



# FINAL EVALUATION OF THE JOINT PROGRAM

«Improving the system of social protection through the introduction of inclusive  
quality community-based social services»

Artiom Sici  
sici.artiom@gmail.com

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## Abbreviations

GDP	Gross domestic product
CRPD	The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRC	The Convention on the Rights of the Child
CEDAW	The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee
HDI	Human Development Index
UN	The United Nations
UNDP	The United Nations Development Program
PUNO	Participating United Nations Organizations
CSDF UN	The cooperation and sustainable development framework of the United Nations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
JP	Joint Program
SDGsF	Sustainable Development Goals Fund
ToR	Terms and references
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	The United Nations Population Fund
UNODC	The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes

## Executive summary

### Program Context

SDG Joint Program on community-based social services was launched in 2020 to develop and pilot a new social services model in Turkmenistan. The model supports and advances vulnerable groups' inclusion at the community level by providing quality inclusive social services to vulnerable groups on a need basis.

The JP designed social services that can meet vulnerable people's needs and contributed to developing a national social protection system ready to provide inclusive community-based social services. The JP supported the achievement of crucial sector policy objectives and improved national protective and preventive measures aimed at eliminating isolation risks and vulnerabilities of people through better access to quality social services and more effective social protection.

The Joint UN Program had the following outputs:

- ⇒ An inclusive community-based social service model is developed, with its key elements prototyped to address multiple vulnerabilities of the most in need and ready for scaling up (output 1);
- ⇒ Legislative and regulatory framework is reinforced, and institutional mechanisms established to facilitate the introduction of the new community-based social service system (output 2);
- ⇒ The country's social work and social service workforce capacity is strengthened (output 3).

The Joint Program was launched in January 2020 and ended in mid-2022. It covered all velayats (regions) of the country. For example, community-based social services were piloted in 20 etraps (districts) out of 59 etraps, and 12 specialized social services were piloted in Ashgabat city and two velayats (Lebap and Mary).

The Joint Program was jointly implemented by UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and UNODC. Nevertheless, each of these UN agencies had specific roles and tasks jointly working on a shared outcome "The social protection system is ready to provide inclusive quality community-based support services".

The total amount of the UN Joint Program is USD 2.350.000, of which USD 1,920,000 is the SDG Fund contribution, and USD 430,000 is the Participating UN Organizations' contribution.

### Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The subject of this Evaluation is the Joint UN Program "Improving the social protection system through the introduction of inclusive quality community-based social services". It is a final

evaluation of the Program. The overall goal of the Evaluation is to promote accountability, stock-taking of achievements, performance, impacts, good practices, and lessons learnt from the implementation of SDGs. The Evaluation aims to provide guidance and recommendations for further development of the social care system in Turkmenistan and bring a knowledge-base for developing a national strategy for further reforming the system of social service provision in the country.

The methodology came to comprise the following methods:

- Desk review (case studies, reports, statistics and legal documents);
- Semi-structured interviews (triangulation and validation).

The evaluation was conducted mainly by analyzing project data (progress reports, assessments), case studies exploring specific cases, and interview findings. The evaluation process has been carried out in four phases: (a) inception stage, (b) desk stage, (c) field stage, and (b) synthesis stage.

Guided by the Evaluation Matrix, the evaluation assessed the Joint Program by using five OECD-DAC criteria: relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, impact and coherence of the Joint Program.

## Key Findings and Recommendations

### *Key findings*

This Joint Program certainly can be considered a successful one. The overall level of assessment is estimated at a high level (applied criteria from low, medium, to high).

Criteria	Level
Relevance	High
Effectiveness	High
Sustainability	High
Impact	Medium
Coherence	High

### *Relevance*

The Joint Program was a relevant and timely UN initiative to reform the social service system. The Program was prepared jointly by UN agencies and national stakeholders. The goals, objectives, activities of the Program and other interventions were undertaken mainly taking into account the needs and priorities of the country. Therefore, the Joint Program addresses



Turkmenistan's development challenges, policy priorities, and critical focus areas identified by the UN Country Team.

