Executive Feedback

Title of the evaluation: EVALUATION OF TURKMENISTAN’S NATIONAL NUTRITION PROGRAMME

Sequence No: 2017/001
Region: CEE/CIS
Office: Republic of Turkmenistan
Coverage: Republic of Turkmenistan
Evaluation Type: Programme
Year of Report: 2017

OVERALL RATING

• • - - Fair

Implications: Meets UNICEF/UNEG standards for evaluation reports in some regards, but not all. Decision makers may continue to use the evaluation with caution, but substantive improvements are possible.

Lessons for future evaluations: To develop reliable and useful findings and recommendations, it is essential that the evaluation methodology be sound and that sufficiently robust and diverse first-hand data can be collected. In difficult-to-operate contexts, it is advisable to conduct an Evaluability Assessment to ensure that conditions will facilitate an adequate assessment of the object of evaluation. It is also important to have some flexibility in the methodological design to adjust it when challenges arise.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND (weight 5%)

• • • - Satisfactory

Stakeholders and their contributions are identified and discussed, and the report is particularly strong at identifying which programme elements UNICEF was a part of. The report explains that clear output, outcome and impact level results were not identified for the initiative, but nevertheless the evaluators attempted to recreate a Theory of Change model to demonstrate the initiative's change logic. The description of the object of evaluation outlines the intended goals and outcome-level results but does not discuss what kinds of activities or outputs were conducted, which hinders the reader's ability to gain an overall understanding of the initiative. The report could also be strengthened by providing an overall description of how the initiative has evolved since its inception. While the needs of rights holders are outlined, they are not broken down into sub-groups based on religion, ethnicity, etc. The report also does not explain how the national context has affected the programme implementation.

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

• • • • Highly Satisfactory
The purpose of the evaluation is clearly outlined, including who will use the information generated from the evaluation and to what ends. The relevance of the timing of the evaluation to inform the next programming cycle is also highlighted. The evaluation objectives are clearly listed. Additionally, the report is particularly strong at describing how the evaluation scope was modified since the release of the initial ToRs, and provides a good description of what is and is not included in the evaluation scope in terms of time period, geographic location, and thematic elements.

SECTION C: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY (weight 15%)

Unsatisfactory

The evaluation followed standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria but also included the criteria of coherence and coordination, without providing an explanation as to why these two additional criteria were added. The methodology allowed for the collection of only first hand qualitative data and relied on secondary quantitative data. Due to severe limitations in availability of documentation, the report explains on p. 8 that "the evaluation had mostly to rely on the qualitative data obtained through stakeholder interviews". However, only 11 stakeholders participated in KII's and only a handful of focus group discussions were conducted, therefore reducing the level of evidence on which to base findings. Additionally, evaluators were given government permission to visit only one district even though the evaluation covered the entire country. Therefore, only stakeholders from that one district are represented in the evaluation. These are very serious limitations that have undoubtedly led to a reduction in the overall quality of the evidence generated.

SECTION D: EVALUATION FINDINGS (weight 20%)

Fair

The evaluators made a good effort to structure the findings on effectiveness around the initiative's objectives. However, overall, the findings lack depth and analytical detail to justify an assessment, which is unsurprising considering the methodological challenges that the evaluation faced. The findings are generally more descriptive in nature than analytical and they do not answer all of the evaluation questions. No financial information was available, therefore seriously limiting the evaluation's assessment of the criterion "efficiency". Challenges with baseline data also reduced the quality of the assessment of "impact". The report explains that the initiative did not have an M&E system. The need for an M&E system is included in the evaluation recommendations.

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

Fair

The report identifies three (3) lessons learned that are correctly identified and phrased in a way that can make them applicable to different contexts/sectors. Conclusions provide simply a summary of the findings and do not add any analytical value beyond what was already presented in the findings section. They do not discuss the foreseeable implications of the findings for the future of the initiative.

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

Recommendations identify the target group for action and are clearly prioritized as immediate, short-term, or medium-term priorities. The report explains that they were validated by stakeholders. While the recommendations provide some guidance that will likely be useful to end-users, they are based on information that was collected through a less than robust evaluation methodology.

