make this a formal part of the evaluation for application in all countries due to time and resource limitations, the idea was pursued on an experimental basis in certain location. The Team Leader discussed the approach during case study visits and trained adolescents (in Bhutan) and UNICEF staff and consultants (in India – Jharkhand and Gujarat) in the methodology. This sparked some interest among UNICEF and its partners leading to additional spin off adolescent focus group discussions in Jharkhand/India and Bhutan following the Team Leader’s visit. UNICEF/partner staff and adolescents organised these focus groups themselves with advice and guidance from the Team Leader. In Jharkhand, the Office made a significant investment in carrying out 12 additional focus groups involving 150 more adolescents some of which were led by adolescents/youths, others conducted by partner staff. Detailed reports of focus group discussions were sent to the Team Leader for integration into the evaluation report. In Bhutan, the ‘adolescent evaluators’ convened an additional focus group themselves and also filed a report.

47. The spin off focus groups resulted in a very rich data source. They added value in terms of substantial additional numbers of evaluation contributors (particularly in Jharkhand where the Team Leader did not have adequate time for proper focus group meetings during the case study visit herself). They also yielded
different and in some cases better information than that collected by the evaluation team. It was interesting to see for example, what adolescents were prepared to say to other adolescents that they would not say to adult evaluators. For instance, adolescents in Bhutan were more open about drugs, suicide and depression or corruption in NGOs in focus groups conducted by ‘adolescent evaluators’ (as compared to those conducted by the adult evaluators). Feedback from those involved also suggests that it was a useful capacity building exercise on M&E participatory approaches and that the adolescents understood and enjoyed using the methodology.

48. As the adolescent evaluators’ component was not a formal part of the evaluation, the Team Leader could not require implementation to be carried out in specific ways (for instance, it would have been useful to ask for an evaluation of the exercise itself to see what worked/didn’t work or to ensure that all the focus group discussions were only led by adolescents/youths instead of having some led by staff from implementing partners). Nonetheless the main learning seems to be that this type of participatory M&E methodology works well in settings where adolescent groups/clubs are already in place; it is a relatively cost-effective way of gathering feedback on interventions; adolescents can easily grasp the approach, lead focus groups and report back. It does however, require planning and organisation by UNICEF/partners to convene the groups and make it happen.

5.1.4. Sampling methods

49. As a formative evaluation, the aim of the sampling was to make choices which best promoted institutional learning. The evaluation team set guidelines for sampling and then made selections on the basis of discussions with staff. Sampling occurred at different levels.

Selection of case study locations

50. These were selected by ROSA prior to formal recruitment of the evaluation team since it determined the contractual agreement. The five ‘full’ country-based case studies were chosen as follows:

- India, Bangladesh and Nepal as the three countries having the largest adolescent-related operations;
- Afghanistan as a country that has repeatedly operated in conflict/humanitarian situations (chosen over Pakistan because the context is unique in terms of being wholly humanitarian and conflict related and also because the country office is in the process of strengthening its multi-sectoral approach to programming with and for adolescents);
- Bhutan as a middle-income country context where UNICEF operations are smaller and of a different nature (selected over the Maldives and Sri Lanka since the evaluation had more ready-made information on the latter two countries).64

Selection of initiatives and project sites

51. The selection was made in the inception phase at a time when the evaluation team had limited knowledge of the number of initiatives in the region (as explained in Box 4). UNICEF staff therefore made these choices based on the following guidance from the evaluation team:

- Initiatives that could yield the most learning e.g. strongest, weakest programmes, innovative activities etc.;

64 The evaluation Team Leader had just completed an evaluation of the Maldives country programme in early 2015. In relation to Sri Lanka, the former regional office focal point for adolescents was now posted in the Sri Lanka office, and in addition, many documents were available on UNICEF Sri Lanka’s past work relating to youth.
• Initiatives that the country office had a special interest in evaluating;
• Ensuring coverage of all UNICEF sectoral areas as far as possible;
• Ensuring selection of both convergent and standalone approaches;
• Established rather than brand new programmes so that the evaluation could draw on evidence of performance;
• Visiting a limited number sites/initiatives and obtaining a 360 degree perspective by consulting a range of stakeholders (beneficiaries, government, NGOs etc.) rather than a superficial visit to too many initiatives.
• Time and budget considerations: with only 3-5 days available in each case study location, this was a particular constraint and meant accessible sites had to be selected.

52. In the case of India, the case studies were approached from the State rather than national level given the scale of the country. The selection of States for case study visits was done by the Team Leader following consultations with country office staff. Assam, Gujarat and Jharkhand were selected as in combination they offered the best coverage of different sectors alongside well-known and lesser known initiatives.

53. As it turned out there was a positive degree of randomness in the selection of sites. The evaluation team had very little idea about what initiatives they were visiting until they actually arrived on site due to the difficulties in obtaining information in advance. It was therefore a surprise and a confirmation of the strength of UNICEF’s work in the field of adolescent programming that there was much to see in the locations visited and also evident enthusiasm of UNICEF staff in programming for and with adolescents.

Selection of Respondents
54. UNICEF offices were asked to select respondents based on the following guidance
• Cover all groups of respondents – beneficiaries (adolescents, communities), implementing partners, and key informants (staff, government, NGO, International, academia etc.).
• Adolescents and community members to be representative of the participants in the programme to the extent possible – age, gender, ethnicity, caste etc.65

Setting up meetings
55. UNICEF offices were given the following steer:
• Adolescents and community members to be met in focus groups not in individual meetings partly to observe protection/safeguarding standards and also in order to obtain a wider perspective.
• Focus groups to comprise between 10-20 persons.
• Key informants to be met in interviews and small group meetings.
• The minimum/maximum number of stakeholder meetings or focus groups per country was not set in advance since this depended on the time available in a given context.
• Meetings with grassroots beneficiaries where these were a key part of the UNICEF programme were prioritised i.e. adolescents, communities, parents, community organisations etc., grassroots implementing partners and government counterparts since it was either impossible or inappropriate to consult them in other ways.

65 The evaluation team did not ask for groups to be representative of the communities since it is assessing the programme and the aspect of adequate representation can be explored through questioning participants
• Meetings with key informants e.g. UNICEF staff, NGO, international were also important but organised as group meetings if time was limited. Meetings with UNICEF staff covered sectors that carry out programming for and with adolescents (as well as sectors those that don’t).
• Timings allowed for meetings – one hour for meetings/interviews and 1.5 hours for focus groups with time for travel/running over in between.

56. The final itineraries are shown in Annex 2 and can be summarised as follows:

**Afghanistan:** Mazar and Kabul

**Bangladesh:** Khulna district (multi-sectoral programming) and Dhaka (key informants).

**Bhutan:** Thimpu (key informants), Wangdue Phodrang, and Paro. All three locations for child protection, education and health programmes

**India:**
- Jharkhand State (Gumla and Ranchi districts) (Initiatives on education, C4D, menstrual hygiene, child reporters, HIV/AIDS);
- Gujarat (Banaskantha district) (child protection/child marriage, education, nutrition, health, C4D);
- Assam (Dibrugarh district) (child protection, nutrition).

**Nepal:** Saptari district (adolescent empowerment programme); Kathmandu.

Table 3 sets out the main initiatives visited where the evaluation had interaction with beneficiaries (Afghanistan is not included as it was not possible to carry out field visits).

**Table 3 Main initiatives visited**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study visit</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Communications for Development - Radio clubs and WASH, School-led total sanitation in school sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Adolescent Clubs, out of school adolescent vocational training, health community clinic adolescent support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>Y Initiative (support to NGO youth groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>Y-Via (support to NGO youth groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>Youth centres (support to govt centres)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>Adolescent Friendly Health Services (support to government programme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>Draktsho centre (support to NGO vocational training centre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>Bhutan Narcotics Control (support to government agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>Police Youth Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India (Assam)</td>
<td>ABITA-UNICEF Child protection programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India (Assam)</td>
<td>Partnership with State Government District Social Welfare Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India (Gujarat)</td>
<td>Protection and Education Rights of Children in Cotton Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India (Gujarat)</td>
<td>Educated and protected; a better future for India’s children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India (Gujarat)</td>
<td>Intervention for Life skill enhancement through Equity based framework in Child Care institutions, in 2 districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India (Gujarat)</td>
<td>Life skills in SABLA (Nutrition; Child Protection and Education) programme (implemented by government. UNICEF support to pilot.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

66 In Mazar and Kabul, key informant interviews were held with Government staff, other agency staff, and some youth - none of whom were currently involved directly in UNICEF initiatives. In this regard, no UNICEF initiative was directly visited. Field visits were not possible for security reasons and limited time availability.
5.1.5. Contributors

57. The evaluation consulted 1276 stakeholders in total drawn from UNICEF staff, Government, civil society, international agencies, community members, and adolescents. Adolescents constituted by far the largest number of contributors, and over half, 785, of all those consulted broken down into 528 females and 257 males. There were more females than male contributors overall (see Table 4 and Annex 1).

### Table 4   Breakdown of contributors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF staff</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil society</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International agencies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community members</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents/youth/children combined</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adolescents 10-19 = 470</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Youths falling in the 20-24 age range = 67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Children under 10 years of age =4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unknown = 94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spin off adolescent focus group discussion adolescent and youth participants</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal adolescents and youths</td>
<td>(257)</td>
<td>(528)</td>
<td>(785)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>1276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2. Data analysis

58. The data collected was organised using a coding system linked to the TOR evaluation questions. The report is founded on two layers of analysis.

- Firstly, each team member analysed the information collected for each case study – this involved analysing the findings by each evaluation question and ensuring confirmation by more than one stakeholder at least, and usually by a wider range of stakeholders. For example, on the measure of ‘empowerment’ this meant testing responses across multiple adolescents in each focus group using a methodology which engaged all participants (Annex 4), then comparing responses across different adolescent focus groups in the same locality, and continuing triangulation up across different project sites and case study locations.
• Secondly, once the individual case study analysis was complete, comparisons were made across case studies on the findings per evaluation questions to see whether it was possible to generalise across the region or if the findings were specific to particular countries. This was done by desk review and through a team meeting.

59. The report indicates the strength of views or divergence of responses between countries and makes it clear to what degree points are validated by different sources. Also note that while the report reproduces many testimonies, particularly from adolescents, as the evaluation cannot guarantee full accuracy due to translation etc., these are presented as paraphrasing (indicated by single apostrophes) rather than quotes. The evaluation findings mainly draw on primary data; secondary sources are use as background information except for pre-existing external evaluations which are also used to address questions on effectiveness and results.

5.3. Ethical considerations

60. The evaluation sought to adhere to UNEG norms and other relevant ethical standards particularly those concerning consultations with vulnerable human subjects (adolescents, minority groups, disadvantaged communities, persons living with HIV/AIDS or disability etc.):

• **Integrity** – Although this was a formative rather than outcome evaluation, objectivity was still important in order to generate credible evidence for future programming. This was assured by:
  - having a variety of research methods and sources to triangulate findings.
  - ensuring that the evaluation was free from bias and conflict of interest, for instance, by requesting staff from UNICEF/partner agencies not to participate in meetings where their presence could inhibit respondents. This had to be balanced against the emphasis on staff learning and participation in the TOR and in fact UNICEF staff often sat in on focus group meetings with adolescents (in cases where they were not directly known to the adolescents). The evaluation had the assistance of external interpreters.
  - explicitly noting any bias that existed in the process – for example, that the evaluation is likely to be biased towards interventions/project sites that are functioning well as these choices were made by staff.
  - ensuring that respondents receive some benefit and acknowledgement for their contributions – for instance, by receiving a copy of the final evaluation report, including a adolescent friendly summary version of the report (Annex 9) prepared for adolescent contributors.

• **Confidentiality and privacy** - The parameters and purpose of the research as well as the confidential nature of the process and use of information in the report on a non-attributable basis was explained in meetings with all stakeholders.
  - Focus groups with adolescents and community members - informed consent was verbally obtained from the group after the explanation was given. It was not feasible to obtain written

67 The UNICEF ‘Procedure for ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis’, dated 1 April 2015 and the UNICEF ‘Ethical research involving children’, 2013

68 This is a matter for further consideration as it depends if the overall findings are relevant and accessible to grassroots beneficiaries.
Lists of participants (with names, gender and age) in attendance were sometimes kept by the evaluation team for its own internal record but not reporting. In the case of adolescents, two further issues were considered. The consent of parents or guardians was not required for the adolescent focus groups as the meetings took place within the context of established ongoing project work for which UNICEF had already obtained the requisite consents. Furthermore, consent was always obtained for taking photographs in compliance with UNICEF guidelines.

- Key informants and implementing agencies (contributing in face-to-face meetings and through the electronic survey) were explained the purpose of the research and their continuation of the process was taken as informed consent.
- The report does not name individual sources and also takes care to avoid presenting the information in a way that points to a particular source.

- **Cultural sensitivity** – harmful practices or with issues where there are differences between international standards and local practice required careful handling. For instance, when exploring issues of diversity, while the evaluation team was cognisant of human rights principles and its role in upholding such standards, it also had to be sensitive in how it raised such issues in a given context, for example, openly asking individual participants which minority group they belong to.

- **Respect for core human rights standards** – the evaluation team itself sought to ensure that its own practice did not breach core standards and sought to ensure that human rights approaches were integrated into its analysis (see section 4.4.).

- **Best interests of the adolescent-child/Do no harm** – these are not UNEG principles as such. The best interests of the child is a principle from the CRC whereas do no harm is a maxim from discourses in development aid. Both are especially important for interacting with groups of adolescents (and community members).
  - Child safeguarding (i.e. ensuring that the adolescents are not at risk from the evaluation team itself) - given that criminal records checks are not standard procedure in UNICEF, nor feasible in the countries being visited, this risk was mitigated by ensuring that all meetings with adolescents took place in groups in communal settings. There were no interviews or meetings involving individual adolescents and the evaluation team.
  - Risk of upset and emotional distress to adolescents arising from focus group discussions was low since the evaluators did not ask about sensitive personal subjects (e.g. experiences of child marriage) but rather their opinion about UNICEF supported activities. Nonetheless adolescents were not obliged to answer questions or put on the spot and a back-up plan was in place to report problems arising to local partners for follow-up support if required.

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69 The aforementioned new UNICEF procedure says ‘informed consent’ forms should be produced but this was not as practical as a verbal explanation and assent in contexts where literacy levels were variable. It would also have created logistical challenges in terms of translation and preparation in advance to seek such written consent.

70 According the afore-mentioned UNICEF procedure.
5.4. **Stakeholder engagement**

61. UNICEF regional and country offices fully participated in setting up, overseeing and guiding the evaluation. Regional evaluation and ADAP staff; and focal points in each of the eight country offices were tasked with providing substantive technical and logistical support. Quality assurance was provided by an internal reference group and an external advisory panel. These stakeholders and their roles are detailed in Annexes 10 and 6 respectively.

62. The evaluation sought to engage a wider range of stakeholders in other ways also:

- **UNICEF** staff participated in some evaluation meetings, particularly with adolescents and communities, as long as their presence did not engender a conflict of interest. This was decided on a case by case basis.
- Adolescents were encouraged to carry out data collection and analysis themselves through the ‘adolescent evaluators’ initiative (see section 5.1.).
- The presentation of the report seeks to reflect the voices of adolescents through replication of quotes and testimonies received from adolescent focus groups.
- The conclusions and recommendations were developed in a participatory manner through a findings workshop in Kathmandu on 7 October 2015 involving 25 UNICEF staff participating in the Regional ADAP Network Meeting. The workshop involved a presentation of key findings by the evaluation team through power point presentations and handouts, followed by a question and answer session against a backdrop of photos from the case study visits. This then led on to group work: participants were organised into three groups - convergence and mainstreaming; planning, monitoring and evaluation; and a third group on programming where participants had a list of options (reaching the most disadvantaged; working with boys; adolescent participation; relevance) and were asked to discuss two. The workshop then reverted to plenary to share conclusions and recommendations which are now integrated into this report. Annex 8 lists the workshop questions. The evaluation team and UNICEF ROSA staff worked closely to develop the plenary presentation, the group work, and to pre-select participants for the separate groups based on their knowledge and experience.

5.5. **Methodological limitations**

63. The TOR comprised an exercise which combined both a formal evaluation process (standard evaluation criteria) and other knowledge generation elements useful for a formative evaluation such as mapping (scan of interventions in the region), adolescent participation, and learning for staff – lessons learned, good practices. The exercise was challenging for a number of reasons:

- Evaluability was recognised as a difficulty in the TOR (section 4.3.). This is an evolving programming area in which the full scope of interventions and experience across all eight countries in the South Asia region was not known at the outset. The mapping exercise was intended to address this in the inception phase but proved more complex than anticipated and took the entire evaluation period to complete (Box 4).
- The evaluation and mapping components then ran concurrently which meant taking evaluation decisions about the choice of site/projects without the evaluation team, or anyone else, knowing the extent of adolescent programming in the region. The evaluation does not know therefore if the initiatives selected for review through case study visits are representative of the overall ‘programme’ and how they compare to initiatives that were not known about, whether they are better, worse etc.
• Addressing the breadth of programming meant visiting multiple interventions in short case study visits rather than probing specific interventions in depth. Most interaction was with adolescents (as per the TOR) and UNICEF staff, hence evaluation criteria/questions which could be addressed by them are well covered i.e. Effectiveness (empowerment measure), Efficiency and Impact (narrow definition used by TOR). Other criteria requiring triangulation with external policy sources i.e. Effectiveness (service delivery, enabling environments), Relevance to context, and Sustainability, are less well addressed.

• Information flow was a challenge. On the one hand the evaluation received more documentation than it could cope with, on the other it was unable to obtain the ‘right’ documents that burrowed into the detail of UNICEF’s interventions on adolescents. Communication with offices was slow; though this is certainly not due to a lack of commitment among staff for their work with and for adolescents (or the evaluation itself) as was clear from the enthusiasm for the visits once on site.

64. As the evaluation was constrained in fully assessing all formal evaluation criteria, it takes a cautious approach in reporting findings, it makes clear which conclusions are validated and is careful about making critical judgments without sufficient evidence. A number of practices are ‘shared’ in the report in boxes but are not labeled as ‘best’ or ‘good’ for the same reason. For these reasons the report also acknowledges a bias in the report towards positive findings at the programme level. On the knowledge generation side, the evaluation met the TOR requirements albeit with extensive efforts: it produced a mapping database (Annex 12) and follow-on analysis; it developed the adolescent participation element (e.g. ‘adolescent evaluators’, adolescent friendly version of the report etc.); and collected information and learning from practitioners on the ground (Boxes on sharing practices, points of interest and practitioner tips).

65. Managing the amount of data collected and presenting this in a readable usable way was a further challenge given that:

• This is an eight country evaluation spanning 15 years, a wide breadth of 145 initiatives/groups of initiatives, and the collection of hundreds of documents and testimonies which resulted in eight case studies totaling hundreds of pages.
• UNICEF’s TOR and quality standards’ requirements are extensive.
• The evaluation was required to cover interventions of all UNICEF offices in the region and pay attention to balance and proportionality in reporting e.g. replication of adolescent testimonies required balancing genders, UNICEF offices, projects etc.
• There are multiple audiences for the report from UNICEF staff in regional and global offices concerned with coordination and management issues through to UNICEF field staff, partners and frontline workers interested in programmatic approaches and tips to aid their work. The adolescents themselves are also an interested party.

Given all these expectations, the report is inevitably very long. It aims to be reader friendly nevertheless: key issues are presented in the Executive Summary, the contents page is detailed and allows the reader to navigate around, the use of sub-headings and bolded font enables the reader to read selectively, and boxes are used to section off points of special interest.
Box 5 - Sharing practices
Life skills education through drama
UNICEF Gujarat, India

Gujarat State, in western India has been hailed nationally and internationally as being progressive and registering rapid strides in its economic and industrial indicators. On the social development front too, it has demonstrated innovations and success stories, especially in the spheres of health and literacy. But there remain challenges, especially for girls. Literacy levels for girls fall behind boys, as the sex ratio (due to female infanticide) is below the national average according to the 2011 census. The State records a large percentage of child marriage in the age group 10-14 years, the National Family Health survey of 2005-6, found as many as 65,048 children married, of which more than 10 per cent were widowed or separated. Gujarat also has 250,318 children in child labour according to the 2011 Census.

In response to these problems facing adolescent girls, UNICEF Gujarat in conjunction with the Government and civil society partners, rolled out the Jeevan Kaushalya initiative in 2013 covering 3,450 villages across six districts of Gujarat and directly reaching more than 38,000 adolescent girls. The initiative involved building the life skills of adolescent girls through the use of drama. The strategy comprised of working through existing community-based structures, building capacities through a cascade model, providing platforms and mechanisms for interactions and using an integrated approach to look at issues of adolescent girls holistically. There was a strong element of adolescent participation and ownership; the cascade training involved 7000 adolescent group leaders as peer supporters.

The initiative was enthusiastically embraced by adolescent girls and the project reports many successful stories of change such as the re-enrolling of girls in school, halting of child marriage and the recording and addressing of cases of abuse and harassment. The success of the initiative led to girls assuming leadership roles in federations at the cluster, block and district levels.

A comprehensive facilitator’s guide entitled ‘Life skills education through drama’ was developed giving step by step instructions (available in English and also the local language Gujarati) to enable the methodology to be easily replicated. The module covers five life skills areas (understanding emotions, effective communication skills, understanding ‘self’, empathy, problem solving and decision-making) and give full lesson plans with illustrations, warm up games, drama exercises and discussion points.
C. FINDINGS

6. Relevance

6.1. Relevance to context

Alignment with national priorities

66. Key finding: UNICEF’s adolescent programming is aligned at the top level with national priorities but there can be some differences in emphasis or focus depending on whether governments identify adolescence and/or youth as a priority and if so, how these terms and age ranges are defined.

67. UNICEF’s adolescent programming is broadly aligned with national priorities at the top level as country programmes are agreed with Governments and structured around Government plans. In Bhutan, for example, the UNICEF office operates under the One UN plan which is harmonised with the Government’s 11th five year plan. In India, UNICEF State offices are guided by State policy as well as central Government flagship programmes such as the 2014 Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) programme which expressly targets adolescents.

68. There can nevertheless be difference in emphasis between UNICEF and Government objectives, depending on whether there is agreement on the degree of prioritisation afforded to ‘adolescents’, definitions and age groups of interest. UNICEF defines adolescents as aged 10 to 19 years; all Offices in the region are alert to the ‘adolescent’ issue with the degree of investment ranging from those with significant ‘adolescent programmes’ like Nepal through to offices like the Maldives which are just now embarking on more explicit ‘adolescent’ programming. The external policy environment in South Asia does not give recognition to adolescents as a distinct group with specific rights and needs as shown by Table 5. Nepal is the only country with a dedicated policy on adolescents, the rest have policies on ‘youth’, sometimes covering people as far apart in age as those who are ten to adults in their 30s. Only the Afghan youth policy has a distinct sub-category of adolescence and even then the concept appears not well understood in Government ministries as the terms ‘Youth’ and ‘Adolescence’ were often used interchangeably in evaluation meetings (‘jawan’ and ‘naw-jawan’ in Dari meaning ‘youth’ and ‘adolescence’, or ‘pre-youth’, respectively).

Table 5 Policy frameworks for adolescents across the region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Age definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td><strong>Afghanistan National Youth Policy (2014)</strong> includes guidelines on adolescents</td>
<td>Youth defined as 18-35 years. Adolescents defined as 12-18 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>National Child and Adolescent Health Strategy 2016-2020</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td><strong>National Youth Policy (2003) (under revision)</strong> includes reference to adolescent</td>
<td>Youth defined as 18-35 years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

71 Evaluation TOR question (1.6.) To what extent is UNICEF’s South Asia adolescent programming aligned with the national priorities of programme countries?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Policy Information</th>
<th>Age Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India (Assam)</td>
<td>Government of India National Youth Policy (2014) (references to adolescents)</td>
<td>Youth defined as age 15-29 (no age definition of adolescents in document)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India (Gujarat)</td>
<td>Government of India National Youth Policy (2014) (references to adolescents)</td>
<td>Youth defined as age 15-29 (no age definition of adolescents in document)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India (Jharkhand)</td>
<td>Government of India National Youth Policy (2014)</td>
<td>Youth defined as age 15-29 (no age definition of adolescents in document)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>National Plan of Action on Holistic Adolescent Development</td>
<td>Defines adolescents as 10-19 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>National Youth Policy (2008) devolved to regions – only Punjab Province has a Punjab Youth Policy</td>
<td>Youth defined as 15-29 years in Punjab Youth Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>National Youth Policy and Action Plan (2014)</td>
<td>Youth defined as 15 – 29 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

69. The risk of merging adolescents with other age ranges is that their issues may be de-prioritised or inadequately understood. The distinct needs of adolescents in terms of health, protection, education and employability could be lost by being grouped together with adults. It is especially notable that younger adolescents (under 15) are missing from most of the youth policies in the region except for Afghanistan, Bhutan and Nepal. While they still come under national policies on children, this again may miss the unique developmental needs of the adolescent stage of life. Speaking about the external context, a key informant summed up the situation in India, typical of the rest of the region, as follows,

“Adolescents per se are a fairly neglected group in terms of rights-based programming and Government schemes targeting this group are not given due importance in terms of engagement and resources by the concerned departments. This can be attributed, to a large extent, to the lack of understanding of stakeholders – Government, CSOs, panchayats, communities and adolescents themselves – on issues relating to adolescence as a critical stage in the life cycle.”