### *Effectiveness*

The Joint Program has undertaken all the planned activities and has achieved good results. Despite the COVID restrictions, the Joint Program could adjust its activities. The Joint Program's interventions increased the population coverage and the number of new social services, thus ensuring vulnerable groups needed support. All three outputs can be considered fully achieved.

### *Cross cutting issues linked to SDGs*

SDG Target 1.3: Based on the needs assessment of target groups, and inventory of social services was developed:

- » theoretical framework document describing a model of community-based inclusive social services.
- » guidelines, principles/manuals. They were agreed upon with national stakeholders and used for capacity-building of social and allied workers.
- » The draft of the National Plan of the development of the social service in Turkmenistan was elaborated. This plan describes the structure of the proposed model of social services.

Also, the measures mentioned below have contributed to the accomplishment of Target 1.3:

- » The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection recruited and deployed a new social services staff (specialists). Specialists obtained the appropriate skills training to provide a new model of inclusive community-based social services.
- » JP analyzed national legislation, policies and regulations in the field of social protection and drafted a new law on social services. The Law on Social Services was presented and approved by Parliament in December 2021. The law guarantees the extension and improves access and coverage.
- » Draft regulations have been developed for community-based and specialized social services. New standards meet the needs of vulnerable groups of the population (children with disabilities, left without parental care, at risk of separation from their parents, people with disabilities, people in need of primary care assistance, women facing gender-based violence, young people at risk).

- » Higher education curriculum in social work was drawn up with the participation of the Ministry of Education and leading national universities. It should replenish the labour force while expanding social service coverage.

**Target 10.4:** Adopt policies, particularly fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve equality.

- » The legislative amendments aim to provide more effective financing mechanisms, enable civil society organizations to participate in the delivery of social services and become recognized stakeholders of the national social protection system. However, Mejlis (Parliament) has not yet adopted them. The JP provided the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection with a regulatory framework for their deployment at the etrap level. Forty-five specialist positions were included in the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection budget in 2022.
- » The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection provided technical assistance in negotiations with the Ministry of Finance and Economy on financing social work positions and social services. Calculating the cost of the services and creating appropriate financing mechanisms were also carried out.

**Target 16.1:** Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related mortality

- » The proposed theoretical framework of a new model of social services, as well as training and proposed legislative amendments, aims to address various forms of violence, primarily domestic violence, gender-based violence and violence against children.
- » JP developed draft legal documents on preventing violence and protecting victims of violence (standards of work procedures and specifications for specialized social services).

### *Sustainability*

One of the main achievements of the Joint Program is the development and adoption of a new Law on Social Services (adopted in December 2021). Also, the Joint Program has developed many other legal documents (standards, guidelines, and higher education curriculum). Though some documents are practically implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, these documents are not yet nationally adopted by competent authorities. In any case, the developed drafts of legal documents can serve as a basis for further development of social services in Turkmenistan.

### *Impact*

The Joint Program widened and deepened understanding among national stakeholders about the approach of community-based social services. Newly trained specialists in social work have acquired competencies in inter-sectoral matters, case management, and assessment of vulnerable people's needs.

Though the government appreciates the work of involved NGOs in Joint Program activities, NGOs not involved in Joint Program activities still need to gain recognition among some government organizations. Expanding NGOs networks and increasing their capacities may create good opportunities for their participation in social services. Also, this shall strengthen the cooperation between Government and NGOs and can result in acknowledgement by the Government of NGOs value in social services provision.

### *Coherence*

Activities designed around existing initiatives exploited the competitive advantages of each UN organization while aligning itself with development plans implemented by the participating UN organizations and its national partners.

Cooperation between the Government and the UN, as well as internal cooperation of working group members, proceeded successfully. Regular meetings of the Joint Program steering and technical committees were held. Meetings were chaired by the management of the MLSP and the UN Resident Coordinator's office. Documents produced by the Joint Program were coordinated with the Government, members of the working group and development partners.

