TURKMENISTAN
CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL INITIATIVE

EVALUATION REPORT
MARCH 2014
This report has been prepared by Karen Munce - kmunce@bigond.com, based on data collected during a field visit conducted in November-December 2013.
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<td>CEE/CIS</td>
<td>Central and Eastern Europe / Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
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<td>CFS</td>
<td>Child Friendly School</td>
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<td>CPAP</td>
<td>Country Programme Activity Plan</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>GoT Programme “On Development of Secondary Education Sphere in Turkmenistan up to 2020”</td>
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<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
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<td>Former Soviet Union</td>
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<td>HRD</td>
<td>Human Resource Development</td>
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<td>Information Resource Centre</td>
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<td>LSBE</td>
<td>Life Skills-Based Education</td>
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<td>M&amp;E</td>
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<td>Ministry of Education Turkmenistan</td>
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<td>National Institute of Education</td>
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<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>WASH</td>
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Map of Turkmenistan
Executive Summary

Turkmenistan Education Context

With a nationally flourishing economy (founded on its hydrocarbon wealth\(^1\)) and steady GDP growth, Turkmenistan offers a favorable economic environment for ensuring the well-being of the population. However, Turkmenistan continues to face a number of critical challenges – not the least of which being significant issues of quality affecting the education sector. Quality concerns relate to teaching and learning methodologies, curriculum content and textbooks, school infrastructure and teacher professional development. Another issue is the continuing exclusion of children with disabilities from mainstream education. In terms of management, the education system remains highly centralized and the lack of data, disaggregated by gender, region, wealth quintile, and other indicators, precludes in-depth analysis and comprehensive education sector planning.

Despite this, the education system in Turkmenistan is based on the provision that “every citizen has the right to education - general secondary education is compulsory; everyone is entitled to receive it free in public schools.” (art. 35 of the Constitution of Turkmenistan). At the same time, the Government of Turkmenistan is committed to enhancing the quality of education and increasing access to the same for all Turkmen children and youth.

UNICEF Support to Child-Friendly School Development

One of very few international partners that operate in Turkmenistan, UNICEF has progressively developed a significant partnership with the Ministry of Education. The focus of this partnership since 2006 has been the introduction of the ‘Child-Friendly School’ (CFS) concept to Turkmenistan, being a global initiative, but adaptable to any context, strategically focused on the realisation of every child’s right to quality education. To this end, any and all barriers to learning require elimination. Consequently, a child-friendly school is typically characterised in the following terms: proactively inclusive and child-seeking; academically effective for every child; gender-sensitive; healthy, safe, and protective; working in close partnership with parents and the community; and supported by strong leadership and management practices. While limited to 26 CFS Model schools, the intention has been demonstrate the effectiveness of the approach with a view to national endorsement as the vehicle for advancing quality education in Turkmenistan.

Under the previous UNICEF Country Program (2006-2010), support was directed to building the capacity of critical stakeholders (pilot school teachers, school heads, administrators, parents and local communities) to implement the concept at the school and classroom level. Particular attention was directed to the application of child-centred teaching-learning methodologies emphasizing active learner participation and respect for individual and gender differences. Within the present UNICEF Country Program (2010-2015), the focus has shifted to the development of a set of CFS Standards and a CFS Certification Package. The result target by 2015 is the national education system strengthened to meet international standards on CFS. Progress was to be measured in terms of the % of schools meeting CFS quality standards.

While the Ministry of Education is the lead implementation partner, and active at all levels, other key stakeholders include administration, teachers, students and their parents/guardians in the 26 Model schools, and representatives of a wide range of public organisations and other government departments. A CFS National Working Group (NWG) was established in 2012 to take lead role in the development of the CFS Certification Package.

The revision of the Education Law in 2013, including provisions for the extension of secondary schooling to a 12 year program, the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools, and the establishment of public education standards to inform the education quality improvement process (amongst other), presents an opportunity to take to CFS concept to the next step. To inform this important development, the present

\(^1\) Supplemented by cotton monoculture and fishing along the coast of the Caspian Sea.
evaluation of the CFS Initiative was conducted.

Evaluation objectives and intended audience

The purpose of the evaluation was:

- To assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of UNICEF strategies aimed to incorporate CFS standards in the secondary education system of Turkmenistan – in relation to targeted result as stated in the Country Programme Action Plan for 2010-2015.

The specific objectives included the assessment of potential modalities and strategies for mainstreaming the CFS framework and determining where and how of UNICEF's limited resources could be applied for maximum effect.

The main audiences for the evaluation are i) UNICEF and development partners with a view to strengthening the CFS development strategies and mainstreaming of the CFS model; and ii) Government representatives, concerned to make informed decisions about how best to expand the programme to a larger number of schools nationwide.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation has been conducted by a UNICEF-contracted consultant, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, and more specifically, the CFS National Working Group. The study was facilitated by the active support of a UNICEF national education consultant and the UNICEF staff.

The evaluation involved data collection in all five velayats, including consultations with a wide range of stakeholders and visits to ten schools – two in each velayat, one being a CFS Model School and the other a so-called ‘CFS Applicant’. A range of data collection strategies were used in relation to various sources – including teachers, students, parents, school administrators and representatives of public organizations. These were complimented by school and classroom observation, including demonstrations of interactive teaching methods, and presentations made by students.

The study was guided by the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and UNICEF's Global Evaluation Report Oversight System. Particular care was taken to ensure participation was voluntary, confidential and anonymous; interactions were characterized by dignity, respect and cultural sensitivity. Schools visited are not named in this report.

The comprehensive programs prepared by teachers and students presented time constraints for the actual data collection process, and precluded more in-depth discussion, verification or clarification. Furthermore, several significant stakeholders were not consulted during the study, including representatives of the Institute of Education and other tertiary-level teacher training bodies, and representatives of specialist agencies working for children with disabilities were consulted.

Findings and Conclusions

This study found the CFS Concept to be highly relevant to Turkmenistan – in terms of synchronicity with national education objectives, and in terms of meeting the needs of stakeholders. The CCFS concept is equally relevant to international human rights conventions.

UNICEF support to the Child-Friendly School initiative to date has been very effective. The CFS concept has been translated into practice, not only in the Model schools, but also in other schools who proactively took it upon themselves to become child-friendly. A wide range of child-friendly characteristics was found in these schools. Of particular note are the efforts made by teachers, supported by school administration, in implementing child-centred active teaching and learning practices. Students, teachers and parents all conveyed great pride in their schools. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the CFS Initiative evidenced by the
expressed readiness of the Ministry of Education to mainstream the CFS concept – together with widespread stakeholder awareness of, and commitment to, the CFS concept.

The CFS concept is founded on the notion of ‘inclusion’ – and this means inclusion of every single child, no matter what their background or circumstance, in quality learning activities. One core component is dedicated to ‘inclusion’ and the concept is also embedded throughout. The schools visited were seen to be successfully implementing a wide range of inclusive practices. However, this is the area where there continues to be a critical gap – and that relates to the inclusion of children with disabilities, who remain outside mainstream education. The address of this issue requires prioritization. With regard to gender, on the whole, schools appeared to have close to parity in terms of male and female enrolments, and boys and girls appear to have equal access to the range of school curricular and extra-curricular activities. Particular care is required to ensure curriculum and textbook content, and attitudes of parents and teachers, do not continue to pigeon-hole girls in traditional domestic roles.

While the CFS concept has focused on 26 schools to date, the intention was to extend the concept to every school in the country, so every child in Turkmenistan has the same access to quality education. With reports of widespread disparity in the distribution of education resources, it will be important to ensure even the most remote school receives the same range of quality education inputs as a school in the centre of Ashgabat.

The efficiency of UNICEF support to education has been largely considered from a result-based management perspective. It is considered that the UNICEF Turkmenistan education program would benefit from the development of a comprehensive result framework, articulating the range of actions required from the development of the standards to their realisation in schools. This analysis will enable the identification of any critical gaps in the enabling environment that require attention. One such gap is the whole area of school improvement planning, plan implementation, and the associated school-level capacity building required to achieve CFS standards. This is a critical area, the importance of which cannot be under-estimated.

Sustainability depends on local ownership of, valuing and eventually institutionalizing, the CFS concept. UNICEF processes have been effective in this regard. Stakeholders emphasized that the CFS initiative is not functioning as a separate project but is integrated within the routine operation of schools. The Ministry of Education has indicated that mainstreaming the CFS concept is now part of the national vision for developing education – ‘by 2016, we want all schools to be child-friendly’.

Given this is the intent of the Ministry, there is need to unravel what ‘mainstreaming’ actually involves. A multi-dimensional approach will be required. On the one hand there is need to address any institutional gaps (in terms of legislation, guidelines, resources, methodologies, other) that might constrain the realization of the CFS vision. On the other hand, there is need to a) develop a sound approach to rolling the CFS concept out to all schools and b) to build the capacity of local-level stakeholders to achieve the quality standards being established.

UNICEF is in a unique position to continue to support the Ministry of Education in this most important initiative.

**Main recommendations**

Recommendations are made in the following areas:

- further refinement of CFS Standards/Indicators to include the ‘quality dimension’ and simplification of the CFS assessment process;
- building an Enabling Institutional Environment in relation to each standard and indicator;
- development of CFS assessment and school improvement planning processes;
- development of a comprehensive CFS School-based training Manual (covering all key action areas);
- development of an enabling environment for the inclusion of Children with Disabilities;
- review of curriculum and textbooks, and pre-service teacher training programs from a CFS perspective; development of a MOE CFS Capacity Building Strategy.
Section 1: Background
1.1 Turkmenistan Education Context

The Government of Turkmenistan is committed to enhancing the quality of education and increasing access to the same for all Turkmen children and youth. In terms of international commitments, Turkmenistan became a State Party to: i) the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1994, ii) the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1996; and iii) the Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (CRPD) in, 2008. Further, it has signed the Millennium Development Goal Declaration in 2000 and is believed to be on track to meet many of these by 2015.

With a nationally flourishing economy (founded on its hydrocarbon wealth) and steady GDP growth, Turkmenistan offers a favorable economic environment for ensuring the well-being of the population. However, Turkmenistan continues to face a number of critical challenges. Amongst other, these include: reported widespread disparity in access to services, environmental degradation and vulnerability to drought and climate change, unemployment, ethnic diversity, traditional social norms and values, gaps in legislation and systems and severe gaps in the availability of data needed to inform ongoing policy development and national planning.

These issues can be traced to: the particular development trajectory pursued by Turkmenistan since independence; young governance structures still in the process of development; a shortage of trained human resources; underdeveloped human rights and civil society cultures; limited access to information and media; and unsustainable resource use. Some of these issues are already being addressed by the Government, but most will require commitment to a long-term process of change.

In terms of the education sector, Turkmenistan inherited a relatively comprehensive education system from the Soviet era, featuring free and near-universal access for both sexes – based on the provision that “every citizen has the right to education; that general secondary education is compulsory; and everyone is entitled to receive it free in public schools.” (art. 35 of the Constitution of Turkmenistan). In fact, however, post-independence in 1991, education in Turkmenistan was negatively impacted by a range of challenges which similarly affected other former Soviet Republics of Central Asia. These included severe budget cuts and loss of skilled educational personnel (teachers, administrators, academics) due to government lay-offs, emigration and “brain drain,” amongst other. School overcrowding, increased teacher workloads and deterioration of school infrastructure resulted.

These challenges were, however, further compounded by the specific education reforms introduced by the first President Turkmenistan Saparmurat Niyazov with his policy of Turkmenization of the education system. Amongst other, these reforms included: reduction in the duration of education at school and tertiary levels (with reduced access to the latter); introduction of Turkmen as national language and change in script from Cyrillic to Latin (creating huge demands for Turkmen language classes and textbooks that were not readily available); isolation from global community and major restrictions on access to information and knowledge; strong ideological control of curriculum; depletion of library holdings; lack of access to contemporary teaching methods; elimination of most minority-education schools; and resistance to most forms of international cooperation. Collectively, these changes catapulted the Turkmenistan education sector into a serious decline.

While data in 2006 revealed still high and stable school enrolment, retention and completion in Turkmenistan for boys and girls, the ‘quality’ of education remained constrained.

However, the February 2007 inauguration of the second and current President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov brought a renewed commitment to education as a national priority, together with a range of reforms intended to restore quality to the sector. Over time, these have included: extending the duration of

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2 However, very limited official data are publicly available documenting national progress.
3 Supplemented by cotton monoculture and fishing along the coast of the Caspian Sea.
4 The major ethnic groups are Turkmen (85%), Uzbek (5%), Russian (4%), other 6%) (2003). The official language is Turkmen spoken by 72% of the population, while 12% speak Russian, 9% Uzbek and the remaining 7% other minority languages.
5 Refer UNICEF 2013a; Horak and Sir 2011; Bailey and Sitova 2008
6 UNICEF Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey 2006
compulsory education from 9 to 10 years; reducing the weekly teaching load of school teachers to 24 hours; redefining hour allocations for subjects and developing new syllabi; expanding the curriculum to include more science, mathematics, history, social studies, and foreign languages; reducing the medium class size to 25 pupils; establishing boarding schools to provide access to education for children from remote areas; developing a network of specialized secondary schools; increasing the level of teacher salaries and launching a program of new school construction. In 2012, secondary education was further extended to 12 years, the age of Grade 1 enrolment was advanced to six years of age, and further reforms in legal and pedagogical-methodological aspects of the education system have been initiated.

Notwithstanding the above-listed developments, issues of quality, access, and management remain. Quality concerns relate to school facilities and infrastructure (including furniture, heating, water and sanitation), curriculum content, teaching/learning materials/textbooks, teaching methods and the quality of teacher training programs. The need for expanded access to teacher professional development programs has been recognised. Contributing to this situation has been the pace of reform implementation, the continuing extension of the compulsory number of school years and the introduction of new subjects, prior to the development and implementation of new curriculum and related methodological guidelines, teaching resources and in-service teacher training programs.

In relation to access and equity, a particular concern has been the continuing exclusion of children with disabilities from mainstream education. Beyond this, disparities and high selectivity in the distribution of quality education inputs have been reported referring to quality infrastructure, teaching and learning resources, new technology [computers, laptops, interactive boards] and professional development opportunities. In terms of management, the education system remains highly centralized and the lack of data, disaggregated by gender, region, wealth quintile, and other indicators, precludes in-depth analysis and comprehensive education sector planning.

While there is no overarching comprehensive Education Policy document, the Law on Education was revised in 2013. Of particular note is the provision for the establishment of public education standards as mandatory requirements for the implementation of education programmes.

UNICEF / Ministry of Education Cooperation 2002-2013

UNICEF was one of very few international partners which operated in Turkmenistan under the leadership of Turkmenistan's first President. From 2002, UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Education in piloting the Global Education Program in 18 schools across all velayats and Ashgabat. The Global Education program advocated education of the “whole person” by addressing intellectual, emotional, physical, moral, and spiritual dimensions of the learner in a comprehensive approach. The introduction of interactive learning methods and active participation in the learning process were key elements of this program, which also introduced the concept of ‘child-friendly schools’. Over time, the ‘child-friendly school’ concept came to the fore, subsuming the global education philosophy and offering a more comprehensive approach to school quality improvement.

The achievement of ‘quality education accessible to all’ requires the identification and removal of the multiple barriers that block an individual child’s access to regular school attendance, or block successful learning therein. Given the diversity of these barriers, which vary in kind and in time of occurrence, for different children in different contexts, a comprehensive and multi-dimensional response is required. A child-friendly school therefore entails a multi-dimensional concept of quality, typically encompassing the following characteristics: proactively inclusive of all children; academically effective; gender-sensitive; healthy, safe, and protective; working in close partnership with parents and the community; and supported by strong leadership and management practices.

These broad characteristics however require further definition, tailored to the particular needs of specific implementation contexts. Further, their achievement requires enabling environments at national and local

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7 See Horak 2013.
8 Refer: UNICEF (2013); Iltus (2011; Horak (2013); TIHR (2009)
levels, which themselves frequently require strengthening to encompass this expanded concept of quality. Coinciding with a certain ‘opening up’ of Turkmenistan to international cooperation initiated by the current President, UNICEF has progressively become a significant partner to the Ministry of Education. In relation to school education, the focus of this partnership since 2006 has been the development of the Child-Friendly School concept in the Turkmen context.

While piloted on a limited scale, the intention was to demonstrate the effectiveness of the model with a view to national endorsement as the vehicle for advancing quality education in Turkmenistan. The above-mentioned provision within the Education Law for the establishment of public education standards, now provides an opportunity for institutionalizing the Child-Friendly School (CFS) concept and thereby making a direct contribution to enhanced access to quality secondary education for all Turkmen children. To inform this important development, the present evaluation of the CFS Initiative was conducted.

The remainder of section 1 provides a summary on the CFS initiative as supported by UNICEF, the evaluation Terms of Reference and the methodology used.

1.2 UNICEF Support to Child-Friendly School Development in Turkmenistan 2006-2013

UNICEF support for CFS development in Turkmenistan spans two country programs, with the current program building on the achievements of the previous. A brief outline of CFS development to date is presented below.