70. In Bangladesh, the UNICEF Office has been keen to assert that adolescence is not just “a sub-section of youth”; it is deliberately not providing support to the National Youth Policy and is instead working with the Government to develop a National Adolescent Strategy. On the other hand, having a youth policy which
encompasses adolescents is better than no policy at all, and is currently the best available option in most countries in the region.

71. UNICEF and national governments may also have a difference in approach on how to tackle adolescent issues. This was most pronounced in Afghanistan where external stakeholders expressed disappointment that the UNICEF-supported Youth Information and Counselling Centres (YICC) were discontinued following the 2012 MTR; stakeholders were very positive about this programme – despite the UNICEF MTR highlighting a number of shortcomings in UNICEF’s internal management. The new USAID-funded Iron Folic Acid supplementation is seen to be in line with national priorities. In Bhutan, there appears scope for increased advocacy by UNICEF on potential gaps in Government programmes, for instance, in relation to child marriage, or neglected communities such as roadside labourers (both Bhutanese and migrant).

Priority needs of adolescents

72. Key finding: Violence in different forms is a commonly agreed key issue for adolescents across the region. Child marriage is cited as a concern in areas of UNICEF programming. Adolescents and communities particularly emphasise addictions (substance abuse and gambling) and livelihoods as matters needing attention. Further research is needed to understand whether UNICEF is addressing or can better address priority needs as seen from the perspective of adolescents and communities within the scope of its mandate and available resources.

73. According to evaluation focus groups and interviews, the top priority issues across the region facing adolescents include violence, addictions, and child marriage. Other issues include child labour, discrimination, nutrition (anaemia), psycho-social issues and education. Livelihoods and addictions were often emphasized by community members and adolescents in focus group discussions and recognised as such by individual UNICEF staff, but they are not key intervention areas for the organisation as a whole.

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72 Evaluation TOR question (1.7.) What are the priority needs of adolescents in the context in question? Who is addressing them and what role can UNICEF play in addressing these needs?
Interventions addressing livelihoods/employment and employability are not a common feature of UNICEF’s adolescent programming. There are ad hoc interventions in the region such as e.g. UNICEF Bangladesh/BRAC vocational training for out of school adolescents (which was set up following the lessons learned from an earlier adolescent programme called Kishori Abajan); UNICEF Bhutan and Gujarat initiatives on career counselling; or UNICEF Bhutan’s support to small scale vocational training for persons with learning disabilities. UNICEF as an organisation does not appear to have the expertise or confidence to work in this area. Some UNICEF informants recall negative experiences in the past and believe the organisation should stay out of an area in which it has no expertise. Others say the organisation cannot afford to neglect an aspect that is vital to older adolescents. UNICEF likely has a conceptual struggle in terms of thinking of employment and more ‘adult’ concerns since its mandate is focused on children and education. In the meantime, UNICEF Offices on the ground continue to independently grapple with these issues. For instance, the S4D project in Jharkhand is considering how to make linkages with industrial training institutes and colleges, setting up revolving funds for income generation activities, and developing partnerships with specialist organisations working on livelihoods suited to rural communities (livestock, agriculture, small businesses).

The evaluation believes these challenges cannot be ignored, not least because UNICEF’s own programming is leading to these unanticipated but foreseeable consequences. Its activities are successfully building adolescents, changing their lives, creating expectations but the next step has not been considered. Adolescents who are empowered and educated grow out of their contexts, they are not ready to settle for early marriage or work as manual labourers and yet there are no opportunities awaiting them. For instance, in India/Gujarat, girls said they were ready for secondary and higher education but the supply of Government schooling in UNICEF project sites could not match these emerging needs.

In Assam/India, UNICEF is running adolescent groups for girls only and the UNICEF-supported child protection committees focus on the issues of child marriage, child labour and anaemia. Forced child marriage appears not to be a current issue in the tea plantations according to evaluation contributors; early marriage, where it occurs, is a case of teenage elopement and even then, cases appear few. Stakeholders also say that girls’ school attendance is also much improved and child labour in the tea estates reduced. Adolescents and communities felt substance abuse, alcoholism, violence, livelihoods, education were the main issues facing adolescents – matters which are not being addressed by the project since it does not deal with boys or with the issue of emerging aspirations (see Box 6). As one female child protection committee member put it ‘We have addressed one level of issues but we have to be careful about emerging issues, we have to equip ourselves to deal with them’.

Adolescent girls told the evaluation that they did not want to work as tea pluckers like their mothers, ‘I want to do a job that people respect, people have respect for the doctor, he comes in a big car...the people from the tea community who have grown older are not treated with respect’, said an adolescent girl. The evaluation encountered many examples of adolescents going on to higher education in the tea estates but could barely find one example of someone who had found work outside. The aspirations of skilled work e.g. becoming a nurse or teacher are common among adolescent girl group members. Some adolescents/youths are enrolled on vocational courses which may lead to jobs but communities say they need more guidance, as one child protection committee member put it, ‘we want to help adolescent girls to achieve the next generation of results...children are completing graduation and masters but how to we connect them to jobs’. 

Box 6 - Point of interest
Livelihoods and aspirations
74. While these responses suggest there may be a difference in places between UNICEF’s priorities and those of adolescents and communities, it is not possible to derive general conclusions from this information as it is anecdotal in nature (it is replicated in annex 11 for interest only). However, this does underline the need for a more systematic collection of evidence as well as analysis on issues affecting the second decade of life through existing mechanisms (such as Situation Analyses, Multiple Indication Cluster Surveys (MICS) and other surveys). It also indicates a desirability for a review in some localities as to whether UNICEF can feasibly address other needs. For instance, in Assam, India, the UNICEF programme focuses on the issues of child marriage, child labour and anaemia. Whereas adolescents and communities felt substance abuse, alcoholism, violence, livelihoods, education were more relevant – matters which are not being addressed by the project since it does not deal with boys or with the issue of emerging aspirations (see Box 6). As one female child protection committee member put it ‘We have addressed one level of issues but we have to be careful about emerging issues, we have to equip ourselves to deal with them’. As a longstanding project dating back to 2007, the lesson here appears to be that UNICEF interventions need to move with the times, take stock of progress and achievements and re-tailor activities to the most pressing needs. The fact that understanding the context requires a nuanced understanding was highlighted during the evaluation when it encountered, by chance, the same ethnic/tribal groups in completely different parts of India, revealing some interesting historical connections as well as modern-day implications for UNICEF programming (see Box 7).

75. Such differences in perspective do not mean that UNICEF has to tackle everything, it has to work within its own mandate, resources and strategies and other players also have obligations (Governments, civil society, international organisations). Nonetheless, there is a question for UNICEF about its role. As will be discussed in section 6.2., UNICEF often enjoys a unique role as trusted advisor to Governments on children/adolescents. As such it could be expected to have a better overview of the issues facing adolescents than came across in the evaluation, in terms of what the issues are, who is addressing them, what is not being addressed, where the gaps are etc. The absence of this may be due to the fact that the organisations’ situation analysis process still being biased towards children under 10. Having a wider knowledge would enable UNICEF to better position itself as a policy guide on adolescent matters. The evaluation findings workshop arrived at similar conclusions saying that there was a need for more understanding of drivers for adolescents’ development, to work on adolescents as a whole using socio-ecological approaches, and the need to build more partnerships with other organisations to work in certain areas such as livelihoods, reaching boys etc.
Box 7 - Point of interest
Historical connections

The evaluation encountered some unexpected similarities during the visit to India between the adolescents in Jharkhand and Assam. Despite being some two thousand kilometers apart, adolescents in both places greeted the evaluation with almost identical songs and dances performed by adolescent girls dressed in vibrant red and white saris worn in a distinct fashion with scarlet red hair decorations and make up, and accompanied by adolescent boys on large drums. Upon enquiry, it emerged that there was indeed a historical connection between these groups.

In the late nineteenth century, during British colonial rule, impoverished tribal people from Jharkhand and nearby areas were taken as indentured labourers by the British plantation owners to the newly established tea plantations on the plains of Assam where there was a need for intensive manual labour. With the end of colonial rule, ownership of these tea gardens changed but the tribal population that had migrated there remained settled in and around the tea gardens. This population mostly consists of Oraon and Munda communities, the same tribes met by the evaluation in Jharkhand. Despite this migration taking place long ago, the cultures, customs, rituals and language of the native land have been retained. The communities have a different status under India’s constitution with those in Jharkhand having the status of Scheduled Tribes whereas those in the tea gardens do not.

Aside from being an interesting anthropological observation, this connection has implications for UNICEF programming. The cultural similarities between communities in both places and the issues facing adolescents were so similar – particularly risks facing adolescent boys in terms of addictions (substance abuse, gambling), violence, livelihoods etc. – that UNICEF could also consider similar programmatic responses in these different locations. The S4D project in Jharkhand would likely have much relevance to the tea estates of Assam also, for example.
6.2. UNICEF strategic advantages

76. Key finding: There are other players in the ‘adolescent field’ but UNICEF has distinct advantages, principally being able to make the link between the policy level and the field but also its broad mandate, credibility and branding. Partners also emphasise the value of UNICEF’s technical expertise and its convening role. Internal bureaucratic systems and procedures can be seen as potential disadvantages.

77. Other organisations working on adolescent issues in UNICEF areas of operation include UNFPA, a common player specialising in programmes on sexual and reproductive health, and other UN agencies such as UNDP, UNODC, WHO or UNESCO (e.g. Afghanistan literacy programme reaching many adolescent girls). Multilateral banks, (like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank in Sri Lanka), international NGOs like Save the Children, Action Aid, Practical Action etc., donor funds (e.g. the Global Fund in Jharkhand on HIV/AIDS) and bilateral donors (e.g. Indian Government support to Bhutan on drugs control).

78. UNICEF nevertheless has distinct strategic advantages in programming for and with adolescents.

- **Policy level engagement.** UNICEF staff say direct contacts with policy-makers is a key asset. In places where UNICEF has grassroots programming, for instance, India, Bangladesh and Nepal, it can bring further value by marrying both policy and field level work, as one staff member put it, ‘we have a seat at the table and a boot on the ground’. The evaluation found UNICEF to be a trusted advisor and occupying an enviable position among development agencies, taking into account its track record of being able to pilot initiatives that are taken seriously by Government and scaled up (see section 9.2. for discussion). In Sri Lanka and the Maldives, possibly due to divisions in the political context, the importance of UNICEF role as a neutral player working on non-contentious issues was highlighted by staff.

- **Convening role.** Both staff and partners mention the ability of UNICEF to bring together diverse actors. In Bhutan, all stakeholders recognise UNICEF’s potential in helping to coordinate the spurt of youth groups and networks across the country.

- **Credibility and branding.** This was mentioned by UNICEF staff. Civil society partners also rate UNICEF’s ability to give more visibility to their work than they could hope to achieve by themselves.

- **Technical expertise.** This was much recognised by partners (see section 8.5 and 8.6. for discussion) particularly the capacity building and advice provided by local offices. Access to global and external resources was also occasionally mentioned by partners who had benefitted from such interventions.

- **Broad mandate.** UNICEF staff feel that the organisation’s “holistic development of children, including adolescents, in an integrated manner with a focus on health, nutrition, sanitation, protection, and education following a life-cycle approach” is an added advantage in a field where most other players are working on segmented adolescent issues. This approach could be seen applied in most places except for Afghanistan where informants remarked on the reduced scope of UNICEF’s adolescent-related work over the years, saying that. ‘we only know UNICEF from the

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73 Evaluation TOR question (1.4.) What strategic advantages does UNICEF have in supporting the empowerment and rights’ fulfilment of adolescents in South Asia?
children’s schoolbags’ and that ‘Nobody outside the UN system sees UNICEF doing anything other than basic education’.

79. Partners also noted that UNICEF was able to add value without necessarily bringing large funds to the table. In smaller country programmes UNICEF can use its limited resources strategically to position itself as an invaluable player. UNICEF Bhutan has consciously sought to be a technical expert, for example, by assisting the government with a drug control communications strategy, rather than the more hands off donor role under previous country programmes. Government partners in Bhutan said, that “Money is not much from UNICEF compared to funds from other development partners but that little money has a huge impact especially on youth partnerships and leadership”. In Bangladesh, UNICEF’s adolescent programming framework, and particularly the entry points and overarching programming areas, provide UNICEF with a substantial opportunity to build on its leadership role in convening the required national partnerships and investment in adolescents in line with the Government understanding of the necessity of investment in adolescents in achieving its Vision 2021 strategy.

80. There are strategic disadvantages too. The main issue cited was UNICEF’s internal systems and bureaucratic procedures (see section 8.5. also). One informant expressed the view that while the bureaucratic procedures were robust, UNICEF risked losing out to other development actors, including other UN agencies, who were able to draw Government interest through the offer of more flexible and rapid administrative systems. In Afghanistan, several informants referred to UNICEF “flip-flopping” and an on/off strategy towards adolescents resulting in it losing ground on the issue from 2012 onwards.
Jharkhand is one of the most underdeveloped states of India because of its political and administrative instability. Since its inception in 2000 the State has seen 10 changes of Government, and most of the State is badly affected by Naxalite insurgents (left wing extremists). It is known for its high rates of child marriage, child trafficking, child labour, children from migrating families, children in coal mines, children in militant camps, etc. Other obstacles facing adolescents and youth from fulfilling their potential are the poor quality of education and the lack of employment prospects. To address this critical issue, in 2014, UNICEF, Jharkhand conceptualised the ‘Mein Hoon Champion’ (I am a champion) – sports for development programme for youth in 320 villages of eight districts affected by armed insurgency. The programme was soon adopted by the Government who added a further 160 villages of another four districts. It is now in 480 villages of 12 districts. The programme uses sports as a medium of change to prepare youth (15 – 29 years) to become responsible and healthy citizens.

In every village two separate clubs, one for boys and one for girls, are formed after initial consultations with the Gram Sabha (village administration) and other concerned officials at the village level. These clubs are named after local leaders. The project is implemented through a system of peer master trainers and coaches who are trained up by UNICEF and who work with the clubs in their villages throughout the year. A sports kit is provided to every village for this purpose. It contains around 18 footballs, volley balls and hand balls, skipping ropes, pumps, nets, markers, aprons, etc. Master Trainers and Coaches are also provided with tracksuits. There is a plan to link the programme to local cultural activities and possible employment of youth. Other than sports it attempts to enhance the professional skills of youth in a wide range of domains including writing, speaking, designing, management, social/ cultural/ economic entrepreneurship, painting, photography, coaching, etc. so that they can grow as professionals and contribute to village development.

The content of the programme is systematically designed to enable every youth to participate in learning activities as a part of the annual academic calendar other than daily sports activities. The core domains include nutrition, health, sanitation, protection, life-skills, safety, culture and education. The year-long curriculum has a total of 52 themes and 208 sessions for every village club to complete and benefit from. Village level activities include environment building activities, organised tournaments at block and district level. A baseline for every player is taken so that their progress in various domains can be continuously tracked in a systematic manner.
7. Effectiveness

7.1. Adolescent empowerment

81. Key finding: UNICEF's programming for adolescents has an important effect in terms of increased empowerment. Adolescents are unanimous that UNICEF activities have improved their lives by giving them more confidence, increasing their knowledge and skills, and by enabling them to have a greater voice in their families and communities. Adolescent participation is at the heart of UNICEF activities at grassroots level.

82. Adolescents are unanimous that their participation in UNICEF programmes had resulted in a feeling of greater empowerment; of the 691 adolescents consulted in focus group discussions, none reported any negative effects, and a handful declined to comment having joined UNICEF activities too recently to see a change in themselves. The evaluation collected plentiful examples of empowerment, more than can be recounted here; adolescent voices are brought to the fore in reporting through sample testimonies reproduced in 'Adolescent Voices' boxes in this section.

83. Adolescent empowerment, and in particular inner confidence, is at the kernel of what UNICEF is trying to achieve, and is successfully being able to do so, through many of its programmes for and with adolescents. The S4D project in Jharkhand called 'I am a champion' aims to build a sense of self-worth in adolescents in order to enable them to improve their own lives and the lives of others. And the words make a difference, as an adolescent boy in Jharkhand told the evaluation team when asked what difference the project was making to him, ‘...after joining club, the name of the project itself, ‘I am champion’ gave me such a psychological boost that I can now go about my life with confidence’.

84. The evaluation can assuredly go beyond measuring outputs to assessing empowerment outcomes as it had multiple opportunities to interact with adolescents; it is able to base its conclusions on primary data comprised of direct testimonies from focus group discussions and meetings with adolescents in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India (Assam, Jharkhand and Gujarat) and Nepal. The following sections present the findings

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74 Evaluation TOR Question (2.1.) To what extent do UNICEF South Asia programmes, past and present, contribute to the empowerment of adolescents, particularly girls and those from other discriminated or excluded groups? To what extent do UNICEF programmes empower adolescents through participation in its own programme design, implementation and evaluation? And (2.6.) Which factors, besides UNICEF’s programming with and for adolescents, are contributing to the types of changes described here? What are the reverberations of the programme, how does it affect other programmes in UNICEF and the country? What are the intended and unintended consequences of a programme that has a focus defined by one age group?

75 785 adolescents/youths were met in total but of these 691 were in focus groups where the full methodology was applied, the rest were in more general group meetings with adolescents.

76 This sample is distilled from hundreds of testimonies collected; the most important factor in selection was content, the originality or typicality of the point being made and the compelling way in which it was made. In addition, to the extent possible the evaluation seeks to be proportionate in reproducing these testimonies, taking into account for example, the amount of testimonies available from each location with Jharkhand/India being the highest due to the contribution of spin-off groups, followed by Bhutan and Gujarat/India, and then Assam/India and Nepal which were shorter visits (Nepal was a pilot case study and further disrupted by the earthquake). The evaluation did not have much interaction with adolescents in Afghanistan. However adolescent case studies from these locations are included in other sections. The 'Adolescent Voices' boxes also seek to bring out both male and female voices bearing in mind the gender balance of adolescent contributors i.e. 3:2 female.

77 The evaluation makes a distinction between 'focus groups with adolescents' and 'meetings with adolescents'. Most encounters with adolescents were focus group discussions where the full adolescent focus group methodology was applied (see adolescent
according to the four main elements of empowerment explored in these meetings i.e. increased confidence, knowledge and skills, voice, and changes in behaviour. As these elements were not specifically defined in questioning and open to subjective interpretations, some element of overlap in responses arises.

85. Moreover these ‘downstream’ outcomes can readily be attributed to UNICEF. This was systematically crossed-checked in all focus group discussions with adolescents who were able to link the positive effects they were describing to their involvement in UNICEF activities. This was reinforced by the fact that there were often no other interventions taking place: UNICEF projects tend to be taking place in underserved communities that are not in receipt of other support, including villages that have never received such external support before. There were only isolated examples of projects taking place alongside other development initiatives e.g. adolescents clubs in villages in Nepal where Women’s Development Committees have been active for years or other places where the distinction between present and previous work is difficult to make e.g. some villages in the S4D project in Jharkhand which previously benefitted from other adolescent initiatives. The adolescents themselves were also good at distinguishing other factors and able to give a realistic appraisal. For instance, one female youth in the Assam tea estates when describing how domestic violence had reduced in her community, gave a reasonable assessment of the role of the project, ‘There are multiple factors at play, including the adolescent girls’ clubs, then [Tea] management formed the women’s club, and there was a general awareness of Childline...and women started to feel safe...if someone was beaten, someone would make a phone call and things changed gradually’.

7.1.1. **Confidence**
86. Increased confidence was the most important effect of UNICEF-supported projects; adolescents said they felt more able to go out, to interact with others, to make new friends. Adolescents in Assam and Nepal for example, reported feeling less shy and nervous about speaking in front of peers, families or community elders. In Bhutan, adolescents developed the confidence to speak at high level forums through civic engagement initiatives involving representations to policy-makers. Increased self-belief in their own capabilities (e.g. emotional resilience, physical fitness, and leadership skills) was another important result. For instance, one girl in Gujarat spoke evocatively about being able to muster the confidence to retake exams. As collective sense of confidence was also noted in projects like Jharkhand S4D which have a strong emphasis on team building and unity.

87. While many of positive effects were mainly seen in adolescent girls, since they constitute the majority of UNICEF’s beneficiaries, some of the most powerful effects were in projects that consciously brought boys and girls together in a safe environment. Greater confidence in mixing with members of the opposite sex was a particularly notable outcome of the Jharkhand S4D project and in Bangladesh – in the latter assurance had grown to such an extent that adolescent boys and girls were able to talk openly about puberty together in adolescent clubs.
Box 9
Adolescent Voices – Empowerment and Confidence

‘I failed in my 10th exam because of that I felt broken, but after coming to the project at the Anganwadi [village health centre] I rebuilt trust in myself, and then developed the self-confidence that I will work hard and pass this exam.’ Adolescent Girl, SABLA project, Gujarat, India

‘I have gained confidence, I can socialise more, participate more, make more friends.’ Adolescent Girl, Bhutan

‘Previously my parents would not let me go to school, I just used to stay at home everyday doing nothing, I never went to the Madrassa either. After getting involved in the group, I talked to my parents and said I wanted to continue my education and then get married. I asked my uncle and brother to speak to my father as well’. They let me go to school and my teacher is now making me learn’ Adolescent Girl, Nepal

‘I have increased confidence to lead the team, to play games and teach games to others, to learn games and how to referee’. Adolescent Boy, S4D project, Jharkhand, India

‘Earlier we had to face taunts by elders, male youths and even parents while going to the ground. They used to say that “See the footballers of our village, they can’t run nor can they kick a ball yet they are trying to become footballers”. Parents used to say that we are grown and therefore playing in the field is not acceptable. In the beginning we had to struggle for space in the field space as this was fully taken over by male youths but later on we collectively went to our elders and parents to discuss the matter. As a result, we now have access to the field and not only are our parents allowing us to play, they are encouraging us.... We have also gone door to door and talked to other parents to allow their adolescent girls to join the female club for sports activities...’ Adolescent Girls, S4D project, Jharkhand, India

‘I was not used to speaking in a group, I used to get stage fright, I’ve now got the confidence to speak.’ Adolescent, Bhutan

“We are now comfortably sharing puberty issues with each other and are not shy now” Adolescent boys and girls, Radio group, Bangladesh

‘I feel physically more capable, I feel able to get job in army or police, and have confidence in ability to play well.’ Adolescent Boy, S4D project, Jharkhand, India

‘I wasn’t even able to introduce myself to people, now I am able to talk in front of everyone, if a problem comes in the family, I can now participate in sorting it out. For example, my family were planning to marry off my elder sister but she was not ready to marry, so I pleaded with my parents not to make her marry’. Adolescent Girl, Nepal

‘I couldn’t talk with elders, I can now talk, I’ve got knowledge about rights’ Adolescent Boy, Nepal

‘Parents are proud when [we] teach other people’ Adolescents, Bangladesh

‘During my period, I was not allowed to go in the kitchen, I was not allowed to make pickles or go to the play ground, after discussing these things in the group, I discussed these things with my parents and am now able to go out’, Adolescent Girl, Menstrual Hygiene Project, Jharkhand, India

I didn’t feel confident to speak in front of people, I felt very scared to talk, now I have confidence, I can convince people...earlier when people used to say why go to the club, I used to cry and couldn’t say what I got out of it....I never had the guts to reply when people asked me something” Adolescent Girl, Assam, India

7.1.2. Knowledge and skills

88. The majority of adolescents report feeling empowered through the acquisition of increased knowledge and skills. Much of the grassroots work in UNICEF-supported projects is about imparting information on child rights and related issues such as child labour, child marriage, and gender alongside practical information on self care, hygiene, health and safety, birth and marriage registration, water purification etc. Although such
information is not entirely new, it may be imparted in schools, but adolescents said that attending UNICEF’s groups taught them to put theory into practice.

