

Office of the Secretary of the UNICEF Executive Board

Template for delegations commenting on the country programme documents

2021 First Regular Session

Country programme document posting period: 17 November to 7 December 2020

Delegations are kindly invited to use this template to share their comments on any of the draft country programme documents being presented to the Executive Board during the forthcoming session.

Delegation name: Estonia

Draft country programme document: Eswatini

In accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1, country programme documents are considered and approved in one session, on a no-objection basis. All comments received by the Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board before the deadline will be made public on the Executive Board website, and considered by the requesting country, in close consultation with UNICEF.

Category	Comments from Member State	Comments from UNICEF Eswatini
General comments	<p>Estonia notes with appreciation the significant progress Eswatini and UNICEF have achieved in key areas of child well-being.</p> <p>It is commendable that the CPD focuses on building emergency preparedness and resilience of essential services to be provided during emergencies, such as has been the need with the COVID-19 pandemic. The spread of epidemics has increasingly become a growing risk factor that can lead to conflicts and crises. In addition, it would be necessary to focus in the CPD on climate change and environmental pressures that have direct and indirect effects on the security and stability of countries and communities and on the well-being of children and adolescents.</p>	<p>UNICEF acknowledges, with high regard, the interest of the Government of Estonia in the Eswatini Country Programme 2021-2025 and appreciates its comments. UNICEF also appreciates the positive observation of the Government of Estonia regarding the joint achievements of UNICEF and Eswatini.</p> <p>On the issue of climate change and its impact on the communities, UNICEF shares the same concern, and views climate change as one of the various risks that affect survival, development and wellbeing of children and women in Eswatini. Climate-induced hazards are recurrent phenomena in Eswatini, and droughts are an expected occurrence every three years. The recent drought (2015/16) gave a glimpse into the disruptive nature of climate-induced hazards. They primarily affect access to safe sources of water and hygiene, negatively impact the nutritional status, expose children to higher risk of violence, and reduce their access to quality education.</p> <p>UNICEF, in the new CPD, has adopted a risk-informed approach and resilience building as a strategy to reduce negative impacts of emergencies on children and families. Disaster risk reduction will be mainstreamed across the programme as a strategy to build the resilience of systems, services and communities. The programme will aim to ensure that capacities are in place to identify vulnerabilities and provide timely and adequate response.</p>

<p>Comments on specific aspects of the country programme document</p>	<p>Maternal, child and adolescent health: as many children and adolescents are exposed to violence and sexual exploitation, improving prevention, response and support services for victims is of essence. Mental health and sexual and reproductive health and rights should be important parts of the CPD. Under Priority 1 it is important to bring out that it will be necessary not only to ensure birth registration, but also that civil registration records are easily retrieved by individuals. The registration process must be available and accessible without difficulties.</p>	<p>UNICEF appreciates specific comments of the Government of Estonia and would like to reaffirm its commitment to strengthening provision of mental health services in its cooperation programme with the Government of Eswatini.</p> <p>The new CPD envisages that every child benefits from loving, safe and supportive relationships throughout childhood and adolescence, preventing, responding to and recovering from violence and promoting good mental health. In the current context, it is estimated that 88% of children 1 to 14 years of age have experienced at least one form of psychological or physical punishment by household members during the previous month; 66% of parents and caregivers see physical punishment as a necessary part of child-rearing, and one in three girls are estimated to experience some form of sexual violence before age 18. In the new CPD, UNICEF will promote safe and secure environments in communities and schools, including mental health and psycho-social support services for those children who need it, while improving family-centered approaches to mental health and psychosocial care of children and adolescents through parenting support programmes. This has been captured and incorporated in paragraphs 23 and 31.</p> <p>With regard to sexual and reproductive health rights, UNICEF re affirms its commitment in this area and will continue strengthening adolescent-targeted interventions, including youth-friendly health services; adolescent peer mentoring programmes with adolescent-responsive services; adolescent health and HIV prevention programmes; prevention violence against children and adolescents, including sexual violence and gender based violence; and guidance and counselling life skills programme.</p> <p>On the issue of birth registration and accessibility to civil registration records, UNICEF appreciates the comment made by the Government of Estonia, that the registration process should be available and accessible without difficulties. The birth registration programme will contribute to reforms in the area of management information systems and will aim at increasing transparency and efficiency (incorporated in paragraph 22).</p> <p>Additionally, UNICEF programme in the area of birth registration is embedded in the broader framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), under its Outcome 3, which has a focus on e-Governance and plans to strengthen the capacity of civil registration system in line with efficiency and transparency.</p> <p>Also considering the importance of birth registration and its linkage with other management information systems, in the</p>
--	--	---

		<p>new CPD, UNICEF has prioritized open and transparent data and information management systems in its new Country Programme. In the current Programme, UNICEF is supporting the integration of an open Education Management Information System with the data systems of the Central Statistics Organization. In the new CPD, efforts will be made to integrate birth registration, health and education information systems, following on the concept of open data sources.</p>
	<p>Lifelong learning, protection and development: a priority should be addressing the high rates of out-of-school children, including high rates of grade repetition, dropouts due to poverty or unsafe school conditions and the gendered patterns of dropout.</p> <p>To build emergency preparedness of education systems, we suggest incorporating into the programme the improvement of digital distance learning opportunities.</p>	<p>UNICEF agrees with the observation of the Government of Estonia regarding the importance of addressing challenges in the education system resulting in dropouts and high rates of grade repetition.</p> <p>In the current context, Eswatini’s repetition rate in the early years of primary education averages 15 per cent across Grades 1 to 7, with record low net enrolment rates at lower secondary school levels (32.3%). An estimated, 11.6 per cent of secondary-school-age females, compared with 7.4 per cent of secondary-school-age males, are out of school. In the new CPD, UNICEF will contribute towards improving school readiness, capacity development programmes for education workforce, strengthening curriculum delivery, alternative pathways for out-of-school adolescents, and promoting adolescent participation in school governance platforms. Further, UNICEF will continue to promote a safe, protective, inclusive and participative school/learning environment, including mental health and psycho-social support services for those children who need it.</p> <p>UNICEF reaffirms its commitment to improving the quality of education in Eswatini and ensuring that the right to quality education is progressively fulfilled for all children in the country.</p> <p>Also, with regards to introduction of digital platforms for delivery of education, UNICEF has been closely supporting the Ministry of Education in Eswatini with introduction of alternative forms of distance learning that are compatible with the local context and capacities, especially taking into account the risks of disruption of education in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure continuity of this programme beyond the emergency response interventions, UNICEF has also introduced this element into the new Country Programme.</p>