The expected outcome statement and target for the CFS Initiative under CPAP (2006-2010) was:
- More children have access to schools following child-friendly criteria
- 95% and more of girls and boys in priority areas complete primary schooling in child-friendly schools

Specified outputs were:
- Basic schools in 20 etraps offer a child-friendly learning environment (40 basic schools) by 2009
- Basic schools offering a child-friendly environment are documented and promoted for national expansion

During Phase I, the CFS Initiative focused on the introduction of the CFS concept and strengthening the capacity of critical stakeholders (pilot school teachers, school heads, administrators, parents and local communities) to implement the concept at the school and classroom level. Particular attention was directed to the application of child-centred teaching-learning methodologies emphasizing active learner participation and respect for individual and gender differences. Specific activities included:
- development of CFS manual
- conduct of CFS orientation courses for school admin, teachers, school inspectors and parents,
- in-service training of 800+ teachers trained in new teaching methods
- training of CFS coordinators in 26 pilot schools
- establishment of CFS Information Resources Centres
- Support for establishment of youth clubs and other extracurricular cultural activities
- revision of Healthy Life Skills syllabus grades 1-10, with resources developed for the grades 1-4.
- development of CFS advocacy / awareness materials.

From 2006 until the present time, development of the CFS concept has concentrated on 26 Model schools – five in each of five velayats and one in Ashgabat city. This is 1.5% of secondary schools in Turkmenistan.

*CFS Review 2011*

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*10 Compiled from UNICEF planning and reporting documents. Details of activities, inputs, costs by year were not available.*

*11 The Statistical Yearbook of Turkmenistan 2012 reported 1,742 secondary schools in 2011.*
A UNICEF study conducted in 2011 surveyed 25 CFS Model schools to assess the impact of project interventions to that time (Illus 2011). The study found the CFS concept had generally been accepted by the CFS schools and the Ministry at that time – reporting positive stakeholder views and teacher satisfaction with the quality of education in their schools (for summary, refer Annex 2). With only a few exceptions, class sizes were found to be comparable to universal standards, attendance rates were high, failure rates low, gender equity was excellent, and significant progress had been made in improving the physical environment and safety of the schools. Students similarly presented very positive views of their school. 99% of students surveyed found ‘learning in school interesting’, 97% ‘love their school’; and 95% ‘like their teachers’. Almost all children agreed that ‘all their rights were being observed in school’, including not only their right to education, but also their right to health, safety protection, personal liberty and freedom of speech. The study identified three key areas as requiring more targeted attention. These were:

- inclusion of children with disabilities (there were very few);
- child-centred teaching and learning (traditional teacher-centred approaches were still dominant);
- active student participation (narrowly conceived – with limited practice)

Other noteworthy issues identified by the study included: the dominant school culture of competition, the close association of education quality with the availability of modern technology, and again the issue of broad disparity across schools in terms of distribution of resources. Despite this variation across schools and the specific weaknesses noted, stakeholders considered their schools to be ‘child-friendly’.

Ultimately, the study recommended that UNICEF concentrate its efforts on further developing the CFS concept and expanding it to all schools in Turkmenistan. A gentle transition towards a more child-centered approach was proposed (rather than a radical approach) and informed by a deeper understanding of the strengths of the existing system. Given the major shift in educational philosophy required for teachers to effectively practice child-centred pedagogy, the study strongly recommended a review of the teacher training curricula and the qualifications of teacher trainers.


The overarching goal of the present UNICEF Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) 2010-2015 is to:

promote progressive and sustainable fulfillment of the human rights of children and women in full compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, MDGs, the “World Fit for Children” Declaration and Action Plan, and the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The **expected outcome** statement as expressed under CPAP (2010-15) is:

Nationally, vulnerable children benefit from improved health, education, protection and prevention services.

The Country Program comprises two main areas of intervention: “Advocacy for Social Policies and Child Rights” and “Strengthening of Systems at the National and Local Levels”. With regard to support for Child-Friendly School Development, the key result targeted by 2015 is:

- education system strengthened to meet international standards on CFS – more specifically:-
- CFS certification package introduced into the education system and used for adoption of child-friendly principles in the system of education

According to the CPAP, progress towards will be measured by 2 indicators:

- % of schools which meet Child-Friendly School quality standards; and
- % of schools certified as Child-Friendly Schools

The main activities implemented since 2010 have been the: development of CFS Standards and Indicators; the development of a CFS certification package and the conduct of limited base-line study in ten schools. Complimentary activities have also been supported in recent years by both the European Union and USAID

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12 In all, 25 directors, 250 teachers, 1860 students and 930 parents were surveyed – including 12% of the teachers and 10% of the students in the schools visited
supporting training in active teaching and learning. It is noted that a number of the CFS Model Schools were similarly targeted as pilot schools by the EU project.

The overall UNICEF/Government of Turkmenistan Country Program is coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), with programme implementation carried out by the relevant ministries and agencies – in the present case, this being the Ministry of Education. Critical stakeholders at the school/community level are school administration, teachers, students and their parents/guardians in the 26 Model schools. Other key stakeholders involved with the realization of child-friendly schools include Velayat and Etrap-level Education authorities, and representatives of the Ministry of Health, the Women’s Union, Youth Union, Trade Union, amongst other.

A CFS National Working Group (NWG) was established by the MOE in 2011, comprising representatives of the Ministry of Education, National Institute of Education, local education authorities, school management and UNICEF. The NWG has taken a lead role in the development of the standard / indicator development and the Certification Package, with technical support from UNICEF-contracted international consultants.

The Programme is implemented through Two-Year Rolling Workplans, developed collaboratively by UNICEF and authorized government institutions - in line with national priorities outlined in the National programme on Early Childhood Development and School Preparedness for 2011-2015, the Presidential Decree in 12-year school education, country’s global commitments on education (Millennium Development Goals) and recommendations of UNICEF’s Mid-Term Review conducted in March 2013.

Program monitoring consists of: quarterly review meetings involving UNICEF, MOE and other relevant stakeholders to assess workplan implementation; regular technical meetings to discuss progress, identify problems and find solutions joint field visits to project sites and specific studies as and when deemed necessary. Adjustments to the workplans are made on the basis of these collective monitoring and evaluation activities. The 2013 Mid-Term Review confirmed the continued importance of the work aimed to ensure the compliance of the national education system with the international quality standards in pre-, primary and secondary schools.

1.3 CFS Evaluation Terms of Reference (TOR)
The evaluation Terms of Reference (refer Annex 1) specifies the study parameters, as summarized below.

The purpose of the evaluation is:

- To assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of UNICEF strategies aimed to incorporate CFS standards in the secondary education system of Turkmenistan – in relation to targeted result as stated in the Country Programme Action Plan for 2010-2015.

The specific objectives of the evaluation are to:

- analyze UNICEF’s strategic positioning with regards to its contribution to education quality;
- identify strengths, weaknesses and challenges of current UNICEF CFS related programmatic interventions that have implications for the secondary education reform;
- highlight barriers and difficulties that limit UNICEF’s programmatic effectiveness in integrating the CFS standards in the secondary education system of Turkmenistan;
- assess potential modalities and strategies for the mainstreaming/scaling up of the CFS framework (inclusiveness, child centeredness and stakeholders' participation) to the education sector reform;
- determine where and how limited resources of UNICEF should be applied to ensure the achievement of the CPAP result;
- provide forward-looking recommendations for strengthening UNICEF programming in the mainstreaming/scaling up of the CFS initiative.

Evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, inclusion, efficiency and sustainability) are those recommended by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
OECD. Questions specific to each criteria are summarized in Box 1 below. The TOR additionally requires consideration of UNICEF Turkmenistan programme planning and management processes in relation to results based management and rights-based approaches. Given the CFS concept is expressly concerned with the realisation of the rights of every child to quality education, consideration of gender, equity and rights is intrinsic to the evaluation.

### Box 1 – Specific Questions x Evaluation Criteria

#### Relevance
- What is the relevance of the CFS Initiative in relation to primary stakeholders’ needs, national priorities and policies, human rights, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities?
- What is the relevance of the CFS strategies for promoting education quality?
- To what extent tools, methodologies and the Child Friendly concept are accepted by national and local stakeholders?

#### Effectiveness
- To which extent do schools and teachers respect the rights of children and operate in the best interest of the child?
- Are there any examples of good practice or especially innovative approaches developed under the initiative which should be highlighted?

#### Inclusiveness
- How much has the CFS Initiative managed to promote inclusion into the education system?
- To what extent is the CFS Initiative sensitive to cultural, ethnic diversity and gender?
- To which extent are efforts/resources invested in creating stimulating classrooms that support active learning for all?

#### Sustainability
- What mechanisms are in place to promote government and local ownership for long-term sustainability?
- Are sustainable facilities/services/supplies available to support the needs of the whole child and every child?
- To what extent do local duty bearers have at present capacity to carry on the CFS activities on their own?
- Are the Ministry of Education, the Institute of Education, pedagogical colleges and higher education establishments able and ready to bring to scale/mainstream the CFS concept and principles in the education system?
- Has the CFS Initiative been in any way mainstreamed by the Ministry of Education in the policy documents, school curriculum, education standards, training of teachers, participatory and interactive teaching methods?
- To what extent the CFS programmatic interventions inform policy and funding priorities?

#### Efficiency
- How effective are the planning strategies and implementation methodologies in terms of inputs, process and outputs?
- To what extent does UNICEF have the competences required for the achievement of the CPAP IR?
- What specific factors contributed to delays or difficulties in the implementation and how might these be addressed?
- What strategies/interventions associated with the CFS approach should be prioritized to maximum contribution to education quality improvements?
- What is the most cost-effective way for incorporation of CFS standards in the education system in Turkmenistan?

According to the TOR, the scope of the evaluation encompasses: UNICEF programmatic actions aiming to incorporate the CFS standards in the secondary education system of Turkmenistan; interventions within the present UNICEF / Turkmenistan country programme (2010-2015); and resulting change in the CFS Model schools, in all five regions and the city of Ashgabat, in child-friendly status. Changes in student enrolment, attendance, retention, completion and learning achievement, are outside the scope of this study.

The evaluation results are intended to be used as follows: i) by UNICEF and development partners to promote the CFS concept, strengthen CFS development strategies and to support mainstreaming of the CFS model; and ii) by Government representatives will - to make informed decisions about how best to expand the programme to a larger number of schools nationwide.

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13 The evaluation consultant relocated a number of questions to the evaluation criteria where there seemed to be a better fit.
1.4 Evaluation Methodology

Key Features of Approach Taken

An international consultant was contracted by UNICEF with primary responsibility for the evaluation, working in close cooperation with the MOE, the National Working Group, UNICEF staff and the UNICEF national education consultant. Key features of the approach taken to the 2013 evaluation of UNICEF Support to CFS Development in Turkmenistan include the following:

Rights-Based Approach - The CFS evaluation has been informed by a Rights-based Approach, in that it has sort to examine the extent to which the programme has a) contributed to the realization of the right of all Turkmen children to quality education; b) focused attention on especially vulnerable groups; and c) utilised appropriate development strategies for these purposes.

Results-Based Approach - The TOR requires assessment of the CFS initiative the pilot schools, against the results targeted by the current UNICEF Country Programme Action Plan (2010-2015) (presented above). However, understanding programme achievement requires consideration of a range of more intermediate results – the necessary stepping stones leading to the overall result targeted. In the absence of a programme generated Logic Model, a generic CFS Development Model has been established as a point of reference for the study. This model (refer Figure 1 below) distinguishes results at four levels – namely:

i. Education Outcomes for Children (increased access to a high level of learning attainment through quality secondary education provision).

ii. Progressive certification of CFS standards achieved (preceded by a comprehensive process of school self-assessment, school improvement planning and plan implementation)

iii. CFS Stakeholder Capacities Built (individual-level) and Enabling Environment created (institutional Level) to achieve all standards across all CFS aspects

iv. Appropriate CFS Model and CFS Development Strategy established (Includes standards, indicators, certification process, training resources, amongst other)

The education result targeted by UNICEF’s present country programme equates with level (ii) in this model. A number of assumptions are inherent in this model. Not the least of which being the availability and equitable supply of the necessary resources to build the professional capacity of teachers and the physical capacity of schools to ensure all schools throughout the country reach the same quality level within the same timeframe.

Participatory, Inclusive and Learning Approach – By ‘participatory’, the intent was that key stakeholders would be involved in the entire evaluation process, from planning, through data collection, analysis, identification of lessons learnt and development of recommendations. By ‘inclusive’, it was intended that the evaluation participants would include a) representatives of all key stakeholder groups (students, teachers, school administration, parents, public organizations, MOET and other government departments, UNICEF); b) representatives of diverse ethnic groups, and c) men and women in all categories. This approach was selected in order to maximize access to the evaluation process and resulting knowledge, and to increase the likelihood that the findings would be effectively used to inform ongoing quality improvements of the education sector.

Key stakeholders were involved throughout the evaluation in different roles at different levels. Representatives of UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and, more specifically, the CFS National Working Group were engaged throughout the whole evaluation process, including development of the ToR, facilitating and participating in the evaluation process, providing information, validating findings and developing recommendations.

Representatives of local education authorities and other public organisations, together with school administrators, teachers, parents, students, both facilitated data collection and/or participated as key informants.

Quality and Ethical Approach - Strategies employed to maximize the quality of the evaluation included: sourcing and reviewing relevant recent reports on the education and development context of Turkmenistan; canvassing the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders; multiple data collection methods; use of standardized data collection tools; data triangulation and informant checking. All stakeholders were encouraged to share their experiences and ideas as openly and fully as possible. The study was guided by the
Particular care was taken to: brief participants on the purposes of the study; ensure participation was voluntary, confidential and anonymous; ensure interactions were characterized by dignity, respect and cultural sensitivity - especially in relation to children. Schools visited are not named in this report. The extent to which the programme has been designed, implemented and managed in an ethical manner ethical is also considered.

\[14 \text{ Refer: UNEG (2008), UNICEF (2010)and UNICEF (2011c).}\]
**Figure 1: CFS DEVELOPMENT MODEL**

### RESULTS HIERARCHY

4. **QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL TURKMEN CHILDREN**
   - **School experience for All Turkmen children** is inclusive, healthy, protective, nurturing, empowering and academically effective

3. **ALL TURKEN SCHOOLS PROGRESSIVELY ACHIEVE CHILD-FRIENDLY STANDARDS**
   - **Schools progressively achieve CFS standards**
   - **CFS Self-Assessment, School Improvement Planning, Implementation and Monitoring commence**

2. **ENABLING CONDITIONS CREATED TO SUPPORT & SUSTAIN CFS DEVELOPMENT AT INDIVIDUAL & INSTITUTIONAL LEVELS**
   - **Stakeholder Capacity (Attitudes, Knowledge, Skills) – to achieve all CFS aspects in schools**
   - **System-Level Capacity**
     - to Support & Sustain CFS Development & quality education for all - at Etrap, Velayat & National Levels (Legislation, Policy, Curriculum, Textbooks, Teacher Training, other)

1. **EFFECTIVE CFS DEVELOPMENT & INSTITUTIONALISATION STRATEGY DEVELOPED**
   - **Development of CFS Standards and Indicators**
   - **Development of CFS Certification Package**
   - **Development CFS Awareness Raising**
   - **School Planning Process established**
   - **Development CFS Capacity Building Strategy**
   - **Development CFS Training Package**
   - **Development CFS ‘National Roll-Out’ Strategy**

### CFS ASPECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>CFS ASPECTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management / Policy</td>
<td>1 - Inclusive of All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Process</td>
<td>2 - Academically Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Resources</td>
<td>3 - Gender-Responsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, Safe, Protective</td>
<td>4 - Healthy, Safe, Protective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation – Students</td>
<td>5 - Participation – Students, Parents, Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alignment of Data Collection Methods and Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation questions were mapped against this framework (refer Annex 5) and data sources identified. Data was collected in order to address evaluation criteria-specific questions in the following manner:

Relevance was assessed in relation to: national priorities, stakeholder priorities (specifically children), and international conventions. Data was collected through document analysis and in terms of students, through small group activities.

Effectiveness was considered in relation to a) the achievement by CFS Model schools of the child friendly standards (result level 2 of above model); b) the development of stakeholder and institutional capacity to enable CFS development; and c) the establishment of an effective CFS development model / strategy (result level 4).

Inclusion and gender are addressed within this framework. Several methods were used to assess effectiveness including: document analysis of CFS standards and indicators; a teacher self-assessment of school child-friendly status; an individual student survey; student small group discussion; school and classroom observation15; school administration questionnaire; focus group discussions with public organizations and teachers; and student presentations, displays, demonstrations.

The efficiency of UNICEF program planning, management and monitoring strategies is considered from a results-based management perspective. Data collection strategies included document analysis and stakeholder questionnaire (teachers, school administration and the NWG).

Sustainability was assessed in relation to the extent to which the CFS concept had been institutionalized in the national education system. Data was collected via document analysis, stakeholder questionnaire and key informant interview16.

A set of common data collection tools was drafted by the consultant and translated into Russian. All consultations were conducted in a combination of Russian, Turkmen and English as required. Data collected was subsequently translated back to English prior to analysis. It was not possible to trial the data collection process prior to the field visits, due to start-up delays on the part of the Government. However, slight adjustments were made to the process after the first school visit.

Velayat and School Visits

During four days in Ashgabat, the evaluation consultant: identified key documents (refer Annex 4), consulted UNICEF program staff and the UNICEF national education consultant, mapped the CFS Intervention history and the education context in Turkmenistan, developed data collection tools, planned the field visits, visited one child-friendly school in Ashgabat and met the CFS National Working Group (NWG).