89. Some projects set out to give very specific types of knowledge, for instance:

- Menstrual hygiene project in Jharkhand has a very intense focus on sanitary practices and then broadens out to wider life skills.
- Police partnership project in Bhutan gives information and training to adolescents on a variety of police matters (fire safety, crowd control, criminal laws, the ‘Good Samaritan’ principle and such like).
- Nutrition activities in Assam teach girls about cultivating and cooking vegetables for health through kitchen garden schemes and cookery classes.
- Jharkhand S4D project teaches adolescents about new games (Touchdown handball, handball, volleyball, Kabbadi, Kho Kho), rules and regulations; sporting values – fair play, respect, team work, warm-up exercises, and safety measures (cutting finger nails, keeping the play ground clean etc.).
- Adolescent school clubs in Bangladesh give adolescents information about a variety of issues including the importance of sanitation.
- Adolescent groups in Gujarat impart knowledge about emotional intelligence and life skills through a drama-based methodology. (Box 5)

90. Adolescents also come to learn about new opportunities: girls in Gujarat said they only became aware of being able to sit exams as external candidates after joining the UNICEF IKEA child labour project, following which some had gone on to achieve high school certificates and even advanced education. Many of the adolescent groups involve a degree of self-organisation which enables the development of management and administrative skills e.g. the Jharkhand S4D project requires members to take on responsible tasks such as club formation, preparing baselines, writing reports, keeping minutes, writing personal stories. Not only do UNICEF activities impart practical knowledge, adolescents speak about learning new values, for instance, citizenship and unity according to members of Bhutan Police Partnership Project.
Box 10

Adolescent Voices – Empowerment and Skills/Knowledge

‘I learnt about savings, previously when my father gave me money to buy books, I used to spend money other things, I used buy sweets, toys and dolls. I now save money to buy books and for good things like pencils, colours, erasers. I’ve already saved 100 rupees’. Adolescent Girl, Nepal

‘At school level we were taught about personal hygiene and sanitation but hardly practiced but after attending the club we knew that how important it is. Now we are practicing learning in our life.’ Adolescent Girl, Menstrual Hygiene Project, Jharkhand, India

“After I joined the programme I learnt about how to be a good citizen, I had the idea how to be a good citizen – it is not just about being a citizen of the country, just saying that you are Bhutanese does not make a real citizen. There are certain things you need to know – know yourself, not to do crimes and help other.” Adolescent Boy, Bhutan

‘I learnt about savings, how to behave with good manners and how not discriminate among castes and religious groups’ Adolescent, Nepal

‘We learnt how to keep hygiene and sanitation during menstruation, to bathe twice day, to keep cloths clean, to eat well such as green leafy vegetables and sprouts’. Adolescent Girls, Child labour/marriage projects, Gujarat, India

‘We have developed our rules, regulation in the club. We have our own flag, club songs which gives us unity….We are divided our roles in the club and we have develop our planning skill’, Adolescents, S4D Project, Jharkhand, India

‘We learned that collectiveness is powerful tool in bringing changes in community and also in personal life…. [others added] ‘Sense of “We” feeling developed’ [others added] ‘We first change ourselves then after we can insist others for change.’ Adolescents, S4D, Jharkhand, India

‘Previously I was totally illiterate, after enrolling in programme, I learnt to read and write’ Adolescent Girl, Nepal

‘I leant how to eat for my health, I learnt about making mixed lentils, dhal, how to clean vegetables and food items.’ Adolescent Girl, Assam, India

‘We are coming to know many new things’, Adolescent boys and girls, Bangladesh

7.1.3. Voice

Increased voice is also an important effect, with adolescents regularly saying they feel more able to speak up78 in their families, communities and schools after participating in UNICEF-supported projects. They are better able to make their voice heard with each other and establish rules for their clubs, for example, in the Jharkhand S4D project.

78 There is some overlap with 'confidence' as adolescents often identified the ability to speak as a sign of increased confidence. The focus in this section is not only on being able to speak but also in being heard.
Moreover, their voices are heard by parents and community members. Their families pay more attention to them. In Bangladesh all adolescents unanimously reported increased ability to discuss issues with their parents and participate more fully in decisions made affecting them. Girls in Gujarat said they were able to persuade their parents to allow them to go to school. There were also examples of adolescents raising their voices in the defence of others. In Assam, adolescent girls had successes in bringing other girls out of child labour and back into schools; one girl told the evaluation how she had started work as a tea plucker at the age of 14 when her parents became sick and that it was only thanks to the intervention of the adolescent girls’ group that she came back to school to pick up her studies. Adolescents from all the clubs in Bangladesh said they had prevented early marriages in their communities by voicing their concerns. Adolescents in the Bhutan Police Partnership Project said they had been able to deter their acquaintances from using drugs, one said,

‘The youths would mock me when they saw me coming, they would say ‘oh here comes the cop’...After attending the [Police Partnership] course, I explained the impact of abusing drugs, the rules and regulations on how to become a good citizen, I shared knowledge from attending the class...I advised my neighbours to stop using marijuana which was growing near their house, they stopped doing it’.

Overall, the degree to which adolescents experienced increased voice in their lives varied between projects. This lesson learned is that this is not an inevitable consequence of activities for adolescents, it depends on whether the group is organised around such an objective and provides appropriate opportunities. This contrast was evident in Bhutan where there appeared a difference between groups geared towards advocacy as compared to projects aimed at community volunteering and providing service to the community or simply being given services (e.g. training in IT) – adolescents participating in such groups rarely recognised increased voice as an effect of the UNICEF-supported project in question. In Assam too, the ability to speak was not evenly observed across all the adolescent groups and participants met during the evaluation. This suggests that the structure and methodology of an intervention needs to facilitate and encourage adolescents to have a voice.
Box 11

Adolescent Voices – Empowerment and Voice

‘Our parents are proud when we teach other people.’ Adolescent Girls, Bangladesh
‘We have taken a decision that nobody will take any tobacco or smoke during the session and all of us who have this bad habit will leave these habits which are harming our bodies.’ Adolescent, S4D, Jharkhand, India
‘It felt good that we were able to discuss things with adults and that they did use what we did, that felt good, we didn’t have a voice before”. Adolescents, Youth Initiative, Bhutan
‘Earlier I would not be able to open mouth before anyone, after coming here I can talk to everyone, I’ve learnt that I should take my own decision and act accordingly’. Adolescent Boy, Child labour/Marriage Project, Gujarat, India
‘We have developed our rules that if any member uses any abuse language they will be fined and they will have to clean the ground for 7 days.’ Adolescent, S4D project, Jharkhand, India
‘Earlier we wanted to study further, but our parents would not understand, but after coming here, we would go back and tell our parents, and they agreed to allow us to study further.’ Adolescent Girls, Gujarat
‘Before, my parents always used to call me a lazy, good-for-nothing son, but after joining the programme and organising some cleaning camping and advocating people about proper garbage disposal. They started to take me seriously and consider my opinions.’ Adolescent Boy speaking to Adolescent Evaluators in Bhutan
‘I asked my parents why they were discriminating and why boys were being given more nutritious food. Previously my parents give milk to my brother but not me, after starting the project, I talked to my parents and how they no longer do that’, Adolescent Girl, Nepal
We were able to say “NO” to our parents as we do not want to compromise with our studies.’ Adolescent Girls, S4D project, Jharkhand, India
‘Before the programme, I was not that much aware of laws and crimes, my neighbours and all tend to go against the law, after the programme I became aware of the law and they are aware and they listen to us – for instance, some people now know that if they see accident they should not ignore it and just go. According to the law if a person is in need you should help them. I’ve explained this to them.’ Adolescent Police Partnership Project, Bhutan
‘My elder sister was getting married at 16 years, I told my parents that it is not an appropriate age to marry, that they should wait till she is 18 years, my parents agreed. This just happened in the last two months. My sister also said they same….We persuaded our parents by saying that if my sister marries young, she will have to do work and be weak, she will become pregnant and get problems’ Adolescent Girl, Nepal
“We talk differently with our parents now….our parents listen more and they are proud when we teach other people”, Adolescents, Bangladesh
7.1.4. Behaviour change

93. Adolescents report changes in behaviour as a result of this increased confidence, knowledge and skills. Participation in UNICEF initiatives is often said to have given more purpose in life or a new outlook. Adolescents reported being more helpful around the house, or treating siblings and parents with more respect. The spin off adolescent focus groups in Jharkhand recorded various changes in behaviour including better punctuality (some clubs require waking very early in the morning for sports sessions between 5 – 7 am), and less use of rude language. A number of boys said they had cut down on substance abuse (chewing tobacco, drinking alcohol) and gambling as belonging to the sports clubs taught them the ill-effects of such substances and gave them more constructive ways to spend their time.

94. Adolescents also gave examples of how their sense of empowerment had led them to initiate new action. Some members of the Jharkhand S4D clubs said they had started cooking activities to earn money, others had initiated evening tuition classes for village children, while some were exploring new business opportunities, for instance, setting up a duck farming. One female youth from Assam, a former long term member of the adolescent girls’ club, gave a realistic appraisal of how the club along with other experiences had affected her life,

‘I became self-confident, I became fearless and when people see me they recognise me as someone who is not scared of anything...I also started to help some NGOs...from that experience I learned how to teach and to be with children...this is what I want to do with other girls, I can share my own learning and materials, I want that they do even better than me...I want to bring about a change in society’.
Box 12

Adolescent Voices – Empowerment and Behaviour Change

‘I studied till class 7, previously I used to wake, do chores, watch TV but after being joining the project, I learnt so many new things, I like to read and write a lot, I want to study, I used to envy girls who go to school, I am now preparing for class 10 and intend to give class 10 exams as an external candidate.’ Adolescent Girl, Gujarat/India

‘I learnt that after defecation and before eating, I should wash my hands with soap and water. Now I help my mother with housework.’ Adolescent Girl, Nepal

‘We do not get angry frequently and also not use filthy language,’ Adolescent Boys S4D project, Jharkhand, India

‘During leisure time instead of going nearby market or playing cards (gambling) we play sports and enjoy it.’ Adolescent Boys, S4D project, Jharkhand, India

‘Earlier without thinking anything I would take a decision, now after gaining knowledge, I think and then take a decision,’ Adolescent Boy Child Labour/Child Marriage project, Gujarat/India

‘I came to know about savings. Yes I saved money. I put money in a money box’. Adolescent, Nepal

‘Before joining the club I used to take alcohol frequently but now I don’t. I enjoy sports more than alcohol. Alcohol reduces my physical strength and earns me a bad name in the community.’ Adolescent Boy S4D project, Jharkhand, India

‘Previously I was not willing to study, after enrolment, I am interested in studying.’ Adolescent Girl, Nepal

‘Now we do not spend time, roaming here and there. We play and learn the tips of physical fitness and get knowledge on issues other than sports, important for our life like sanitation, nutrition & health, education and community’s issues.’ Adolescent Boys, S4D project, Jharkhand, India

7.1.5. Adolescent participation in UNICEF programmes

95. UNICEF is conscious of the importance of fostering adolescent participation and field staff, in particular, see a high value in this approach. The Bangladesh Office adolescent framework, for example, says that the ‘Participation of adolescents is key to empowering them to help build a modern Bangladesh’. The degree to which adolescent participation is happening varies from place to place, with some Offices e.g. India, Nepal and Bangladesh further down the participation road, than others like the Maldives, which are about to embark on the process. The Evaluation Findings Workshop felt it would be helpful for UNICEF itself to do more work in the region on unpacking the concept, decoding and mapping out the levels and types of participation to see what has worked well and what has not. The evaluation was aware that there was already a rich understanding of these concepts at grassroots level among UNICEF field and partner staff.

Activity level

96. Most of UNICEF’s adolescent group work emphasises participation at activity level, with adolescents themselves leading the content, structure and design of activities. Many activities are peer-led with adolescents trained up to pass on information and to engage with other adolescents. Examples include the menstrual hygiene project in Jharkhand, the adolescent clubs in Assam and the Youth Initiatives project in
Bhutan. The Gujarat suggestion boxes both gave adolescents themselves the responsibility for enabling children and adolescents to voice their concerns. The suggestion boxes were placed in about 3,000 villages across six districts of Gujarat as part of the IKEA child labour in the cotton belt project in 2012-2013. The whole process was managed by the Adolescent Girls Networks, who designed the boxes, positioned them in discreet but accessible locations (e.g. ensuring they were the right height for children), advertised them; set up a process for opening boxes, reading comments and addressing issues along with village elders. A total of 2000 suggestions were put in the boxes. A random sample of 1200 were selected for analysis and categorised according to the following child rights in descending order: development, protection, survival, water and sanitation and generic issues.

**Community level**

97. Another important element, particularly prominent in India (Assam, Gujarat and Jharkhand) is the engagement of adolescents, especially girls, in community structures: UNICEF is promoting the representation of adolescents in village level child protection committees and in school management committees. In Nepal, the Child Friendly Local Governance initiative itself reports that it has helped to embed child participation in the local government system in various ways – 10-15 per cent of local government resources are mandated to go on the involvement of children; the ward level structure is set up to involve a boy and girl; and children have to be consulted annually by the local government planning process. Other examples of linkages with local structures and officials include the organisation of meetings between adolescent girls' groups with the police chief, post master, bank manager etc. in Assam.

**Policy level**

98. Adolescents are also represented at higher levels of policy making, for instance, the consultation of 37,000 adolescents in the Nepal National Plan of Action development process; a week long mobile campaign and consultation in Gujarat in celebration of the anniversary of the 25th anniversary of the Child Rights Convention in 2014; and the youth club members forum and inputs to the Ministry of Youth Affairs in Sri Lanka in 2014.

99. The wider policy context makes a difference to such participation. In Bhutan, the Government has become increasingly open to a participatory approach through youth forums and festivals where adolescents are encouraged to take charge or the current efforts of the Electoral Commission to establish a Children’s Parliament. The Bhutanese Government also gave examples of how consultations with adolescents had influenced the design of its programmes, for instance, adapting interventions to ensure adolescent privacy (adjusting the hours of adolescent friendly clinics, or ensuring that school counseling is not done by teachers to avoid a conflict in role and embarrassment for the adolescents). Likewise, one of UNICEF’s civil society partners, the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy has a youth representative on its own board. While UNICEF has advocated a participatory approach, there appears an independent stimulus in Bhutan in favour of an open and inclusive approach towards adolescents. In other parts of the region, the external interest in adolescent participation is much less evident save for ad hoc projects such as the Child Reporters project in Jharkhand where local government officers said they had responded to requests from adolescents for playgrounds, bike sheds, benches etc.

**UNICEF structures**

100. Consultation with adolescents in programme planning and monitoring appears quite typical; the Nepal country office carried out a rapid consultation with nearly 2000 adolescents in 14 districts after the
earthquake of April 2015. However, the participation of adolescents in UNICEF’s own decision-making structures (annual planning meetings and so on) is entirely absent; UNICEF interviewees did not appear to consider this meaningful nor did they elaborate on this further.

Outcomes of adolescent participation activities
101. The outcomes of these adolescent participatory approaches are not systematically captured but some good examples emerge of adolescents as agents of change able to influence the enabling environment. Adolescents in the Youth Initiative project in Bhutan ran a ‘Buy Local’ campaign which had some success in changing community buying habits (see Box 19). In Jharkhand, the S4D spin off focus groups collected numerous examples of how they had influenced the community by being asked to attend community meetings and give their views, resulting in initiatives like cleanliness campaigns, plantation schemes or drainage systems for which community members have offered support. One of the S4D clubs in Jharkhand said that villagers had accepted their proposal to jointly contribute to the repair of broken hand pumps. In terms of the higher level civic engagement initiatives, while they have helped increase the confidence of adolescents, impacts on policy-makers are not independently measured - in Bangladesh, for example, there was no follow up by an impact study, for instance, to see how changes in policy level documentation and/or yearly budget speeches could be attributed to UNICEF as a result of Ministers being “quizzed” on TV by adolescents as part of the CAP young journalists project.

Protection risks
102. The management of the protection risks arising from adolescent participation i.e. adolescents putting themselves in danger by challenging abuses in the community, merits further attention. UNICEF staff acknowledge such risks exist as adolescents become more empowered, as one staff member put it, ‘not everyone likes vocal girls’ but such risks are not yet properly planned for or managed. Examples came up in Assam and Gujarat but they are likely to be occurring elsewhere too in projects which are seeking to challenge existing social norms or power structures. Adolescent club members in Assam talked of their sense of powerlessness and fear of a backlash when taking up issues like alcoholism, gambling and corruption in the community, as one female youth put it, ‘Taking up such issues is also a risk to personal safety, there should be somewhere one can call with security concerns, if you speak against someone who makes alcohol this could affect your own security, if you go to the police station everyone will know it was you......and then because of corruption, police just take money to ignore it and in the meantime the person who is making alcohol illegally will blame you ....’.

In this location, adolescents do not go alone to take up issues but even being accompanied by frontline NGO staff is not protection. In one case in Gujarat, grassroots workers reportedly felt threatened by the community after making interventions to stop early marriage, and the tension was only eased after much work with the village Child Protection Committee.

103. While most interventions are well supported by adults (community mobilisers, teachers, child protection committee members etc.) and adolescents are not left alone to take up issues – for instance, teachers from the Child Reporters programme in Jharkhand said they accompanied adolescents in any meetings or discussions with external parties, this is not enough of a safeguard. UNICEF would benefit from addressing this more explicitly by setting out protocols for raising issues and by giving adolescents and frontline workers the communication and messaging skills to raise issues in a constructive and protected
manner. The Evaluation Findings Workshop also highlighted the importance of ensuring that adolescents are not put at risk through participation.

Some reflections

104. Interesting reflections arise from this nexus of adolescent group work, participation and empowerment:

- Adolescent participation is mainly being fostered at the grassroots level where it has the potential to be more meaningful. Participation decreases higher up the chain and becomes more tokenistic at policy level. The participation of adolescents in UNICEF’s programming is in reverse order to the ladder of participation (see Diagram 1), the more grassroots the initiative, the more likely adolescents are to be higher up the ladder of participation, leading the process and taking decisions, as can be seen in much of the group work activity. Conversely, the higher up the policy chain, the lower they are on the ladder of participation; although it need not necessarily be tokenistic, the Nepal examples cited above, facilitate broad-based inputs from adolescents without relying on tokenistic representations by individual adolescents. Participatory programming approaches may also be directly linked to increases in adolescent empowerment but the evaluation is unable to say this with certainty and poses it as a question for further research.

- Fun and creativity are key elements in effective adolescent group work. This is an important lesson learnt from projects in India (Gujarat and Jharkhand) which impart information through the use of drama, arts, handicrafts (glass-painting, embroidery). The evaluation meetings with adolescents were alive with singing and dancing everywhere; adolescents often spent much time in advance preparing to meet the evaluation team. Even in places where project activities do not involve such aspects (e.g. Bhutan) there were impromptu performances and talent contests. Sports can also work well, including in mobilising girls – see the girls soccer initiative in Nepal or the strong female involvement in the S4D Jharkhand project. In Bhutan, the evaluation saw some activities aimed at captivating adolescent interests e.g. outdoor adventure available through the Scouts (not funded by UNICEF), and a police volunteers training programme. But it also saw a number of other activities focused more on volunteerism, and doing good works in the community (cleaning campaigns and the like) which appeared to be missing the ‘fun’ element.

- There are different technical opinions on the best way of imparting life skills education, whether it’s best to tackle narrow subjects and then broaden out into general life skills (menstrual hygiene management project in Jharkhand) or start wide and then tackle issues e.g. drama-based life skills work in Gujarat and C4D radio clubs in Bangladesh.

- The adolescent group work enabled adolescents to enjoy their rights to education, protection, health etc. This is a manifestation of what theorists describe as the capability approach, “people should be provided with real opportunities, which extends beyond resources and formal rights”79 i.e. rights do not exist in a formal sense, they need to be enabled. This was seen repeatedly in the group work, especially in India, where a number of Government schemes exist to provide resources such as iron folic tablets, nutrition etc. Adolescents receive this information in schools and health centres but it is the dynamic process of the project building internal capabilities in adolescents who in turn interact with the external environment to create more opportunities for themselves and other adolescents – examples of taking up issues in the community and so on.

• Linked to this is the finding that interventions operating at multiple levels: linking grassroots adolescent group work with interventions at the meso and macro level through capacity building of duty-bearers and policy level activities were considered most effective by evaluation contributors.

7.2. Improved services

105. Key finding: UNICEF programming commonly aims to improve the quality of and access to services for adolescents. While this evaluation is unable to assess the outcomes of such efforts, it can confirm that support to Government services in health, nutrition, social services, youth work etc. takes place in all countries.

106. UNICEF is engaged in fostering better access to and quality of services for adolescents in many of its programmes, outputs, include for example:
• Afghanistan – Youth Information Contact Centres (YICC) till 2012
• Bangladesh – support to Government on adolescent-friendly health services
• Bhutan - support to establish and strengthen youth centres (for instance by piloting delivery of all services – health, careers, counselling etc. under one roof) and helping to strengthen adolescent friendly health services.
• India (Gujarat, Jharkhand, Assam) – involvement in the Government's flagship schemes like SABLA, RKS, Mamta Taruni which focus on nutrition, health services, adolescent empowerment.
• India/Assam – strengthening child protection services at district level including the reporting of incidents of abuse and exploitation. Also advocacy with the State Government to ensure adolescents from tea communities access entitlements under various flagship programmes. UNICEF hosted a national conference in November 2015 child rights in the tea plantations with particular reference to the implementation of The Plantation Labour Act, 1951.
• Nepal - support to Government in developing adolescent friendly health services. In addition, in the aftermath of the Nepal earthquake in April 2015, UNICEF child protection mobilised support Government structures to address typical risks in a humanitarian crisis.
• Pakistan – peace-building programme is working through education sector planning to mainstream social cohesion and institutionalise alternative learning programmes.
• Sri Lanka - capacity development of youth centre staff through the Open University youth Development Diploma in Sri Lanka.

107. The evaluation can confirm such outputs are commonplace. However, it is unable to make any further assessment of UNICEF’s outcomes in terms of contributing to improved services within the framework and resources of this evaluation. There are only a few pre-existing independent evaluations that confirm such

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80 Evaluation TOR question (2.2.) To what extent do UNICEF programmes, past and present, foster better access to and use of quality adolescent-oriented services, particularly among girls and other discriminated or excluded groups? and (2.5). How effective or ineffective is the programme as a whole? Which other effects or results are there from UNICEF programming with and for adolescents, both positive and negative? And (2.6) cited earlier.
81 In Assam, the unique legislative and governance set up of the tea plantations means that such government programmes are not automatically present.
82 Including for example working with Child Welfare Boards to preserve families and identify separated and unaccompanied children, as well as partnerships with the police to strengthen police stations and checkpoints to prevent child trafficking – as of May 2015, UNICEF reported the interception of 95 children who were being trafficked.
results. For instance, India – the IKEA cotton project evaluation found enhanced access to social protection schemes in Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujarat by linking vulnerable families to social schemes to improve their income levels.

108. The evaluation also found UNICEF to be linking adolescents to Government services through its group work, mainly in India, where many such Government schemes exist. There were various examples from focus group discussions in Gujarat especially, of adolescents increasingly using services themselves e.g. receiving nutritional supplements, immunisation etc. Both boys and girls talked about increasing access to education services; girls talked of finding out about the external examination process (which allowed them to study at home and still sit for exams) and boys reported taking advantage of scholarships in Government schools. Girls said they learnt about savings schemes in banks and had increased confidence in using Government services, especially hospitals.

109. The girls who had participated in the former IKEA cotton project in Gujarat were especially aware of external services and were also assisting their own families to better access services (e.g. registering for the toilet construction scheme or food rations). They also gave examples of helping others in their village to access services, for instance, helping widows to obtain pensions; advising pregnant women on the availability of free education between classes 1-8, free midday meals, scholarships for their children, and helping them to fill out forms to claim entitlements such as 2000 Rupees on the birth of a child and 900 Rupees when the child reaches one year of age.

110. The spin off adolescent focus groups obtained similar information from adolescents participating in the Jharkhand S4D project who also talked about accessing similar services - iron tablet distribution, toilet construction scheme, child immunisation, and ration cards and the Jan Dhan Yojna scheme (a National Mission for Financial Inclusion to ensure access to financial services, namely, Banking/ Savings & Deposit Accounts, Remittance, Credit, Insurance, Pension in an affordable manner). In Assam, adolescents mainly mentioned access to iron folic tablets as other Government services are very limited in the tea estates.

Box 13

Adolescent Voices – Access to Services

‘After joining the project I started going to the Anganwadi centres to get snacks, to have my weight checked and receive iron tablets, and I also explained about it to those girls who don’t go to go’
Adolescent Girl, SABLA project, Gujarat, India

‘Earlier I never used to visit the government hospital, I thought it was not that good, that they might remove my kidneys and put something else in their place, but after coming here (group), I realised that Government hospitals are also good, that they give free of cost treatment and that some people are also given money on top of that...so we started taking Government services...’
Adolescent Girl, SABLA Project, Gujarat, India

‘The Government has a toilet scheme, earlier my father was going to construct a toilet independently but I suggested that there was a scheme where government will pay money if need we it...so we filled in the form’, Adolescent Girl, Gujarat, India

‘We started using the ration card which provides grain, sugar and oil at subsidised rates...I asked my father to get grains from the ration shop instead of getting it from the regular grocer as before.’
Adolescent Girl, Gujarat, India

‘We helped widows in the village by opening accounts where they could receive 1000 Rs per month’
Adolescent Girls, Gujarat, India
7.3. Enhanced enabling environments

111. **Key finding:** All UNICEF country programmes focus on strengthening the policy environment. Building the capacity of communities can be challenging and has variable success. Working with parents is a relatively neglected area.

7.3.1. **Policy level**

112. Building enabling environments is a key strategy in UNICEF’s adolescent programming across the region. There are multiple outputs of UNICEF’s work in building the policy and legal framework for adolescents. Information from evaluation interviews and existing external evaluation reports indicates the following outcomes at policy level, with the caveat that UNICEF projects are taking place within the context of other drivers in society and the evaluation's ability to assess effectiveness in achieving upstream policy change is inevitably limited (The downstream work with communities and families described in the rest of this section can more easily be attributed to UNICEF). Examples of UNICEF’s contribution to building the policy environment include:

- **Afghanistan** - UNICEF support to the National Youth Policy (2014) was well-received in evaluation interviews with Government representatives although UNICEF is not credited in the policy (whilst UNFPA is). Key informants expressed disappointment in what they perceived to be a lack of continued support from UNICEF in developing the National Youth Strategy which is still to be finalised. UNICEF staff felt they had more engagement in the process than suggested by external stakeholders suggesting a different internal and external perspective of UNICEF’s role within the strategy.

