Executive Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the evaluation</th>
<th>Evaluation of the National Early Childhood Development Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sequence No</td>
<td>2018/001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>ROSA</td>
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<td>Office</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
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<td>Coverage</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
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<td>Evaluation Type</td>
<td>Joint Programme</td>
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<td>Year of Report</td>
<td>2018</td>
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OVERALL RATING

- Satisfactory

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

Implications: use the evaluation with confidence

SECTION A: BACKGROUND (weight 5%)

- Satisfactory

The object is large (a national program running for 12 years) so it is therefore challenging to describe in detail. It is explained as of paragraph 4 of page 17 (under 1.1. Context section) and presents some of its objectives and elements. Table 1 offers a clearer picture of what it entitles. However, section 1.2. "Program Overview" seems to address this same issue (like Table 2 in page 30), but in reality contains plenty of findings (how the program performed in terms of results, - instead of how the program was designed and implemented), which makes it slightly confusing.

The relative importance for UNICEF and the government is also described. The context of the ECD in Nepal is presented (partially reproducing the excellent documentation review included in the ToR) and the results chain is articulated. Key stakeholders are mentioned, though their specific contributions are not explicitly explained, including those of UNICEF. The ToC is present but it could be improved with a narrative that walks the reader thought its logic.

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

- Satisfactory

The purpose of the evaluation is clearly stated and corresponds to the commissioners' needs expressed in the ToRs. Similarly the objectives are also clearly outlined in the corresponding section. The scope is defined, although there are some details present in the ToRs that could be also included in the report in order to have an even better idea of what the evaluation aimed to assess.

SECTION C: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY (weight 15%)
The methodology section is quite complete and covers all the expected elements. It thoroughly explains most of the evaluation decisions made by the team. It goes into detail describing framework, approach, methods, sampling, ethical issues and limitations. There is, however, no specific mention of a literature-based approach guiding the evaluation, and ethical considerations are discussed in detail but no mention to children is done.

The report answers thoroughly the evaluation questions for each sector, combining appropriately quantitative and qualitative data analysed and triangulated. It is highly appreciated how gender and equity issues are included in each section. On the other hand, given the length of the report (considerably longer than the recommended length of about 60-70 pages), some of the data could be provided in the annexes. Also, potential unexpected effects of the program are not very visible in the document. The monitoring framework is challenging due to the nature of the object, and some reference is done to it, but it could be further developed.

The report incorporates conclusions into each of the sectors and evaluation questions, which is considered a good practice. However, the final conclusion section (5. Conclusions) is slightly confusing as it appears to be the conclusions section but which in reality actually appears later in section 7, after section 6. Recommendations). The lessons learned are present in section 6 but are merged with the recommendations, which makes it difficult to identify them.

The recommendations section has been elaborated and merged with lessons learned, which is interesting but may limit their immediate applicability. Also, it has limited traceability with the specific findings or conclusions that originated them, and they are not prioritised (i.e. by relevance or potential of impact, etc). The process followed in developing them is not clearly articulated, including how stakeholders were involved in their formulation and/or validation.
The report is overall well presented and structured, following the guidelines for evaluation reports. The opening pages contain introductory elements to help to easily navigate the document, and sections are numbered with clear titles and subtitles with the exception of the Conclusions that are presented after the Recommendations (instead of preceding them, as their source). However, the only annexes present are the ToRs (in a document apart). The report annexes are missing an evaluation matrix, list of interviewees, copies of the evaluation tools, calendar of the evaluation, information about the evaluators' profiles, etc. Another important issue to address would be to keep the first chapters (mainly 1. Context and 2. Object) free of findings, so that the description of the programme's initial design and implementation is not mixed with the assessment of its performance and results.

SECTION H: EVALUATION PRINCIPLES (weight 15%)

<table>
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<td>The report successfully succeeds to mainstream Gender and Equity issues all along the report. These issues are present in the objectives, the questions, methods, approach, findings and conclusions. However, there is no reference to equity frameworks such as rights-based framework, and/or CRC, and/or CCC, and/or CEDAW and/or other rights related benchmarks, and it is not clear the level of participation from stakeholders involved in the evaluation process.</td>
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SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (weight 5%)

<table>
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<td>The Executive Summary is present and conveys all important elements. It includes an overview, reproduces the demands of the ToR, includes a summary of the methodology and a comprehensive recap of each of the sectors. However, the methodology discusses the design and the sources but it does not specify the approach or methods actually used. The fact that it is written in first person (we identified, we did…) instead of impersonal style (it was identified…) provides it with a close approach, at the same time it is more common to keep reports narratives more impersonal. It is clear and concise, although slightly longer than recommended (usually 2-3 pages is ideal, instead of 6).</td>
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Does the evaluation meet UN SWAP evaluation performance indicators?