The evaluation team visited a total of ten schools, selected by the Ministry of Education. The ten schools visited included one Child-Friendly ‘Model’ School and one so-called ‘CFS Applicant’ in each of five velayats - one school being located in an urban area and the other in a so-called rural area, but within thirty minutes drive from an urban centre. Non of the schools visited were remote. The particular Model schools visited had all joined the CFS initiative in 2009 or later, and were all newly constructed schools. Thus, ethnic diversity of student populations in schools visited ranged from 100% Turkmen to one school comprising 17 different ethnic groups. In all cases, the school population largely reflected the ethnic mix of the local population.

A very tight data collection schedule was adhered to. The two day programme in each velayat entailed: courtesy meetings with the Deputy Mayor, consultations with representatives of MOET at velayat and etrap levels, consultations with a range of ‘stakeholders’17 (including representatives of the Women’s Union, Youth Union, Democratic Party, Members of Parliament, Ministry of Health, Trade Union and Red Crescent), and visits to two schools.

15 Teaching/learning activities were observed for 10 minutes in 3 classes in each school, covering a range of grades and subjects.
16 A National education consultant contracted by UNICEF since early 2012 was considered a key informant.
17 Directors are male and Deputy Directors are female. Velayat-level stakeholders consulted were predominantly male, although women did also participate. However, the team was advised they ‘all spoke with the one and same voice’.
Evaluation team members participating in the data collection process within schools included the international consultant, an interpreter, the UNICEF national consultant, a UNICEF program officer and two members of the CFS NWG. In each velayat, the participating NWG members included the local school inspector and one from another velayat, thus the NWG representatives varied in each velayat. Overall, five inspectors each participated in data collection in two velayats. The team was accompanied by representatives of the MOE velayat and etrap-level offices. The main responsibility for data collection resided with the international consultant, supported by the national consultant. The role performed by the NWG members was coordination, facilitation and observation.

Coordinated by the MOE, the school visit program was comprehensive - encompassing: an official welcome ceremony by students; student presentations and demonstrations of a wide range of school activities and resources; observation of classroom learning environments and interactive teaching and learning methods; a tour of school facilities; a student concert and administration of data collection tasks. Evaluation data was collected from the five CFS Model and two of the five CF Applicant Schools. Time constraints prohibited data collection from the other three schools visited.

Rather than minimizing disruption to the normal school routine, the visit of the evaluation team was treated as a celebration and holiday - with much dancing, singing, music recitals, poetry reading, drama, preparation of traditional cuisine and displays of sport, culture, art, student work, games and locally-produced education resources. Tremendous effort on the part of many people (including school administration, teachers, students, parents, MOE and other stakeholders) went into evaluation preparation.

**Contribution from Teachers, School Administration and Parents**

In the case of teachers, the School Child-Friendly Self-Assessment tools contained between 10-15 indicators for each of the CFS aspects (derived from the draft national CFS standards developed by the NWG). However, health and protection were divided and each assigned the same number of indicators. While Turkmenistan CFS standards are grouped into three categories: school policy, management, administration; education processes and school resources, the indicators selected were considered to represent the key action areas for each aspect – that is ‘processes’, rather than ‘inputs’. It was considered that the successful implementation of process implied the availability supporting policy, administrative support and resources.

The response format was a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘Strongly Agree, Pretty Much Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Totally Disagree to Don’t Know’. It was decided to organize teachers in groups rather than complete the CFS assessment individually – as it was felt that assessment based on group discussion and consensus would be more fruitful, in limited time. Once grouped, then asked to: discuss the item, provide the collectively agreed response, and cite concrete examples to confirm the assessment status assigned. It was initially planned that teachers would present their assessments and demonstrate their evidence, however time did not permit this extra step. Some teachers provided statements referring to evidence, others did not. Photographic documentation of school CFS status was planned, permission for the same was not granted but MOE.

Twelve to fifteen teachers were selected to participate by school administration in each school, with approximately equal numbers of men and women. The evaluation team requested that participating teachers
had particular expertise related to different aspects of the CFS framework. In the first school, teachers were organised into three random groups of five, and each group was asked to complete the whole survey. From the second school on, teachers were divided into groups representing each of the CFS Aspects (with Health/Protection again divided). Teachers self assigned themselves to a particular group, according to their interest and expertise. Each group then completed only that part of the survey that related to their Aspect. The ‘group approach’ to CFS assessment was a) considered likely to be more time efficient; b) considered to be more comfortable and therefore fruitful; and c) considered likely to generate a more accurate assessment, through group reflection on tangible practices.

A second questionnaire was distributed to teachers and also to School Administrators, seeking to capture details of the school’s involvement with CFS to date, together with their views on relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. Parent representatives were available in only a limited number of schools. In these cases, they were provided with CFS assessment items related to Aspect V – Participation. All stakeholder groups completed their assigned tasks in different classrooms.

**Student Participation**

School administration was requested to facilitate the identification of 30 student volunteers to contribute to the study, with five boys and five girls from each of grades 10, 8 and 6, and including, to the extent possible, a cross-section of the student population on the basis of ethnicity and academic ability. Students were assigned two tasks.

The first task comprised a survey, containing items that reflected different aspects of a child-friendly school. The response format consisted of a tick against the response appropriate to their own experience – either: ‘yes, sometimes, no, don’t know’. These responses were later tallied for each school, and disaggregated for male and female students. This task was completed by individual students, enabling a diversity of student views and experiences to be captured.

The second task was a group activity, whereby students were asked to discuss and respond to 10 open-ended questions, as presented in Box 2 below. These questions aimed to a) develop an understanding of what constitutes a child-friendly school, from the perspective of students (in order to consider the relevance and comprehensiveness of the current model; and b) to provide further insights into the current child-friendly status of schools, complimenting the survey questions). The first two and final the questions are very general. The remainder explore specific issues – namely: discipline, absenteeism, drop-out; safety / protection / anxiety; learning, and teaching; inclusion and disability.

**Box 2: Open-Ended Questions for Students Group Work**

1. The things **we like** about school are
2. The things **we don’t like** about school are
3. If we make mistakes at school or break a rule, the teacher…
4. Sometimes children don’t go to school because………………
5. Some children don’t finish secondary school (they drop-out early) because …
6. Sometimes we worry or are afraid about the following things…
7. Sometimes it’s hard for us to learn because ………….Teachers could help us learn better by…
8. School and parents could help children with disabilities to **come to school** by doing these things………………
9. Schools would be ‘inclusive’ of all children and their different needs, if they…………
10. For schools to be effective schools for all children,
    a). they should **have** these things …………………
    b). teachers should do these things …………………
    c). students should do these things …………………

For this task, students were divided into six groups of five students, with groupings based on gender and grade. Within these groups, students were asked to discuss the question amongst themselves, with one
student writing down the collective responses, listing as many ideas as possible. It was expected that small group discussion amongst same gender and grade peers, unhindered by the close presence of teachers, would result in more fruitful responses. Students were advised that: their responses would remain anonymous; that their school would not be identified; that their contribution and individual ideas were very much valued; that the study’s findings would be used to help inform future education planning decisions; that they represented the voices of all children and so they should try to reflect the experience of other students in their responses; that there was no right or wrong answer; all group members were to contribute and that differences in opinion amongst students was acceptable.

Data analysis

The draft CFS Standards and Indicators were analysed to assess the extent to which they were clear and unambiguous, comprehensive, mutually exclusive, and measurable. Given a considerable amount of repetition and redundancy remaining in the present version, the key action areas implied by the standards and indicators were identified for each of the CFS aspects.

In terms of the student group task (open-ended questions), a deductive approach was taken. Group responses were summarised. Things ‘liked’ about school, and specific recommendations made, were considered representative of ‘child-friendly’ characteristics of school. Things disliked, or otherwise presented as negative practices, were considered barriers, whether to attendance, participation, learning, health or safety, and to be replaced by positive practices. On the basis of this analysis, a set of characteristics of a child-friendly school was compiled, reflecting the views of students. These characteristics were then grouped on the basis of the core CFS aspects, and mapped against the CFS Standards key action areas, to check complementarity and /or gaps. This was used to assess the relevance and comprehensiveness of the CFS standards and indicators.

While the primary intend in this activity was to capture the range of responses by type (rather than the number of children expressing a particular response), common items or issues identified across schools were captured.

In terms of the individual student survey, survey items were re-organised and grouped on the basis of the CFS aspects. Student responses were tallied and disaggregated by gender. Representing student views on the child-friendly status of their schools at the present time, this data was compared with student feedback provided through the group work, and also with teacher assessments of schools.

A summary of the assessments provided by teachers of the child-friendly status of their schools was prepared.

Study Constraints and Limitations

The methodology was not without limitations but was considered adequate for present purposes. Data collection at schools was time-constrained. As noted above, school programs were full and stakeholders expected the evaluation consultant to fully engage in the program as planned. While the range of school-initiated activities provided valuable insights into the culture of the schools, this program left very time to administer and oversee the planned data collection processes and no time for in-depth discussion, clarification or confirmation.

Conflicting demands for the consultant’s attention during school visits meant supervision of data completion tasks was assigned to school administrators. Teachers were asked to refer to concrete evidence to explain their assessments of school child-friendly status. In some cases this was done, but in very general terms. The intent to include a wide range of stakeholder perspectives was constrained by the likely presentation of the ‘official perspective’, rather than ‘individual or personal perspectives’.

The classrooms, in which teaching and learning activities were observed, had been preselected. In most cases, rather than routine lessons taking place, the activities observed were staged demonstrations of interactive teaching and learning. It was not possible to gauge whether the observed learning environments and teaching / learning practices were typical of all classrooms, as all other classroom doors were closed.

It was intended that the inclusion of data collected from schools which were not CFS Model schools would provide a point of comparison between intervention and non-intervention schools. It is understood that they were selected for inclusion in the study because they are considered as equivalent to CFS Model Schools in
demonstrating child-friendly standards. It is not known to what extent these non-‘CFS-Model’ schools are typical of the wider range of secondary schools in Turkmenistan.

It will be noted when reading this report that both teacher and student assessments of the child-friendly status of their schools is overwhelmingly positive. This is obviously desirable, however the potential (but unconfirmed) bias in their collective responses is acknowledged. While it was intended that teachers’ assessments of school child-friendly status would be confirmed through sighting of specific tangible evidence for key indicators, this was not possible in the time made available for the data collection process. However, the inability to verify school child-friendly status in a relatively short amount of time, using the indicators as they have currently been drafted, is useful information in its own right, reflecting on the adequacy of both the indicator construction and their measurability. Ultimately, there is little to be gained by inflating the representation of school quality. Thus, this report has been written with full appreciation of the possibility of bias informing teacher assessments of their schools, but considers this less problematic at the present stage compared to the insights gained into the CFS development tools.

In this regard, both student academic results and curriculum and textbook content, were outside the purview of the present study.

A further constraint was the lack of opportunity to meet representatives of the Institute of Education and other tertiary level teacher training bodies. These had been included in the official programme, but were dropped from the programme at the last minute for reasons unknown. Similarly, no representatives of specialist agencies working for children with disabilities were consulted, nor representatives of other development partners. Finally, the cost analysis referred in the TOR has not been possible, due to lack of access to financial information.

**Report Preparation**

This report has been prepared by the independent consultant, incorporating feedback on a draft, provided by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education. The format of this report has been adjusted slightly from that specified in the TOR, in order to comply with UNICEF reporting standards. Section 2 provides an overview of the child-friendly status of schools visited based on stakeholder feedback and school observation - using the CFS standards and indicators developed by the National Working Group. Section 3 responds to the specific evaluation criteria and questions described in the Terms of Reference, based on the information collected using the methods described above. Section 4 concludes and presents recommendations.

**1.5 Acknowledgement**

The evaluation consultant wishes to extend sincere thanks to UNICEF, the Ministry of Education Turkmenistan at national, velayat and etrap levels, the CFS National Working Group, the UNICEF national education consultant - and the school administrators, teachers, students, parents and representatives of public organizations - for the extensive support, cooperation, coordination and enthusiasm provided for this study. Your collective enthusiasm for the education of Turkmen children, the future of your country, is overwhelming. It is very much hoped that this study will prove useful in navigating the onward journey towards quality education for all children in Turkmenistan.
Section 2: Findings - School Child-Friendly Status
2.1 Inclusive education

In relation to CFS Aspect I – Inclusion, the overarching standard is:

- All children have equal opportunities for enrolment and completion of school education, regardless of their nationality, gender, race, culture, language, religion, social-economic status, abilities or any other characteristics

Related standards address inclusion in both curricular and extra-curricular activities (Standard 2) and equality of opportunity and respect for difference (standard 3). Overall, there are 38 indicators related to inclusion (see Annex 8). Eleven indicators, addressing discreet key action areas, were included in the CFS Assessment tool constructed for this study. The group assessments made by teachers in seven schools, for each indicator, are presented in Table 2 below.

As will be noted, teachers in all of the schools surveyed had very positive views of the ‘Inclusive’ practices of their schools, ‘strongly agreeing’ that schools were achieving of the all indicators listed - with just three exceptions. (In two cases, teachers ‘agreed’ rather than ‘strongly agreed’).

Teachers in one of the schools were divided in their assessment of most indicators across all CFS aspects – recording both ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ throughout. Also noted is the very affirmative response of teachers in relation to the inclusion of children with disabilities, which is contradicted by data from other sources. Both raise issues related to the clarity of indicators and their measurement. This issue is discussed in Section 3.

Table 2 - TEACHER CFS Self-Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CFS ASPECT I - INCLUSION OF ALL CHILDREN INTO EDUCATION</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colours represent different schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Climate: Friendly, Non-Discriminatory, Respectful, Just</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 School documents advocate for equality, justice, mutual respect, and inclusion</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 School has mechanisms to prevent discrimination of any kind</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Relations between teachers and schoolchildren are built on the basis of trust, mutual respect and tolerance</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactively Inclusive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 School has list of all children of school age in the district</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 School monitors attendance and performs various activities to ensure daily attendance of all students (visits, campaigns, cooperation with relevant bodies, local communities, parents)</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 School maintains comprehensive student records (admission, leaving school, attendance, academic performance) (their parents, legal representatives, gender, nationality, domicile and others),</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 All children fully participate in extra-curricula activities, regardless of their origin, gender, abilities, any other</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 School possesses appropriate resources to ensure the full participation of children, regardless of their nationality, gender, race, culture, language, religion, social status, abilities, other</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes Children with Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 School works with community to identify / enrol children with disabilities &amp; other special needs</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10 School has facilities &amp; resources to enable full participation of children with disabilities</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.11 Teachers have appropriate knowledge &amp; skills to provide effective programs for children with disabilities</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
<td>☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷ ☷</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School Culture: Inclusive, Non-Discriminatory, Fair and Mutually Respectful

Student views on ‘school climate’ were similar to those of teachers. In relation to ‘friendly’ school climate, 100% students in four schools, and 93-97% students in the other three schools reported that ‘teachers speak to us nicely, are friendly and kind’. This was reiterated by student responses to ‘things we like about school’ which included: teachers’ attitudes (warmth, kindness, friendliness) and positive relations between students.

Students across all schools agreed: ‘Teachers treat all students fairly - they don’t discriminate, and ‘teachers mark student work fairly’. All students in four schools, and the majority in the rest, confirmed: ‘Students are encouraged to help each other’. According to parents in one of the schools, ‘students are taught their rights and responsibilities’; children respect teachers – and each other; there is no discrimination at this school’. These findings repeat those of the 2011 CFS study, which similarly found teachers and students reporting a very friendly and harmonious atmosphere in their schools, conveying a sense of pride and high degree of satisfaction.

However, that study also commented on the dominant ‘competitive’ culture of schools, with competition between students, between teachers, between schools and between regions. While a potentially strong motivating force, that study recommended closer analysis of the impact of such a highly competitive environment on students. This trait continued to be very much apparent at the present time. The main problem with competition ‘against another’ is that it entails ‘winners and losers’. A better approach is competition against oneself, where an entity (individual student, teachers or school) continually strives to achieve one’s personal best. In this way, everyone can be a winner, in a manner relevant to oneself.

Proactively Inclusive of All Children

Teachers in all schools surveyed ‘strongly agreed’ that schools were:

- Establishing lists of all children of school age in the district; Motivating students and monitoring daily attendance; Maintaining comprehensive student records (admission, leaving school, attendance, performance; Ensuring all children fully participate in extra-curricular activities and Possessing appropriate resources to ensure the full participation of all children

Students in all schools agreed children did not miss school without having legitimate reasons. The main factor contributing to absenteeism is ill health. When asked about students dropping out of school before completing secondary education, both male and female student groups in every school indicated there are none.

Inclusion of Children with Disabilities and Special Needs

Significantly, teachers in all schools ‘strongly agree’ that:

- School works with community to identify & enrol children with disabilities or other special needs
- School has facilities & resources to enable full participation of children with disabilities
- Teachers have appropriate knowledge & skills to provide effective programs for children with disabilities

School visits in fact revealed no schools had special facilities and equipment to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities. Students’ feedback however contradicted that of teachers, in suggesting very little or no inclusion of children with disabilities, in three of the schools. In two of the schools, 97% of students agreed: ‘There are children with disabilities at school’19. Feedback from school administrators also confirmed very few students with disabilities in schools.