- **Bhutan** - support to National Youth Policy (endorsed in 2011) and drafting of National Youth Action Plan was appreciated by Government. The plan is currently held up in the Government system and is now in its final stages of finalization and approval.

- **Bangladesh** - a significant success within the Bangladesh HIV MARA programming has been securing a Government interim memo in November 2014 which allows street children to access HIV and STD services without parental consent and which will be institutionalised in due course as a policy change according to information received by this evaluation.

- **Maldives** – UNICEF’s work on the Guidelines on Child Protection in Education Settings, as well as Life skills programming (by UNICEF and UNFPA) with ongoing efforts to make it mandatory in the school curriculum are recognised by Government as having made a contribution to education policy according to the UNICEF Maldives Country Programme evaluation 2015.

- **India (Rajasthan and Maharastra)** - according to the IKEA cotton project evaluation UNICEF was successful in advocating for legislative change with the State Government of Rajasthan which led to a reduction in the child labour age from 14 to 18 years and also the formulation of State policy in Maharashtra.

- **India (Maharastra)** – the evaluation of the Deepshikha girls empowerment programme in Maharastra was found to have informed the life skills development component of the Rajiv Gandhi Adolescent Girls Empowerment Initiative (SABLA), which was incorporated into the government

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83 Evaluation TOR Questions (2.3.) To what extent do UNICEF programmes, past and present, build enabling environments (at political, policy, legal, social, economic, family and community levels) for the fulfilment of adolescents’ rights in South Asia? and (2.5) and (2.6) cited earlier.
National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and Kasturba Gandhi BalikaVidyalaya (KGBV), both which aim to reach the most vulnerable and hardest to reach girls. The Government of Maharashtra has also adopted the model for replication in 125 of the most disadvantaged community development blocks in 25 districts reaching three hundred thousand girls.

- **India/Jharkhand** - The child friendly police stations programme has been effective according to an internal assessment in terms of raising awareness of relevant laws among police, in changing police attitudes and in leading to the establishment of child friendly police stations in at least 24 police stations to date (October 2015).

- **Nepal** - various examples include UNICEF’s support to the development of a National Plan of Action on holistic adolescent development, development of a national strategy to end child marriage. According to UNICEF itself, its advocacy has resulted in increased budgetary allocations from Government for the implementation of the National Plan of Action, as well as the expansion of the UNICEF-sponsored Child Friendly Local Governance initiative across the country, with local authorities required to allocate specific funds to implement the process.

### 7.3.2. Community level

Building supportive environments at the community level is an important facet of work in some countries (e.g. Bangladesh, India, Nepal) but not in others at this stage (Bhutan, Maldives).

- **Bangladesh** – UNICEF is working with the Union Convergence Coordination Committees: committees established with both Union Council Representation and grassroots level workers which work on issues related to children such as separate WASH facilities for girls in schools, and engage with the community about the harms of child marriage.

- **India** - establishing and supporting village level Child Protection Committees is part of the operationalisation of the nationwide Integrated Child Protection System. This is advancing in different ways in different states.
  - **Gujarat** - the office started work on this in 2011/12 and has moved from establishing Child Protection Committees at district and state level through to village and block level; it is also strengthening School Management Committees mandated by the Right to Education Act; strengthening the non-nutritional components of the national SABLA programme (nutritional advice through village level Aagandwadi centres).
  - **Jharkhand** - UNICEF aims to establish child friendly panchayets and schools through training for leaders and teachers on child rights.
  - **Assam** - UNICEF is working with a distinct set of local level and community duty-bearers in the tea plantation context comprising of tea estate management, private sector companies, mothers’ groups, welfare officers etc. UNICEF set up child protection committees as far back as 2007 in the tea plantations, long before the national scheme (which does not apply to the tea plantations due their unique administrative structure). UNICEF also leverages the pre-existing Mothers’ Clubs (innovation of tea estate management who set up these groups to promote good health) and has expanded their remit to cover child protection.

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84 Tea plantations operate under a specific laws and policies; the Plantation Labour Act 1951 applies in these areas, and other government policies and programmes, such as SABLA or the Integrated Child Protection Scheme do not apply as a matter of course.
- **Nepal** - the country office is working to build the capacity of local religious leaders and media representatives on harmful traditional practices (child marriage, untouchability during menstruation and dowry).

114. Community members appear interested in UNICEF projects. Evaluation meetings were well-attended: in Jharkhand, the visit to the S4D project was reported in several State level newspapers highlighting the importance given by local stakeholders to the initiative in question. Community support to that project appears to extend in other ways too as the S4D ‘adolescent evaluators’ focus group discussions came up with multiple examples of financial and moral support from community members to the club activities. One sports club described how a local farmer stepped in to allow club members to use some of his fallow land as a playground. Likewise members of village Child Protection Committees in Gujarat expressed a commitment to UNICEF initiatives.

115. However, challenges exist in working with communities to enable them to uphold their role as duty-bearers:

- **Education**: Levels of knowledge about adolescent issues and child rights vary between communities and tend to be significantly weaker than the knowledge displayed by adolescents. Sometimes community members are aware of gender issues as they apply to adolescents (child marriage, child labour etc.) but unable to apply the same analysis to themselves e.g. composition of Child Protection Committees in terms of the role and participation of men and women. This highlights the low starting point in many communities. Even adult male community leaders said that were becoming empowered themselves through this process of education, as one said, ‘there are other sources of information like TV serials but this is practical’, another added, ‘We have to learn first, we are the teachers of our children, we have to educate our children but the first step is for us to know.’

- **Power relationships**: The implicit agenda behind much of this work on social norms is to challenge established power structures and vested interests. This is bound to encounter resistance. For example, the tea workers of Assam live in enclosed communities with limited rights and in a very hierarchical tea industry; community beneficiaries need to be capacitated to take on authority figures e.g. police, management and cope with power differentials. Likewise, in order to influence their peers, community members feel they need some authority, they told the evaluation, ‘No-one listens to us, people who drink or gamble say who are you to tell us what to do?’. UNICEF Assam is trying to see if the child protection committees can obtain recognition from tea management and identity cards as this would help their community awareness efforts.

- Time, motivation and other personal factors also affect how community members respond.

116. Working with communities has its challenges and local partners in India described the slow and painstaking process of winning the trust of community members and persuading them, one by one, to allow adolescents in their families to participate in project activities. UNICEF staff spoke of the difficulty in changing ingrained attitudes, ‘Even if you stayed for 20 days it would not break the hardcore mindset’. The IKEA Cotton project evaluation report noted obstacles such as reluctance, and the lack of community support and misconceptions regarding child protection, highlighting the need to strengthen community structures. The evaluation encountered this resistance first hand in one of the villages visited – see Box 14.
Box 14 - Point of interest
Building the community environment on gender equality

In a visit to a village in Gujarat, India which had been the recipient of several years of investment, the level of gender inequality was still a major concern. The community structures are a male dominated, few women attended the evaluation meeting and those present lacked the confidence to speak 'we are illiterate, no-one taught us anything'. In a discussion on girls’ education, the male community leaders were very resistant to allowing girls to attend schools ostensibly due to the distance involved. They were unwilling to consider creative solutions e.g. allowing girls to cycle in the same way as boys, perhaps in groups to overcome safety fears. The girls were left studying at home alone and obliged to sit for external exams – for which opportunity, they expressed much gratitude. While much good work had been done with the adolescents themselves in this community (one adolescent had received a commendation from the State, and was also part of the Child Protection Committee), the degree of complacency among community leaders appeared to be stifling further progress. Some UNICEF staff were also found to be holding such limiting beliefs about what girls could or should be allowed to do, ‘it is only a question of opportunity – it is also a question of access as most government secondary schools are at a distance from the village which can be accessed by boys but not girls due to poor transport facilities, etc.’

It was a stark example of the importance of overcoming limiting belief systems and cultivating a supportive environment in parallel to work with adolescents in order to maximise gains – otherwise adolescents, knowledgeable and empowered as they may be, face the daunting challenge of pushing against the dominant power structures and belief systems alone. Further thinking on how to catalyse change is required. The Gujarat Office, for example, is currently working on an advocacy strategy aimed at religious leaders and caste panchayet leaders as a means of influencing a change on social norms. Another idea could be the better use of incentives. For instance, it was clear that the community in question valued being seen as a ‘model’ village, and had been visited by numerous dignitaries over the years. This desire among community leaders for social standing and interest in guiding and advising other nearby villages is an opportunity to leverage further positive change for adolescents.
7.3.3. **Family level**

117. The principle gap is in strengthening the family environment. Few projects are working directly with parents. Most of the parents met during visits were supportive of the work but tended to be poorly informed about what the projects were actually doing or in having an awareness about issues facing adolescents or child rights. Parents involved in community decision-making bodies (as above) are reached with training but the broad cross-section of parents are being missed. UNICEF and its partners often described how much persuasion it took for parents to allow their adolescents to participate in UNICEF projects. As one adolescent girl from Nepal said, ‘Previously parents said this is rubbish, but when they saw changes in the children’s behaviour, then other parents also used to send children.’ Even adolescents who enjoy relative freedom said they had to overcome negative attitudes to attend UNICEF activities, as adolescents told adolescent evaluators in Bhutan,

‘...but from parent and family side there is a negative response. The only thing they ask is ‘what do you get?’ They want us to have the materialistic result (money) from these kind of voluntary activity. But what they don’t understanding is what we really gain, like knowledge and confidence, which has a lot more value than anything’.

118. Most initiatives seen by the evaluation are reliant on indirectly influencing the parents via the adolescents passing on information and taking up issues with parents themselves. Such a strategy for change is only likely to be viable in families where relationships are fundamentally positive; it is unlikely to help adolescents who are living in violent or abusive households. The reason why UNICEF projects are not so focused on parents appears, in part, according to UNICEF staff, due to the difficulty UNICEF projects find in changing adult attitudes - adolescents are seen as more pliable and receptive and able to bring about change for future generations even if nothing can be done about adults and their entrenched attitudes. This unfortunately leaves an unfair burden on adolescents themselves to confront these issues in their own homes. While work with parents needs strengthening, there is some positive experience from the region to draw on:

- **Bangladesh:** Work with parents is probably best developed here. The evaluation did not have time to evaluate this properly but is aware that the Kishori programme 2006-11 involved setting up clubs for parents, segregated by sex with separate groups for mothers and where parenting skills were taught (e.g. nutrition, discipline without the use of corporal punishment etc.) Adolescents told the evaluation that the mind-set of parents has changed, they are ‘more relaxed and tension-free’ due to the adolescent clubs and the associated mothers and fathers clubs. The mothers and fathers clubs continue to meet. UNICEF Bangladesh is planning an intervention called Connexions which aims at strengthening family bonds through joint groups of fathers with sons, and mothers with daughters respectively.

- **Jharkhand:** the menstrual hygiene programme is also one of the few exceptions where mothers groups were also formed and with much positive effect, aside from improving the lives of the mothers themselves, this structure also builds support for the adolescent in the home. The project has dedicated meetings with mothers taking place in parallel to daughters and imparting the same information. Mothers met during the evaluation visit talked of being freed of traditional beliefs (e.g. that touching anything would lead to infertility, that changing clothes or washing during menstruation would lead to increased blood discharge). One woman described her trepidation in daring to touch a jar of pickles in the kitchen for the first time during a menstrual period, when she
realised nothing bad had happened, she set about convincing her mother-in-law of what she had learnt. This project does not work directly with fathers either but several women in the group said they were able to talk to their husband about adapting the home to create private spaces for changing napkins and for allocating more money for buying nutritious food during menstrual periods.

- **Nepal** - the UNICEF office has produced an adapted version of the Rupantaran training package for parents. Adolescents stressed the value of this in evaluation meetings, ‘Yesterday parents of adolescent had an orientation, now they know the age of marriage, they listen to children’s voices and respect voices and children’.

> 119. Where activities with parents exist, they tend to be focused on mothers. Work with fathers lags further behind. In Assam, where mothers’ clubs have long existed, community members felt that fathers’ clubs in the tea plantations would be a good idea, ‘it would be a very good idea to have a fathers’ club...men are feeling that women are getting much focus and privilege and if such a forum were created, men would love to join’. Overall, while projects inevitably have to make decisions about how best to use limited resources, some more emphasis building the knowledge and skills of parents is important in facilitating the support and sustain the empowerment of adolescents themselves and to instil these changes in families for upcoming siblings.

### 7.4. **Equity** 85

120. **Key finding:** There is strong emphasis on gender equality for adolescent girls but insufficient attention to working with adolescent boys. Other diversity issues are addressed in a piecemeal way. Despite efforts, the organisation faces challenges in reaching the most disadvantaged.

#### 7.4.1. **Gender equality**

121. There is a strong emphasis on the gender inequalities faced by adolescent girls. All country programmes emphasise the participation of girls and many activities are specifically targeted at them, primarily at combating child marriage. The database (Annex 12) shows that 39 of the 145 initiatives/groups of initiatives expressly refer to gender; the number is likely to be higher but detailed information is missing on other interventions.

122. UNICEF offices emphasise the importance to partners about ensuring at least an equal participation of girls in activities with special efforts made to reach out to girls in projects that have more appeal for boys, for instance the S4D project in Jharkhand. The overall breakdown of adolescent girls and boys benefitting from UNICEF programming is impossible to know but the higher representation of girls in the evaluation (528 girls to 257 boys) is indicative of their greater participation in UNICEF activities. Despite this concerted effort, as

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85 Evaluation TOR Question (2.4.) How is programming with and for adolescents in UNICEF South Asia addressing equity and diversity issues among adolescents, including reaching the most disadvantaged, and differences in sex, gender, ethnicity, race, caste, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity etc.?
discussed in the last section it is troubling to see girls settling for second best and self-study at home in Gujarat instead of attending school, “Five years ago we were all sitting at home, we were not aware of the provision that we can sit at home and appear as externals. We now know of the provision, none of have gone to schools but we have given exams”. Box 14 gives further details on this example thus illustrating the limitations girls still face in accessing equal opportunities.

123. Issues facing adolescent boys by virtue of their gender role tend not to be well addressed. While some countries and/or projects do have an understanding, awareness of the potential problems facing adolescent boys (e.g. child labour, addictions, substance abuse, child marriage and early parenthood) was missing in other locations. As one adolescent girl in Gujarat put it when asked what problems boys have, ‘Since they can go and study what issues would they have. They can roam freely’. Adolescents in Nepal also had trouble thinking of issues facing boys until they recalled that ‘Boys have to work in shops, hotels, go to the forest to bring firewood’. Youths in Afghanistan – both male and female - were very clear that illegal migration was a serious issue that predominantly affected adolescent boys (see Box 15). Even where boys face the similar problems to girls e.g. child marriage, they are not recognised, the issue child grooms was only raised in one case study - Nepal by UNICEF staff and through the evaluation team’s own field observations despite statistics showing that 11 per cent of boys marry when they are a child in Nepal.86

124. The levels of gender inequality vary between countries in the region (Table 1) and also in contexts within countries. For instance, even between the three case study sites in India, levels of discrimination against girls appear lower in Assam as compared to Jharkhand or Gujarat - based on the fact that boys have higher school drop out rates, the forced early marriage of girls is not practiced, and girls enjoy relative freedom, for instance, traditional male games, like football, are commonly played by girls. Conversely, meetings with community members suggest that adolescent males face the most critical problems (alcoholism, violence, speedbiking, lack of employment opportunities). Yet the project is only running groups for adolescent girls and has no current focus on boys resulting in a sense that boys and are discriminated against; a sports kits was recently distributed to the adolescent girls groups leading to boys asking why they weren’t receiving anything. Adolescent girls, community members and tea management all strongly recommend action for boys, particularly to constructively channel their physical energy, including the creation of boys clubs, ‘Boys do not study because the focus of education is so much on girls and the focus on boys if the parents are not there they have to earn...when they finish class 10, they start working somewhere’.

125. By contrast in Bangladesh there was very good and unprompted awareness. Evaluation contributors (both UNICEF and adolescents) differentiated priority issues facing adolescents along gender lines with child marriage, sexual harassment, and the attitudes of male teachers identified as problems for girls; whereas addiction, suicide, drugs, corporal punishment, and child labour were identified as problems for boys. Here the programme is directly seeking to empower adolescent boys and address their issues as well as seeing them as agents of change, who can be influenced to help improve the situation of adolescent girls. This was a key lesson learnt from the previous 2011 Kishori Abajan project. In the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bhutan where gender inequalities are less evident, the offices take a more gender neutral approach, for instance, UNICEF Bhutan supports activities which benefit both boys and girls such as youth centres, volunteerism or

86 UNICEF source – further details not available
civic participation, or they may identify more subtle inequalities, for instance, UNICEF Maldives says that boys are more vulnerable in their context due to higher levels of school drop out and greater likelihood of coming into conflict with the law.

126. The lack of focus on boys arises for varying reasons:

- The high level of gender inequality and discrimination against girls in the region as manifested in the many harmful traditional practices make girls an inescapable priority.
- UNICEF’s global approach to gender issues appears to mean equality for girls despite the fact that the word gender is neutral and refers to the socially ascribed roles of both males and females.
- Where boys are considered, they appear as adjuncts to girls, instrumentalised to improve the lives of girls rather than being seen as adolescents in need of support and with their own rights. As one staff put it, ‘...the only premise seems to be that we should work with boys to save girls...we can’t instrumentalise boys in this way’. Working with adolescent boys to improve the situation of girls is a useful approach and the evaluation found adolescent boys to be receptive and aware of the structural bias against girls. Nonetheless, it should not be at the expense of addressing the rights of adolescent boys.
- UNICEF’s lack of experience and know-how in working with boys, ‘Girls are low lying fruit, it’s easy to mobilise girls....The obstruction in UNICEF is not knowing how to deal with masculinity ...programming around gender and masculinity is not very strong’ said a staff member. Staff and partners call for more guidance, techniques and approaches in how to work in a way that appeals to boys. In this respect the S4D project in Jharkhand is a prime example of a project that has found a way into dealing with the challenging issues facing young men while at the same time keeping girls engaged (Box 8).
- Other variables may also skew the picture on the ground. For instance, UNICEF projects are sometimes operating in relatively better off communities with middle class boys who do not face the same risks as boys from poorer communities.
- An approach which benefits both boys and girls through a more balanced understanding of the pressures of their respective roles and the attendant risks is worth emphasising across the region.
Box 15 - Point of interest
Illegal and unsafe migration – the burden on adolescent boys

Whilst much gender-based harm in relation to adolescent health, protection, participation, and development has a disproportionately negative effect on girls, it is important to remember that some issues are more harmful for boys and young men. In Afghanistan, all youth – male and female - raised the issue of illegal migration for boys as a priority concern, as did UNICEF and Government staff. A 2014 UNHCR migration report confirms that the illegal migration problem within and out of Afghanistan affects, predominantly, 13-17 year old boys. It is driven by poverty, insecurity, and inadequate opportunities for education and employment at home. The burden for income-generation in Afghanistan rests entirely with boys rather than girls and it is this gender-norm that precipitates and promotes the unsafe migratory patterns. As a female youth reported – ‘as per the culture here, even if the family is dying from hunger, you don’t send girls abroad alone’. But unfortunately that is not true for boys. An earlier (2010) UNICEF report, “Children on the Move”, highlighted the increasing number of separated and unaccompanied children – predominantly boys – seeking asylum status in Europe. The dangers and hardships faced by these children are many and varied, both throughout the journey itself and upon reaching the destination. These dangers include child trafficking into slave labour; detention without (or with) charge; beatings and inhumane treatment in detention; and deportation back to country of origin or out of country of current location. Families often pay smugglers substantial sums of money for travel assistance, and this is then lost. Even if boys do make it to their planned final destination, they risk having their asylum request refused, and even when granted they then have to cope with adjustments in language and culture whilst trying to find work to as poorly educated immigrants which extends their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. This particular aspect of gendered norms increasing harm to boys is increasingly reported in the media today with the continued European refugee crisis highlighting the vulnerabilities of boys (and men) to human smugglers and human traffickers. However, it is only one example of issues which disproportionately affect boys: another example raised by the Bangladesh evaluation was that of corporal punishment in schools.

7.4.2. Other diversity issues
127. Other diversity issues are addressed in a more piecemeal way:

- **Bangladesh** – there is inclusion of adolescents with disabilities in its programmes and religious groups (Hindu, Muslim and Christian) are well-mixed in its adolescent clubs. The UNICEF Office is merging existing working groups on adolescents and gender into a new taskforce on the ‘Second Decade of Life’ intended to give a more coordinated approach to mainstreaming these issues.
- **Bhutan** - is supporting vocational learning for adolescents with learning disabilities through the Draksho Training Centre, and is exploring partnerships with organisations working on gender identity and HIV.
- **Nepal** - is working with LGBT adolescents, and also has a programme for adolescents vulnerable to HIV/AIDS (Commerically sexually exploited children, adolescents affected by HIV/AIDS, sexual and gender minorities and drug users).
- **Gujarat and Nepal** - there is a conscious effort to mix castes and religious groups through work in mixed communities.

- **Sri Lanka** – much of the work is in conflict-affected areas which are mainly Hindu but projects also try and build social cohesion between communities e.g. recently initiated social cohesion through music project.

- **Pakistan** – is delivering educational projects to Afghan refugee children.

- **Region** – it’s worth noting that transgender issues at a policy level receive significant focus in UNICEF. The Evaluation Findings Workshop recognised the importance of working with all genders, i.e. including the transgender community. Commentators also often called on the evaluation report to make greater references to LGBT issues. In some countries of the region, such as Nepal, many strides have been made in the recognition of transgender rights and UNICEF’s programme is explicitly targeting transgender communities. Elsewhere in the region, in projects on the ground, transgender is little addressed.

### 7.4.3. Reaching the most disadvantaged

128. UNICEF offices are aware of equity issues and seek to target the most disadvantaged adolescents. The UNICEF Nepal ADAP programme works in 15 of the most disadvantaged districts selected on the basis of the Child Deprivation Index which identifies the most deprived and marginalised areas of the country. Likewise in Bangladesh where the office works in 20 UNDAF districts identified through a multiple deprivation index. In India (both Gujarat and Jharkhand) and Bangladesh, UNICEF is working with tribal communities in geographically remote or neglected areas. Work in the tea estates of Assam is another example of reaching marginalised and excluded groups in areas of geographical remoteness, with special laws and governance structures described by some as a ‘state within a state’. Afghanistan faces acute needs across the country arising from decades of conflict. Perhaps the one exception in the region is Bhutan where much of the Office’s current adolescent work is being carried out in urban communities, some of which comprise affluent and middle class populations – activities have been initiated recently to try and reach more disadvantaged groups through community-based social programmes in rural areas.

129. Despite prioritising the most deprived areas, reaching the most disadvantaged remains a challenge. UNICEF staff acknowledge the difficulties ‘when it comes to reaching more marginalised and getting systems to the last nth percent’. The evaluation found that projects in mixed communities of people of different income levels, occupations and castes in Gujarat and Nepal were more likely to attract the better off, higher caste, wealthier families. The most at-risk and disadvantaged were noticeably absent. Working in mixed communities has positive benefits in terms of fostering social cohesion but the absence of those most at risk is a concern – for instance, during one focus group in Nepal, the evaluation heard that two ten year olds from the village had recently got married and neither was being reached by the project or any other services.

130. Adolescents and community mobilisers said that despite efforts on their part, it was difficult to engage such hard to reach adolescents for various reasons: they lived too far, had to stay home and help with housework or farming; weren’t allowed to participate by their parents; or that the adolescents were not interested and regarded ‘coming for such trainings is a pain in the head’. Adolescents in Nepal speculated that caste may be a factor with lower caste people not attending due to conventions about not sitting with higher caste people or touching or eating the same food as them. Adolescents did not immediately identify
those who were not attending as poorer or more disadvantaged but on further enquiry by the evaluation team, absent adolescents were found to be from single parent families, or have parents who were sick.

131. Some groups and issues are simply not being catered for. Married adolescent girls appear fairly neglected everywhere; as child marriage activities are mainly preventive and targeted at unmarried girls, the needs of married girls are missed (see box 12). For example, in Bangladesh, the age of the mother is not systematically captured or analysed in age-categories through HMIS. In Bhutan, the most visible vulnerable groups are the roadside labourers, migrant communities, and rural communities. Offices may not be ready to tackle certain issues; in Gujarat, adolescent victims of intra-familial violence and abuse are not much reached through current programming. The systems of social care are not extensive enough in the region to intervene in such cases although the Office has piloted some work in adolescent groups on sexual abuse and the concept of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ touch by people in the community (teachers, religious leaders).

