Executive Feedback

Title of the evaluation: "Min Illa" Cash Transfer Program for Displaced Syrian Children in Lebanon (UNICEF and WFP)
Sequence No: 2018/001
Region: MENA
Office: Lebanon
Coverage: Lebanon
Evaluation Type: Programme
Year of Report: 2018

OVERALL RATING

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

Implications:

SECTION A: BACKGROUND (weight 5%)

Satisfactory
The report does a good job at describing the initiative in detail, including information on the target groups and their particular needs, the timeline and location of the Programme as well as the importance of the initiative to UNICEF. Also, the report provides a thorough description of the context in which the initiative took place and of the way the context influenced the implementation of the Programme. Furthermore, the report presents a section where the Theory of Change (ToC) is fully described in a narrative way and a graphic representation of the ToC is also presented that clearly portrays the way the cash transfers were to result in the achievement of outcomes and desired impact. The said graphic representation of the ToC also includes the risks and assumptions associated to the implementation of the initiative. Finally, although the report explains that the Programme was implemented by UNICEF and WFP along with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education of Lebanon and NGOs, the specific contributions of each stakeholder group are not outlined.

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

Highly Satisfactory
The report describes the purpose of the impact evaluation as to identify the programme’s effects on recipients and provide evidence to UNICEF, WFP, and MEHE to inform decisions regarding the programme’s future. Similarly, the report lists the evaluation objectives such as assessing the immediate schooling effects, broader effects on children's lives, age and gender differences, etc. Finally, the scope of the evaluation, including what was and was not covered by the evaluation is discussed in the report and a rationale is provided to explain the decisions made in this regard.
SECTION C: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY (weight 15%)

- Highly Satisfactory

The report provides a good explanation of the methodological approach used in the conduct of the evaluation and key evaluation questions are presented that served to guide the evaluation. Relevant evaluation criteria and approaches were used for an impact evaluation, including the use of a counterfactual. Also, the report presents a detailed description of the data collection methods and instruments as well as the data analysis processes that were used and that seem appropriate for the task at hand. Finally, the report makes reference to the obligations of the evaluators and explains that the evaluation design, instruments, and data-collection procedures passed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the research team in charge of the evaluation, which assesses a project’s compliance with the standards of conduct and protection of the rights of human research subjects, including the UNICEF procedures for ethical research involving children.

SECTION D: EVALUATION FINDINGS (weight 20%)

- Satisfactory

The report presents findings that are robust and based on different levels of qualitative and quantitative evidence, which is presented according to the evaluation's results framework and thematic axes. The findings cover both positive and negative results and the causal factors leading to one and the other are well outlined in each case. Similarly, the report presents an analysis of unintended negative effects observed, although positive unexpected results are less clearly accounted for. As an impact evaluation, an assessment of the programme's M&E system is not a requirement.

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

- Unsatisfactory

Whereas the conclusions are correctly drawn from the information presented in the findings and highlight both strengths and weaknesses, they provide mostly a summary of the main findings and do not provide a clear added value through deeper analysis. Also, the conclusions for the most part do not provide an analysis of the foreseeable future implications stemming from the information presented in the findings. Finally, even though lessons learned are explicitly required in the ToRs, these are missing from the report.

SECTION F: RECOMMENDATIONS (weight 15%)

- Satisfactory
The report does a good job at presenting recommendations that are logically drawn from the findings. They are clearly presented and indicate the stakeholder groups for action in each case. However, although the recommendations seem realistic, they do not provide sufficient practical details regarding the way in which they could be implemented. Finally, the report provides an explanation of the process followed in developing the recommendations and the level of stakeholder participation in this process.

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

Satisfactory

The opening pages include all necessary elements to provide end users with the essential information about both the initiative and the evaluation. Also, the annexes include valuable information but some important elements are missing such as the evaluation matrix, the questionnaires used, and a list of interviewees. Furthermore, although the report is nicely formatted and sections and subsections are clearly indicated, pages are not numbered.