Students in four schools separately reported: ‘Teachers visit such children at their homes, so they can learn the same things’. This was similarly reported by teachers and representatives of public organisations across all

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18 This was confirmed by the responses of Grade one students when asked if they knew what their rights were. A sophisticated range of examples were provided by a cross-section of students.

19 It is acknowledged the item wording is problematic, because the inclusion of even one child with disabilities would trigger a positive response. Hence, the highly positive response of students in two schools does not reflect the magnitude of the inclusion.
2.2 Effective Teaching and Learning

In relation to CFS Aspect II – Effective Teaching and Learning, the overarching standard is:

- All children realize their maximum potential (Standard 4)

Related standards are: 'use of innovative inter-active learner-differentiated teaching methods (standard 5) and 'Teacher Competence and Professional Ethics’ (standard 6). Overall, the CFS Standards contain 41 indicators related to effective teaching and learning. Twenty items related to Effective Teaching and Learning were included in the CFS Assessment tool. Teachers’ assessment results are presented in Table 3 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3 -Teacher CFS Self-Assessment Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CFS ASPECT II EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Heads of school support the implementation of <strong>active methods</strong> and innovative educational technologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Teachers encourage <strong>joint work of schoolchildren</strong>, advance practice of teaching in groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Teachers apply <strong>practice of encouragement</strong>, as a means of motivation of schoolchildren and avoid making critical statements which humiliate student dignity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Teachers apply methods which <strong>meet individual needs</strong>, possibilities and learning style of different children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Teachers encourage schoolchildren to <strong>think independently</strong>, ask questions, and express opinions freely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 School has mechanism to work with children who face problems when learning of have other <strong>special needs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 School has programs to enable advancement of <strong>gifted and talented children</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Children have a opportunities to develop their <strong>abilities and interests</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 School regularly <strong>demonstrates student achievements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10 Teachers regularly <strong>assess student knowledge and skills</strong> using various methods, forms and criteria of evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11 School has a mechanism of regular <strong>informing parents</strong> about attendance and performance of their children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12 <strong>Classroom environments stimulate learning</strong> – with resources, displays of student work, books, other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.13 School possesses <strong>educational resources</strong>, materials and equipment in all subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.14 All students provided with <strong>textbooks</strong> and learning materials according to their educational requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15 School possesses <strong>up-to-date technical infrastructure</strong> supporting modern (interactive) teaching methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.16 School has <strong>qualified teachers in all school subjects.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.17 School conducts <strong>regular school based professional development activities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.18 School administration regularly <strong>monitors teachers’ performance</strong> and provides constructive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.19 School pursues <strong>fair and transparent policy of promotion</strong>, encouragement and discipline of teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.20 Teachers develop, implement and monitor <strong>school annual plans</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Teachers’ Assessment of Effective Teaching and Learning**

Across the schools, for almost all of twenty indicators of effective teaching and learning, teachers ‘**strongly agreed**’ their school was performing well in all areas. Teachers in one school provided the following report:

> We are trying to use innovative methods at the lessons: role playing, visual, interactive methods. Depending on the age and knowledge of school students, we use technologies, mainly, an interactive board. We hold competitions and Olympiads (in all subjects) - expressive reciting, exhibitions, literary parties, concerts, issue wall newspapers. We often hold tests and compositions in different subjects. Administration holds its own tests and results are very good. Our school students take good places in city, velayat and state Olympiads; they prepare scientific presentations on the state level and are awarded with certificates and gifts.

**Students’ Perspective**

Across every school visited, student groups emphasised they like everything about their schools (‘there is nothing we don’t like’), they find their school work interesting, and they consider they are learning things that will help their future life. Overall, students surveyed had very positive views on the quality and effectiveness of the education provided by their schools – more specific details follow.

**Teaching and Learning Methods**

The 2011 CFS study (of 25 schools) had reported a predominance of more traditional teacher-centred educational practices, citing: ‘less frequent use by teachers of class discussion and ‘role play to support learning; many teachers considering student discussions took time away from learning; and a significant number of students not always understand textbooks’.

In the present study of seven schools, students presented a very positive account of their learning experiences. Students listed the following things they like about school: ‘different teaching methods; interactive methods-innovations; classes being held properly; learning process is interesting; playing games ; use of visual aids; different competitions / Olympiads; extra lessons; recreational, creative, cultural activities, holiday celebrations’.

When asked to indicate what contributes to learning difficulties, student groups in every school responded: ‘it is not hard to learn –have no difficulty learning’. Some explained further by saying this is because: ‘teachers find a proper approach for each student (differentiated instruction), because it is interesting, because teachers always teach us well, they help us, they, explain clearly.

All students in three schools agreed ‘Students are encouraged to express their ideas’, with over 90% of students also agreeing in the other four schools. In relation to ‘my teacher often tells me I am doing good work’, between 86% and 100% of students in six schools agreed. One student confirmed positive feedback from teachers has a motivational effect. In five schools, 90 and 100% students agreed ‘my school work is easy’, however only 59% of students agreed to the same in another school (a CFS ‘aspirant’). In relation to ‘other students help me learn’, while positive responses were made by 59-90% of students in six schools, only 39% of students agreed in the same CFS aspirant school. This included 63 of boys and 6% of girls surveyed.

Students reported other strategies used by teachers to enable learning, including: ‘doing all they can to motivate students, making lessons interesting including games and visual aids, correcting their mistakes, and providing additional classes after school; seating children with hearing or visual problems are seated at front’.

The evaluation team observed demonstrations of ‘active teaching and learning’. In a number of cases this comprised teachers rapidly asking questions of students, with students selected to respond. The 2011 CFS study reported the same, together with ‘little spontaneous questioning by students, group work or discussion’. In the present case, student group-work was observed in a number of classrooms.

Parents in one school reported their school was becoming better year by year: ‘teachers regularly have seminars and training in all subjects in order to enrich their teaching methodology - children have all opportunities for study and improve their knowledge – they have many extra classes in all disciplines’.
Teaching /Learning Resources

Based on student survey responses, almost 100% of students across all schools agreed:

- There are many textbooks for us to use at school
- I have enough school materials (exercise books, pens)
- The classroom walls have interesting charts and posters
- There are many interesting books at school to read

A common response across schools, in relation to ‘things liked about school’, was ‘having different textbooks, many interesting (new) books’. Also mentioned were the school library, different equipment and technologies, and especially the interactive multi-media board. These resources were observed in those classrooms visited in all schools, as also a range of equipment in science laboratories. In at least one case, this appeared to be brand new. Students and teachers in all schools demonstrated a very impressive variety of locally made teaching/learning resources. All students in Grade1 have a lap-top computer with software containing all their lessons. In relation to this, the 2011 study reported a good number of teachers expressed concern over heavy reliance on computer use at such a young age.

Parents in one school reported: ‘the school learning environment was increasingly enriched day by day – all children are supplied with new books; all equipment at school is accessible for all students; students can use free internet and do research; the school has a multi-media room, language laboratory, sport hall with all equipment, computers, sewing machines and handicraft equipment, and most importantly, these are accessible to all students’.
Classroom Learning Environment

Large classrooms were reported by students— as was school cleanliness. School furniture, and heating /cooling systems were also appreciated.

Observations of all schools visits revealed: Classrooms were all spacious, large, bright, well ventilated, clean, comfortable temperature – heating and cooling systems, no evident safety hazards; comfortable seating and desk furniture in very good condition (seemingly new). In the majority of cases, desks were organised in parallel rows facing the front of the class. In some lower grades, desks have been arranged in group formation. In two upper grade classrooms, desks were organised in a ‘U’ and a ‘Y’ formation.

Schools were found to have various quantities of computer equipment, a language laboratory; a school library and Museum; the supply of laptops to all Grade 1 students; and a teacher resource facility.

Teacher Professionalism and Professional Development

All students across schools agreed:

- My lessons start on time every day
- My teacher is always present to teach our lessons

Teachers gave examples of a range of professional development activities, including: Mentoring new teachers; open-door lessons (qualified teacher will conduct lessons whilst other teachers observe methodology); multi-lateral competitions on teaching methods; methodological seminars at city, velayat and national levels; meetings with different public organizations; concerts, competitions, museum visits courses in pedagogical institute; internet; library-based study; special seminars; national education program; inter-velayat teacher exchange; International teacher exchange.

One school mentioned the requirement that any teacher obtaining training, should subsequently share knowledge gained with others. Several well-known sayings were cited: ‘an excellent teacher must have students who excel him/her’ and ‘if you don’t share knowledge, you are like a donkey loaded with goods’.

A Teachers Network on Innovative Teaching Methods was mentioned in one velayat, with monthly meeting to share and discuss.
2.3 Gender-Sensitivity

In relation to CFS Aspect III – Gender-Sensitive, the overarching standard is:

- School environment, educational and extra – curricula events are gender – sensitive (Standard 7)

The CFS Standards contain 19 indicators related to ‘Gender-Sensitive’, of which ten, representing the key action areas, were included in the CFS Assessment tool.

Teacher Feedback on ‘Gender’

Teachers’ assessment results are presented in Table 4 below. Again, as will be noted, almost uniformly, teachers across all schools ‘strongly agreed’ that schools were implementing the practices reflected in the self-assessment items. As before, in one school, teachers’ views were split - between ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ on all items except 3.6 below, with their assessment divided between ‘agree’ and ‘disagree’. The only other exception was on item 3.2, to which teachers in one school ‘totally disagree’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4 - Teacher CFS Self-Assessment Results</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Totally Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspect III - . GENDER SENSITIVE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 School has gender equity policy – and teachers and students are informed and understand</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 School implements policy against gender discrimination regarding children and staff</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3 Teachers can recognize and eliminate negative gender stereotypes</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4 Boys and girls participate equally in school events such as school leadership activities, sport competitions, cultural programs, performances</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Teachers teach schoolchildren to conduct gender-analysis in everyday life, books, advertising literature, and materials from mass media.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.7 Joint work between boys and girl is in common practice.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 There are separate toilets and change rooms for boys and girls which are suitable and available at any time.</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.9 School provides hygiene facilities for girls</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10 Teachers assist boys and girls in academic program according to need, without gender bias</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐</td>
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Student Feedback on ‘Gender’

The student survey contained four items intended to provide insights into ‘gender-sensitivity’, related to separate toilets for boys and girls; equal treatment of boys and girls; school violence and bullying; and student views on rights to education. In the cases of the first three items, positive responses were reported by students – separate toilets, almost negligible cases of bullying reported by boys and girls, and equal treatment of boys and girls by teachers.

One survey item produced interesting responses. In only one school did all students disagree. In one school, 34% of combined male and female students agreed: ‘Boys need to have more education than girls’. This response was selected by 77% of boys and no girls. This was an ‘aspiring’ CFS school. However, in one CFS Model school, 31% students similarly agreed to this item, and this response included 25% of boys and 38% girls. Only one schools (a CFS Model) had no positive responses on this item.

School visits revealed boys and girls similarly involved in a range of activities, including activities counter to traditional gender-roles and both girls and boys were seen performing leadership and demonstration roles. One point noted however was that school wall displays of Turkmen leaders, literary and other historical persons of renown, typically only included male figures and no female figures.

For the reasons cited in section 1, it was not possibly to obtain an explanation of this assessment.
With affiliates in every school and class, the Women’s Union conducts regular activities for girls, often jointly with the Health Dept and other public associations.

In relation to Gender, the 2011 CFS study did not find ‘Gender’ to be an issue. Gender analyses between male and female teachers revealed no significant differences or discrimination of any form, and respondents raised no gender issues.

2.4 Health, Safety and Protection
In relation to CFS Aspect IV, the two standards:

- The school has policies and procedures for the health, protection and safety of all children regardless of their background, ability, and/or gender (Standard 8)
- All children feel safe and protected at school (Standard 9)

There are 20 indicators related to Health, and 13 indicators related to safety and protection.

Health, Nutrition, Water and Sanitation
Teachers across all schools generally assessed their school as achieving specified health indicators, as presented in Table 5 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5 - Teacher CFS Self-Assessment Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspect IV – HEALTH, SAFETY AND PROTECTION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.1 School medical examination of students held on a regular basis</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Totally Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2 School children receive all required vaccinations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.3 School prohibits gambling, pornography, smoking, drinking alcohol, use of drugs</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4 School provides healthy food stuffs for children, as per the approved school ration</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.5 School organizes training of teachers in providing first aid during accidents</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.6 School teaches reproductive health education to students at appropriate age levels</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 School implements appropriate HIV/AIDS education program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 School teaches health and nutrition education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.9 School implements extra-curricula activities, considering student needs and interests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.10 There is continuous water supply at school; clean drinking water are available</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.11 All students participate in regular sport and physical education activities</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.12 There are sport grounds and equipment available at school – sufficient for all children</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.13 School has adequate clean separate sanitation facilities for all students and teachers</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.14 School building and yard are clean, hygiene rules are regularly observed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Of health-related characteristics of schools appreciated by students, the most frequently cited items were: delicious healthy lunches and school sports / physical activities. Also mentioned were: school toilet; school uniform; learning healthy life- life skills and school medical kit.

Hunger was not identified as a problem by students in any of the schools. In most of the schools 100% students indicated they ate lunch every day. There was no significant difference between boys and girls. It is understood school meals are free for all students in Grade 1; and free for children from impoverished families. The MOE has submitted a recommendation for free lunches to be provided for grades 1-4. For others, the cost is reported by teachers to be reasonable. Food quality is reported to be monitored by Medical Workers and Parents’ Council.

In relation to ‘All students participate in physical activities every week’, positive student results across schools ranged from 80% (1 school), 90-95% (2 schools) and 96-100% (4 schools).

Students indicated they do ‘learn how to protect themselves from HIV /AIDS’, although one student did comment further by relating this to ‘doctors coming and making immunisations’.

In relation to water, 90 - 100% of students in all schools agreed there were sufficient quantities of clean drinking water at school and water for hand-washing.

Students considered their toilets were clean in four of the schools, with between 83-93% students in the other schools indicating the same.

Representatives from the Ministry of Health and public organizations, notably Trade Unions, described health activities conducted at schools, related to: adolescent girls’ health, personal hygiene, dental health, disease prevention, vaccinations, and medical assessments amongst other. Parents are reportedly involved in many of these activities.
**Safety and Protection**

Teachers across schools responded ‘strongly agree’ to the majority of Safety and Protection indicators, as shown in Table 6 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect IV - SAFE AND PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT</th>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Totally</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.16 School enforces a <strong>policy on school safety and protection</strong></td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.17 School prohibits corpo<strong>ral punishment</strong> / psychological assault.</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.18 <strong>Safety instructions</strong> are available in the gyms, workshops and laboratories.</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.19 School is equipped with <strong>safety equipment</strong>. Safety briefing is conducted regularly.</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.20 School undertakes all necessary measures for protection in case of emergency</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.21 School has procedures for supporting children with emotional problems</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.22 School has procedures for responding to suspected cases of abuse or neglect</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.23 School provides the simplest <strong>medical aid</strong></td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.24 School nurtures in students tolerance, respect, compassion</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.25 School implements policy of preventing <strong>any kind of violence</strong>, humiliation, insult</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.26 Teachers help children who were absent from classes for a long time due to illness</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.27 Teachers teach age-appropriate <strong>healthy life skills</strong> (including HIV / AIDS)</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.28 School has <strong>Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy</strong></td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.29 School building and yard are physically safe, are regularly inspected</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Students Feeling Safe**

Student feedback across all schools identified virtually no safety and protection issues. Students across schools unanimously agreed they feel safe at school, commonly commenting: ‘we have nothing to be afraid of; we have no concerns; there are no risks; we are supervised by our teachers’. The majority of students indicated they feel safe travelling to and from school. When asked if they are afraid or worry about anything, student groups across all schools responded: ‘We are not afraid of anything (“in our vocab, we don’t have the word ‘afraid’). Various reasons were given for this, including: ‘because our President does everything for us; our school is ‘child-friendly’; we are always safe at school; we are protected by our teachers & director; we live in our great peaceful country’. Some students did however identify some things that worry. Predominantly these related to academic issues: getting low marks, exams, missing class and therefore not learning the topic well, being late to school and not doing homework.’ The 2011 study had similar findings.

**Corporal Punishment**

When asked what actions teachers take if a student makes a mistake or breaks a rule, student groups again unanimously responded along the lines of: ‘they help us correct the mistake; explain what we did wrong; help us learn from mistakes; tell us not to make mistakes again; give suggestions and advice’. However, in relation to the individual survey item: ‘The teachers beat students if they make a mistake’, while students in five schools replied ‘no’, and commented ‘teachers never raise hands to students, no students are beaten by teachers’, 10% and 13% of students in two of the schools (CFS Model schools) gave positive
responses. Similarly students in two schools commented “they sometimes yell at us, shout”, students in three other schools indicated ‘they don’t shout or yell’.

**School Bullying**

When asked if students were ever bullied, hurt, insulted or felt discriminated against, again the unanimous response of student groups was ‘No – never, it doesn’t happen, nobody humiliates me at school; students respect each other, they cooperative; we are friendly – I am happy’. However, in relation to the individual survey student item: ‘All the students at school are kind to me’, while the student positive response rate in three schools (all CFS Model) was 97-100%, in two other CFS schools the students responding positively were 70% and 76% respectively. In the two ‘aspiring CFS schools’, the positive response ranged from 81% to 97%.