132. The evaluation identifies the following learning in improving the reach to the most disadvantaged:

- Projects working in more homogenous impoverished communities e.g. tribal groups in India (Gujarat and Jharkhand) which lack basic infrastructure (water, electricity and sanitation) and have little differentiation among the population, tend to have wider participation. In such communities, adolescents reported that everyone was coming to UNICEF projects, including from poor households, the only people not participating were adolescents who had already migrated for work.
- Working with partners who have hands on experience with marginalised communities increases the chances of reaching the most in need. This was particularly noticeable in Gujarat where the Office has sought out small organisations with such longstanding experience, even if they lack administrative capacity and need substantial support and training. By contrast, in Bhutan, one of the constraints is finding suitable partners is that civil society groups are used to working with easy to reach groups (in schools for example) rather than with less accessible groups in remote mountainous and rural locations.
- Using an outreach model, most developed in Assam, is also a way of addressing this issue. The project recognises that weekly meetings will not be attended by the most disadvantaged who may be out working and places a strong emphasis on outreach ‘the weekly meeting is not for everyone, if the girl does not reach us, we need to reach that girl’. One to one peer befriending models is an important means for increasing inclusion.
- Project design is also an issue. The Police Partnership Project in Bhutan for example, had more success in involving harder to reach adolescents than other initiatives because the subject matter (crime) appeared more appealing to them. In addition, local community policemen were actively involved in identifying at risk youth and inviting them to attend the training course.
- The cost-effectiveness of an equity-based approach is also an underlying constraint. Reaching the most disadvantaged will inevitably require more effort and be more costly than working with easier to reach populations, as one UNICEF staff cautioned against chasing big numbers, ‘if we work with an adolescent girls’ group, there’ll be 20 girls in a club meeting, there will be 3 or 4 who really need to be reached but instead we will focus on all 20, the way our programmes are designed loses out the last few children who are most important from a programme point of view. We need to relook at how we chase big numbers’.
Box 16 - Point of interest

Exclusion of married adolescent girls

In 2010 the Government of Bangladesh passed policy, and held a high-level national workshop, in regard to married adolescent girls attending school and pregnant (usually married, within the conservative context of Bangladesh) can sit exams. This was not technically illegal before 2010 but the purpose of the 2010 policy reform was to highlight the support the government wanted to provide to allowing married adolescent girls to continue education where possible: this reflects a broader Government will to ensure married adolescent girls can access services and support as other adolescents do. However, the fact that the policy environment is enabling is not enough, and in practice, few married adolescent girls are benefitting from adolescent clubs.

This was cross-checked in the case study visit to Bangladesh. There was a sense from UNICEF staff that in fact married adolescent girls were included in adolescent clubs. In Dhaka Mirpur slum when asked, adolescents reported that there were 3 married adolescent girls in the club (although they were not present at the time: we were told they were at school although also told that the reason there were so few boys there was that they boys were at school in the afternoon (the time of the visit) whereas the girls went to school in the morning). In Kulhna district adolescents in the peer training (from 12 different clubs) reported adolescent girls dropping out when they got married.

Regardless of whether a few married adolescent girls might be able to access the adolescent clubs it is clear that:

1. Particularly in the rural districts married adolescent girls are not accessing the clubs
2. The majority of married adolescent girls are unable to access adolescent clubs
3. Some of the discussions, activities, and LSBE – particularly those centred around the harm of child marriage – are inappropriate and in fact harmful to married adolescent girls
4. A significant proportion of husbands and mother-in-laws will be unwilling to allow married adolescent girls access to the adolescent clubs in their current form (linked back to point 2)
5. Separate activities could be considered for married adolescent girls to ensure UNICEF reaches as many married (and commonly most vulnerable) adolescent girls as possible.

7.4.4. Human rights

133. Referring back to the human rights framework set up in the methodology section (section 4.4.), the evaluation found that nearly all of the 145 initiatives/groups of initiatives identified make reference to child rights in some form (Annex 12). This shows a good adherence to promoting human rights values. The issue arises more in the application of principles as shown by the discussions above on equity, gender and reaching the most disadvantaged. UNICEF’s work also reveals a good balance between supporting duty-bearers and rights-holders. The evaluation can show strong evidence of empowerment of adolescents as rights-holders better able to recognise and claim their rights. It also notes, UNICEF’s extensive work with duty-bearers at different levels, from policy, through to communities and families, though by virtue of the nature of this evaluation, it is less able to validate such outcomes.
7.5. Factors behind effectiveness

134. Taking an overview of the many initiatives covered by this evaluation, the following extraneous factors appear to help or hinder the effectiveness of UNICEF’s programmes for and with adolescents. Factors internal to UNICEF are addressed under the next section under ‘Efficiency’:

**Stable Governance** – Having a good government in place, with an open participatory approach and minimal levels of corruption facilitates programming. Bhutan was cited as an example in interviews. By contrast, the past track record of Jharkhand has been very difficult politically and economically. Jharkhand has faced years of political instability, and has the first majority government in its 16 year history – this presents an important opportunity as the State Government rolls out major programmes targeting some of the most disadvantaged areas. It is open to scaling up UNICEF initiatives, including those targeted at adolescents. In Bangladesh, the environment is relatively enabling, with Bangladesh being an UNGEI (UN Girls Education Initiative) target country from 2006; a vibrant civil society, and an understanding that adolescent and youth programming is vital to Bangladesh’s 2021 vision (becoming a middle income country by 2021).

**Trust between UNICEF and Government** – positive relations were mentioned as a facilitating factor in various contexts (Bhutan, Gujarat/India, Sri Lanka). UNICEF Nepal cited the strong support of Government on the development of adolescent friendly policies and its endorsement of UNICEF initiatives, like the social and financial training package, which facilitated dissemination and use by other development agencies.

**Coordination with partner agencies** - regular meetings to share developments with partners is key. UNICEF Sri Lanka helped the Ministry of Youth Affairs set up a monthly coordination mechanism for all agencies in 2014. Taking account of what others are doing has helped the Sri Lanka programme to focus; UNICEF is no longer carrying out vocational training as it was only able to support minimal numbers (couple of hundred) and other actors like the World Bank are better placed to do this to scale. In various places, the lack of external coordination within ministries was noted as a constraint which can be compounded by a lack of coordination and competition within UNICEF itself. Coordination with other UN agencies and aligning with One UN systems, UNICEF global strategies and other frameworks can be a challenge.

**Partner capacity** – the capacity and commitment of partner organisations both Government and civil society is a critical issue and varies from place to place. Systems and structures may not adequately be in place. Only one country in the region, Nepal, has a distinct strategy on adolescents. Staff capacity in partner agencies is another issue, with some places facing staff shortages. For instance, if pilot projects are scaled up, it can be difficult to keep pace and ensure the capacity is in place to take change forward, see for example, challenges facing the expansion of the Child Friendly Local Governance initiative in Nepal. Much is expected of frontline staff in terms of actually realising project results and more investment is needed at that level to build capacities (see section 8.6.).

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87 Evaluation TOR Question (2.7.) Why has/has not UNICEF programming for adolescents been effective/ineffective?
availability of relevant partners can be an issue e.g. in the Maldives civil society organisations are still limited in number due to past restrictions making it difficult to find the relevant expertise.

**Lack of data** – this is a serious constraint to proper planning and mentioned in several locations. UNICEF offices are often reliant on official data but this can be dated and fail to provide the detailed picture needed for effective planning. For instance, in Gujarat, census data only covers health and child marriage, and then only at an aggregated level and not at block or village level (the level of intervention of UNICEF programmes). In Assam, it was pointed out that India’s census data does not disaggregate 10-19 year olds in one place, the office has analysed the data to come up with a composite number.
### Box 17

**Sharing practices - Framework for programming with and for adolescents**

**UNICEF Bangladesh**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Entry Point</th>
<th>Outcome Result</th>
<th>Key Intervention Areas</th>
<th>Over-Arching Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage** | National partnerships, political commitment and civil society and community actions are mobilized to eliminate child marriage in Bangladesh. | • Policy / legal reforms  
• Development of a Theory of Change to end child marriage  
• Establishment of coordination mechanism to address child marriage.  
• Understanding and addressing key social norms that drive child marriage;  
• Social protection schemes and child protection systems to reduce vulnerabilities of girls and their families to early marriage |  |
| **Education and Employability Skills** | Equitable access and utilization of quality equivalent non-formal education by marginalized children aged 5 to 14; and livelihood and vocational skills for out of school children in the age group of 14-18 years in the most marginalized districts\(^{88}\) (and urban areas) in Bangladesh | • Policy support for second change education  
• Integration of life skills-based education in the upper primary and secondary curriculum  
• Leadership in the education sector-wide approach to leverage resources for the most marginalised children  
• Non-formal education for marginalised children aged 5 to 14 years  
• Livelihood and vocational skills for out of school children in the age group of 14-18 years |  |
| **Inclusive Programme for Most at Risk Adolescents** | National action to promote adolescent sexual and reproductive health, reduce HIV transmission risk, gender based violence and exploitation among most at risk adolescents are operational. | • Protective measures to support and care for adolescent victims of exploitation, violence and abuse;  
• Capacity building of relevant law enforcement agencies  
• Address social norms and practices related to gender identity and sexual orientation  
• Promotion of adolescent friendly health service including adolescent sexual and reproductive health  
• Adolescent HIV prevention, treatment and care and mentoring support  
• Promotion of social network among the different adolescent groups. |  |
| **Adolescent Empowerment and Participation** | National mechanisms, partnerships and investment towards sustainable empowerment of disadvantaged and vulnerable adolescent populations (girls and boys) to reduce multi-dimensional social and economic deprivation are functional in Bangladesh | • Mobilization of action by government and civil society towards effective coverage of a combination of adolescent-friendly interventions targeted at prevention,  
• Protection and care of disadvantage and vulnerable adolescents to abuse, exploitation and violence  
• Strengthen institutional mechanisms for adolescent participation in decision making processes, civic engagement and social change process at national and sub-national levels. |  |

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\(^{88}\) Marginalized communities as identified in the UNDAF (2012 – 2016)
8. Efficiency

8.1. Institutional fit

8.1.1. Alignment to UNICEF global policies

135. Key finding: UNICEF’s structures and results matrices do not support work on adolescents in the most logical manner. Achieving alignment between UNICEF country level activities and global policies can be a challenge due to differences in the way various corporate documents address (or don’t address) the issue of adolescence.

136. There is institutional alignment at a broad level as all adolescent initiatives are structured within the framework of country programmes which in turn align to UNICEF’s Strategic Plan (SP). However, achieving this alignment can be challenging as the planning documents at global and country level frame the issue of adolescence in different ways. Table 6 sets out the key UNICEF planning documents, the SP and each of the country plans for the region. The SP integrates adolescents explicitly as an outcome under the health and nutrition sectors. In turn, four of the countries explicitly include adolescents in an outcome. However, they all do so in various ways as the country programme documents are conceptualised differently: Afghanistan includes adolescents under two sectors; India takes a lifecycle approach; Nepal and Bangladesh both include adolescents but frame their outcomes in individual ways. The four remaining countries – Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka do not have explicit outcomes on adolescents but may have relevant lower level indicators.

Table 6 Integration of adolescents in UNICEF planning documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning document</th>
<th>Integration of Adolescents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF Global Strategic Plan – 2014-2017</td>
<td>Health - Outcome: Improved and equitable use of high-impact maternal and child health interventions from pregnancy to adolescence and promotion of healthy behaviours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIV - Outcome: Improved and equitable use of proven HIV prevention and treatment interventions by children, pregnant women and adolescents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF Afghanistan 2015-2019</td>
<td>Health – PCR 1 - Improved access and increased utilization of quality and equity focused MNCH and immunization services for mothers, new born, U5 children and adolescent girls in most deprived provinces and areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nutrition - PCR 4 - Improved coverage and increased utilization of quality and equitable nutrition services for children under five, adolescent girls and mothers in the most deprived provinces and area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PCR 1 - By the end of 2016, women, children and youth in 20 selected districts,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

89 Evaluation TOR question (1.5.) To what extent is UNICEF’s South Asia programming with and for adolescents aligned with the UNICEF Global Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and other relevant plans such as the Gender Action Plan (2014-2017)?
UNICEF’s structures and results matrices therefore do not support work on adolescents in the most logical manner since they integrate the issue into their frameworks in haphazard and different ways. A point much highlighted by the Evaluation Findings Workshop which said that reporting was disconnected and disjointed making it difficult to track results and money. The SP itself makes the strongest link between adolescents and health and HIV but in practice, the strongest programme link is with child protection, and as HIV has become a mainstreamed issue in itself, the link with adolescence in that area has become even less visible. At country level, the degree of alignment differs: connections are most comprehensive in Nepal as Country Office activities concerning adolescents link to all seven outcomes of the SP but even here unless the associated indicator exists and is SMART, the inclusion of adolescents becomes a cosmetic exercise. The Afghanistan Country Programme (2015-2019) by contrast aligns in three outcome areas. The Bangladesh Country Office adolescent framework is structured around multi-sectoral entry-points which largely map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan One UN Country Programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF India 2013 – 2017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives UNDAF 2011 – 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF Nepal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF Pakistan 2013 – 2017</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF Sri Lanka 2013 – 2017</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
across to SP implementation outcomes except to WASH, although structurally direct alignment is less clear. See Annex 12 table V for sectoral alignment.

138. Given that the global corporate outcomes are broadly couched, it is possible to make adolescent initiatives fit into the overall framework. Country programmes are in any case often out of synch with the SP in terms of timeframes and in practice, country office staff do not much draw on the SP or other global documents for guidance – no-one mentioned the Gender Action Plan, for example, specifically although there was much awareness among staff in taking account of this dimension in their work vis-à-vis equality for girls (see section 7.4.). The global level is rather remote for country offices, and the emphasis is more on coordination at the regional level, and in the case of India, between the State Offices and the Country Office.

139. While, with a degree of manipulation, a fit can be made between adolescent interventions and strategic planning documents, this can be unsatisfactory in terms of the lack of explicit results pertaining to adolescents and clear reporting lines. This was mentioned by various UNICEF staff in India who pointed out that in the process of rationalising and reducing the numbers of intermediate results under the current country programme specific wording on adolescents was lost, for instance, the fourth intermediate result on health no longer refers to adolescents. Staff from different sectors expressed the concern that, ‘by removing adolescents we are deprioritising, adolescents are not visible in reporting’ another added, ‘when we are not reporting, we are not compiling and assimilating’. Stakeholders in different countries/locations mentioned that there was a stronger focus in earlier programmes/strategies (up to 2008/9) – possibly because the earlier global strategic framework was less compartmentalised into sectors and more conducive to mainstreaming.

**8.1.2. Strategic approaches**

140. Key finding: Capacity development and partnerships are the most important strategic approaches. Evidence generation, innovation and integration are recognised as warranting more attention. Service delivery is not common and South-South and triangular cooperation appears non-existent.

141. In terms of the application of the seven strategies outlined in UNICEF’s current SP 2014-2017 to UNICEF’s programming for and with adolescents:

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90 Evaluation TOR questions (1.1.) What strategies have been followed within UNICEF to promote the empowerment and other rights’ fulfilment of adolescents, particularly those facing socio-economic discrimination or exclusion? and (1.2.) What strategies/approaches have not been followed in a given context and why?
91 UNICEF Global Strategic Plan (2014-2017) Strategies
(1). “Catalyzing and supporting strategic partnerships and social movements for the realization of the rights of children, integrating child rights into other agendas and building capacity through partnerships with national and local governments, civil society, academic institutions and the private sector”;
(2) “Delivering essential services especially where institutional capacity is weak and/or during humanitarian crises and procuring essential commodities”;
(3) “Helping partners to generate evidence through supporting research design, data collection, strengthening quality assurance and using evidence and innovation to influence policy dialogue and advocacy”
(4) “Identifying promising innovations and supporting partners to adopt, adapt and scale up the most useful and promising approaches”
(5) “Learning from programmes and partnerships that support integrated programming for children at different stages of the life cycle or that address inter-sectoral issues”
• **Capacity development** and **partnerships** are the most important approaches (see discussion in section 8.5 and 8.6).

• **Service delivery** is not common: the focus is on upstream work as countries in the region move to a higher income status and are seen as having the resources and infrastructure to deliver services themselves. Downstream services may be deployed in places of humanitarian crises like Pakistan (e.g. support to services like alternative education for refugees), or in areas of particular development need e.g. Indian states like Jharkhand, where the State Office is involved in upstream work as well as downstream work in some districts.

• **Evidence generation and innovation** require more priority and funding as necessary according to staff. Examples of the Offices generating countrywide information to input into national policy include the Sri Lanka perception study and adolescent female participation in the economic context or the 2013 national health study on emerging issues. While the evaluation did not come across innovation as such, Offices show a common interest in experimentation, trying out activities that are new to their contexts at least e.g. suggestion boxes in Gujarat, sports for development in Jharkhand, civic engagement in Bhutan. More novel approaches can come from links to UNICEF’s Innovation Initiatives section in New York, U-report was tried in Sri Lanka and mobile application community mapping under BCMD in Bhutan but neither worked well due to technological limitations. U-report is earmarked for implementation in Pakistan.

• **South-South/triangular cooperation**, appears to have the least relevance, staff are little aware of this occurring despite this being a reporting component under UNICEF’s reporting frameworks. There is some high level cooperation among governments across the region on adolescent issues e.g. UNICEF/SAARC 2013 ‘Regional Policy Dialogue on Adolescents in South Asia’ but no examples of bilateral linkages facilitated by UNICEF.

8.2. **Internal organisation**

142. **Key findings:** All countries have some human resources specifically deployed to adolescent programming but capacity is an issue. The overall adequacy and appropriateness of human resources for programming for adolescents merits further assessment. The better use of mainstreaming and convergence to enhance programming for and with adolescents is clear. The organisational set up varies in each office but specialist posts, internal coordinating committees and cross-sectoral strategies can all help the improved integration of adolescent programming into the broader work of Offices.

8.2.1. **Management structures**

143. All UNICEF Offices in the region have some level of human resources deployed to coordinate and/or initiate work on adolescent issues but an important question is the adequacy of these resources to meet programme needs. The human resources available in each Office range from focal points in six locations (i.e.

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(6) “Supporting development and learning for the realization of the rights of children through South-South and triangular cooperation”

(7) “Supporting individual, community and national capacity development through communication for development, training and technical assistance, strengthening supply change management, piloting models for scaling up and strengthening national and sub-national data collection, analysis and use”
staff positions which are assigned this role in addition to their usual functions), to the deployment of an ADAP officer in Afghanistan and Bhutan, through to a four person team including a Junior Professional Officer for the ADAP Section in Nepal, and a two person team in ROSA. India may have additional focal points in the state offices.

144. The structural set-up is different in each place in terms of reporting lines as shown in Table 7:

- UNICEF offices with adolescent focal points have them sitting in different sections: Child Protection sections (Bhutan, Sri Lanka); Education (Maldives); Communications for Development (India – Gujarat and Jharkhand. In Bangladesh, the focal point is part of the role of the gender and development specialist who reports directly to senior management. These choices reflect the focus of programming for and with adolescents as decided by local offices.

- Adolescent staff are also situated differently: in Bhutan the ADAP officer is part of the Child Protection section, in Afghanistan, the position is independent of all sectors and reports directly to senior management. In India, the ADAP specialist in the Delhi office sits in the Child Protection unit.

- The ADAP team in Nepal has its own status as a separate section with a reporting line to senior management.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7</th>
<th>UNICEF office structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td><strong>ADAP and UNICEF structural-set-up</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Youth and Adolescent Development Specialist reporting directly to the Deputy Country Representative. Gender and Development Specialist – also a recent appointment, focuses on gender equality but also adolescent girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Adolescent focal point is newly part of the gender and development specialist's role, this function having been recently taken over from the CP Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>Youth and Adolescent Officer in Child Protection section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India (Gujarat)</td>
<td>Adolescent focal point in Communications for Development section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India (Jharkhand)</td>
<td>Adolescent focal point in Communications for Development section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India (Country office)</td>
<td>Adolescent specialist in the Child Protection section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>Adolescent focal point in Education section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Adolescent Development and Participation Section with four staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Adolescent specialist/focal point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Adolescent focal point in Child Protection section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF ROSA</td>
<td>ADAP section with two staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2.2. **Human and financial resources**

145. The amount of financial resource invested by UNICEF in programming for and with adolescents in South Asia is not known to this evaluation. There are hundreds of interventions taking place in the region through multiple local partners and information about them is far from accessible. As stated, the evaluation, after

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92 Evaluation TOR Question (3.1.) To what extent are programming approaches with and for adolescents, including the allocation of human and financial resources by UNICEF, appropriate to, and commensurate with, the political and operational contexts within which UNICEF works in South Asia?

93 During the finalisation of the evaluation, a commentator suggested that it was possible to extrapolate financial information by doing an analysis using Programme Information Database (PIDB) coding in VISION, a system accessible to UNICEF staff. This could be a further area of enquiry for the office itself.
several months of effort, was able to track 145 initiatives/groups of initiatives (Annex 12) and gather some basic information about them. Further details on the level of human and financial resources deployed through implementing partners in addressing adolescent needs is embedded deep in locally held project and financial records.

146. In terms of funding, the smaller and relatively prosperous countries in the region, like Bhutan, face challenges in raising development funds, including for work on adolescents. In the larger programmes with substantial funds but dire needs, like Nepal, more funding can always be used, for instance, to expand existing interventions in local governance or to explore emerging issues like nutrition. By contrast, Bangladesh has been working on these issues for a long time; it has regular and external resourcing and adequate staff capacities. Generally speaking, rather than extra funds, the more important concern expressed in evaluation interviews was the capacity of designated staff, recruitment does not always emphasise and/or yield staff with specialist skills (see section 8.6. on capacity development).

8.2.3. Mainstreaming/Convergence

Specialist posts vs mainstreaming
147. The region has used different approaches for managing its work with and for adolescents, i.e. setting up specialist units/staff, mainstreaming (making adolescent issues a responsibility for all staff) and convergence95 (joint intervention on adolescence covering various sectors in a particular geographical locality). ‘Specialist posts’ and ‘mainstreaming’ are not mutually exclusive concepts. While Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan have put in place specialist positions, this is not instead of mainstreaming and in fact specialist roles can be tasked with identifying opportunities for integrating adolescent issues across the work of an office. In India, there is an ADAP specialist at Country Office level and adolescent focal points in the State Offices. Conversely, the absence of specialist posts in an office does not de facto mean that more mainstreaming is automatically taking place.

148. Experience from Nepal and Bhutan suggests that specialist ADAP posts/units are useful in giving concerted attention to adolescent programming but with the downside that the work can become siloed unless specific efforts are made to mainstream work on adolescent issues in other sectors, as one staff put it, ‘having an adolescent section has helped us focus and think of word ‘adolescent’ but in long run the issue needs to be mainstreamed like gender.’ The setting up of specialised sections can also cause friction with sectoral units if boundaries are not clarified or if there is potential for competition over funding. The Nepal ADAP section has sought to promote work for and with adolescents across all programme areas and identified linkages across all sectors. In Bhutan, ADAP remains under the domain of the Child Protection unit and the need for better mainstreaming across the full range of work carried out by the office is recognised.

Mainstreaming experiences
149. The degree to which the issue of adolescents has been mainstreamed to different sectors varies:

- Child protection – most common home for adolescent issues;

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94 Evaluation TOR Question (3.2.) What is the experience in UNICEF of adolescent-specific programming vs mainstreaming or convergence approaches? And (3.6.) To what extent is UNICEF able to advocate for explicit adolescents programming, both within the organisation as well as vis-à-vis development partners, in a possible context of competing priorities?

95 The term ‘convergence’ and ‘mainstreaming’ were not defined in the TOR or other available UNICEF documentation. The evaluation uses its own definitions.
• **Education** - natural link with education especially in countries like the Maldives and Sri Lanka where the focus is on the quality of secondary education but the concept of ‘adolescence’ is not explicitly understood or integrated in existing education programmes;

• **C4D** - integration with this cross-cutting sectors is happening with relative ease in various places (e.g. in India a number of State offices have appointed the C4D person as the focal point on adolescent issues);

• **Health** - mainstreaming in health is more challenging as UNICEF’s focus remains on early childhood and adolescent health is seen as the domain of UNFPA. There are some interventions on Adolescent Friendly Health Services principally in Nepal and also starting up in Bhutan.

• **Nutrition** – this is systematically mainstreamed in India due to the emphasis in Government flagship programmes on iron folic tablets for adolescents but much less evident elsewhere in the region.

• **WASH** – ad hoc initiatives around the region on menstrual hygiene primarily in India, Nepal. Adolescents are also seen as agents for change e.g. cleanliness campaigns.

• **HIV/AIDS** – UNICEF’s focus on adolescents was born out of its work on HIV/AIDS. However, as HIV itself has become ‘mainstreamed’, the issue appears to have dropped off the agenda and/or have become invisible. The links between programming for adolescents and HIV could only be found in Nepal (linked to at-risk populations) and the Maldives where it was mentioned by staff as a priority issue.

• **Social inclusion** – the link was not made much possibly because social inclusion itself is seen as a mainstreaming issue.

150. The evaluation uncovered these sectoral links after speaking directly to sector staff in each country but the connections sometimes appear incidental and the links implicit. It is not therefore correct to talk of ‘mainstreaming’: with the exception of Nepal, Bangladesh and some State Offices in India, there isn’t a conscious effort to integrate adolescent concerns across all sectors. Rather staff often appeared to be considering these linkages for the first time because the evaluation team was asking questions. There appears to be little advocacy within UNICEF encouraging the take up of adolescent programming by all sectors. Aside from asking country offices to appoint focal points, it is not clear what other direction has been given. Advocacy and sharing of knowledge by global and regional advisers can be effective, for instance, in a one off example, the evaluation found that the new support being offered to adolescent friendly health services in Bhutan is due to encouragement by the HIV/AIDS and health advisers at ROSA to take up this issue.