SECTION H: EVALUATION PRINCIPLES (weight 15%)

Satisfactory

The evaluation uses a rights-based approach but references to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) or other human rights frameworks are for the most part absent from the report. Similarly, apart from the participation of stakeholders in developing the recommendations, the report does not refer to the level of stakeholder involvement in guiding the evaluation process and no information regarding the set up of an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) is provided. On the other hand, the report is quite strong at using a language that underlines the existence and different realities of girls and boys and the different effects that the Programme had on each group. Similarly, the report adequately addresses equity issues. Some questions regarding the differences in coverage and results observed between boys and girls are included in the scope of the evaluation and the report discusses the methodological tools used, i.e. data collection tools, and data analysis methods, in order to capture the different effects the programme had on girls and boys. Finally, the findings and conclusions present a gender analysis that thoroughly addresses the differences and gaps in the programme impacts observed between girls and boys in different age groups.

SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (weight 5%)

Highly Satisfactory

The report includes an executive summary that contains all of the essential elements in order to effectively inform end users. Namely, the executive summary includes a brief overview of the context and the initiative as well as a description of the main purpose and objectives of the evaluation, key findings, conclusions and recommendations. Furthermore, the executive summary only includes information that is developed in further detail in the core of the report.

Does the evaluation meet UN SWAP evaluation performance indicators?
### Recommendations for improvement

This is a quality impact evaluation report that can be used with confidence by decision makers. It is based on a good quality methodology and presents thorough and reliable findings. However, the report falls short in terms of providing insightful and analytical conclusions as well as lessons learned (lessons learned are missing but were specifically requested in the ToRs). In the future, it is important for the Evaluation Manager to ensure that all of the requirements outlined in the ToRs are fulfilled by the evaluation team or that an explanation is provided in the report as to why the evaluation scope differed from that outlined in the ToRs. Evaluators may also require some guidance from the Evaluation Manager to ensure that conclusions are sufficiently analytical. It is also good practice to establish an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) consisting of key stakeholders to guide and assist the evaluation team throughout the evaluation process. This facilitates greater stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process.

### Lessons for managing future evaluations:

- **Section A**: It is important to present a description of the specific contributions to the Programme made by each of the implementing UN Agencies and other key stakeholders in order to provide end users with a more complete understanding of the processes through which the initiative operated and the responsibilities of key implementing stakeholders.

- **Section B**: This section observes good practices. No further improvement is required.

- **Section C**: This section reflects good practices. No further improvement is required.

- **Section D**: Unexpected results oftentimes provide valuable information on ways to improve future programming. Unintended effects, not only negative but also positive, should be clearly listed and analyzed, ideally under their own subsection.

- **Section E**: Conclusions should provide an added value to the information presented in the findings by including an analysis of the foreseeable implications of the findings for future programming. Also, lessons learned should be understood as contributions to general knowledge and should be correctly identified and developed so as to maximize their greater relevance in different contexts. It is particularly important to include lessons learned since they were requested in the ToRs.

- **Section F**: In order to provide more useful and actionable recommendations, the report should present further detail as to the way in which they could be implemented in practice, the level of effort implied in each case, and practical advice on the best ways to proceed; ideally indicating pathways of action, given the specific context around the initiative.

- **Section G**: It is very important to include an evaluation matrix in the annexes when this is not included in the body of the report. An evaluation matrix provides a sound framework for the evaluation and should include guiding evaluation questions as well as indicators to serve as assessment benchmarks. It is also good practice to include copies of the data collection tools (i.e. questionnaires) as well as a list of stakeholders interviewed. Furthermore, the report requires all pages to be numbered.
Section H

It is good practice to explicitly mention the Convention on the Rights of the Child and/or other human rights frameworks in order to situate UNICEF’s work within a larger child rights framework. Also, GEROS standards require reports to discuss the way stakeholders participated in the evaluation beyond their participation as data sources. The establishment of an Evaluation Reference Group or a steering committee is a recommended mechanism for stakeholders to participate in the management of the evaluation and to provide further guidance and support to the evaluation team.

Section I

The executive summary observes good practices. No further improvement is required.