**Addressing Student Problems**

Student responses to the survey item ‘If I have a problem of any kind, I tell me teacher’ ranged from 40% (in 2 CF schools), through 60-70% (CFS and 2 aspirants) to 83 and 93% in the final CF schools. However, 90-100% students in five schools indicated ‘the school helps us solve our problems’. The response rate in the two final schools was in the 70-80% range. Both CFS and CFS-aspirants were represented in both groups.

**Psycho-Social and Holistic Development**

The Youth Union organizes a range of age-specific activities for students, aiming to promote holistic development (intellectual, physical, emotional, social), to motivate and encourage children, to strengthen moral behavior and promote healthy life styles, creativity, innovation and enthusiasm.

**Disaster Risk Reduction including Road Safety**

Disaster Risk Reduction programmes have been introduced into CFS Model schools, supported by UNICEF. A range of related teaching and learning resources were observed in schools.
2.5 Involvement of schoolchildren, families and communities

The two standards related to CFS Aspect V – Involvement of Students, Families and Communities are:

- Children have opportunities for expressing their point of view and participating in the process of decision making on the school (Standard 10) and
- Parents and the public are equal partners of school in discussing planning issues, in the process of decision making on the issues of the quality of education and upbringing of children and in school (Standard 11)

These standards are accompanied by 12 and 10 indicators respectively.

The 2011 CFS study found Participation of Students, Parents, Community to be weak area, with limited participation of students and parents in the development of the school plan, and parents having limited access to key information (school budgets; school development plans, teacher meeting minutes, school inspection records,) with little say in matters of importance. Some student participation was reported but doubts were raised as to the authenticity of the same. A review of the whole concept of Student Participation was recommended.

In the present study, teacher assessments across all schools, in relation to student and parent participation, were largely positive, as reflected in the Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7 - Teacher CFS Self-Assessment Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASPECT V - INVOLVEMENT OF SCHOOLCHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Children have opportunities for expressing their opinion and participating in decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 School supports and encourages student initiatives, proposals and comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 School supports development of student leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Schoolchildren actively participate in the decision making process through the Student Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 School welcomes and encourages participation of parents and the community in the school life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 School informs parents and the public in a timely manner about school matters including educational policy, plans and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 Parents and representatives of the public participate in the development, implementation and monitoring of school annual plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8 School informs parents about students' achievements (during individual meetings, parents' meetings or through individual written notification)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9 An active Parents' Council is available at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10 School cooperates with other organizations, in the life and activity of school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Participation**

Students responded positively to ‘Students are encouraged to express their ideas’, with YES select by 90-100% students in all schools.

Positive student responses to: ‘My Teacher asks my opinion and listens to me’ ranged from 97-100% in five schools (both CFS and ‘aspirant) to 88% and 79% in CFS ‘aspirant' and CFS model respectively.

‘Student involvement in decision-making at school’ was positively endorsed by fewer students across schools. In fact the highest scores were registered by students in ‘CFS-aspirants), with scores in CFS Model schools ranging from 57% through to 90%.
Student Councils were reported by four schools. Two of these had equal male/female membership, while the other two had 2:1 and 2:3 boy:girl ratios respectively. Students in one school explained the Student Council structure as responding to student interests, with different sections for: sport, healthy life-style, girls club, academic matters, school newspaper, amongst other. The Student Council is supervised by a Deputy Director.

During the school visits, a range of students (boys and girls, of all ages, commencing in grade one) were observed actively and confidently performing leadership tasks – welcoming guests, giving presentations, demonstrations, explanations, compeering concerts, operating technical equipment, amongst other.

**Participation of Parents**

The evaluation team obtained feedback from parent representatives in three schools. In one school, parents reported improvements in parent involvement with the school over the past five years, noting parents often come to school and actively participate in school life. These same parents made the following comments:

‘We think this school absolutely deserves to be considered ‘child-friendly’ school because we love the way our children are taught and treated…. we hope our kids will become as good people as their teachers and school administration – we are very thankful’.

School Directors in all school indicated the existence of Parent Committees. Membership numbers varied across school, and comprised either equal male/female members or greater numbers of women. The Parent Council Chairperson chair is elected annually at the commencement of the academic years. As per the Student Council, the Parent Council also has different departments, such as safety, cultural affairs, student support and education (appraising teaching methods and teachers’ conduct).

**Participation of Communities**

In relation to the participation of communities, the evaluation team was briefed by representatives of a wide range of public organisations who work closely with the schools in a considerable range of school programs. It is understood these public organizations operate according to nationally legislated set of activities, aiming to improve education and children’s upbringing. Furthermore, each district and velayat have Education Committees, of which public organization representatives are members. The public organizations indicated they support all children, in all schools, reiterating children all have the same rights.

A number of Members of Parliament also briefed the evaluation team on their role to spread the President’s policy to enhance the quality of education. They indicated they visit schools regularly and assess children’s interests and needs, consulting parents and teachers, providing feedback to Parliament for information when developing legislation.

A Democratic Party representation advised: children are our most valuable resource - education is the primary focus of our work…. we can see the results of the CFS concept in terms of education quality improvement.’

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21 While parents were involved in organising student activities in all the schools visited, many had returned home by the afternoon when the data collection activities took place.
Section 3: Findings - Evaluation Criteria
3.1 Relevance

The CFS concept was found to be highly relevant to Turkmenistan, from numerous perspectives, as presented below.

Relevance of the CFS Initiative in relation to primary stakeholders’ needs - Turkmen Children

In order to assess the relevance of the CFS model to the needs of Turkmen children, the evaluation endeavoured to ascertain a) students views on education broadly, and b) the characteristics of what students consider to be an effective and inclusive school.

Feedback from students revealed the CFS concept is highly relevant. Firstly, children value education and they very much like to attend school. Almost 100% students surveyed indicated they enjoy school, and they same number considered education is important for their future lives. Students across schools repeated expressed their satisfaction with their schools. In five of the seven schools students said they liked everything about their schools. Students were hard-pressed to identify things they did not like about their schools. Groups in all schools said ‘there is nothing we don’t like – we have everything we need’.

Secondly, in terms of the specifics of the CFS model, student group responses to the open-ended questions were summarised and recurring issues were identified (see Annex 9 for details). From these responses it is possible to extract those characteristics of a school which children value, and which they consider enhance inclusion and effective learning. These items were loosely assigned to emerging categories, which have been labelled: Leadership and Participation; Positive School Climate; Behaviour Management; Socialisation Opportunities; Inclusion; Gender-Equality; Relevant Curriculum; Effective Teaching and Learning Methods (including differentiated instruction and interaction methods); Holistic Development; Teacher Professionalism; Equipment and Learning Resources; Safe Comfortable Learning Environment and Health and Sanitation. See Table 8 below. Both the items generated by students and the associated themes significantly overlap with the CFS indicators and aspects.

Relevance of the CFS Initiative in relation to human rights and in particular, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with disabilities

The CFS concept, in broad terms, is strategically focused on realising the right of every child to quality education. Specific standards, indicators and implied action areas are directly intended to remove barriers to education and reinforce known learning-conducive conditions. The CFS concept is directly relevant to both the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, however there is scope to strengthen the standards and indicators particularly in relation to Children with Disabilities, and possibly also in relation to gender.

Relevance of the CFS Initiative in relation to national policies and development priorities

As indicated in Section 1.1 above, in terms of its intent to promote quality education for all children, the CFS concept is relevant to the national objective of enhancing the quality of secondary education. The CFS standards and indicators provide a solid foundation for long-term planning at individual school and national levels, to progressively address the quality and disparity issues highlighted earlier.

The CFS national Working Group has confirmed the relevance of the CFS initiative in relation to national legal framework found to conform to the followings, with conformity found to the following:

- The National Constitution, The Law on Education; the Education Policy; the Law on Protecting Citizen’s Health; the State Program of Educational Sector Development; the Law on Local Authorities; the Civil Code; the National Program of Early Childhood Development; the Regulation on State General Education Establishments, amongst other

Other stakeholders repeatedly reiterated the synchronicity between the Presidents’ vision of improved education quality, in accordance with international standards, and the CFS concept.
### Table 8 – Summary of Student-Generated Characteristics of a Quality Inclusive School

| Leadership & Participation | • Effective Leadership (School Director and Deputy Directors)  
|                           | • Effective School-Parent Communication (use of diaries)  
|                           | • opportunities for students to voice their concerns/ share ideas  
|                           | • each student participates in decision-making  
| Positive School Climate    | • teachers’ attitudes; warmth; very kind, friendliness, fair, helpful  
|                           | • Friendly relations between students; mutual respect, understanding - promoted  
|                           | • Friendly welcoming environment  
| Behaviour Management       | • Behaviour Management strategies implemented /School Rules /  
|                           | • Life Skills Education – including conflict resolution strategies  
|                           | • Positive Discipline  
|                           | • Teachers fully perform their duties - Teacher Code of Conduct -  
| Socialisation              | • Opportunities for making friends  
|                           | • social activities  
|                           | • breaks between classes (of sufficient duration)  
| Inclusion                  | • Free education  
|                           | • Non-discrimination; Equal treatment of students by teachers  
|                           | • Home schooling for special needs children if appropriate  
|                           | • Provision financial support for needy children, if required (free textbooks, uniform, lunch)  
|                           | • Monitoring and counselling provided for ‘special needs’ children  
|                           | • Develop specific interventions- to enable full school participation for children with disabilities (equipment, modified facilities, lessons, transportation, awareness, motivational activities, etc.)  
| Gender-Equality            | • advocacy – gender relations; gender equality  
|                           | • boys and girls get equal treatment, equal education  
|                           | • All students can participate in all school activities  
|                           | • recognising different home responsibilities of children (gender roles) when giving homework  
| Relevant Curriculum        | • quality education - relevant for the future  
|                           | • learning new things  
|                           | • Learning different languages (including English)  
|                           | • Learning: physics, algebra, geometry, informatics, biology, mathematics, amongst other  
| Teacher Professionalism    | • well-trained teachers - teachers selected on competitive basis  
|                           | • Classes are held properly – teachers on time, and remain in class  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Teaching and Learning Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• teachers explain topics well; clearly, using understandable language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learning process is interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• different teaching methods, innovations, games - interactive methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• teachers find a proper (differentiated) approach according to needs of each student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• peer learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• maximise opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge to practical activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• maximise learning time - teachers complete all program material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• different competitions / Olympiads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• teachers correct student work and provide constructive feedback;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• continuous assessment – for diagnostic purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• opportunities to catch up on missed lessons if absent from school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• extra lessons, if required – to enable appropriate learning achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Holistic Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• after school activities (physics, labour, Singing, drama clubs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recreational, creative, cultural activities, holiday celebrations, excursions, concert hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Balancing time for academic studies and time allocated to sport and extra-curricular activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Different Equipment / Learning Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• computers, computer class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• internet, wi-fi, telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• interactive multi-media board (in all classrooms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• visual aids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• library – with many interesting (new) books – including books in different languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Different Textbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All equipment well maintained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safe Comfortable Learning Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• large comfortable well-lit ventilated safe classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• attractive school environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sufficient furniture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Heating and cooling systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• clean classrooms and school environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health and Sanitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sufficient quantity of clean toilets – separate for boys and girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• tasty healthy lunches (available for all) - canteen/cafe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• attractive school uniform (available for all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• many sports activities / physical training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sports facilities and equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• advocacy – healthy life-style, good nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• school has medical kit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safety &amp; Protection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• School safety facilities / equipment ((including fire extinguisher, evacuation procedure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prohibition all forms of violence and humiliation (physical, verbal, psychological)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prohibition of smoking, use of illicit drugs and other anti-social activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Life Skills Education – including conflict resolution strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supervision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Parent supervision of television watching, internet use, student sleep and waking times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Effective School-Parent Communication (use of diaries)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acceptance of CFS concept and methodologies by national and local stakeholders

All stakeholders consulted were extremely enthusiastic and supportive of the CFS concept, and considered it should be expanded to all schools in Turkmenistan. This includes MOE officials, representatives of the various public organizations, school administrators, teachers, parents and students. Specific comments included:

‘we are very supportive of CFS initiative - there has been fair bit of advocacy and much of population know about these CFS schools - generally, the population support this program’ (Trade Union representative)

‘It is important. It is good if we have more such schools. This is the background of peace, friendship and good neighbourliness’ (teacher)

‘parents are very supportive of this concept – and want it disseminated nationally’ (velayat-level MOET representative)

‘CFS teachers share lessons learnt with other schools - all schools know about CFS -CFS helps improve education as a whole’ (etrap-level MOET representative)

‘we consider all five aspects of CFS are fully in compliance with the national strategy.. we want to scale up CFS to all schools.’

‘I think the CFS self-assessment is very beneficial, important, useful – to make analysis then develop new goals / objectives for inclusion of CFS aspects’ (teacher)

Yes, CFS concept/process is applicable in Turkmenistan, appropriate to national traditions, Turkmen mentality and international rights - This is wonderful program – all schools of Turk can participate and include CFS aspects (teachers)
3.2 Effectiveness

Program effectiveness is considered in relation to the extent to which program results have been, or are being, achieved. As indicated earlier, it is suggested results can be considered at different levels, and as represented in the proposed CFS Development Model (see Figure 1 reproduced below):

1. All Turkmen children achieve quality Education (in terms of access to, and active participation, quality relevant and holistic education programs)
2. All Schools become quality, inclusive – ‘Child-Friendly’ Schools (this is the level where UNICEF results are focused)
3. Capacities are built to enable schools to achieve quality ‘child-friendly’ standards, at individual and institutional level – that is, enabling conditions for the achievement of child-friendly schools, in every aspect
4. An effective CFS Model and CFS Development Strategy is established (without this, an effective and efficient national roll-out will not be possible).

In this section, program effectiveness will be considered briefly in relation to 1-3, and more fully in relation to 4.

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**Effective for All Children: Quality Education for All**

Effectiveness for all children can be considered in relation to a number of criteria and associated indicators. These can variously relate to:

- **‘access’ to education** (considered in relation to age-appropriate enrolment, regular attendance, annual grade progression and education cycle completion)
- **access to ‘learning’** (active & successful participation in wide range of relevant learning activities and appropriate learning achievement)
- **access to ‘holistic development’** – (physical, intellectual, psycho-social, cultural, etc)
CFS implementation has focused, over approximately eight years, on 26 CFS Model schools. The present study visited five of these Model schools. Within each of these schools, 30 students were consulted. Feedback from these students suggests, as indicated throughout the previous section, that the practices and resources of their schools are broadly impacting in a positive manner on the students therein. The same can be said of the CFS aspirant schools, which were also found to demonstrate child-friendly practices.

In terms of effective for children, the critical exception relates to ‘children with disabilities’, for whom the schools visited are not proving effective, as discussed further below.

**Effective for Schools – School Achieve Quality Child-Friendly Standards**

The extent to which the CFS Model schools have achieved ‘CFS standards’ has been discussed in the previous section. Key findings included:

- an extensive range of achievement of CFS standards, as assessed in relation to indicators, based on stakeholder feedback and school observation
- a number of non CFS Model schools, referred to as ‘aspiring CF schools’, also demonstrating the same range of characteristics – with little, if any, consistent difference between the CFS Model schools and the other schools visited
- Some CFS Model schools have been benefited from complimentary support from other sources – such as training in interactive teaching and learning methods supported by the European Union.
- While the full-range of inputs required to achieve CFS standards is not provided by UNICEF, UNICEF’s significant contribution has been in promoting the introduction of the CFS concept, which has given provided a comprehensive framework for schools to work towards quality and inclusive education.
- Teachers appear to be respecting the rights of children and operating in their best interests

In relation to new practices introduced as a result of the CFS program, teachers highlighted: *Interactive methods of teaching and learning which increase the quality of education, expand understanding and develop more critical thinking in the classroom; students have equal opportunities, despite sex, social status, cultural background, religion; new subjects introduced; increased duration of education; physical training reintroduced; healthy life-style subject for upbringing healthy generation and overall improvement in education standard.*

**Dissemination of CFS Concept to Other Schools**

A number of stakeholders commented on the diminishing differences between the CFS Model schools and other schools, as other schools are starting to adopt the CFS practices. It is not known how widespread this is, but certainly the CFS ‘aspiring’ schools visited by this study are examples of the same. Some CFS Model schools have invited teachers from other schools to participate in seminars on the CFS concept. The fact that velayat-level education inspectors are significant members of the CFS National Working Group has been an effective strategy in securing their participation of the development of the Certification package, and at the same time, ensuring their ownership and in-depth understanding of the concepts and processes. This has certainly contributed to the wider-dissemination of CFS. The staff of CFS ‘aspiring’ schools were very enthusiastic and proactive in accessing CFS information and working to enhance the quality of their schools. *(See Boxed Text below.*)
Comments Made by Two School Directors – ‘Aspiring’ CFS

Case 1: This School Director has had no CFS training but did attend a national education conference where CFS was discussed. She took it upon herself to obtain a copy of the standards and is endeavoring to implement them independently. She has been pushing to join the CFS programme – ‘the teachers and parents are very willing.. the teaching team is young, enthusiastic, proactive..they have been using interactive pedagogies since 2005.. they have good networks with local specialists. The school has methodological associations, as well as a Teachers Council. In the latter, the most experienced teachers have specific roles, e.g. mentoring young teachers; museum; interactive teaching methodologies; student research; sport and healthy life-styles; adoption of best practices, supporting children with problems; etc. In the former, Methodological Associations are subject-specific. ‘Students love this school and want to come back as teachers’.