151. The challenges facing the mainstreaming of adolescence are typical of those facing other issues like HIV and disability. It is easy for an issue to slip off the agenda especially when there are no clear lines of reporting and accountability. Competing demands can take precedence. For instance, in a country like Afghanistan which lacks so many basic amenities (primary education, vaccination, under 5 nutrition etc.), staff see adolescents as of secondary importance and do not recognise the acute and life-threatening issues facing them. Moreover, UNICEF offices operating under One UN structures, like Bhutan, have limited control over what priorities are set. It is also rather ambitious at this stage to expect mainstreaming to be taking place, adolescent programming as a global/regional priority is still in its early days, there is much to do in terms of raising awareness internally about the adolescent stage of life and to think through the implications for different sectors, before mainstreaming can happen as a matter of course.
Convergence

152. There are few self-declared convergent programmes (see Annex 12 dataset). UNICEF’s work in Banaskantha district, Gujarat appears to be one of the few genuinely convergent programmes where different sectors have sat down together to plan a joint approach in a particular geographical area. The Office selected the district of Banaskantha for concentrated work with and for adolescents earlier this year, this has involved all sectors (education, child protection, adolescent health, WASH, nutrition, social policy, programme monitoring and evaluation, C4D, A&C) sitting together round the table to design holistic interventions targeted at adolescents, as one staff member put it, ‘we are looking at every opportunity that presents itself to build in issues for adolescents...if we look at child marriage as an entry point...we think through the implications for health, nutrition, behaviour change, social norms...’

153. The IKEA Foundation-funded multi-country programme ‘Improving Adolescent Lives in South Asia’ which is starting up is also intended to be a convergent programme. There are examples from other elsewhere of joint collaborations involving a couple of sectoral areas e.g. Sri Lanka child protection and education; Assam/India child protection and nutrition. The Nepal ADAP programme has collaborations of this type with all sectors on adolescent targeted activities which it defines as ‘convergent’ though in practice it is not known if all these activities are ‘convergent’ in the full sense of the word i.e. joint programming or simply linkages identified by the ADAP team, since the evaluation was not able to verify this through discussions with all the different sectors.

154. Other projects though described as convergent, appear more holistic in the sense of covering all issues rather than working jointly with other sectors to implement a project. The menstrual hygiene project in Jharkhand is an example of holistic programme which uses a specific topic, menstruation, as an entry point for making specific links to all sectors. Girls groups are taught about WASH (Hygienic management of the period, demand for private spaces and toilets); Education (Regular attendance even during periods, negotiation for continued schooling); Health and Nutrition (Understanding physiology, managing the body, regular eating, iron intake); Protection (Challenging mobility related restrictions, child marriage, discussing violence and abuse). The Jharkhand S4D project in a similar way uses the activity of sports as an entry point for a wider discussion on all sectoral issues. The distinction between these projects and the Gujarat project described in the paragraph above is that the latter involved a conscious effort by all sectors sitting together to deliver a joint intervention whereas a ‘holistic’ project could simply mean that one section developed a project using existing training materials on different topics and spanning different sectors.

155. The challenges to convergent programming arise from a lack of internal coordination and the tendency for sectors to work in silos. The lack of adolescent focused budgets in all sectors is critical and the Assam convergence between child protection and nutrition (activities on kitchen gardens, cookery classes, health shops) is a rare example of close cooperation by section, nutrition in this case, operating without an assigned budget. As discussed earlier, the absence of clear reporting lines (see section 8.1. ‘Institutional fit’) is also a constraint.

156. Moreover, the lack of convergence in Government presents an external challenge and is cited as an obstacle in Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Afghanistan. UNICEF offices frequently have to work with different ministries who are each responsible for different aspects of adolescent lives but are often not in communication with each other. In India, some recent Government programmes like RKSK and SABLA are more holistic and require the involvement of different ministries. In an effort to foster greater coordination
in Government, UNICEF Gujarat persuaded the State government to launch an inter-departmental initiative led by the Ministry of Health (Department of Women and Child Development) to make the SABLA programme (intervention to give nutritional enhancements to adolescents at community level) more holistic by integrating components on strengthening life skills. In Assam, the Government reported finding UNICEF efforts to foster convergence between different parts of Government (education, national rural health commission, public health, engineering, water and sanitation) and also with the private sector tea associations through joint meetings, very helpful.

157. In Bangladesh, the situation is particularly chronic due to the lack of convergence and cooperation between line ministries, and also within programme divisions in UNICEF itself. This has led to duplicated effort with different UNICEF sections running similar and uncoordinated programmes for and with adolescents with their respective line ministries. This means potentially wasted resources and conflicting messages though on the plus side, it means that more adolescents are being reached through many different entry points. However, more convergence – at Government level and at UNICEF level (and potentially, for UNICEF to promote and advocate for this convergence through their own programming) would be highly beneficial.

Ways to facilitate mainstreaming and convergence

158. Despite such challenges, learning in terms of how mainstreaming and convergence can be fostered are as follows:

- Capacity building of staff across all sectors. Some staff feel the subject is new and while they may be working with implicit adolescent programmes, they may not have enough knowledge to design programmes in a way that best meets the development needs of adolescents. In addition, staff across sectors need capacity building to help them identify the links between their work and adolescent issues.

- Convergence needs to be embedded at the higher levels of the organisation. As emphasised by the Evaluation Findings Workshop, management needs to weigh in behind convergence efforts; the political will is necessary alongside mechanisms to enable senior management to coordinate work on adolescent issues across the country programme. Mechanisms can include:
  - Having adolescent focal points/officers sit independently of sectoral interests and report directly to senior management (e.g. Bangladesh).
  - The use of internal coordination structures can also help. In Bangladesh, the deputy representative chairs what was an ‘Adolescent Working Group’ (now known as the Second Decade of Life Taskforce which covers gender and adolescence) in order to foster integration across all sectors. In Sri Lanka too, the deputy representative (former ADAP focal point at ROSA) uses management meetings to discuss the integration of adolescent issues into various sectors. India has state and national level taskforces bringing together all sectors around adolescent programming.
  - At the other end of the scale in Afghanistan, the role of senior management in overseeing adolescent programming appears less active.

The important learning is that where adolescent issues are implemented through specific sectors and without an overarching coordination role by senior management, there is a risk of ADAP interventions becoming siloed to specific thematic areas. In Bhutan for instance, with ADAP coming under the Child Protection unit, mainstreaming of the adolescent issues in other sectors is relatively weak despite UNICEF Bhutan being a small office.
• Cross-sectoral strategies to facilitate links across sectoral programmes are also an important tool. Bangladesh is working on a UNICEF Adolescent Programming Framework which attempts to bring together the various strands of programming (see Box 17). There is a ROSA regional strategic framework on programming for adolescents that has been presented to all countries in October 2015 during the regional ADAP network meeting.
• Institutionalising convergence in global and country level strategic plans is also important so that reporting frameworks facilitate action and reporting on convergent programming in a coherent way. This was highlighted by the Evaluation Findings Workshop.
• The importance of capturing lessons learnt from convergent programmes like Child Marriage in India and the IKEA Foundation-funded multi-country programme ‘Improving adolescent lives in South Asia’ was emphasised by the Evaluation Findings Workshop.

8.3. Knowledge management

159. Key findings: Knowledge management is weak. There is much experience in the region which is not being documented or shared leading to unnecessary duplication and inefficiency. Even where good documentation exists there are no mechanisms for dissemination. The regional office has an important role in facilitating information exchange around the region and is in the process of launching a four year knowledge management plan to address gaps in the region.

160. Knowledge management and sharing and exchange across the region is weak with staff having little awareness of what others are doing in adolescent programming. In larger country programmes like India there are network meetings where staff from different offices meet together and exchange information. Information and experiences may be shared and replicated at times but this appears to occur on an ad hoc basis and through word of mouth. As noted, the evaluation itself faced a major challenge in finding out what UNICEF is doing for adolescents, with the mapping only eventually completed shortly before the submission of the report. Adolescent focal points/officers in the country offices did not have this information to hand and even in small offices, said that they didn’t know the details of what other sectors are doing. This is a marker in itself of the weakness in coordination across the region on adolescent issues. Staff also point to the lack of institutional mechanisms for sharing information within the same office and ensuring that programmes build on past experiences and learning. There are IT challenges as well; as the Team Leader found when trying to exchange large documents and learning between projects visited. When the ROSA adolescent focal point was first appointed in 2013 there was much effort to improve knowledge management; a rich resource was developed comprising of newsletters, country profiles and case studies all presented in an attractive and accessible manner. This endeavour which the evaluation only found out about at the end of the inception phase is worth reviving. As the evaluation draws to an end, it has learnt that a four year regional knowledge management plan is in the process of being finalised which aims to articulate the production and widespread dissemination of knowledge management products.

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96 Evaluation TOR Question (3.3.) To what extent has UNICEF put in place guidelines and procedures to build the capacity of staff in order to support the mainstreaming of an adolescent perspective in programming or to adopt participatory methods and approaches?
161. Documentation of learning is also generally weak with much rich experience, for instance, in Bangladesh and Nepal, remaining un-captured or analysed. There are some good examples for instance, like the India Country Office’s practical guidance on setting up Child Protection committees or various briefing papers and good practice guides (only encountered during the finalisation of the evaluation report). The Gujarat Office’s systematic efforts to document its experiences in working with adolescents in easy to read, appealing formats that can be shared with partners or others wishing to learn from its work. Even where good documentation it has limited use due to the lack of dissemination mechanisms. The net effect may be a lack of efficiency, unnecessary reinvention of the wheel and inadequate building on others’ experience and learning.

162. Some staff in different countries/locations also expressed a sense that their work on adolescents was being overlooked and unappreciated by the UNICEF institutional hierarchy (global, regional and national offices). This issue highlights both the need for better knowledge sharing but also systems of internal reward and recognition. In terms of cross-office connections; Country Offices are able to connect with various headquarters units in an ad hoc way e.g. country offices like Bhutan are able to link in directly with global initiatives and also can access global experts if needed. There was some feedback from country office staff that contact with the ADAP ROSA section is relatively limited; the ADAP regional adviser post was only incepted in early 2014 and the IKEA Foundation-funded programme ‘Improving adolescent lives in South Asia’ has taken much focus in the first 12 months which has perhaps led to more intense contact with some countries than others. The main points arising are:

- Country staff suggest more interaction so that the ADAP adviser can find out what country offices are doing and advise accordingly. Some country office staff also request more clarity on how the regional advisor will work with country offices (with the focal point or with all staff for example).
- A TOR establishing the role and responsibilities of adolescent focal points would be helpful to show their role in gathering and sharing information i.e. replicating the evaluation’s mapping of speaking to all sectors and finding out how their activities link to adolescents, what the details of these activities and partners are.
- The focal points could also have a role in sharing information and training others in their offices.
- Offices also need guidance on how they can collect data and report on adolescent issues since the formal reporting structures may not do justice to the work being done (see section 8.1.).
- The database initiated by this evaluation could be maintained and expanded, for example, with the support of country level adolescent focal points.

UNICEF ROSA says that regular communication mechanisms systems exist to link country offices and the regional level (database to request for support, client satisfaction survey, list of identified contact persons for adolescent issues provided by the country offices) but that how this information is shared/disseminated with zonal offices is another issue since the regional level, by definition, does not interact directly with the zonal offices level.
8.4. Monitoring and evaluation

163. Key findings: Monitoring mostly occurs through Country Programme frameworks but results for adolescents are often not explicitly stated and in any case tend to be output focused. The direct effects/outcomes of UNICEF’s interventions are insufficiently captured. There are few formal evaluations, even of established well-known programmes and little use of theories of change or detailed log frames in planning interventions.

164. The extent to which UNICEF’s interventions for adolescents are evaluable i.e. set up to enable monitoring and evaluation in a reliable and credible fashion was considered. The summary data from an analysis of the 145 interventions/groups of interventions gathered for this evaluation (Annex 12 dataset) is presented in Table 8. The analysis is largely based on past and current programmes; the evaluation received little information on new or forthcoming programmes (Annex 12, Table II). The analysis highlights a number of issues:

8.4.1. Definition of results

165. All activities are linked to results at some level, since they all come under country programme results matrices. However results for adolescents are often not specifically defined within these frameworks. Where more specific indicators exist, partners may be required to report against them in programme cooperation agreements but in most cases interventions are reliant on the overarching results of the country programme action plan. In practice this means that activities/outputs and financial expenditure pertaining to particular activities are monitored and then assumptions made about their relationship to the results in the overarching plan. The immediate effects or outcomes, evidence and learning about the intervention, as well as the causal links between the activity and the higher level result are often not to be captured. Much of what UNICEF is doing and achieving for adolescents is thus being lost in the process of trying to align lower level activities with a disparate and remote set of strategic documents (see discussion in section 8.1.).

Table 8 M&E frameworks

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<tr>
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<td>Yes – 15</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>No – 6</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Unknown - 90</td>
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97 Evaluation TOR Question (3.4.) To what extent have monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems, including theories of change, been set up for UNICEF programmes that explicitly or implicitly address adolescents with a view to generating evidence on UNICEF performance? Are participatory methods and approaches included in the design of M&E frameworks for interventions aimed at adolescents? [Note to evaluator - Consideration of M&E frameworks to involve checking if results are defined, when are results measured (baseline, mid-term, endline), what data is collected (gender; age disaggregation); what methods are used: what human resources are there; is there a logframe/theory of change/results matrix – if so obtain a copy.]
8.4.2. Scheduled monitoring

166. Where interventions are reliant on the overall country programme framework, monitoring takes place through annual work planning and mid-term or final reviews; again as the focus of these exercises is broad, the specifics of adolescent programming may be missed. Interventions with more tailored frameworks have defined points for collecting data (baseline, midline or endline data collection). The Nepal ADAP programme has a baseline carried out in 2014 and midline and endline studies planned. Nonetheless concerns came up in evaluation meetings about the adequacy of UNICEF’s monitoring on the ground and supervision of partner work. Establishing a proper baseline can be difficult; initiatives are often reliant on government data which can be too dated or lacking in detail despite efforts to supplement such information with small survey data.

167. The evaluation only found a few examples of internal or external assessments or evaluation reports (Annex 12 dataset). At the same time, partners often do keep detailed records, whether asked to do so or not by UNICEF. The implementing partners of the Police Partnership Project in Bhutan had records and photographs of each participant going back years and could instantly recall all their individual fates. In Assam communities confidently reported reduced school drop out rates and instances of child labour as compared to 2003 - although UNICEF did not have supporting data, tea management welfare officers have annual reports that compile this information. UNICEF Offices appear either unaware of or uninterested in asking for such data; this type of information could easily be consolidated to better track the outcomes and even longer term impacts of UNICEF’s work.

8.4.3. Data disaggregation

168. Data appears to be disaggregated by sex as standard practice but rarely by age. Even where data is disaggregated, it is not always collected in disaggregated form by UNICEF; hence it is not possible to know the breakdown of adolescent boys and girls benefitting from UNICEF programmes. Sometimes this data is relatively inaccessible, for instance, kept as part of Government records (school or health centre attendance records etc.) and may be complicated to retrieve. Even when it is available, UNICEF does not tend to ask for it as it is not required in UNICEF’s own reporting. UNICEF itself cannot therefore give a comprehensive breakdown by age and sex of the beneficiaries it is supporting through its programmes.

8.4.4. Methods
169. Offices appear to be struggling to find the right methods and tools to capture changes of interest. There are a variety of methods being used. In some established Government programmes being supported by UNICEF, there is sophisticated data collection through web-based reporting and Government IT schemes, as reported by the Nepal CFLG initiative, for example. Elsewhere, Offices may use pre and post testing of beneficiaries involved in campaigns, training courses etc. in an effort to capture the difference made by UNICEF interventions e.g. pre and post testing of the UNICEF Jharkhand Awakening campaign or the drugs awareness-raising activities in the Maldives. However, this is not done systematically enough and constitutes a missed opportunity. For instance, in Bangladesh the life skills based education could be better tracked. Finding appropriate methods can be difficult, in Assam, a case management system was trialed but child protection committees used to a culture of oral record keeping found written record-keeping difficult. Some standard ‘how to’ guidance/templates/tools tailored to the realities on the ground would be helpful.

170. One aspect that is proving particularly challenging is the attempt to define and capture changes in adolescent development and empowerment. The evaluation encountered some dedicated efforts by Offices to tease out and document such change.

- The S4D project in Jharkhand, for example, has developed a measurement framework covering 8 domains and comprised of 200 indicators according to which each participant in the project is assessed on a regular basis.
- In Gujarat, the UNICEF office has developed a 360 degree assessment framework where adolescent participants are reviewed by themselves and others (staff, trainers, peers) on a regular basis.
- Nepal and Sri Lanka also mentioned that they were working on measurement frameworks to capture adolescent growth and development.

Such efforts are commendable but at the same time highlight the challenge in developing a manageable and scientifically sound way of measuring changes in adolescents:

- Is the depth of assessment proportionate to the level of investment made in individual adolescents? The examples above are of projects organising group activities for adolescents but not providing around the clock holistic care on an individual basis.
- Do these frameworks give consideration to other aspects in the lives of adolescents which may be contributing to or detracting from the changes observed?
- Are the methods ethical? The evaluation has reservations about methods which ask adolescents to assess each others’ development (though questions like ‘How many of the group members like working with her/him?’) since this is not sensitive to the dynamics of adolescent inter-personal relationships especially among vulnerable young persons.

It would be helpful for ROSA to develop a standard approach for sharing around the region based on established psychological models, such as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and an understanding of how these have been used in measuring adolescent development98.

171. Finding methods which capture the evidence needed is difficult when it come to projects concerned with social and behavioural change. UNICEF is seen making claims about its contribution to high level Government indicators and it is not always clear how this is or will be evidenced e.g. UNICEF ROSA’s headline.

98 Organisations like YCare which have developed short and simple to use tools to capture empowerment changes in adolescents (not publicly available). There appear to be various materials on the internet about the use of such well-being scales in measuring changes in teenagers.
target is to avert 750,000 child marriages. The Evaluation Findings Workshop highlighted the difficulty in finding suitable methods to capture change related to social norms especially in prevention projects in terms of obtaining accurate, quality data, for instance, the experience of the University of Mannheim in designing a questionnaire to capture child marriage in Pakistan. In India, the child marriage global project has used the empirical norms method (asking respondents their perception of what others in the community do) for its baseline studies. If the endline shows lower rates, it is unclear how this will prove a link to the project. The girls met by the evaluation in groups currently running in preparation for that project were mainly not at risk of early marriage so if they do not marry young, it will not be because of the project. This is in part a question of targeting but also the choice of methodology. For example, a detailed baseline which charts every girl in the community over the course of the life of the project, tracking various aspects such as risks factors, their involvement in the project etc., is more likely to be able to show evidence of causation.

8.4.5. Human resources
172. While this evaluation was unable to assess staff capacities on M&E, it is likely to be an issue based on other recent reports, such as the Maldives UNICEF Country Programme evaluation (2015) which found that staff capacities to carry out M&E activities need strengthening. According to the data collected here some of the interventions have some form of specialist M&E support which could include a portion of staff time, or dedicated consultants or staff, or help from academic institutes e.g. University of Mannheim support to UNICEF Pakistan for carrying out the impact evaluation of the IKEA ‘Improving adolescent lives’ project.

8.4.6. Adolescent participation in M&E
173. Participation in M&E mainly comprises of consulting adolescents on their views when assessments and evaluations are taking place. The Nepal ADAP section has made use of the Most Significant Change methodology to obtain feedback from adolescents, though this information does not appear to have been consolidated and analysed as yet. In Gujarat, the life skills in KGBV settings has used diary methods to encourage adolescents to reflect on the life skills training and its application in their daily lives, ‘in training the girls were made to write diaries about whatever they felt, what happened in the day, what they learnt, recollected, everything, so that they can refer back, and so that the warden can see what is written… …”, the evaluation was assured that while the diaries were initially read by the warden to show the girls how it was done, they were eventually kept private in line with diary keeping convention (!).The evaluation did not come across any interventions where adolescents were responsible for M&E themselves. This evaluation trialled a methodology of ‘adolescent evaluators’ as reported earlier ( section 5.1.).

8.4.7. Theory of change
174. Very few of the interventions, 11 only (out of 145 in the database of interventions) had theories of change. A further 11 reported having a logframe, and the remainder were using the country programme results matrix as their tool for designing interventions. The evaluation did not find a common definition or understanding of these terms in UNICEF, and sometimes documents that were described as theories of change, would in other organisations, be called logframes. The evaluation sees these as planning tools of differing levels of complexity, with result matrices at one end (specifying results, inputs and outputs), logframes in the middle demonstrating a higher degree of thought on other factors, and theories of change at the other end of the spectrum, situating in the intervention within a variety of contextual factors.
175. Annex 12, Table V gives summaries of the available theories of change. They are all devised in different ways, some follow established models (e.g. socio-ecological model) or a logframe model. Overall, they are rather general, set out everything that needs to change in the world and fail to tease out the linkages and specifics of what needs to happen to effect change in a specific context.

- The Nepal ADAP programme theory of change is a series of hexagonal shapes showing all aspects of adolescent development but no explanation of how any of those dimensions can be prioritised or achieved.

- The ‘South Asia Child Marriage’ framework (now known as the Regional Action Plan for Child Marriage) is likewise too broad to be of use. On the other hand the theory of change for the Child Marriage global project (Dutch/Canadian funds) has been customised to the region, and also to the specific context in India, to particular government programmes etc. so it has more meaning.

- The S4D project rationale (not described as a theory of change) is the only one to work from the individual outwards, looking at how intensive work with youth and adolescents to help them change their sense of self which in turn can help them change their communities and families. The other theories tend to be ‘top-down’ looking at how external factors impact on adolescents without allowing for adolescents as change agents, even though in practice as shown by section 7.1., the group work is in fact allowing and encouraging that.

- IKEA ‘Improving adolescent lives’ three country regional programme has a well-developed theory of change which is an essential basis for the rigorous impact evaluation that is planned. It posits adolescents as agents of change; adolescents protected in the family and community and an increase in adolescent oriented services. The theory of change identifies three targets - adolescents, stakeholders and service providers with outputs and outcomes linked to all in a logical flow through to three impacts - the reduction in child marriage; increased enrolment of adolescents in secondary education, and a decrease in adolescent pregnancy.

- UNICEF ROSA has a regional strategic framework set out in diagrammatic form. It aligns with the Social and Structural Determinants of Adolescent Well-being framework developed by the Office of Research Innocenti and aims to better understand the multi-dimensional nature of adolescent well-being. It too is a diagram of three levels rather than a theory and does not show what it takes for one dimension (macro, meso, micro) to influence the two others.

176. The concept of theory of change was not much understood in staff interviews highlighting the need for more knowledge and capacity development on this issue Some gave very simplistic replies, for example one staff member when asked what the theory of change was behind WASH in schools replied it is ‘when girls have periods don’t go to schools’. There was some scepticism at different levels of the organisation about the ‘drive’ towards theories of change, with some dismissing it as a new fad,

‘...this is new terminology repackaging same thing, it leads to frustration among people...Personally I feel that a rigid theory and framework at high level, does not fit at field level, it should be per the needs and relevance of the programme’.

Theories of change are not helpful for all interventions carried out by offices, many of which are ad hoc pieces of technical support, so the fact that they are not systematically produced is not the main issue. In any case, even if theories of change/logframes do not exist, staff do usually have a rationale for the initiative in question. What is clear is that the surplus of generalised overarching theories of change (one person mentioned several versions for ending child marriage, for example) is not useful; more guidance is needed on how to produce meaningful and contextualised versions.
8.4.8. Reflections

177. Evaluability of UNICEF’s adolescent programming as shown through the set up of robust M&E systems is relatively weak. Much of UNICEF’s rich experience in this area is not being captured and it is a pity to see extensive adolescent programmes with much to offer the region going undocumented. Given that UNICEF Bangladesh, for example, has got such a longstanding comprehensive programme on adolescents, it could be better evaluated, particularly to show the outcomes and impacts of its work. The evaluation came across ad hoc examples of internal assessments which had guided and influenced the development of programmes e.g. Bangladesh (Kishori Abajan), Afghanistan (YICC) - even where these were mentioned, they were not always shared with the evaluation team. Specific M&E systems tend only to be developed for donor funded projects; with much of the activity carried out through regular resources disappearing without proper evaluation.

178. While some of UNICEF’s activities amount to technical support e.g. help with writing guidelines, can be satisfactorily monitored under Country programme frameworks, others which involve the capacity building of stakeholders, pilot interventions, or grassroots activities with adolescents ought to be better measured. The inability to generate credible evidence that UNICEF-supported interventions are working may also constrain resource mobilisation and scale-up by partners.

179. The type of guidance given to staff on M&E appears to be an issue. In some places there is barely any guidance, in other places, requirements are overly complex. UNICEF staff in India, for example, said that while some structure was needed to improve the quality of evaluations, the process had become too rigorous and off-putting,

’The evaluation office has set the standard too high and we feel we can’t reach it......you need to get multiple approvals to do anything...you have to do ten thousand other things before commissioning an evaluation, as documents are missing, it becomes almost impossible to show evaluability’.

