

# Executive Feedback

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| <b>Title of the evaluation</b> | Reducing Stunting in Children Under Five Years of Age: a comprehensive evaluation of UNICEF's strategies and programme performance – India Country Case Study |
| <b>Sequence No</b>             | 2017/001  |
| <b>Region</b>                  | ROSA  |
| <b>Office</b>                  | India   |
| <b>Coverage</b>                | India   |
| <b>Evaluation Type</b>         | Strategy  |
| <b>Year of Report</b>          | 2017  |

## OVERALL RATING



### Satisfactory

Meets UNICEF/UNEG standards for evaluation reports and decision makers may use the evaluation with confidence

#### Implications:

The report is well written and presents interesting findings and recommendations based on a good mixed methods methodology. However, the report could be further improved. To begin, it is a good idea for the report to present the programme's results targets (not just outcome areas) to provide a framework against which to assess the programme's effectiveness at achieving results. Additionally, it is important to present a theory of change model in order to help the reader to understand how UNICEF interventions are intended to lead to results. If a ToC model does not already exist, it is a good idea for the evaluators to retroactively create one (even if only in general terms). Regarding the evaluation methodology, it is important for the report to explain why non-standard evaluation criteria were used; present the sampling rationale at the country level; and describe how ethical principles were respected by the evaluation team. It is a good idea to reference the UNEG Ethical Standards. The evaluation findings could be strengthened by clearly identifying unexpected results and by providing a detailed assessment of the programme's M&E system. The report should include clearly identified lessons learned, as requested in the ToRs. The report's recommendations could be strengthened by clearly identifying the target group for action for each recommendation and by explicitly presenting them in priority order. Additional credibility is provided to the recommendations when the report explains how stakeholders were involved in developing them. The annexes could be strengthened by including an evaluation matrix, copies of the data collection tools, and information on the evaluators. The Executive Summary needs to be lengthened in order to include a summary of the evaluation methodology and key findings. The report's gender equality component could be strengthened by including a specific evaluation question around the extent to which the programme followed gender equality principles and by presenting sex disaggregated data whenever possible.

#### Lessons for future evaluations:

## SECTION A: BACKGROUND (weight 5%)



### Satisfactory

The UNICEF India Country Programme is well outlined, including those elements that are related to nutrition and to stunting. However, civil society or non-government stakeholders working with UNICEF at the country level are not clearly identified. The country context is very well explained and includes information on government strategies to reduce stunting. The report presents programme outcomes related to stunting and states that the programme had no theory of change in regards to stunting. Information on rights holders is broken down according to tribes and casts, which demonstrates a sensitivity to equity.

## SECTION B: EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE (weight 5%)



### Satisfactory

The report clearly explains why the evaluation is taking place at this point in time, what it is expected to achieve, and how the information will be used and by whom. Specific evaluation objectives are also clearly presented. The evaluation scope in terms of thematic coverage, geographic coverage, and timespan are clearly articulated.

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#### SECTION C: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY (weight 15%)

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##### **Fair**

The evaluation uses a good mixed methods methodology and is very strong at describing the methods of analysis used to code and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data. While data sources are presented within the annexes, the report does not discuss the sampling strategy used to select the data sources. The evaluation criteria are presented but the report does not explain why the additional non-standard criteria of "leadership and leveraging partnerships; equity; and knowledge/data generation, management, and use" are also included. The report makes no reference to the UNEG Ethical Standards or to the ethical obligations of the evaluators or ethical safeguards used to protect participants.

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#### SECTION D: EVALUATION FINDINGS (weight 20%)

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##### **Satisfactory**

Evaluation findings are structured around the evaluation criteria and answer specific evaluation questions identified at the beginning of each section. They are clearly written and are based on multiple lines of evidence. The analysis of effectiveness focuses on four main SP output areas that are relevant for India. While unexpected effects are somewhat included throughout the findings, they are not clearly identified or discussed. While the CO's ability to gather and share knowledge around stunting is assessed in detail, the analysis of the CO's M&E function is quite limited. It would be useful to include greater analysis on the M&E system's strengths and areas for improvement, including how the M&E system informs decision-making.

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#### SECTION E: EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS & LESSONS LEARNED (weight 15%)

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##### **Fair**

Conclusions are presented at the end of each findings section (per evaluation criterion) and are accompanied by an analytical summary of the programme's strengths and areas for improvement according to each criterion. The report could be strengthened by including a separate conclusions section that highlights the most important elements overall emerging from the findings and that discusses the programme's primary strengths, areas for improvement, major causal factors for the achievement and non-achievement of results, and the foreseeable implications of the findings for the future of the intervention. The evaluation does not include any lessons learned that can be clearly identified.

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#### SECTION F: RECOMMENDATIONS (weight 15%)

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##### **Satisfactory**

The recommendations are logically derived from the findings and will likely be useful to decision-makers. However, they could be strengthened by providing more detailed information around how to implement them within the country context. They are numbered but the report does not explicitly state that they are presented in priority order. The report also does not specify how they were developed and if stakeholders were consulted during the process. It could be assumed that all of the recommendations are aimed at the UNICEF CO but this is not explicitly stated.

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#### SECTION G: EVALUATION STRUCTURE/PRESENTATION (weight 5%)

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##### **Satisfactory**

The evaluation is well structured and easy to read. It is an accessible length (45 pages excluding annexes) and presents the report sections in the standard format. The opening pages contain all of the necessary elements but do not specify the timeframe of the evaluation. The annexes include some useful information including details on the evaluation methodology, a list of data sources, and people interviewed. However, some key documents that are usually included in the annexes and that add significant credibility to the report are missing. They include an evaluation matrix, copies of the data collection tools, and information on the evaluators.