Case 2: The Director of another ‘Aspiring CFS’ similarly reported hearing about and independently studying the CFS concept, then introducing in the school, and trying to become involved with the ‘UNICEF CFS team’. This Director referred to innovations introduced including: participatory planning / management; special analysis of student learning needs and establishment of special classes; and various ‘teacher-friendly’ initiatives including: a Teacher resource centre (containing all rules and regulations, resources for lesson-planning, new textbooks); good salaries; lunch available; and access to sport facilities.

Effectiveness- in Terms of Creation of Enabling Conditions (to Support and Sustain CFS Development)

Stakeholder Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes (to Achieve CFS Standards)

A notable outcome of UNICEF support to the CFS Initiative has been the creation of an awareness of, and commitment to, the whole CFS concept – by a broad range of critical stakeholders in Turkmenistan, including the Ministry of Education. This is a major achievement. New knowledge, skills and attitudes resulting from the CFS Initiative, reported by teachers surveyed, included:-

- New methods of interactive teaching
- Care about student health
- Enabling students to express opinions and participate in decision-making process
- Criteria of assessment (test and questionnaire)
- Facilitating Parent involvement
- Promoting gender-sensitivity
- Motivating student learning
- Creating environments favourable to learning
- Ensuring no child is excluded – in school and general upbringing process
- Creating favourable conditions for students with limited abilities

The extent to which all teachers in CFS schools would report the same, is not known. A limited range of short duration training was provided to 30 teachers in each school, some years ago. Despite initiatives reported by schools to disseminate new knowledge to other teachers, there is no doubt that more teachers need more training in multiple areas. Particular areas of need include: differentiated instruction, active teaching and learning, healthy life skills. The development of a comprehensive longer-term school-based child-friendly school training package would be useful, to underpin a whole-of-school approach to capacity development.

Institutional Capacity (to Support and Sustain CFS Development)

The attainment, by schools, of targeted standards, requires an enabling institutional environment - at national, velayat and etrap levels. An ‘enabling institutional environment’ means appropriate legislation, policy, plans, resource allocations, guidelines, networks, teacher training programs, amongst other, that support the achievement of standards, as per the indicators. There are many institutional requirements already in place to enable schools to achieve CFS standards, but there are also capacity gaps in particular areas. The creation of fully-enabling conditions need to be planned and worked towards, beginning with capacity gaps analysis.
The CFS NWG has completed some analysis of the enabling environment in relation to each indicator, identifying existing enabling conditions, and capacity gaps. This is an important undertaking. In numerous areas, capacity gaps were noted, as per the examples below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In relation to:</th>
<th>Capacity Gaps noted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers teaching children with special needs</td>
<td>Lack of specially trained teachers, specialists, teaching resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers holding extra classes for students facing problems</td>
<td>Potential constraint: material incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers conducting after school classes</td>
<td>Requires additional budget (teacher time, student snacks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informing authorities about violence inflicted on children</td>
<td>Lack of mechanism for monitoring, detection, referral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers participating in regular professional development</td>
<td>Lack of widespread coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of modern technologies</td>
<td>Issues of ongoing maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching of healthy life styles</td>
<td>Gaps related to curriculum, teaching resources, trained teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of active learner-differentiated teaching / learning methods</td>
<td>Many teachers have not been trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers provided with the necessary conditions for effective teaching and learning</td>
<td>Not all classrooms are sufficiently and equally equipped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers training students on Reproductive Health</td>
<td>Lack of refresher courses and teaching / learning resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The completion of this analysis, together with the development of a prioritized list of action steps to be taken, to fill institutional capacity gaps, would be a useful contribution to more strategic planning to ensure the achievement of CFS standards are actually achievable.

**Effective CFS Model and CFS Development Strategy created**

To what extent has an effective CFS Model and Development Strategy been established, to support the national institutionalization of the CFS concept?

The realisation of quality child-friendly standards in schools, across all aspects, will involve a longer term process of change. A critical foundation for national achievement of CFS quality standards, is the establishment of an effective strategy (with accompanying resources) to support, monitor and sustain the transformation of schools into child-friendly ones, across all aspects and indicators, and across all corners of the country. This requires a comprehensive and systematic approach to planning, funding, resourcing and managing this process of national expansion – which is yet to be undertaken.

However, a significant achievement of the UNICEF-supported initiative over the past two years has been the development of the CFS standards and indicators (used in the present study) and the CFS Certification process, collecting serving to provide a comprehensive definition of what a child-friendly school actually is, in the Turkmenistan context, and a process for certifying the achievement of the same. Guided by the Ministry of Education, facilitated by the CFS National Working Group, supported by a wide range of local stakeholders and with technical support from a team of international consultants, this development has contributed to the consolidation of the CFS development process initiated a number of years earlier. These are important developments, which are discussed further below.

**CFS Standards and Indicators**

The primary role of standards and indicators to provide a clear mutually agreed definition of what is quality inclusive education for secondary schools in Turkmenistan, whereby all children successfully achieve relevant learning outcomes.

The standards encompass principles (reflecting values) informing the conceptualisation of education quality. The indicators illustrate how the principles can be put into action. In a child-friendly school, these principles
relate to inclusion, child-rights, participation, fairness, access to learning, holistic development, realising human potential. The standards and indicators about ensuring these values infuse all aspects of a school - in approaches to teaching and in relations between staff, students, parents and wider community. Similar initiatives are being undertaken in many other countries – and particular note is taken of the ‘Index to Inclusion’ that has been developed in the United Kingdom22.

In Turkmenistan, the standards provide a vital tool for progressing the national quality improvements agenda, and can be used in a variety of ways, including: they serve as a tool for assessing the present status of the school, in child-friendly terms – illuminating school strengths and weaker areas, and providing a focus for analysis of constraints and capacity gaps;

i) they provide a framework for planning, working towards and monitoring school improvement, together with guidance for target setting and strategy selection;

ii) they provide the basis for assessing capacity building requirements, at school, district, provincial and national levels, for planning capacity building initiatives;

iii) they provide information to inform national planning, budget development and resource allocations; and ultimately

iv) they provide the reference point against which schools can be certified as ‘Child-Friendly’.

Given this critical role in providing a point of reference for education quality, it is important for the standards and indicators are as clear, concise, understandable, measurable and usable as possible.

It is noted that the present draft CFS standards and indicators have not yet been widely dispersed even to present CFS Model Schools. In one school, two recently appointed Deputy Directors had not seen CFS standards.

Scope for Further Refinement of Standards and Indicators – Encompassing ‘Quality’

While the expression of some indicators could be tightened to enhance focus and clarity, the critical aspect requiring further strengthening relates to the specificity, measurability and in particular, the quality dimension of each indicator. Many of the indicators are expressed in imprecise terms, leaving them open to broad interpretation, misinterpretation, inaccurate assessment of school child-friendly status and missed opportunities to achieve the level of quality desired. Several examples follow.

An indicator that specifies ‘the existence of a Student Committee’, without further qualification, is inadequate. The indicator needs to express the essential attributes of an effective Student Committee – which might include: inclusive membership (representing the diversity of the student population in gender, ethnicity, and ability/disability terms); the manner by which members are appointed, frequency of meetings; focus of activity; etc. The means, by which this indicator will be verified, should also be specified.

Endorsement of an indicator that refers to ‘School conducting regular school based professional development activities’, does not tell us much. We need to know about the effectiveness of this training: is it relevant, regular, addressing priority needs, inclusive of all teachers, followed-up? Whilst standards can be broad expressions of ‘aspirations’, indicators need to be realistic and achievable. If well formulated, the standards and indicators provide guidance as to the required action.

It is suggested that the value, meaningfulness, and usability of the indicators would be enhanced if a) they represent discreet action areas, and b) they are accompanied by a set of statements specifying the quality dimension of each. Annex 8 provides a set of comments and suggestions on strengthening the present indicators. As indicators become more specific, stakeholders may find that areas previously considered ‘achieved’ are in fact less advanced than previously thought. This does not matter, given the intent is to

continually scrutinize one's own practices to find ways for further improvement, in relation to standards that are valued.

The lack of precision in current indicators is reflected in the one school where teachers’ opinions differed for every indicator as to the actual level of achievement. It is furthermore suggested that the establishment of precise terms for determining the extent to which an indicator is achieved, with links to specific observable evidence, should make assessment more accurate. This would enable stakeholders to collectively agree that a standard has been achieved, or progress towards the standard made, without the need for tallying of individual assessments of status.

It is important for the CFS indicators to incorporate or cross-reference any other pre-existing standards that may be available. For example, it is understood that there are school building standards that have recently been updated.

stipulating separate toilets for girls and boys, cubicles that provide a safe and private environment, hand washing basins adjacent to toilets, at the entrance of the school canteen and in each classroom, and special hygiene rooms for girls23.

Possible Additional Action Areas Requiring Indicators

In reviewing the standards and indicators, consideration might be given to including a number of additional action areas.

In relation to Health, specific indicators might be included on: School Kitchen Hygiene; School sport/physical education programs; HIV/AIDS education; Malaria Control; Environmental Protection and Waste Management (including tree planting, recycling)

In relation to Safety and Protection, additional indicators could address the following: Disaster Risk Reduction (including Road safety); Student Counseling; Internet safety; Safety and Pastoral Care in boarding schools; Teacher’s Code of Conduct

In relation to Teaching and Learning, additional areas requiring specification include: Effective School Libraries; Classroom Organization and Displays; Access to computers; Science Laboratories; Operation of Student Clubs (role, membership, governance, inclusion, and safety), Language Laboratories and Language Learning. In relation to libraries, science and language labs, quality indicators would encompass the essential common set of resources, their quantity, management, and use.

In relation to the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities, it is suggested that this be given greater prominence, provided its own standard and a set of indicators addressing different issues (physical access; within school mobility, equipment and resources; teaching and learning; participation in extra-curricular activities and sport.

Structure of Indicators

As has been referred in the previous section, a comprehensive package of standards and indicators has been developed - comprising 11 quality standards linked to five core CFS aspects, with a set of indicators for each, organised according to three categories: School Administration and Management, Educational Processes, and School Resources and Facilities. In total, there are approximately 150 indicators describing a child-friendly school. Evaluation analysis of the indicators has revealed approximately 80 discreet action areas implied (see Annex 6).

However, it is observed that there is still considerable repetition of indicators; while others may be better relocated to a different category. The indicators could be considerably streamlined, without loss of content. To this end, the following suggestion is made: i) that the indicators be reviewed, and restructured, such that there is one indicator for each separate key action area - whether this be ‘school improvement planning’ or active teaching and learning, or implementing and effective student or ongoing student assessment or access to appropriate sanitation facilities, or other; and ii) that each indicator, expressed simply, be accompanied but a specific set

23 Refer: Alveteg, T (2012) - WASH Consultancy for the CEE/CIS region - Report from visit to Turkmenistan.
of essential quality criteria. For example, there are currently numerous indicators related to student assessment - the difference between them is not always clear. These could become one indicator, expressed along the lines of: ‘teachers conduct continuous student assessment tasks with feedback into improved teaching practices’. Quality criteria linked to the indicator might include: use of different assessment methods; involvement of students in assessment tasks, feedback to parents; amongst other. Achievement of the standard would require adherence to these quality criteria.

Another point relates to those indicators are worded not in terms of schools ‘possessing’ various resources. It is suggested that these indicators would be stronger if they are alternately expressed as: teachers effectively using various resources and ‘for the benefit of all students’. Whilst the knowledge that schools have relevant resources is important, more important is knowing that they are being used effectively, and also maintained.

- **Child-Friendly School Assessment Process**

Use of the CFS standards and indicators to assess the child-friendly status of schools was trialled in ten schools over the past twelve months (referred to as referred to as CFS baseline24). The NWG facilitated this study, under the direction of the MOE, and guided by the international consultants. The school self-assessment involved school administration, teachers, students and parents, and was overseen by a group of external observers, who ensured implementation proceeded as planned.

Limited feedback from teachers on this activity suggested some difficulties encountered in performing the assessment for the first time – however, activity was considered useful, providing initial insights into the current strengths and weaknesses of participating schools. The CFS baseline study did not assess all indicators, but a selection considered ‘gateway’ or higher-level indicators. While the intention of this is appreciated (to concentrate on establishing the assessment process itself), it is noted that a number of these are very general and open to widely varying interpretations and therefore assessment.

For example, several of the indicators used were: ‘school personnel provide a quality education for all students’; ‘adequate resources are provided to promote equality, justice and mutual respect among all students’; ‘The school supports teachers’ professional development’. Without defining ‘quality’, ‘adequate’ and the nature of ‘support’, staff in the same school could provide widely varying assessments of the same context, having different understandings of these terms. It is suggested that the use of only gateway indicators does not become the norm in ongoing school improvement and certification processes, as this would result in critical CFS action areas being over-looked. However, greater specificity is required in all the indicators.

Another point relates to the school self-assessment actual scoring criteria. It is noted that the baseline study (as also the present evaluation) used a 4-point scoring format representing ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’. It is suggested that rather than reflect opinion on the child-friendly status of a school in relation to a specific indicator, the response format should capture incremental progress towards the achievement of particular quality indicators. The 4-point scale could be retained, numbered 1-4, capturing ‘Progress toward the standard’ and titled along the lines of: 1. Little or No evidence of standard; 2. Some Evidence (‘starting out’), 3. ‘Good Progress’ (almost there) and 4. Standard Achieved. Each level would be linked to specific verifiable evidence, and where shortfalls are identified, stakeholders would know what they need to do to fill the gap.

The involvement of external observers to the assessment process in the baseline study is a very good idea and should be retained. One option is to establish networks of mutually supporting schools, for purposes of collaboration, mutual learning and serving as critical friends for each other. For example, School A, could observe school B, who would observe school C, who would observe school A.

- **CFS School Development Process – Planning, Implementing & Monitoring School Improvement**

24 A copy of the Baseline Report was not made available to the evaluation team, and nor were teachers able to provide summaries of their assessed CFS status.
As is clear, the national priority is quality education for all children in Turkmenistan. The standards and indicators will tell us when this has been achieved – but they also provide directions and a pathway to reach this end. This pathway will not be traversed overnight by stakeholders in all schools. Thus, the journey needs to be carefully planned, with prudent use of available resources, and progress continually assessed.

It should not be assumed that schools will achieve all targeted standards overnight. A process of school improvement, in relation to different aspects, and indicators, needs to be planned, implemented and monitored, as capacities are accordingly built. This process would be founded on critical reflection and mutual support rather than competition and external inspection.

With the support of international consultants, a School ‘Child-Friendly’ Development process has been proposed, encompassing a series of nine steps, as outlined in Box 5 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 5 - Proposed School Child-Friendly Development Process – 9 Steps</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School establishes CFS Development Team, to collect data on school child-friendly status</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. All stakeholders are trained in CRC and CFS standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. National CFS Trainers train School Child-Friendly Development Team to collect CFS data, analyse and interpret CFS data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. School CFS Team collects data on CFS Standards and Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. School Team analyses data and reports to rest of school. School stakeholders collectively interpret data – identifying school strengths, weaknesses and priorities for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. School stakeholders design School Improvement Action Plan specifying targets, timeframes, persons involved, and support required and source (i.e. Professional Development for Teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. School stakeholders implement planned actions (assuming required support is forthcoming)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. School stakeholders monitor and document a) change process; b) improvements achieved; c) any constraints and further action required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. School submits evidence for Certification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of teachers who participated in the CFS ‘Baseline’ study, highlighted the following benefits of the process: visible improvement, stakeholders become more active (teachers, students, parents, others), students and teachers feel more confident, all participants understood the goals and objectives of CFS, and understand the purpose of school self-assessment was to improve education.

The importance of dedicating time and resources to developing this planning process, and recognition of and responsiveness to, related capacity building needs within schools, cannot be overlooked. Given the importance of effective school management, it is suggested that an additional CFS Aspect be created – and that being ‘Aspect VI – Effective School Management’. There are presently no dedicated indicators covering school improvement planning, plan implementation, change management and monitoring. This new ‘aspect’ would provide a home and a focus for this critical area. Some of the school management and administration indicators included across other aspects could possibly be relocated here.

➢ CFS Certification Process

A further significant achievement of the National Working Group has been the development of a CFS Certification package. This has not yet been introduced into schools, however the Ministry of Education is very keen to proceed. Various approaches to school certification have been considered. One model suggested by the international consultants involved a three-phased process of CFS attainment, labeled ‘Bronze, Silver and Gold’ – equating with the number of cycles of school self-assessment and school improvement planning completed, and the number of standards achieved. According to this model, a school will be certified as ‘child-friendly’ when all stakeholders have agreed all standards have been achieved, and a specific number of improvement cycles completed. A number of observations about the process are made.

While CFS Certification is desirable, it is important to remember that the CFS model is multi-dimensional, and
it may take a period of time for particular schools to achieve all standards. Furthermore, different standards will require different degrees of effort and time to be achieved. What is important is the commitment of schools to continually moving in the direction of increasingly greater CFS attainment.