There was a suggestion that evaluation advisers be more hands on, ‘they should not just check, they should help you to draft, they should tell you what should be in a TOR and then comment’. Evaluation managers on the other side say there needs to be a cultural shift at UNICEF with programme staff thinking about the importance of M&E at an earlier stage in their interventions, a point much emphasised at the Evaluation Findings Workshop. Striking the right balance and finding an acceptable compromise between the rigours of science and the practicalities of work on the ground is key to producing accessible and usable M&E tools.
8.5. Partnerships

180. Key findings: UNICEF’s programming for and with adolescents involves a wide range of partnerships spanning Government, civil society and with an increasing interest in private sector. There was much positive feedback on the quality of UNICEF’s support to its partners. Its administrative procedures and delays in contractual payments were sometimes criticised. UNICEF participates in and facilitates coordination mechanisms on adolescents’ issues but there are few joint initiatives with other development actors.

181. UNICEF’s adolescent programming involves partnerships with central Government departments, local Government administrations and civil society organisations. In India, Bangladesh, and Nepal partnerships cascade down through these intermediaries into significant interactions with village councils, communities and adolescents. There are also examples of offices partnering with universities/research institutes for instance in Sri Lanka or with the private sector, for instance, in Assam/India (see Box 21). Relationships with partners are generally very positive. UNICEF’s approachability and collaborative style was mentioned by both government and civil society partners in Bhutan for example. Capacity development of partners is a key part of the relationship (see section 8.2.).

182. Concerns were raised about UNICEF’s administrative systems. While project and financial management systems were seen as demanding, partners also said they learnt a lot from UNICEF about these aspects. The chief complaint was about delays in payments. One individual from a partner agency contacted the evaluation team after the visit with a complaint about a UNICEF office, as the issue was of an administrative nature, they were advised to take this up through the management hierarchy at UNICEF. There appears to be no complaints mechanism available to partners and contractors. On the programming side, the only disappointment was among informants in Afghanistan who felt that UNICEF’s programming had been both ad hoc and inconsistent, and disappointment at the termination of the YICC project as discussed earlier.

183. UNICEF is participating in coordinating mechanisms with other actors everywhere and in some places has facilitated the setting up of such bodies e.g. in Sri Lanka or in Bangladesh (where UNICEF set up adolescent cluster with government line ministries, other UN Agencies and NGOs, at national and district level). Overall coordination with other agencies did not emerge as a problem. In most locations, the evaluation did not meet many key informants from other development agencies. There are few examples of joint initiatives (UNICEF/UNFPA life skills work in the Maldives being one of the few exceptions, also UNICEF/UNFPA collaboration over the Child Marriage global funds project).

184. In terms of advocacy towards partners, UNICEF’s modus operandi in most of the countries under review is upstream policy-influencing work (see section 7.3. regarding the outcomes of such work.). It is standard

99 Evaluation TOR Question (3.5.) To what extent do UNICEF partnership strategies and practices at different levels support the delivery of results for adolescents in South Asia, in particular for the most discriminated or excluded groups? and (3.6.) To what extent is UNICEF able to advocate for explicit adolescents programming, both within the organisation as well as vis-à-vis development partners, in a possible context of competing priorities? – this question also covers part of (4.1.) To what extent do UNICEF programmes explicitly aim to ensure that development results for adolescents are prioritised on a medium to long-term basis?
fare for UNICEF to identify gaps, pilot initiatives and then advocate for its approach and the sustainability section gives further examples of its successes in this approach.

8.6. Capacity development

185. Key findings: Capacity building on adolescent programming of both UNICEF staff and its partners is needed. There is no systematic capacity development plan for staff; only ad hoc opportunities, and staff seem little aware of any existing guidance. Capacity development of partners is a common feature of adolescent programming but learning and approaches are not being sufficiently shared across the region.

8.6.1. Staff

186. Staff capacity both in UNICEF and among partners needs to be built; both need technical aspects but frontline workers also need practical skills in working with adolescents. In terms of UNICEF staff, skills and knowledge are required at different levels: awareness-raising among senior management; knowledge among all sectoral programme staff about the links between adolescents and their work; and more specialised knowledge for staff assigned ‘adolescent focal point’ responsibilities. There is no systematic capacity development programme at national or regional level. There was a training course in ROSA in 2013 which some people attended and report deriving much benefit from. There are two considerations with replicating that course: the training materials for the ADAP short course, the Young Key Affected Populations (YKAP) course and training of trainers were produced by the University of Melbourne and are copyrighted by them; they are based on previous courses carried out by UNICEF EAPRO and focus more on health than wider issues. Besides that there are ad hoc training activities e.g. Nepal country programme staff training ROSA; or study visits to neighbouring countries e.g. Bhutan staff went to Nepal, Dhaka and Assam in India. If there is some written guidance from HQ or Rosa, staff appear unaware of it; only one person mentioned a guideline they had used (adolescents in emergency – though not clear which one they meant as various items on the internet) which they had come across by chance.

8.6.2. Partners

187. Capacity building of partners is a key strategy for UNICEF and the need to raise awareness among counterparts is recognised, as one staff member described it,

‘Adolescents are a fairly neglected group in terms of recognition of adolescence as a critical life stage so capacity development through communication for development strategies focussing on life skills, training and technical assistance has been the cornerstone of our work’.

Capacity development in itself is seen as a strategy for influencing policy change, for instance in the Child Friendly Local Governance and Education sector programmes in Nepal.

100 Evaluation TOR Question (3.5.) To what extent do UNICEF partnership strategies and practices at different levels support the delivery of results for adolescents in South Asia, in particular for the most discriminated or excluded groups? and (3.6.) To what extent is UNICEF able to advocate for explicit adolescents programming, both within the organisation as well as vis-à-vis development partners, in a possible context of competing priorities? – this question also covers part of (4.1.) To what extent do UNICEF programmes explicitly aim to ensure that development results for adolescents are prioritised on a medium to long-term basis?
188. There was much positive feedback received by the evaluation on UNICEF’s capacity development activities. Capacity is built in different ways on a variety of issues, methods and project management skills. A partner from the Child Reporters project in Jharkhand expressed a view typically mentioned by UNICEF partners in other locations, of the changes brought about through UNICEF’s partnership,

‘Due to UNICEF, staff quality improved, became more vocal and professional, writing and reporting skills and also other staff capacity. Due to the programme, our organisation got more visibility.....we made a child protection policy in our Executive Board and also learnt how to be a more child rights friendly NGO’.

In similar examples from the Maldives, where civil society is still relatively nascent, partners described how UNICEF had helped build them up over a period of years through dedicated support, opportunities for training, overseas visits etc. In Bangladesh, by contrast the Office is working with already very well established organisations like BRAC with strong capacities where such training is not required.

189. Capacity development of frontline workers is perhaps the most important of all; they bear the responsibility of translating ideas of transformational change into practice, while at the same time facing the same constraints and limitations of the communities they work in, as one UNICEF staff put it,

‘...we want frontline workers to deliver things without asking where they come from, what is it that they face, they are not imported from Jupiter, they come from the same society they work in.....their exposure is very limited, they suffer the same set of disabilities....we need to invest in them more, they are the channel to adolescents’.

190. Community mobilisers in Assam typically described the need for training on how to reaching out to adolescents to motivate them, to tell them what’s right and what’s wrong and how to speak to community members, ‘we find it very difficult to explain what child protection is about when we go out to the labour lines to speak to the tea workers’. They also highlighted the need to go beyond information,

‘When we started the Child Protection Committee, we were oriented at our first meeting, but it was more in the form of a meeting....we haven’t been trained, training means that we are taught is how to do it, skills building, in that meeting we were informed what we should do but not told how to do it’.

191. UNICEF’s training of frontline workers in Gujarat using a drama based life skills methodology seems particularly effective at addressing such needs. One training course carried out as part of the SABLA initiative was a particularly memorable experience for participants, the training was a residential event and exposed women who had barely had the chance to leave their villages to a novel experience, ‘No-one had given us training in such hotel...for four days we felt like we were in another country’. Being treated equally and with respect (being allowed to light ceremonial candles, everyone having a right to speak etc.) did more than words could do, to show how they in turn should treat adolescent girls, as one put it,

‘when other more educated people are there I normally let them speak, in training they said everyone should take part, this gave me a new perspective and I then taught the girls the same thing...there was a lot of newness that I experienced in that training...’

UNICEF field staff and grassroots partners also have much practical learning to share. It is not easy to extract this information as frontline staff may not normally have time for such reflection. However, the evaluation was able to capture some practical tips which are set out in Box 18.
Box 18  
Practitioners’ Tips

Foster leadership and participation among the wider group of adolescents by rotating responsibilities rather than building up one or two individuals only e.g. have different adolescents take it in turns to be club captain or have different adolescents represented in different community structures. Gujarat and Jharkhand.

Encourage reflection, feedback and learning in the activities themselves. For instance, have discussions after games on how the play went, or put up suggestion boxes in the community. Gujarat and Jharkhand.

Don’t give per diems to peer leaders as incentivisation can lead to project failure (Assam). Do motivate peer leaders through small stipends (Jharkhand).

Prepare duty bearers (police, postmasters, bank managers etc.) before taking adolescents to meet them otherwise they will not be willing to listen or communicate in an encouraging way with adolescents. Assam.

Find role models from the community rather than people who are far removed like celebrities or politicians. Find these “islands of success” to inspire adolescents both within and between tea gardens. Assam.

Choose community mobilisers who break the norm and can set an example to adolescents i.e. don’t choose women who have married young themselves as this gives the wrong message to the girls. Assam.

Mix up gender roles to break down stereotypes and question predefined gender assumptions e.g. have girls do sports and boys do drama, or have the girls manage the finances and the boys do singing and dancing’, Gujarat.

Change behaviour through collective community mobilization, this cannot be achieved through information, education and communication materials alone. Jharkhand.

Involves communities in designing interventions to build ownership and long-term sustainability. Jharkhand.

Have groups for younger children and youths also to enable transition to and from adolescents groups. Gujarat.

Start with planning at village level and then take it up to block, and district level, Jharkhand. Use data from village level to understanding existing beliefs rather than repling on macro data. Jharkhand.

Use audio-visual materials than simply lecturing as this is a better way of showing examples of change e.g. the MAHIMA menstrual hygiene project in Jharkhand showed girls and mothers photos, documentaries, video recording etc. of women burning their menstrual cloths and adopting more hygienic practices. This was more impactful than just giving verbal information. Jharkhand.

Use sports for helping adolescents develop, sports can have a powerful effect, “sports have magnetic effect, they strengthen understanding, they can bring adolescents together, and can contribute to their own physical development and mental growth”, Jharkhand.

Embed adolescents in the community through the use of sports this can have a cumulative effect, teach the adolescent to move from thinking of their own health and well-being, to that of their families, and to their communities and societies. Jharkhand.

Mix diverse groups to break down religious and caste barriers. For instance, rotate group meetings and training events to different localities and villages, in a hindu community one time, in a muslim community another time. It can be very difficult to break down barriers between adults but there’s more potential with adolescents. Even though they learn the same prejudices from their parents, the project activity can break down barriers. For instance staff given the responsibility to girls groups to organize everything the higher caste girls would not accept food from lower castes, but now they sit and eat together and accept everything. Gujarat.

Work through one neighbourhood at a time, consolidate the group, appoint a leader and then go on to new communities. Gujarat.

Be prepared to work for years and take long and painstaking efforts to win the trust of marginalized excluded groups, “When we started the girls came with parents or someone else or sent sister in law, after a while they let them come on own...when we started they used to tell us we were wrong...the critics have now become our supporters...village leaders send their own daughters.....at the start they would not even look up or speak their name...we had to translate all the materials into tribal languages.....we would go to the forest, walk for days to get there...some of the tribal families, have as many as 20 children, some children are not even given names, they are simply referred to by the chores they are assigned to do, for instance, collecting wood, herding goats’. Gujarat.
Box 19 - Sharing practices

Rupantaran social and financial skills package

UNICEF Nepal

UNICEF Nepal Adolescent Development and Participation programme is implementing a holistic intervention for adolescents. This intervention is reaching adolescents from most disadvantaged districts and communities with the aim of empowering them to initiate activities and interventions that create positive transformation in their families, communities and society and bring about realization of their rights.

Rupantaran, which means transformation in English, is an adolescent engagement tool used to strengthen adolescents’ knowledge and skills on various topical issues through interactive activities. This tool covers 15 modules (i.e. My World [Social Networks/Safety Net], Self-awareness, Rights and Responsibility, Gender and Social Inclusion, Puberty, Good Habits, Nutrition, First Aid, Civic Engagement, Environment and Natural Resources, Disaster Risk Management/Climate Change Adaptation, Saving and Spending, Livelihood Options, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Gender-based Violence, and Micro-Enterprise Development). At the community level, adolescents are organised in groups of 30 to 40 and meet once or twice in a week over a period of six to nine months. Depending on the type of implementing partner, Rupantaran sessions are facilitated by either social mobilisers, scout leaders or peer educators. So far around 26,000 adolescents have enrolled in the programme. Parents of the adolescents enrolled in Rupantaran session, also go through the orientation program on holistic adolescent development.

Rupantaran is being implemented by the Department of Women and Children (DWC), Nepal Scouts (under the Ministry of Youth and Sports), and other NGO partners. Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS), Nepal Fertility Care Center (NFCC), Maiti Nepal, JMMS (Federation of Female Sex Workers in Nepal), Recovering Nepal, National Federation of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (NFWLHA), and Federation of Sexual and Gender Minorities Nepal (FSGMN). Interventions with adolescents and parents are complemented and supplemented by other community activities such as forum theatre, community dialogues with religious leaders and media orientation.
9. Sustainability

9.1. Extent of sustainability

192. Key finding: the effects on individual lives in terms of a sense of empowerment, confidence, increased knowledge and skills are sustainable. In some places, adolescents and communities show a willingness to sustain UNICEF interventions themselves.

193. UNICEF has some important successes in this area though without comprehensive evaluations, it is not known if UNICEF’s own assessments of its work can be validated or which initiatives failed and why. The positive effects of UNICEF-supported initiatives on the lives of individual adolescents are sustainable. This was strongly confirmed in all focus group meetings with adolescents who felt their sense of empowerment (increased confidence, new skills and knowledge and greater say in their lives) would continue after the project activities stopped. Some plan to put their newly acquired skills to new jobs, for instance, adolescents seeking jobs involving physical fitness after their involvement in the Jharkhand S4D project. Such follow-on opportunities have the potential to lead to fundamental and permanent change. In Bangladesh, the evaluation met 13 adolescents from a vocational training course offered by UNICEF, seven of the girls (one of whom was mute) had done tailoring courses, six of the boys had done mobile servicing or carpentry. Following the course, all had found gainful employment; three boys opened mobile repair shops; the other four boys are working in carpentry and other shops; all the girls are working in tailoring, some at home and some at work.

194. Adolescents also showed a willingness to continue group activities after the project end, for instance, adolescents in the Jharkhand S4D clubs said they wanted to carry on, to involve parents and the community, to draw in youth who were not involved,

‘Due to the project we came together, we formed the club and acted jointly. Being united we can do many things for our village, thought it is beginning, yet we have done some works for our community, like we have started cleaning, we have set up tuition classes for children, we are looking into duck farming. Our confidence is increased. In the coming day we can play a big role in our community development’.

They are also willing to contribute to the funding of activities and in fact are already doing so, for instance, clubbing together for prize money from matches, or in the case of one village, adolescent girls set up a small catering business, they cooked 1000 meals on International Yoga Day and sold them making 2000 Rupees profit which was put into the club fund. Even after setbacks, adolescents showed a determination to continue. Adolescents in Bhutan who were involved in a project which collapsed told adolescent evaluators that they would find another project to continue the same work,

‘....[NGO XXX] had failed to continue because of some management problem but we have now [NGO YYY], where all the members are from [NGO XXX]. Only the organisation we work under has changed, we are still the same youth volunteers, who have potential to change the world, for

101 Evaluation TOR Question (4.1.) To what extent and in what way are UNICEF programmes sustainable? [Second part of this question moved to question 3.6.]
better. So even after 10 years from now, no matter where we be or work, we will always have the positive attitude in our work and life."

195. In Bangladesh, all of the adolescents said they would continue their clubs without UNICEF or partner support (although no further evidence of this was available); the strategy has been to establish clubs within space donated by the community so ongoing support is minimal with UNICEF/partner paid Animateurs and other small contributions. Only one mothers’ club was visited and it was not clear from that FGD or other evidence whether the same would hold true for associated mothers’ or fathers’ clubs. In Assam, the evaluation found more variability in terms of the degree to which adolescent girls’ groups were sustained in between UNICEF’s project funding. One group had continued throughout since 2007 and another that had just reconvened after eight years. In the projects that had continued, there were examples of girls’ growing up in the adolescent clubs, and membership almost becoming a family tradition as the baton was passed down from one sister to the next. This shows the importance of extenuating circumstances and the willingness of local actors (tea management, frontline workers and the girls themselves) to continue projects. The improvements in partner capacity are also sustainable especially in places where UNICEF has focused on building up organisations with thematic expertise but lacking in administrative and management capacity. For instance, partners in Gujarat said they would be able to carry on the activities themselves with other funding even if UNICEF withdrew.

196. Sustainability can be helped if group activities are planned accordingly with adolescents in charge from the start, with books, manual, guidance printed for retention. The Gujarat IKEA cotton project adolescent clubs appear to have retained some formation despite disruptions in funding. The engagement with adolescents under the Government’s SABLA scheme in Gujarat, is formulated differently: frontline staff have been capacitated to continue even after other partners withdraw; supported by an in-built peer educator model to act as an interface between the frontline worker and the adolescents (although this was not seen in operation by the evaluation). Overall a design which builds in ownership by adolescents and communities and with a gradual exit strategy is likely to be important to sustainability.

9.2. Promoting sustainability

197. Key finding: UNICEF very much sees its role as piloting/demonstration and there are various examples of ‘successful’ projects scaled up and taken over by Government authorities. There is a lack of information on unsuccessful pilots. Thought is given to sustainability in advance but the diminished quality which is sometimes seen in scaled up projects raises questions about the need to improve handover and exit strategies.

198. UNICEF enjoys a unique position as a trusted advisor to national authorities on adolescent issues. It very much sees its role as identifying issues, carrying out pilot and demonstration projects with the ambition of scaling these up nationwide. It has a good track record of inspiring scaled up programmes across the region.

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102 Evaluation TOR Question (4.2.) To what extent has UNICEF been able to ensure that the policies and programmes of its partners (governments, civil society and other development partners) address adolescent needs, especially those facing socio-economic discrimination or exclusion, in a sustainable way?
• **India** – there are various examples of UNICEF achieving geographical scale up to national and State level.

  National level:
  
  o UNICEF’s role in the nutrition/iron folates programme over a decade or so has involved initial pilots and ideas through to a programme that now has national coverage;
  
  o Adoption of the HIV Red Ribbon Club initiative (2012) aimed at preventive work with adolescent boys and girls by the Government.

  State level:
  
  o UNICEF reports that its Child Friendly Police stations initiative in Jharkhand started in six police stations in Ranchi (capital) has been upscaled by the police themselves to 502 police stations including railway police stations (with 27 stations recognised as child friendly as of October 2015)
  
  o UNICEF’s Child Reporters project will be sustained by the State Government of Jharkhand by integration in its existing Children’s Cabinet initiative according to local officials.
  
  o The IKEA cotton project’s model intervention of establishing child protection structures was scaled up to all other districts by the Governments of all the three States involved (Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra)
  
  o In Assam, the ‘health shops’ have been taken up by the Government and expanded to other tea gardens. UNICEF’s intervention has helped give the Government a leeway/entry point into these closed environments as well.

• **Bangladesh** – this evaluation found the Government very receptive, having replicated UNICEF’s adolescent programming (being implemented by UNICEF in 20 out of 64 districts) to other districts.

• **Nepal** – the Child Friendly Local Governance initiative shows the importance of working long-term and strategically in order to achieve sustainability through the use of existing platforms such as adolescent girls’ groups established under the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare as well as Nepal Scouts under the Ministry of Youth and Sports. After ten years of effort, Nepal Country Office itself reports that the initiative can show real policy results in terms of mainstreaming into government processes – ‘getting 10% of the government budget allocated to children can amount to 35-40 million rupees – we need to find the nerves of the government system’.

199. UNICEF is in an enviable position in this respect compared to other development organisations. The expectation of such outcomes is very much ingrained among UNICEF staff who appear concerned that pilot projects will not be mainstreamed into Government programming (even if in numerical terms they have reached substantial numbers – which in the case of India may means hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries – the numbers are still limited vis-à-vis the size of the population).

200. In terms of initiatives that were not sustained, the only obvious example is from Afghanistan. The YICC programme stopped running in 2012 although key informants met during the evaluation still held it in high regard. A 2010 internal assessment said that it could be the most effective way of empowerment but that it had shortcomings (no set model across 16 YICC, no clear strategy, limited partnership with other ministries (aside from youth affairs) or UN agencies or NGOs, no follow up on training and questions about the type of training needed, no data collection, not reaching “neediest youth”). The report recommended improvements but the project was ended after the MTR in 2012.
201. In other countries, it is impossible to know which other pilots or demonstrations failed, there is no clear record of which projects were instituted, what the outcome was, why projects did or didn’t work. Being scaled up appears to be the mark of success but beyond that there appears to be little investment in understanding why an initiative has been sustained or not, whether the technical aspects worked, if the sustainability was due to political or other factors outside UNICEF’s control and so on.

202. As UNICEF comes from a standpoint of aiming to influence Government policy and programmes, planning in advance for the sustainability of programming for and with adolescents can be seen and may include;

- Agreements on co-funding with Government as mentioned in Bhutan.
- Plans for splitting intervention sites, for instance, UNICEF started the S4D project in 320 villages in 8 districts of Jharkhand in 2014, the State Government then took on responsibility for funding for another 160 villages in 4 districts and wants to eventually expand it to all villages in the State.
- The India Country Office is working with UNICEF Jharkhand and elsewhere to scale up the communications framework for the menstrual hygiene project through the Government of India’s national RKSK scheme.
- In Assam, the nutrition component is particularly well-considered from the point of view of sustainability e.g. rather than a simple reliance on the distribution of iron tablets as is seen in many places, the project has promoted the development of kitchen gardens in the tea gardens to allow the cultivation of vegetables (this involved negotiating the use of land for workers who normally have no land rights), the creation of health shops, and cookery lessons for adolescent girls.
- Other examples of planning for sustainability include working with local institutes to ensure training programmes are sustained e.g. Sri Lanka work with the Open University training for youth workers.
- In Gujarat, various measures are in place to help sustain initiatives, including full documentation of processes so that partners, communities and adolescents can continue interventions; making partnerships with local colleges and universities to institutionalise capacity building activities; and passing relevant resolutions at State level to give a legal basis for the continuation of activities (e.g. district supervision of Child Protection Committees which in turn can help ensure the necessary budget allocation).
- In Nepal, close collaboration with Government in planning interventions such as the Rupantaran social and financial skills training package together with the use of evidence-based approaches helps build ownership and assure sustainability.
- There is also some evidence of planning for downstream sustainability, for instance through support to income generation projects for adolescents in Bangladesh, community-based social programmes through grants for youth-led initiatives in Bhutan or building in a system of token contributions and community donations to carry out activities from the outset e.g. S4D in Jharkhand, India.

203. While UNICEF’s track record on sustainability is good, one important point to emerge from various experiences is that the quality of interventions can diminish after Government take over. For example, informants asked questions about how well the HIV Red Ribbon clubs in India were functioning after the initiative was handed over to the Government. Likewise the WIFS programme, while still a national achievement, the emphasis on teaching how to eat healthily has diminished in place of a narrower focus on distributing iron tablets. Key informants raised the same question about whether the quality of the Deepshikha programme, the girls’ empowerment programme in Maharashtra, India had been maintained after scale up to 25 districts in Maharashtra to reach more than three hundred thousand girls.
204. Sometimes, the Government may find it necessary to adapt UNICEF’s pilots to enable scale-up. For instance in Assam, UNICEF instituted ‘health shops’ in the tea gardens as part of the nutrition initiative selling healthy food to combat anaemia and other health concerns. The Government did not find it a viable business model to only sell healthy food and have turned them into regular shops with a health emphasis.

205. This points to the need for better exit strategies, longer implementation and handover periods, better documentation/explanation and realistic programming which is premised on available government capacities. As one UNICEF staff member said with regards to the HIV Red Ribbon clubs,

‘the initiative continued with Government funds but the engagement is not as serious, the clubs probably exist – the difference is that UNICEF has a micro development focus but the Government operates at macro level, when the Government is dealing with hundreds of Red Ribbon clubs, the nitty gritty is inevitably lost’.

The need for proper exit strategies, with explanation to and preparation of local stakeholders was also highlighted by the experience in Afghanistan and the ending of the YICC project; the perception of local stakeholders is that it was ended abruptly and they still don’t know why a valuable initiative, from their perspective, was ended. Informants commented that UNICEF’s approach had not been strategic enough, project-based rather than focused on strengthening systems.
Box 20 - Sharing practices
Youth Initiative
UNICEF Bhutan

In 2013, a group of youth felt that it was time to engage in Bhutan’s maturing democracy. They started the Youth Initiative for Debate, Deliberation, and Development (YIDDD), a project under the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD). Models of other Youth Associations from other countries were examined, adapted, and filtered to match the needs of Bhutanese Youth. YIDDD is an informal, non-party affiliated association that gives a select group of youth practical, hands-on experience in deliberating on national issues and taking community-based action.