| 9 | Meets requirements |

Recommendations for improvement
Lessons for managing future evaluations:

The report fulfills most of the quality requirements for UNICEF evaluation reports and can be used with confidence. However, the final document is considerably longer than the recommended length (it is 172 pages rather than the recommended 60-70 pages). The report states quite early on (in page 29 before Table 2) that given that the provision of ECD services in Nepal uses a segregated approach (rather than an integrated one), the report therefore provides a segregated analysis of the five sectors. However, the evaluation could have been a good opportunity to provide some ideas regarding how integrated ECD services could look like within the country. There is also room for stakeholders to be more fully engaged in the evaluation process as "owners" of the evaluation rather than simply sources of data. In the future, the evaluation managers could consider providing specific feedback to the evaluation team around the prioritization of recommendations and the need to ensure that they are specific and action-focused so that they can be useful to decision-makers.

Section A

The elements of the report would be more clearly presented if the object was in its own section, instead of being part (from page 17 to page 26) of the context subsection. It would also add clarity if findings were not mixed with the description of the strategy. Specific roles and contributions of each stakeholder (beyond the line ministries explained in Table 2) could be discussed in more depth. Finally, it can be useful to include a narrative section that articulates in words the programme's change logic.

Section B

The ToRs mention some details of the scope that would reinforce this section in the report:

a) that the evaluation should "identify direct or indirect, intended or unintended effects of the programme",

b) that "The evaluation would cover all target groups of the strategy and will include particularly children in their early childhood, caregivers, ECD center facilitators, management committee and other local bodies and local level offices of line agencies."

c) And in point 5. Evaluability: "It will be difficult to make a direct linkage of all the results and therefore assert attribution". So attribution is out of the scope.

Section C

Given that the evaluation was seeking to "contribute to a greater understanding of gender, equity, and human rights issues in relation to ECD in Nepal", it would have been useful to provide a clearer framework to refer to the Gender-Responsive Evaluation Approach, beyond the DAC criterion (that can be guided by the "How to design and manage Equity-focused evaluations" (UNICEF) https://mymande.org/sites/default/files/EWP5_Equity_focused_evaluations.pdf or the "Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation -Towards UNEG Guidance" www.uneval.org/document/download/1294).

Section D

This section could further promote its use by reducing its extension by moving some of the data (presented in tables) to an anex and leaving the main part of the report body for analyzed information. Unintended consequences of the program should be more visible. Unintended or unexpected consequences are an important issue evaluations shouldn't neglect. Given the large amount of findings, they could be part of a clear subsection apart, to give them more relevance. The references to the monitoring framework and how to improve it, could be included.
The report would be more user-friendly if the conclusions section (in section 7) was merged with the conclusions in section 5, and if they were presented before the Recommendations section. Section 6 contains many useful lessons learned (including examples), though they would be more useful if they were collected together in a specific section, apart from the recommendations.

The recommendations would be easier to understand if they were redacted in a more concise way (or at least highlighting the recommended action to follow) and if clear reference were made between them and the findings and conclusions on which they are based, which should appear in a section before the Recommendations. They would be easier to use for decision making if they were more precise (i.e. actionable) and were presented in priority order.

The report could be easily strengthened by adding the missing annexes (evaluation matrix, list of interviewees, calendar of the evaluation, copies of the evaluation tools, information about the evaluators’ profiles, etc.). Moving the findings from the presentation of the "Overview of the program" to the findings section would take some time, but would make the report much more structured.

Additionally, the Theory of Change that is presented in 5 figures as of page 34 (which is also one of the products of the evaluation) could be included in the overview of the program, rather than in the evaluation methodology and framework. The conclusions should proceed the recommendations since they are used to inform the development of the recommendations.

The report would increase the evidence of this mainstreaming and integration by adding reference to some of the rights-based frameworks, and/or CRC, and/or CCC, and/or CEDAW and/or other rights related benchmarks, and by more clearly discussing the role of stakeholder participation within the strategy during the 12 years of the study as well as the evaluation itself. Stakeholder participation is important for the appropriation of the evaluation results and it involves the participation of different groups in the decision-making processes regarding the process of the evaluation itself. To learn more about participatory approaches, please see: http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/participatory_evaluation

The methodology should mention the approach and methods used. It is also recommended that the Executive Summary be written in third person. The Executive Summary could be strengthened by being further synthesized to 3 pages. It may also be worth mentioning in the executive summary that the evaluation was commissioned by the government and co-managed by UNICEF.