If school quality recognition, based on CFS Certification, only occurs when all standards are achieved, the attainment of certification may appear illusive, for some schools, with a consequent demoralizing effect. There is no reason why schools cannot be recognized as achieving child-friendly standards, standard by standard or even indicator by indicator. This would be more realistic and motivating, enabling greater annual focus of resources and efforts. In a culture that enjoys ‘awards’, annual recognition of CFS progress in particular areas may have a motivational effect – in other words ‘progressive certification’.

There is need for caution to avoid the notion that the attainment of CFS Certification represents a ‘finished state’. The point is, a child-friendly school is never finished – it is a living organism that requires continuous nourishment, management and monitoring. With the critical actors, the available resources and even the children continuously changing over time, the constant element needs to be the maintenance of quality standards.

One final point relates to the process of expanding the CFS concept to more schools. There is a sense that MOE intends to progressively introduce the CFS concept via ‘CFS Certification’, involving schools that are considered on the verge of attaining the CFS standards. In the view of the present writer, this would defeat the purpose of the whole CFS concept. Every school in the country should have access to the CFS concept, the standards and the school improvement planning process. In fact, a nationally implemented CFS baseline, using the standards, would provide essential information on the status of schools nation-wide, and associated development needs, to inform a comprehensive national secondary education planning process.

3.3 Inclusion

In relation to the criteria ‘Inclusion’, the evaluation TOR asks the following two questions, which are considered in this section.

• To what extent has the UNICEF CFS Initiative has promoted inclusion into the education system
• To what extend is the CFS Initiative sensitive to cultural, ethnic diversity and gender?

Promotion of ‘Inclusion’ into the Education System

UNESCO defines inclusive education as:

‘a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the state to educate all children’.

Inclusive education therefore is not a marginal issue, but is central to the achievement of high-quality education for all learners. Thus ‘inclusive education’ is not just about children with disabilities, children with ‘special needs’, or children with ‘challenging’ but all children - ensuring every child is equally valued and nurtured, recognizing and maximizing individual strengths, individual potential and individual well-being.

In promoting the introduction and institutionalisation of the child-friendly school concept in Turkmenistan, UNICEF is promoting directly promoting ‘inclusion’ of all in the education system of Turkmenistan.

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25 In UNICEF 2011x; p.ix
26 Refer UNICEF 2011c, p.4.
27 The notion of a separate category of children ‘with special needs’ has been questioned, as all children have special needs of one kind or other, and the responsibility of effective educators is to identify and remove the barriers to successful learning for any child, no matter what their source. Isolating children with ‘special needs’ can suggest these children are deficient in some way (Rusteimer & Booth 2005)
The notion of ‘inclusion’ is integrated within the subsequent aspects. Examples include reference to: equal access to textbooks and education resources, differentiated instruction (inclusion of learning differences), inclusion of both gifted and talented, and those with learning difficulties, inclusion of individual interests, and gender equality. Thus, from a conceptual perspective, the CFS standards and indicators embrace a broad concept of inclusion.

UNICEF support to date has largely focused at the conceptual level. It is considered that further support will be required to unravel the necessary actions to operationalise these indicators, and to build capacity to achieve the same. Based on available information, the main area where inclusion is insufficiently addressed, is in regard to Children with Disabilities, who are discussed further below.

**Children with Disabilities (CWD) (CRPD)**

Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Children with Disabilities describes persons with disabilities as ‘those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’.

Despite Turkmenistan’s ratification of the Convention in 2008, children with disabilities remain marginalised in Turkmen society. They face social stigma, discrimination and other barriers that prevent their participation in the wider society and fully enjoying their basic rights, including that of quality mainstream education.28 As reported by stakeholders and documented in other reports, children with disabilities tend be either sent to special schools or residential institutions, or kept at home – all of which contribute to social exclusion, ongoing discrimination, and denial of rights attainment. Children with disabilities remain largely invisible.

Contributing to this situation is an overall misunderstanding of disability, combined with pervasive negative social and cultural norms29, lack of a coordinated and comprehensive community-based approach, limited social service providers, physical inaccessibility to and within schools, inadequately trained teachers and a lack of appropriate resources, facilities and assistive devices. Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive data on the extent of child disability – whether physical, mental, intellectual or sensory.

While stakeholders referred to education programmes whereby teachers visit children at home, children with disabilities have been largely overlooked in efforts to achieve universal access to primary education. Without targeted measures to address all of these barriers (attitudinal, administrative, physical, technical), the goals of EFA will not be achieved for children with disabilities.30 Greater attention needs to be directed to this issue, and local developments are presenting opportunities for this to occur.

**Revised Education Law** – the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools has provided for in the revised Education Law of May 2013.

**CFS Standards** - The inclusion of children with disabilities is given insufficient prominence and specificity in the present draft of the CFS standards. The standards do not in fact actually refer to children with ‘disabilities’ but children with ‘special needs’ (unless this distinction has been lost in translation’).

It is suggested that separate category be created for this group, given the range of interventions required.

**School Construction** – The ongoing national secondary school construction and rehabilitation efforts provide a unique opportunity to pilot the design and development of appropriate physical facilities enabling the inclusion of children with various disabilities. This could be paralleled by the development and piloting of appropriate teacher training programs and resource development.

**Disability Statistics** – a UNDP-supported multi-lateral conference on disability statistics was recently conducted, involving different Ministries and Agencies (MOE, MOH, M Social Welfare, and State Committee on

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28 UNICEF Turkmenistan, Overcoming the Taboo: How to Ensure the Inclusion of Children With Disabilities in Turkmen Communities?, Ashgabat, July 2011.

29 The 2011 CFS study had reported many teachers still feel these children do not belong at school and a minority of students expressed reluctance to share desks with children with disabilities

30 UNICEF 2011b, 2011d
Statistics).

**Sensitivity to Cultural and Ethnic Diversity** 31

The schools visited represented varying degrees of cultural diversity amongst the student population, largely depending on the schools location, ranging from 100% Turkmen, to representation of 17 ethnic groups, to a greater percentage of Uzbeks. This pattern was reflected, to a large extent, in the ethnicity of teachers and the membership of parent committees. The CFS standards appear to embrace cultural and ethnic diversity, in a broad sense. No issues in relation to cultural or ethnic discrimination were expressed. Evidence of the celebration of ethnic diversity was witnessed in school cultural displays.

It is noted however, that outside observers have commented on the Turkmenisation of schools post-independence which excludes the use of minority languages in schools32. The Ministry of Education might consider options for enabling the celebrating linguistic and cultural diversity through Student Clubs.

**Disparity Across Schools**

A major finding of the 2011 study was considerable differences in different aspects of CFS status across schools and between regions – noting that study surveyed all CFS schools. For example, rural parents were much less satisfied with the quality of education than urban parents; 60% of schools did not have a cafeteria, 56% had unsatisfactory health facilities; almost 50% had problems with potable water; 60% of School Directors reported insufficient visual aids and science equipment; and unsatisfactory libraries; and less than 50% were satisfied with computerization in their schools.

On the one hand, this brings us back to the issue of ‘what constitutes a satisfactory library or satisfactory health facilities? What defines water quality? What is sufficient equipment for a science or computer laboratory? What should schools expect? Going back to the earlier point of defining quality in relation to specific indicators would ensure schools do know what they can expect, and would provide a basis for ensuring equality in resource distributions.

In the present study, stakeholders reported all resources were distributed to ALL schools, and not just to CFS schools. It was not possible to verify this.

On the other hand, UNICEF support to the CFS concept has been with a view to ensuring the realization of quality education by every child in Turkmenistan. We do not know what the present situation is in every school, and for every child. However, while UNICEF support over eight years has directly benefitted the children in just 26 schools (or 1.5% of all schools), the intention was that an effective model would be developed in these schools that would then be extended to all schools. Although progress has been slow, the MOE is now interested to proceed. It is important now for the CFS model to be introduced to every school, together with the introduction of and support for, a school improvement program. It is important that CFS is not extended to schools on a school by school basis, at the point of Certification.

**Sensitivity to Gender**

One whole CFS Aspect is dedicated to Gender-Sensitivity, and while still very general, the 19 associated indicators cover a good range of action areas, relating to: gender equity policy; elimination of gender discrimination and negative gender stereotypes; equal access of boys and girls to learning opportunities and the full range of school activities; separate toilets, provision of hygiene facilities; protection from violence.

No gender-specific issues were identified by students, teachers, parents or other stakeholders. Female students as a percentage of total school populations, in the schools visited ranged from 50% to 38%. The latter case, with a female: male ratio of 38:62 was a specialist CFS Model School. It is understood that

31 According to TIMR (2008), National and ethnic minorities account for 20% of Turkmenistan’s population. More accurate information about the size of the various minority populations is not available due to the lack of reliable statistics.

32 See THIR 2009.
specialist secondary schools incur an enrolment fee, and this begs the question to whether there is a bias towards boys in education involving fees.

While gender disaggregated education data is not publicly available, a recent independent report\(^{33}\) indicated the number of female students in higher education is still significantly lower than males, with official figures 34% of higher education enrollees in 2010/2011 being female.

Strong patriarchal attitudes and deeply rooted stereotypes about the role and the responsibilities of women and men in the family and society continue to persist. Although many of them had to become the main breadwinners, women continue to be stereotyped as mothers and caregivers, and can mainly obtain educational and employment choices which are considered suitable for them. As noted earlier, a significant number of boys in schools surveyed still consider it is more important to educate boys than girls.

In 2012, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women called on the Turkmen authorities to: provide gender-expertise to identify and eliminate gender discriminative stereotypes still abundant in textbooks and in education curricula in general.

Violence against women has been independently reported as a significant problem in Turkmenistan – but a difficult problem to solve. There is no reliable information on the incidence of violence against women, it is not openly discussed and its existence is not officially recognised. Hence victims reportedly keep silent, mostly because they are unaware of their rights or fear repercussions if they report. Hence, women subject to violence or harassment have nowhere to turn, and there is no apparatus to protect them\(^{34}\). This situation presents major challenges for schools endeavouring to implement child protection strategies now and to educate students about their rights.

3.4 Sustainability

*Mechanisms to promote government and local ownership and sustainability*

Sustainability depends on local ownership of, valuing, seeing the relevance of (relative to national priorities) and eventually institutionalizing the CFS concept.

The CFS concept has been promoted by UNICEF, but driven by the Ministry of Education, working through Government channels, and implemented by a wide range of national stakeholders, at velayat and etrap levels. As indicated earlier, the CFS developments over the past few years have been facilitated by a National Working Commitment, overseen by the Ministry of Education’s Director of Secondary Education. While technical assistance has been provided by external consultants, the work has been undertaken by national and local stakeholders. The structure and nature of the inputs of the external consultants has contributed to this process – comprising a series of short-term inputs, providing guidance, building capacity and facilitating reflection, with a series carefully planned tasks completed locally, between visits. This is a successful model of local capacity building and ensuring local ownership.

Stakeholders emphasized that the CFS initiative is not functioning as a separate project but is integrated within the routine operation of schools. Similarly, the term ‘Child-Friendly School’ does not necessarily appear in government documents, but the principles are integrated.

The Ministry of Education has established a comprehensive coordination structure for CFS development, involving a wide range of stakeholders, with CFS committees at national, velayat, etrap and school levels. This has enabled a broad range of stakeholders to engage with the development process, in a ‘democratic and transparent manner’.

Mainstreaming the CFS concept is now part of the national vision for developing education – ‘by 2016, we want all schools to be child-friendly’.

\(^{33}\) Norwegian Helsinki Committee (2013)

\(^{34}\) As previous.
Availability of adequate environmentally sustainable facilities, services and supplies that supports the needs of the whole child and all children

In the schools visited, a wide range of facilities, resources, equipment were available that addressed the needs of the ‘whole’ of seemingly ‘most children’. The evaluation did not obtain information on the responsibilities of the government, versus the school and other stakeholders, in terms of supplying schools with resources and facilities, and maintaining the same. The most significant exception being the resources and equipment needed for the inclusion of children with disabilities – which were not available.

Another area of concern was the number of toilets in schools. While separate toilets for boys and girls, and staff, were observed, they are very few in number. One school, for example, with approximately 2500 students (1200 students in each of two shifts – approximately 600 boys and 600 girls), only had eight toilets each for boys and girls. This is not sufficient.

In addition, it is unclear what strategies are in place to ensure the sustainability of the technological equipment that is now being in schools – in terms of maintenance, repair, replacement and disposal (of redundant equipment). Another possible issue identified in an independent report - is the reluctance of teachers to fully use new equipment and resources, due to fear of damage. This was not verified, but indeed, in some schools, the equipment available showed no signs of use.

Also, it is not known to what extent the range of resources seen in these school have equally been provided to all schools in the country, or whether these schools received additional resources given their CFS Model school status. The minimum set of essential resources should however be specified – ‘this is what every school is expected to have, in these quantities, and this is how they will be used, by whom, and how they will be maintained’ – to enable planning, budgeting and equitable resource distribution.

Capacity of local duty bearers to independently continue CFS activities

Teachers in all schools confirmed they consider themselves perfectly capable of continuing to independently continue CFS activities. Without negating the competence and professionalism of Turkmen teachers in schools visited, there is certainly need for further training of teachers in a range of competencies. The refinement and introduction of the standards as point of reference for daily practice may bring with it the need for some further capacity enhancement.

Readiness and Capacity of MOE, IOE and other tertiary institutions to mainstream CFS concept

As noted earlier, the evaluation did not have the opportunity to consult with staff of the Institute of Education, pedagogical colleges or other tertiary institutions, therefore comments in relation to their readiness or capacity cannot be made.

In terms of MOET, stakeholder feedback conveyed a strong sense of willingness to mainstream CFS principles, in broad-terms. While the CFS standards / indicators do, in many instances, reinforce good practices that have previously characterized the education system in Turkmenistan, they also imply a considerable range of new ideas, or quality improvements. Many of these require supplementary resources or guidelines. With this end in mind, there are likely to be significant capacity gaps in particular areas. This is expected to be the case in relation to the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities, and is likely to be the case in relation to implementation of active learner-differentiated teaching and learning approaches, amongst other.

The Ministry of Education has indicated that funding is not the issue – the need is continued access to international expertise and experience.

MOET Integration of CFS Initiative to date - CFS Influence on policy and funding priorities
It was not possible in the context of the present study to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the incorporation of CFS principles across the education system in Turkmenistan policy, school curriculum, education standards, training of teachers, other. This would be a significant undertaking in its own right, and is one that is required. However, there are indications of MOET integration or commitment to integrate CFS principles in various areas. However, a number of examples of CFS principles being integrated in the national education system might include: legislative provision within inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools; national commitment to develop quality education standards; extension of the duration of secondary schooling to 12 years; introduction of new subjects (Information Technology, Economics, Cultural Heritage, Turkmen, World Culture, Behavioural Conduct, Modeling and Graphics); the introduction of active teaching and learning methods; and increases in teachers’ salaries.

It was pointed out by a number of stakeholders that many of the CFS practices were already implemented in Turkmen schools – but what is significant with the CFS initiative is the development of a comprehensive set of standards and indicators, and a School Certification process, providing a common framework for quality and inclusion across all secondary schools in Turkmenistan.

3.5 Efficiency
An understanding of efficiency as relating to the extent to which a program achieves its intended goals on time and on budget, informs the discussion below.

**UNICEF Planning and Implementation from a Results-Based Management Perspective**

The achievement of a program’s objectives, on time and within budget, assumes objectives are realistic and achievable, with successful implementation of the planned set of activities, that the timeframe is realistic, the available resources are adequate, and relationships with related activities of other development partners are taken into account and well coordinated. All of the above requires effective program planning, management and monitoring mechanisms. A comprehensive Result Framework, Theory of Change of Logic Model – linking inputs to activities, outputs, outcomes and overall results targeted, and underlying assumptions, is a useful point of reference for coherent program management and monitoring of both progress and results. The analysis that is required to inform the development of a Program Results Framework is extremely useful in helping to ensure the change process implied by a particular program design is logical, that planned inputs and interventions are comprehensive and will collectively lead to the targeted results, in the time-frames allocated.

The UNICEF program of support to CFS development does not appear to have had a fully articulated Results Framework. The two-year annual rolling plans go someway towards such analysis, but they do not provide the whole picture, demonstrating the link between UNICEF supported interventions and the results targeted.

In this case, the targeted result is: ‘by 2015, the education system is strengthened to meet international standards on CFS’. This statement, in isolation, is ambiguous. The nature and extent of the expected system strengthening is not explicit. If it means ‘strengthening the education system to the extent that international standards on CFS are achievable’ (and even that is ambiguous), then this is beyond the scope of UNICEF resources and responsibility. To date, the sum of activities implemented have not been sufficient to achieve this result.

The Country Program specifies the indicators by which the achievement of program results will be assessed – these being: the % of schools meeting CFS quality standards and the % of schools certified as Child-Friendly Schools. However, school achievement of CFS standards is not the responsibility of UNICEF, nor within UNICEF sphere of control. The actual realisation of child-friendly standards in schools requires the collective input of a wide range of stakeholders including, primarily, the Ministry of Education. It is not surprising therefore that the time frame for the achievement of this target as reflected in UNICEF planning documents is continually

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36 The actual % targeted is not specified in the current two-year rolling workplan.
The expected outcome statement and target for the previous Country Program (2006-2010) was: ‘95% and more of girls and boys in priority areas complete primary schooling in child-friendly schools. Not then achieved, a similar result has been carried through to the present country program with a revised end-date of 2015.