#### SECTION H: EVALUATION PRINCIPLES (weight 15%)

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##### Fair

The report references human rights frameworks and human rights outcomes but does not explicitly place the evaluation within a human rights framework and does not explain how access to basic nutrition is a human right. A specific evaluation question is included to assess the extent to which equity was considered by the programme and this assessment cascades throughout the report. However, the report does not provide a detailed assessment regarding gender equality nor does it consistently disaggregate data by sex. It is unclear how gender equality, equity, and human rights principles were taken into consideration within the evaluation process itself. The ToRs specify that a national reference group will be developed to guide the evaluation and yet there is no discussion around how the reference group participated in the evaluation process or the extent to which stakeholders were involved in managing the evaluation and providing feedback.

#### SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (weight 5%)

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##### Fair

The Executive Summary is well written and is a length that is accessible and useful to decision makers (4 pages). It presents valuable information regarding stunting in a global context; the purpose and objectives of the evaluation; as well as evaluation conclusions and recommendations. However, it is also necessary to provide a summary of the methodology used in carrying out the evaluation. The Executive Summary could also be strengthened by including a summary of the evaluation's key findings.

#### Does the evaluation meet UN SWAP evaluation performance indicators?

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Approaches requirements

#### Recommendations for improvement

##### Section A

All stakeholders (including non governmental actors) should be clearly identified and their contributions discussed. A practical way of doing this can be by creating a stakeholder table or chart that presents each stakeholder and its contribution towards reducing stunting. When identifying programme outcomes and desired programme results, it is most useful to include specific results targets so serve as a frame of reference for the evaluation assessment. This can be done by presenting a shortened version of the country programme's results framework. Additionally, even though the CO does not have a specific ToC for stunting, the evaluators could have worked with the CO to retroactively create one (even if it is in general terms) to inform the evaluation.

##### Section B

This section observes good practices. No further improvement is required.

##### Section C

If the evaluation uses any non-standard evaluation criteria, the reasons for doing so should be justified within the report. Simply referencing the ToRs is insufficient as it is expected that the evaluators validate the selected criteria. It is also essential that the report explain the sampling methods used to select data sources. This explanation is crucial for transparency purposes and to ensure that no biased selection of data sources took place. Along these same lines, it is necessary for all evaluation reports to discuss how the evaluation team upheld the UNEG Ethical Standards including the ethical obligations of the evaluators and how ethical safeguards were put in place to protect evaluation participants. The UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation can be found here: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>

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| Section D | <p>It is important to clearly identify unexpected outcomes as they can be useful to inform adjustments to UNICEF programming. A useful way of ensuring that unexpected outcomes are included in the evaluation assessment is to create a specific evaluation question that looks into unexpected results. Finally, it can be very useful to decision-makers when evaluation reports provide an in-depth assessment around the strengths and areas for improvement of the programme's M&amp;E system, including how information is used for decision-making. Again, a specific evaluation question looking into the programme's M&amp;E system can be useful.</p>  |
| Section E | <p>Conclusions can be very useful when presented within their own stand-alone section so that decision-makers can quickly read them and get a sense of the most urgent issues emerging from the findings. The ToRs call for lessons learned to be discussed within each criterion. They should be clearly highlighted as lessons learned or they should be discussed within their own stand-alone section.</p>  |
| Section F | <p>The recommendations could be strengthened by providing more detailed information around how to implement them within the country context. Additionally, it is important to clearly state which actors are expected to implement each recommendation and to explicitly specify the order of priority in terms of which recommendations to implement first. This additional information helps the audience understand how to best go about implementing the recommendations. Finally, additional credibility is provided to the recommendations if the report specifies how they were developed, especially how stakeholders were involved in developing or approving them.</p>  |
| Section G | <p>It helps to situate the reader early on in the report if the evaluation timeframe is included on the cover page. Additionally, annexes are important to provide the report with additional credibility. Even though this case study is part of a larger global evaluation, it is still desirable to include an evaluation matrix, copies of the data collection tools, and information on the evaluators within the annexes of the case study report.</p>  |
| Section H | <p>The report could better place the evaluation within a human rights framework by explaining how nutrition is a human right and by using human rights language such as "rights holders" and "duty bearers". It is often helpful to include a specific evaluation question relating to gender equality to ensure that sex disaggregated data is collected and that the programme's responsiveness to gender equality principles is assessed. Additionally, special measures need to be taken for the evaluation process itself to be sensitive to gender equality, human rights, and equity principles, such as ensuring that women and men are equally engaged in the evaluation and that data collection takes place in a location where stakeholders feel comfortable to express themselves, etc. Finally, it is very important to explain the extent to which stakeholders were involved in the management of the evaluation (i.e. through an evaluation reference group) and not only as sources of data, as this provides the evaluation with additional credibility.</p> |
| Section I | <p>The purpose of an Executive Summary is to provide an overview of the most critical elements of the evaluation report, including a description of the evaluation's methodology. It is also a good idea to include a summary of the key findings. To find out more about how to create a high quality Executive Summary, please see the following resource:<br/> <a href="http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/guides/executive_summaries/unicef">http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/guides/executive_summaries/unicef</a></p>   |