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

**Highly Satisfactory**

The report's opening pages contain all of the required information, and the evaluator provided his contact information in case stakeholders have any additional questions. The report is logically structured in a traditional evaluation format with one section logically leading to the next. The annexes are complete and include lists of documents reviewed and stakeholders consulted, the ToRs, an evaluation matrix, etc. They add significant credibility to the report.

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

**Fair**

The evaluation process was participatory in that it used an evaluation guidance group and validated findings and recommendations with stakeholders. This being said, the report does not adequately use a human rights framework, data is not consistently disaggregated by sex, and differences in equity groups (by region, ethnicity, etc.) are not regularly referenced. Regarding SWAP principles: 1) Indicators in the Evaluation Matrix do not specify that sex disaggregated data should be collected; 2) There are a few questions in the Evaluation Matrix that call for an assessment of equity (which could be assumed to include gender equality) but no specific GEEW-related questions are provided; 3) The voices of women are captured through some FGDs but no other efforts appear to have been made to make the methodology particularly gender sensitive; and 4) The report provides an assessment around the extent to which equity and gender equality were considered during the intervention's design and implementation, and recommendations to improve the integration of these principles are provided.

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

**Fair**

The Executive Summary is an acceptable length (7 pages), although parts of the text could be better synthesized to further shorten it, which would make it even more accessible to stakeholders. It is well written and makes good use of sub-headings to help guide the reader. It includes all of the required elements with the exception of an overview of the intervention. This information is crucial to help a reader who may be unfamiliar with the initiative to understand the information presented in the Executive Summary.

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

5 Approaches requirements
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Recommendations for improvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>The reader’s comprehension of the object of evaluation could be strengthened by providing a more in-depth description of the activities and outputs executed. It would also be insightful to provide a brief description of the evolution of the initiative since its inception. Additionally, it is useful to understand the different needs of sub-groups of rights holders broken down per region and/or ethnic group, etc. The background section could be strengthened by not only discussing the context in which the initiative operated, but to also discuss how the context affects its implementation.</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>This section reflects good practices. No further improvement is required.</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>The evaluation methodology faced severe limitations that have negatively affected the quality and reliability of the information generated. While many of these challenges lay outside of the control of the evaluators, some modifications to the methodology could have been made in attempt to mitigate these obstacles. Perhaps an evaluability assessment would have been useful prior to initiating the evaluation to identify the extent to which the intervention could be effectively evaluated. Another mitigation strategy could have been to conduct KII’s with stakeholders from UNICEF and other international organisations. It is unclear why these interviews appear to not have taken place (UNICEF staff are not listed in the people interviewed).</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>The evaluators have made a good effort to answer the evaluation questions based on the data that was available to them. However, the methodological limitations negatively affect the ability of the findings to be analytical and insightful. It may have been better to remove the evaluation questions that could not be adequately assessed from the evaluation matrix and concentrate on providing a more analytical assessment of those questions that could be answered based on the available data.</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>Conclusions should not simply present a summary of the evaluation findings but should provide additional analytical analysis to explain how the findings will likely affect the future of the initiative. Conclusions should discuss why the findings are important and answer the question: &quot;so what?&quot; This is particularly important if the evaluation is intended to inform future programming, as is the case with this evaluation.</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>It is crucial to ensure that the evaluation methodology is robust, as it directly affects the quality of the evaluation findings and recommendations.</td>
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<td>G</td>
<td>This section reflects good practice. No further improvement is required.</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td>The evaluation could have been strengthened by explicitly framing the evaluation around a human rights-based framework and by clearly articulating the rights of rights holders to adequate health and nutrition. Additionally, the equity approach could have been stronger by differentiating the needs of rights holders by equity group and by discussing how the intervention may have had different effects on these groups. To learn more about how to conduct gender sensitive evaluations, please see: <a href="http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/guide/gender-responsive_evaluation_handbook">http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/guide/gender-responsive_evaluation_handbook</a></td>
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<td>I</td>
<td>It is important to provide a brief overview of the object of evaluation at the start of the Executive Summary to help a reader who may be unfamiliar with the initiative to understand the information presented further on. There are sections in the Executive Summary that could be further synthesized to make it slightly shorter, which would make it even more accessible to stakeholders. For instance, information on the evaluation purpose and methodological limitations could be further synthesized.</td>
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