In reality, UNICEF’s contribution is directed to more immediate results - the development of the CFS Model for Turkmenistan and capacity building resources; and the creation of enabling conditions for CFS development, including stakeholder awareness, knowledge and skills, and to a lesser degree, building institutional capacity to support CFS development. However, there is little elaboration of the immediate and intermediate results in program documentation. This can lead to critical tasks being over-looked or tasks achieved but not accorded the recognition deserved.

The CFS Initiative has achieved significant results to date, which weren’t actually documented as targets. The most significant of these is the acceptance by national stakeholders of the CFS concept and the willingness to carry it forward. This is the essential foundation for future progress.

In the end, it is considered that the UNICEF Turkmenistan education program would benefit from the development of a more comprehensive result framework, demarcating the contribution of UNICEF vis-a-vis that of the Government and other partners. This mapping can form the basis for analysis of current program logic, assisting the identification of any gaps or inconsistencies. A start has been made in the present report with an attempt to align proposed activities for 2014-15 (as per the Education Sector Workplan 2014-15) with the CFS Result Framework presented earlier (see Figure 2 below). In so doing, it is considered there are a number of critical gaps – including the whole area of school improvement planning, and the associated school-level capacity building required to achieve CFS standards. Required greater prominence and attention is filling the institutional gaps to support and support CFS development.

**Timely implementation & Achievement of Programs objectives**

UNICEF support to the CFS initiative began in 2006. To date, the program has continued to focus on 26 Child-Friendly Model Schools – or 1.5 per cent of schools. Review of program documentation has revealed an expectation that the program would have expanded in past years. With turnover in UNICEF program staff, it is difficult to precisely pinpoint the factors contributing to implementation delays. However, the decision to delay planned expansion in order to develop the standards and indicators, has been a sound - for these provide the foundation for all future planning.

It has been suggested that the slow pace of CFS development, has contributed to a deepening and expanding understanding of the CFS concept - expressed by one teacher as follows:

“Our school ‘became child friendly’ in 2005. The first workshop took place at UNICEF headquarters in collaboration with the opening of the information resource center. When the trained teachers returned, they conducted their own workshops. It went teacher by teacher. We also invited teachers from neighboring schools. At first ‘child friendly’ was not clear, but as we worked toward it we are able to say that our school meets child friendly standards.’

The MOE also conveyed satisfaction with the pace of development – emphasizing the importance of the ‘human factor’ and the need to secure interest and commitment from senior levels of government, in addition to appropriate legislation - for all of which the passage of time is needed. It was said that ‘Turkmen need to taste new things, shape them, in order to decide to embrace or not – they don’t like to rush’. Now, a MOET representative indicated they are certain the CFS model is effective, that it supports the Presidents’ vision and they wish to move forward with it. The limited scale of Government of Turkmenistan cooperation with international partners also needs to be borne in mind when considering the pace of program implementation. Given this, the achievements to date might be considered considerable.

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37 Ilitus 2011; p16.
Costs for CFS scaling up versus mainstreaming

Consideration of ‘scaling-up’ the CFS initiative (presumably implying expansion to X number of additional schools, at the cost of UNICEF) is not relevant at this time, given the interest of the Ministry of Education’s interest to mainstream the CFS concept in the national education system.
4. QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL TURKMEN CHILDREN

3. ALL TURKMEN SCHOOLS PROGRESSIVELY ACHIEVE QUALITY CHILD-FRIENDLY STANDARDS

- SCHOOLS CERTIFIED AS CHILD-FRIENDLY
- CFS SELF-ASSESSMENT, SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING Implementation and Monitoring commence

2. ENABLING CONDITIONS CREATED TO SUPPORT & SUSTAIN QUALITY CHILD-FRIENDLY EDUCATION FOR ALL

- STAKEHOLDER CAPACITY (Attitudes, Knowledge, Skills) to support CFS standards across all Aspects
- ENABLING CONDITIONS AT SYSTEM-LEVEL to achieve education quality standards across all CFS Aspects - (Legislation, Policy, Curriculum, Textbooks, Teacher Training, infrastructure, equipment, water and sanitation, other)

1. EFFECTIVE CFS MODEL AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS FOR TURKMENISTAN

- CFS Standards and Indicators developed
- CFS Certification Package Developed
- School Planning Process established
- CFS Awareness & Capacity Building Strategy developed
- CFS Training Package developed & implemented
- CFS Development ‘National Roll-Out’ Strategy

CFS ASPECTS and Components

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UNICEF SUPPORT FOR CFS DEVELOPMENT (2014-2015)

By 2015, education system meets international ECD and CFS standards (as per current 2-Year workplan 2014-15)

- Awareness raising among education managers and specialists at all levels, teachers, students, parents and communities
- Capacity building of CFS stakeholders at all levels (managers, specialists, students, parents, communities)
- Conduct workshops on CFS certification package for specialists and working groups at all levels (at NIET)
- Study tour for education specialists to view CFS best practices
- Improvement of legislative framework in accordance with the international norms and standards
- Strengthening of school infrastructure: water supply, sanitation and physical facilities from equity perspective
- Development of curriculum and training plans, courses and training materials for educational institutions
- Development of training courses for all levels at NIET
- CFS Training-of-Trainers (interactive methodologies)

- Further Refinement of CFS Standards and Certification Package
- Development of CFS Communication Resources, Brochures, Videos
- Monitoring & evaluation of CFS initiatives
Most cost-effective way for incorporation of CFS standards in the education system in Turkmenistan

The question that needs to be asked first is: what needs to be done to integrate the CFS standards in the national education system? When those things are decided, then it can be asked: how can we do this in the most cost-effective manner. Embedding the CFS standards in the education system will require a multi-dimensional approach. The first step is the refinement of the standards and indicators (ensuring they are comprehensive, concise, essential, mutually agreed, include the quality dimension, and provide the necessary guidance for school administrators, teachers, parents and other stakeholders. Based on these, the following initiatives are required:

i) Comprehensive analysis of the enabling CFS-environment at institutional level, to identify critical institutional gaps in relation to each standard/indicator or key action area – in terms of legislation, guidelines, resources, methodologies, other -prioritising the gaps that need to be addressed, and developing a strategy to do so

ii) Comprehensive analysis of secondary school curriculum and textbooks in relation to the CFS standards and indicators – with subsequent adjustments as required

iii) Analysis of the pre-service teacher training courses from a CFS perspective – (with subsequent reform to integrate the required

iv) Development of a National CFS Roll-Out Strategy, with associated induction training on the CFS approach

v) Review and Revision of existing CFS Training Resources - as input to Development of a comprehensive CFS Manual for Teachers – including guidance on CFS self-assessment, school improvement planning, CFS certification, and with modules and guidelines in relation to all key action areas

vi) Development of a longer-term school-based CFS in-service training program.\(^{38}\)

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\(^{38}\) The intention behind item vi) above is to pursue a whole of school approach to capacity building, whereby all teachers are collectively engaged in a program of peer learning, progressively addressing different CFS requirements. This process would be guided by a resource package containing study notes, case studies, guidelines, amongst other. This is expected to be a more cost-effective approach than removing a small number of teachers for external training, with a likely broader impact on the school.
Section 4: Lessons Learned and Recommendations
4.1 Lessons learned

Turkmenistan is a unique country and it is a rich country – rich in terms of its natural resources, and rich in terms of its ancient history and traditions. Despite this, it is also a country with significant development needs. One area requiring particular advancement is the quality improvement of the national education system – this now being a national development priority.

UNICEF has a history of cooperation with the Ministry of Education Turkmenistan and has developed a strong partnership founded on mutual respect. The major focus of this partnership over the past eight years has been the introduction of the Child-Friendly School concept, and its development as the framework to support the realisation of the quality education for all vision. UNICEF support is highly regarded and much appreciated.

This study has found the CFS Concept to be highly relevant to Turkmenistan – in terms of synchronicity with national education objectives, and in terms of meeting the needs of stakeholders. The CFS concept is equally relevant to international human rights conventions.

In terms of CFS development, as has been identified in other studies, the development of a clear definition of what a child-friendly school actually is, in a specific context, is an essential early step. This then provides the basis for analysis of the enabling environment and assessment of stakeholder capacity building needs.

UNICEF support to the Child-Friendly School initiative to date, is seen to have been effective, with achievements in a number of significant areas. The CFS concept has been translated into practice, not only in the Model schools, but also in another of other schools who proactively took it upon themselves to become child-friendly. A wide range of child-friendly characteristics was found in these schools. Of particular note are the efforts made by teachers, supported by school administration, in implementing child-centred active teaching and learning practices. Students, teachers and parents all conveyed great pride in their schools. They very much wanted to show-off their achievements. However, the effectiveness of the CFS Initiative is most particularly demonstrated by the expressed readiness of the Ministry of Education to mainstream the concept – together with widespread stakeholder awareness of, and commitment to, the CFS concept.

In terms of effectiveness, particular attention has been directed to the CFS standards and indicators, as these are the heart of the CFS concept. A great deal of valuable work has been done by Turkmen stakeholders in developing the standards and school certification package to the state they are now in. However, as appreciated by the Ministry of Education, there is always room for improvement. A number of avenues for further strengthening the indicators in particular, and the manner of their assessment, have been suggested.

The CFS concept is founded on the notion of ‘inclusion’ – and this means inclusion of every single child, no matter what their background or circumstance, in quality learning activities. One core component is dedicated to ‘inclusion’ and the concept is also embedded throughout. The schools visited were seen to be successfully implementing a wide range of inclusive practices. However, this is the area where there continues to be a critical gap – and that relates to the inclusion of children with disabilities, who remain outside mainstream education. The address of this issue requires prioritization. With regard to gender inclusion, on the whole, schools visited appeared to have close to parity in terms of male and female enrolments, and boys and girls appear to have equal access to the range of school curricular and extra-curricular activities. Particular care will be required to ensure curriculum and textbook content, and attitudes of parents and teachers, do not continue to pigeon-hole girls in traditional domestic roles.

While the CFS concept has focused on 26 schools to date, the intention was to extend the concept to every school in the country, so every child in Turkmenistan has the same access to quality education. With reports of widespread disparity in the distribution of education resources, it will be important to ensure even the most remote school receives the same range of quality education inputs as a school in the centre of Ashgabat.

The efficiency of UNICEF support to education has been largely considered from a result-based management perspective. It is considered that the UNICEF Turkmenistan education programme would benefit from the development of a comprehensive result framework, articulating the range of actions required from the
development of the standards to their realisation in schools. This analysis will enable the identification of any critical gaps in the enabling environment that require attention. One such gap is the whole area of school improvement planning, plan implementation, and the associated school-level capacity building required to achieve CFS standards. This is a critical area, the importance of which cannot be under-estimated. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the required quality improvement will take time, and this change process must be nurtured and supported.

The slippage in the achievement of UNICEF’s targeted results (an expanding number of schools demonstrating child-friendly principles) has been noted, but is not considered problematic. The Ministry of Education and other stakeholders consider the time taken has been required to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the CFS concept.

Sustainability depends on local ownership of, valuing, seeing the relevance of (relative to national priorities) and eventually institutionalizing the CFS concept. UNICEF processes have been effective in this regard. Stakeholders emphasized that the CFS initiative is not functioning as a separate project but is integrated within the routine operation of schools. The Ministry of Education has indicated that mainstreaming the CFS concept is now part of the national vision for developing education – ‘by 2016, we want all schools to be child-friendly’.

Given this is the intent of the Ministry, there is a need to unravel what ‘mainstreaming’ actually involves. A multi-dimensional approach will be required. On the one hand there will be a need to address the institutional gaps (in terms of legislation, guidelines, resources, methodologies, other) to ensure the CFS vision can actually be realized and sustained. Integrating the CFS principles into pre-service teacher training programs will be essential. ‘Lessons Learned’ from the programme evaluation contribute to general knowledge with application beyond the immediate project context.

**Priorities for UNICEF to maximize its contribution to education quality improvements**

UNICEF is well-positioned to continue to support the MOE in its commitment to improving the quality of education for all Turkmen children ‘in line with international standards’. However, it is particularly pertinent to ensure the limited resources available (financial and human) are used to maximum effect for Turkmen women and children.

In the first place, it is suggested that UNICEF Turkmenistan continue to direct its assistance to supporting the Ministry of Education to develop an effective CFS Development Model – including further refinement of the standards and indicators (ensuring they provide clear unambiguous definition of essential CFS characteristics and ensuring their measureability and verifiability), development of school improvement planning processes, development of a CFS In-service training, development of comprehensive CFS Manual (based on the new standards) and a National CFS Dissemination Strategy.

Secondly, UNICEF can profitably support the institutionalization of the CFS concept, with particular focus on CFS integration into pre-service teacher training programmes, and to identify and address other gaps in the enabling environment for CFS development. This might include the development of Guidelines.

Finally, a natural focus for UNICEF intervention is the whole area of building national capacity to enable Children with Disabilities realize their right to quality education.

The MOE has indicated that funding for programme implementation is not the priority for UNICEF support, but exposure to international practices and expertise.

**4.2 Recommendations**

The recommendations presented below have been developed with a view to maximising UNICEF’s contribution to the institutionalization of child-friendly school principles within the education system in Turkmenistan, this being a major strategy to ensure quality education is achieved by every Turkmen child.
The recommendations are based on the study’s findings and conclusions, taking account of potential implementation constraints and developed with combined input of national stakeholders, UNICEF and the evaluation consultant.

**Recommendation 1 – Further Refinement of CFS Standards/Indicators and their Measurement**

It is recommended that the CFS National Working Group initiate a process of further refinement of the CFS standards and indicators, taking account of the following:

- Elimination of duplication, encompass the quality dimension, link to observable evidence; 
  Incorporate or establish links to any existing standards or guidelines.
- Revise the format for assessment of the standards, to capture progress towards the achievement of the standard. [For example, 1-4 encompassing: Nil/Little Achievement; Some Progress; Good Progress; Standard Achieved]

It is suggested that this work be completed by a consultant, so it can be achieved efficiently and consistently, overseen by the NWG. This is an immediate priority.

**Recommendation 2 - Examine Enabling Environment in relation to each standard and indicator**

It is recommended that a) that an assessment be conducted of the ‘enabling environment’ with respect to the revised standards and indicators, identifying institutional, technical and resource gaps that would present barriers for the national realization and sustainability of the standards; b) that identified gaps be prioritized and a strategy be developed to respond to the identified gaps.

Who.......... When.............

**Recommendation 3 - Development of School Planning Process**

It is recommended that a School Manual be developed for CFS Concept/Standards and Indicators; School Child-Friendly Self-Assessment; School Improvement Planning, Plan Implementation and Monitoring, and CFS Certification.

Who .......... When .............

**Recommendation 4 - Development of Comprehensive CFS Manual**

It is recommended that a comprehensive Turkmenistan CFS Manual be developed, with Sections for each CFS Aspect and Modules for Each Indicator, providing Background Information, Implementation Guidance, Links to National Policy, Case Studies, amongst other.

Who .......... When .............

**Recommendation 5 - Development of School-based In-Service Guide**

It is recommended that a comprehensive Turkmenistan CFS School-based In-Service Package and Strategy be developed, linked to the above-mentionned Manual. This might comprise a series of training activities that schools could work through together, with application, followed by further review. Particular teachers might be identified as resource persons for different CFS aspects. These resource persons might receive initial external training, and then take the role of learning facilitators within the school. This program could be linked to tertiary institutions, who could play a role in external monitoring and support. Schools Clusters could be established and there could be inter-school sharing.

Who .......... When .............

**Recommendation 6 - Inclusion of Children with Disabilities**

It is recommended that UNICEF support the Ministry of Education to address the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Mainstream Schools. It is also recommended that the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities be treated as a category in its own right, within the Standards framework – whether this is a separate Standard, with associated Indicators, or a separate Aspect – to be determined. Promotion of the Inclusion of Children
might begin with a situation analysis arriving at a set of specific recommendations for a holistic approach to this issue. In addition, it is recommended that school designs be reviewed to ensure they are disability inclusive and that future new school construction ensure its is disability inclusive.

Who ……….. When ……………

**Recommendation 7 – Curriculum and Textbook Review**

It is recommended that a study be undertaken of Turkmen curriculum and textbooks in relation to CFS principles to a) identify issues that are contrary to CFS principles (such as gender-stereotyping or discrimination on other basis); b) opportunities to ensure the adequate inclusion of CFS principles and c) make recommendations for required revisions.

Who ……….. When ……………

**Recommendation 8 - Pre-service Training**

It is recommended that a comprehensive assessment be undertaken of national pre-service teacher training programs from a CFS perspective. (It is noted that CFS Teacher Training Standards have been developed in the international arena that might prove useful for this assessment), that gaps be identified and a process for revising the curricula be initiated.

Who ……….. When ……………

**Recommendation 9 – MOET Capacity Development**

It is recommended that an assessment of MOE capacity building needs, in terms of skills and knowledge, be undertaken, in relation to CFS principles, and that a Capacity Building Strategy be developed. This might include work-based training guided by an external consultant, or participation in a specialized training course, or a targeted training attachment, amongst other. Any capacity building should be specifically linked to the institutionalization of CFS principles.

Who ……….. When ……………

**Recommendation 10 - Development of National CFS Implementation Strategy**

It is recommended that a national CFS Implementation Strategy be developed, that considers the pace and nature of CFS expansion, but which pays due accord to equity issues.

Who ……….. When ……………