One of the first campaigns was ‘Go Local’ enabled to ‘Promote local farm based industries and enable farmers to produce and sell more’ in order to protect Bhutanese farmers from the international market which they cannot compete with because of their small scale of production. At the same time by keeping the handlers of food production close at home, it becomes easy for authorities to maintain greater control over food quality. The youth carried out research which showed that Bhutan has an unhealthy dependence on import even in areas of consumer products where Bhutanese producers could meet local demands; as in the case of vegetables, fruits and dairy products. Bhutan has always had a trade deficit and although this seems to have now steadied due to the large scale production of hydro electricity, the dependence on edible products have increased greatly. On the other hand, the arable land in Bhutan while already very low, is severely under-utilised. By allowing farmers to develop these lands, Bhutan can meet the low local demands and export the surplus.

The initiative required dealing with policy makers, entrepreneurs and farmers. Parallel to the long term goal of reducing import of food items and ensuring a market for Bhutanese farmers and local farm based industries, the initiative supported farmers’ cooperatives by the YI marketing their products in schools and institutions in Thimphu. The first task was to create awareness on the importance of going local, an advocacy video titled ‘A Conversation Between Potato Chips’ was made and the plan introduced at a local school. YI decided to start small and slow by collaborating with some of the cooperatives and then market their products in Thimphu to high school students. This marketing in the schools included talking to the school management, canteens and to the students.

The first collaboration came with Happy Green Cooperative which had started producing locally made potato chips called ‘Happy Potato Chips’. Unlike other locally produced potato chips, Happy Green offers a variety of spices. It also comes wrapped in aluminium papers with its logo giving it a look that assure its consumers of its validity. YI embarked on a process of talking to local schools and was able to win the support of various schools for the project.
10. Impact 103

206. Key finding: Measurement of impacts has received negligible attention to date. The IKEA Foundation-funded ‘Improving adolescent lives in South Asia’ project impact evaluations currently starting up will address this gap with a state of the art methodology and a rigorous tracking of impacts. Currently UNICEF programmes are frequently missing the opportunity to capture the direct effects/immediate outcomes of their work let alone longer term impacts. UNICEF needs an accessible approach to impact evaluation that can be used by staff across the region.

207. The measurement of impacts has received little attention to date, and few, if any, impact evaluations of UNICEF’s programming with and for adolescents appear to exist. The evaluation came across a couple of examples of attempts to measure impacts such as the Sri Lanka Vocational Training tracer study. The Child reporters project in Jharkhand carried out a study with a control group comparing schools that were or were not part of the project but was not ready to share the report due to concerns over quality. Even the longstanding adolescent work in Bangladesh unfortunately has limited robust evaluation of the impacts of its work. There was an external assessment of Kishori Abajan – and while recognising that empowerment interventions are difficult to quantifiably evaluate, some staff within Bangladesh Country Office felt there could be more systematic robust impact evaluations of programming.

208. The IKEA adolescent project impact evaluations currently starting up are intended to address this gap with a rigorous tracking of impacts. It emphasises impact for the following reasons: to trial different approaches around to region to see what works; to place learning at the centre of the programme; to acknowledge the need for the credible evidence of impact both intended and unintended; and to use evidence from rigorous evaluation for policy advocacy and upscaling models.

Aside from this there are no planned assessments, only tentative interest, for instance, the Bhutan office is considering an assessment of the impact of its support to youth work. Ironically, this evaluation stimulated the UNESCO office in Afghanistan to plan an impact assessment of its adult literacy programme but there was no such feedback from UNICEF.

209. Key impediments include staff awareness and understanding of what impact evaluations are about. The evaluation found that the term ‘effects’ and ‘impacts’ were used interchangeably to describe immediate and short-term effects e.g. the Jharkhand office carried out pre and post testing as part of its Awakening campaign, and called this an impact assessment. Sometimes impact assessment is used in a completely different sense e.g. Assam/India impacts of tea industry on children i.e. situation analysis. UNICEF offices frequently conflate impact assessments with outcome evaluations: the planned outcome evaluation in 2016-17 for the S4D project in Jharkhand may include elements of impact assessment, as will the planned review of UNICEF Maldives review of its life skills programme, and the current CFLG initiative evaluation in Nepal. These studies may capture some qualitative data on short-term impacts. Such impact assessments are unlikely to be able to isolate the attributable change to the project because they don’t have a counterfactual.

103 Evaluation TOR Question (5.1.) To what extent is UNICEF embedding evaluation in programming, particularly of pilot initiatives, with a view to demonstrating attributable impacts for male and female adolescents, as well as for adolescents from discriminated or excluded groups, that could be used in policy advocacy and upscaling of approaches?
While the IKEA impact evaluations offer a state of the art approach, they do not model a low-cost methodology for impact assessment that UNICEF staff across the region can easily understand or replicate. The impact evaluation will be carried out over a period of four years through several international and local research institutes and at a cost of USD $1.5 million (not counting staff time) which an indication of the time and cost involved in producing scientifically robust evidence. Evaluation contributors suggest that the reasons why impact evaluations of the IKEA adolescent project type haven’t been done in the region include the lack of understanding of the need to find a valid counterfactual so that robust attribution of the impact of the programme can be shown, lack of understanding and emphasis on robust methods in general, lack of planning for the evaluation as part of the programme design, lack of funds, difficulty in showing attribution when UNICEF is part of a larger eco-system of various players. While this may be true, this posits a high bar for carrying out impact evaluations which is unlikely to be met given the resources required to carry out such a robust analysis. UNICEF may need to consider a lower cost more accessible approach to impact evaluation that staff can easily replicate104; while this may compromise on scientific rigour, it at least means that some programmatic reflection and learning is taking place. It should be noted that currently, UNICEF programmes are frequently missing the opportunity to capture the direct effects/immediate outcomes of their work let alone longer term impacts. This again highlights the importance of capturing and valuing immediate directly attributable effects as the higher the level of result the greater the complexity in linking the result to UNICEF due to the number of players involved and the chain of events.

104 See for example, methods available at these links:
http://betterevaluation.org/resources/guide/can_we_obtain_the_required_rigour_without_randomisation
http://www.tools4dev.org/resources/tiny-tools-impact-assessment-tool-review/
Box 21 - Sharing practices

Adolescent girls’ clubs

UNICEF Assam

The Indian State of Assam in North-eastern India, bordered by Bhutan and Bangladesh is known for its production of tea, petroleum resources, silk and also its rich biodiversity. There are 27 districts in Assam, out of which six are under sixth schedule autonomous councils. The Tea Communities represent approximately 20 per cent of the State’s population. In practice nearly half the population is dependent on the tea industry through linked economic activities and businesses. The tea communities have poor development and health indicators and are socially and economically downtrodden and marginalized. Tea communities and the tea garden setting and management structures form the core focus of UNICEF’s programming on social exclusion and equity in Assam.

UNICEF’s experience in Assam is a key example not only of its work with adolescents but also its partnership with the private sector. UNICEF began work in the tea estates in 2006 initially starting with programmes on early childhood and then quickly expanding into work on adolescent girls. UNICEF is now operating in 172 gardens with 500 adolescent girls’ groups with more than 25,000 adolescent girls as active members in those groups. It carries out nutrition and child protection activities including: supervised weekly iron folic tablet distribution, nutrition and health education and recipe demonstration; cultivation of kitchen gardens; setting up of health food shops; links to national nutrition programmes; life skills development and peer leadership activities; community-based awareness and ownership on protection issues, rights and entitlements of children and adolescent girls; strengthening the process of monitoring and reporting of all cases of child rights violations; building the capacities of government and frontline workers, partner NGOs and other stakeholders.

This experience has given UNICEF key learning on partnerships with the private sector. Over a period of years, UNICEF has become a trusted partner to the tea industry; this is a considerable achievement in what is traditionally a closed world which does not easily open up to such relationships. The tea industry has come to recognise the value of the programme, for instance, seeing more children going to school. The adolescent programme (rather than other types of programmes) is seen as having a particular relevance to the tea industry; adolescents are the future workforce in this hereditary line of work and the industry faces a potential crisis if migration out reduces the availability of labour. UNICEF tries to promote the message that ‘what is good for labour children and adolescents, is good for business’ – i.e. a content motivated workforce which does not suffer from social problems is good for the industry. It also seeks to build in a tripartite relationship with Government which also has limited access and governance over the tea estates. The Government for example has been able to take over the health shops initiative as an entry point into the tea gardens.

UNICEF is able to bring added value and skills that the tea sector does not have e.g. mobilisation and social change. Its approach has been to genuinely engage with the tea industry, to build their capacity on child rights-based business principles (CRBP), rather than seeing the partners as a means to an end. It can be a challenge for UNICEF to be a trusted partner but also to maintain its own commitments to human rights standards especially in the face of recent critical news reports about the conditions of workers on the tea plantations, see for example ‘Inside the Tea Gardens of Assam’, 28 September 2015, available at BBC, http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p032shxl. This is a fine balancing act for UNICEF and its approach is to support change from the inside through information and capacity building rather than to name and shame from the outside.
D. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Conclusions

207. UNICEF’s work on adolescents is deeper and more extensive than known at the start of this evaluation. Far from being a new area of work, UNICEF Offices in the region have built up a significant repository of work - the evaluation unearthed at least 145 initiatives/groups of initiatives and there will be more to uncover, especially in the many States of India. This in itself is an unexpected finding. UNICEF programmes are having a particularly significant effect in terms of adolescent empowerment; this was tested time and again in different locations and the findings are consistent; adolescents across South Asia are more confident, have more knowledge and skills, and a greater say over their lives thanks to UNICEF and its partners. At the same time, UNICEF’s programmes demonstrate considerable inefficiency; they lack integration with other areas of work, they are inadequately monitored and evaluated, and the learning from these experiences is insufficiently codified and shared and built upon across the region. UNICEF’s programmes are highly effective but also highly efficient. This is not the contradiction it seems, while individual programmes may be effective, the inefficiencies all relate to the inability to properly capture, assess, disseminate and maximise these positive experiences. UNICEF’s own internal weaknesses are constraining it from being able to capitalize on the strengths in its programming for and with adolescents across the region as a whole. Key conclusions by evaluation criteria are set out below.

202. Relevance

- UNICEF’s adolescent programming is aligned at the top level with national priorities but there may be differences in emphasis or focus depending on whether Governments identify adolescence and/or youth as a priority and if so, how these terms and age ranges are defined.
- There can be differences in the perception of adolescent priorities between adolescents and communities and UNICEF as an institution. While this information is largely anecdotal and unsuitable for generalisation, it highlights the need for more research on the needs of adolescents in South Asia and in particular localities. Livelihoods, for example, are often seen as a priority by communities and also by individual UNICEF staff but are not a key intervention area for the organisation as a whole. While UNICEF has to work within its mandate, capacities and resources, it could explore partnerships with other specialist organisations to address such needs – especially as heightened aspirations among adolescents are often a consequence of its own programming.
- UNICEF has distinct strategic advantages in the field of adolescent programming. Principally, its ability to make a link between the policy level and the field, its broad mandate, credibility, branding, technical expertise and convening role. Internal bureaucratic systems and procedures may be seen as potential disadvantages. UNICEF has a noticeably close and trusted partnership with Governments and its advice can/is often taken seriously. The organisation would benefit from having a better understanding of the wider range of issues facing adolescents, rather than simply the issues it focuses on, as this would aid both its programming and advisory functions.

105 Addresses Evaluation questions 1.1. to 1.7 (note 1.5. is addressed under ‘Efficiency’)

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UNICEF’s programming has a significant effect in terms of increased adolescent empowerment. Adolescents are unanimous that UNICEF activities have improved their lives by giving them more confidence, increasing their knowledge and skills and by enabling them to have a greater voice in their families and communities. The kernel of many UNICEF interventions is to build a sense of self-worth in adolescents to enable them to improve their own lives and the lives of others. The sample testimonies reproduced in this report are representative of hundreds of adolescents who contributed to the evaluation. Key conclusions arising from UNICEF’s direct work with adolescents include:

- Adolescent participation is mainly being fostered at the grassroots level where it has the potential to be more meaningful. Participation decreases higher up the chain and becomes more tokenistic at policy level. The evaluation found a rich understanding of adolescent participation at field level but this knowledge could be better systematized and consolidated into shared guidance across the region.
- Fun and creativity are key elements in effective adolescent group work.
- Adolescent group work enables adolescents to enjoy their rights to education, protection, health etc. This is a manifestation of what theorists describe as the capability approach, i.e. rights do not exist in a formal sense, they need to be enabled.
- Interventions operating at multiple levels: linking grassroots adolescent group work with interventions at the meso and macro level through capacity building of duty-bearers and policy level activities were considered most effective by evaluation contributors.

UNICEF’s programming commonly aims to improve the quality of and access to services for adolescents. Such support to Government services in health, nutrition, social services, youth work etc. is taking place in all countries but it is not possible to assess the outcomes of such efforts in an evaluation of this kind.

Strengthening the enabling environment involves numerous outputs at the policy level across the region. Building the capacity of communities as duty-bearers is challenging intensive work which has variable success. Work with parents, especially fathers, tends to be limited except in a couple of countries in the region. This places undue pressure on adolescents to combat resistance from parents, families and communities by themselves. UNICEF projects need to do more to simultaneously build the capacity of parents as duty-bearers in order to optimise the effects of their work with adolescents

Looking at UNICEF’s programmes through an equity and human rights lens reveals some gaps.

- There is strong emphasis on gender equality for adolescent girls but insufficient attention in the region to working with adolescent boys – boys tend to be seen as instruments for improving the lives of girls rather than as adolescents with their own rights and needs. The organisation’s policy focus which appears to define gender as equating to equality for girls, coupled with a lack of capacity and know-how in working with adolescent boys, are a constraint.
- Other diversity issues are addressed in a piecemeal way.

\[106\] Addresses evaluation questions 2.1. – 2.7.
Despite efforts, UNICEF Offices find it a challenge to reach the most disadvantaged. UNICEF interventions are not always reaching the most marginalised, excluded and at-risk adolescents, and is sometimes working with those who are positively privileged.

204. **Efficiency**

- **Alignment to UNICEF global policies** is difficult as UNICEF’s structures and results matrices do not support work on adolescents in the most logical manner. This was a key issue raised by the Evaluation Findings Workshop, the fact that global and country planning documents do not explicitly refer to adolescents makes both planning and reporting a challenge.

- In terms of **internal organisation**, all Offices have some human resources specifically deployed to adolescent programming but the overall adequacy and appropriateness of human resources for programming for adolescents merits further assessment. Mainstreaming and convergent approaches aimed at enhancing programming for and with adolescents are still relatively absent. Specialist posts, internal coordinating committees and cross-sectoral strategies can all help facilitate a better integration of adolescent programming into the broader work of Country Offices. The need for better integration of adolescent programmes with other aspects of UNICEF’s work comes across clearly. There is only so much that can be achieved through adolescent specific programmes; given the very high population numbers and the diverse needs of the region, an approach which harnesses the work of all sectors will likely yield the best results.

- **Knowledge management** is weak. There is much experience in the region which is not being documented or shared leading to unnecessary duplication and inefficiency. Even where good documentation exists there are no mechanisms for dissemination. The regional office has an important role to play in facilitating information exchange and is currently developing a four year knowledge management plan to improve dissemination of knowledge products around the region.

- **Monitoring** mostly occurs through Country Programme frameworks but results for adolescents are often not explicitly stated and in any case tend to be output focused. The direct effects/outcomes of UNICEF’s interventions on adolescents are insufficiently captured. There are few formal evaluations, even of established well-known programmes and little use of theories of change or detailed log frames in planning interventions. Evaluability is not much considered in advance and M&E frameworks often miss basic elements necessary for the evaluation function (e.g. specific defined results, scheduled monitoring, theory of change, data disaggregation etc.)

- UNICEF’s programming for and with adolescents involves a wide range of **partnerships** spanning Government, civil society and with an increasing interest in private sector. There is much positive feedback on the quality of UNICEF’s support to its partners, although its administrative procedures and delays in contractual payments receive some criticism. UNICEF participates in and facilitates coordination mechanisms on adolescents’ issues but there are few joint initiatives with other development actors.

- **Capacity building of both UNICEF staff and its partners** is needed. There is no systematic capacity development plan for staff; only ad hoc opportunities, and staff seem little aware of any existing guidance. Staff needs vary from awareness raising among senior management through to more detailed guidance for adolescent focal points and field staff. Capacity development of partners is a

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107 Addresses evaluation questions 3.1. – 3.6., and 1.6.
common feature of adolescent programming and investment in building partner capacity is vital, especially of frontline staff (community mobilisers and NGO staff) who bear the responsibility for delivering transformational change.

205. **Sustainability**

- The effects on individual lives in terms of a sense of empowerment, confidence, increased knowledge and skills are sustainable. In some places, adolescents and communities show a willingness to sustain UNICEF interventions themselves.
- There are examples in the region UNICEF initiated interventions which are now scaled up geographically by Governments.
- UNICEF very much sees its role as promoting high level sustainability by piloting various ‘successful’ projects which have been scaled up and taken over by Government authorities. There is a lack of information on unsuccessful pilots. While sustainability is considered in advance to some degree, the diminished quality that is sometimes seen in scaled up projects highlights the need for improved handover and exit strategies.

206. **Impact**

- Measurement of impacts has received negligible attention to date. The IKEA Foundation-funded multi-country programme ‘Improving adolescent lives in South Asia’ impact evaluations currently starting up will address this gap with state of the art rigorous tracking of impacts. Currently UNICEF programmes are frequently missing the opportunity to capture the direct effects/immediate outcomes of their work let alone longer term impacts. UNICEF needs an accessible approach to impact evaluation that can be used by staff across the region.

12. **Recommendations**

207. The main recommendations arising from this report are listed below; there are many other ideas and suggestions in the body of the report. Each recommendation is supported by practical implementation ideas. The recommendations are organised by target group starting with those aimed at the highest levels of the organisation through to others targeted at the lowest levels i.e. headquarters, ROSA, and then country offices. The recommendations therefore appear in terms of strategic importance ranging from top level policy concerns through to field level programming issues.

**UNICEF HQ, UNICEF ROSA and UNICEF Country Offices**

1. Integrate adolescent issues more systematically into corporate planning documents in order to allow for more consolidated planning and reporting on programmes for and with adolescents.

   Practical suggestions: Evaluation Findings Workshop’ participants proposed the following –

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108 Addresses evaluation questions 4.1. – 4.2.
109 Addresses evaluation question 5.1.
- Review and share of experiences of how adolescent programming is institutionalised in different ways around the region, perhaps with the assistance of an organisational development consultant at a subsequent Adolescent Network meeting;
- Headquarters to pilot and review country programme action plans using the life cycle approach;
- Use of an 'adolescent marker' in reporting, rather like the 'gender marker'.

**UNICEF ROSA**

2. Improve knowledge management in order to better capture, disseminate and learn from the rich experiences taking place across the region

Practical suggestions: ROSA is currently developing a four year knowledge management plan based on the needs identified by countries. It is suggested that this –
- Reinvigorates the previous knowledge management initiatives carried out by ROSA e.g. adolescent newsletter to be disseminated widely and directly to field staff and frontline partners.
- Maintains and expands the database created by this evaluation.
- Analyses financial information on programming for and with adolescents using the Programme Information Database (PIDB) coding in VISION, a system accessible to UNICEF staff (although note that this may miss ‘implicit’ initiatives).
- Find an IT platform which can facilitate easy exchange of documents even in places with weak communication systems will be key.
- Ensure adolescent focal points are clear about their roles and what they are expected to do, for instance by developing a clear terms of reference. They should essentially be a two-way funnel: searching out information (activities, partners) in their contexts (for instance, carrying out similar tasks to the evaluation in terms of mapping out what is currently taking place and keeping this updated) and sharing it with the regional office and other countries across. Likewise, they should have a role in absorbing wider information and sharing it with and training colleagues on their offices. The regional ADAP unit also needs to consider and share its understanding of its role and its work plans with focal points and country offices.

3. Enhance organisational learning on adolescent participation in order to give staff the tools and practical knowledge to apply these approaches more extensively in programming.

Practical suggestions:
UNICEF ROSA to develop a Standard Operating Procedure on adolescent participation (as suggested by the Evaluation Findings Workshop) involving field level practitioners and adolescents themselves. Future guidance should include the management of protection risks in participatory approaches.

**UNICEF ROSA and UNICEF Country Offices**

4. Strengthen planning, monitoring and evaluation in order to help improve programming for and with adolescents through evidence-based research.

Practical suggestions:
- UNICEF ROSA to develop a common, simple but technically grounded tool for capturing changes in adolescent development as a result of UNICEF activities for sharing round the region:
- UNICEF ROSA to consider the dissemination of simpler and more accessible tools to enable staff to measure both the effects and impacts of their work;
- UNICEF ROSA to review its M&E approaches and consider whether it has struck the right balance between scientific rigour on the one hand and accessibility and practicality on the other in its policies, guidance and requirements;
- UNICEF Country Offices to carry out more rigorous and systematic assessment and sharing of learning on both successful and failed pilot and demonstration projects.
- UNICEF Country Offices to better plan for sustainability through the development of handover and exit strategies which take into account the practical application of UNICEF project ideas when programmes are scaled up by Government and taking into account foreseeable adaptations.
- UNICEF Country Offices to better plan for M&E in advance including by involving M&E colleagues at the beginning of programme planning and not just at reporting stage (emphasized by Evaluation Findings Workshop) and by setting up frameworks which address the key components of evaluability (e.g. definition of results; schedule of monitoring (baseline, midline, endline), data disaggregation; human resources; theory of change etc.)
- UNICEF Country Offices to place more emphasis on capturing the immediate and direct effects/outcomes of UNICEF’s programmes (e.g. pre and post testing questionnaires etc.);

**UNICEF Country Offices**

5. Foster greater convergence and mainstreaming of programmes for and with adolescents across all sectors of UNICEF’s work in order to expand the reach of UNICEF’s programming to greater numbers and a wider range of issues.

Practical suggestions: While this needs to be addressed through overarching corporate planning and reporting structures as described above, the evaluation considers that much can be achieved by taking small practical steps including –
- Leadership and direction by senior management i.e. requiring different sectors to coordinate; and setting up coordinating mechanisms such as working groups and taskforces to allow the regular exchange of joint planning and information;
- Ensure adolescent functions are situated in neutral positions in the office structure rather than within specific sectors;
- Ensure the adolescent focal point in each office has a clear terms of reference to find out information and to make linkages between adolescents and different sectors of work etc.;
- Use accountability frameworks (covering adolescent focal persons in sections, representatives, deputy representatives, section chiefs, field chiefs, and all relevant professional staff.).

6. Improve knowledge and understanding of issues facing adolescents in the region in order to enhance programming and advisory work on the second decade of life.

Practical suggestions:
- UNICEF Country Offices to Use existing institutional mechanisms such as the country programme Situation Analysis (SitAn), Multi-indicator Cluster Surveys and other devices as well as more localised and community-based consultations and research.
- Map the work of other organisations to help build partnerships aimed at addressing issues that UNICEF does not work on (as recommended by the Evaluation Findings Workshop).

7. Enhance the capacity of UNICEF and its partners on programming for and with adolescents so that they are better equipped to understand and respond to the unique challenges of working with this age group.

Practical suggestions:
- Address the needs of UNICEF staff through the creation of e-learning tools, webinars and the like. It seems unlikely that heavy investment in residential training courses is warranted for staff at this level. It’s also worth noting that materials used previously by the Office are copyrighted so new materials need likely to be developed.
- Invest more in frontline workers drawing on experience around the region (e.g. India/Gujarat).
- Institute a better system of reward and recognition of staff work which will simultaneously help to spread knowledge, for instance, through an annual award for the best adolescent programme in the region.

8. Renew efforts to reach the most disadvantaged adolescents in areas of operation as, despite efforts, the most marginalised, excluded and at-risk adolescents are not always benefitting from UNICEF activities.

Practical suggestions: Various ideas and tips in the body of the text as to how this reach can be improved, for instance by –
- Working in more homogenous excluded communities;
- Working through partner organisations with pre-existing technical expertise (even if work has to be done to strengthen their financial and administrative capacities);
- Carrying out more outreach activities through adolescents themselves etc.

9. Place more emphasis on building the capacity of parents as duty bearers in order to ensure adolescents benefit from a supportive enabling home environment.

Practical suggestions: Examples in the region (e.g. Bangladesh, Nepal, India (Jharkhand) of work with parents as an adjunct to adolescent group work where parallel mothers’ and fathers’ groups are run using adapted training packages used for adolescents themselves.

10. Continue to strive for gender equality in programming for and with adolescents: issues facing adolescent girls are generally well addressed by UNICEF programming, but the needs of adolescent boys are being overlooked.

Practical suggestions: Learn from projects which have successfully worked with adolescent males e.g. S4D Jharkhand project should be drawn upon to fill gaps in the organisation's know-how and capacity.