### *Recommendations for the UN*

- ⇒ To consolidate the results from the first phase of the Joint Program.
- ⇒ To continue piloting new social services, mainly specialized social services, implementing the higher education curriculum, and working on the adoption of legal documents through the implementation of the second phase of the JP.
- ⇒ To continue the capacity building of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population and local governments.
- ⇒ To strengthen the role and importance of NGOs at the highest levels of government and state institutions.
- ⇒ The number and content of training should be adapted to the needs of central and local stakeholders.
- ⇒ To promote good practices of other countries with a context similar to Turkmenistan.

### *Recommendations to the Government*

- ⇒ To start implementing the social work curriculum in higher education institutions.
- ⇒ To adopt the by-law on social contracting including regulatory mechanisms that can help to ensure service standards are met



- ⇒ To adopt recommendations on legal tools in the national system of social services.
- ⇒ To ensure the gradual expansion of social services from the piloted etrap to all neighbouring etraps, and so on, until all etraps of velayat will be covered.

## Introduction

### *Socio-economic situation in Turkmenistan*

Turkmenistan is a state located in Central Asia and gained independence in 1991. It has rich natural reserves of gas and oil energy resources, which are essential sources of state income.

It is one of the state formations of the former Soviet Union, characterized by typical features of socio-economic development similar to other countries in the region. It also applies to the social protection system.

In the early 1990s, the economy of Turkmenistan was in a deep crisis of recession. The state GDP almost halved from \$13.15 billion (1990) to \$7.85 billion (1997). However, economic growth has been since the second half of the 1990s. So, if in 1998 the GDP amounted to \$ 8.41 billion, then in 2000 it was \$ 10.33 billion, in 2010 it was \$ 21.7 billion, and in 2020 it already was \$ 45.71 billion. <sup>1</sup>

The State owes industry, agriculture, power, transport and communications sectors. Furthermore, many public services remain free of charge. Turkmenistan is the world's leading exporter of fuel resources, having large reserves of natural gas and oil. At the same time, the transportation and exploration challenges complicate the development of this economic sector, which forms about 70% of the gross national product.

According to the IMF, in 2021, GDP at purchasing power parity per person amounted to 17,721 US dollars, and this is 84th place among all countries worldwide. According to the UNDP Human Development Index in 2019, Turkmenistan ranked 111 (HDI-0.005) out of 187 countries, thus entering the list of middle-income countries. In 2021 the minimum wage in the country was 1,050 manats (approximately \$299).<sup>2</sup>

The population of Turkmenistan is 6.031 million, of which 50.8% are women, 31% are younger than 14 years, 64% are aged 15-64, and 5% are over 65. Turkmenistan is characterized by a favourable demographic structure of the population, as the share of working-age people is relatively high. At the same time, this share tends to increase since the average birth rate over the past twenty years has amounted to 1.4 points.<sup>3</sup>

The dependency rate or the ratio of the older people to the working-age population amounted to 7 points (i.e. pensioners' share per 100 people of the working age population).<sup>4</sup>

In quantitative terms, the situation with the labour force potential in Turkmenistan looks favourable in the long term. It suggests a positive impact on the financial sustainability of the social protection system.

### *National Social Protection system*

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank, GDP statistical data <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=TM>

<sup>2</sup> Decree of the President of Turkmenistan on increasing salaries, pensions, state benefits, scholarships for students and trainees in Turkmenistan, 2021

<sup>3</sup> World Bank, statistical data on population

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, statistical data

The current social protection system in Turkmenistan was founded based on the development plans and programs in the former Soviet Union. It is a complex of economic, legal and organizational mechanisms. Also, it guarantees provided by the state for the population in the area of labour, health care, maternity protection and child protection, family protection and social security.

In terms of legal coverage, Turkmenistan covers all eight life-cycle risks. Consequently, the state has programs for the social protection of children and families, maternity protection, sickness, unemployment, employment injury, disability, loss of a breadwinner and old age.<sup>5</sup>

Overall, the social protection system of Turkmenistan can be distinguished into three branches: pension insurance, social security, social care and social assistance.

### *Social services in Turkmenistan*

The social services system has not undergone significant changes since the Soviet times until the Joint Program was launched. The social services system was highly centralized; state institutions provided most services. Before the New Law on Social Services in 2021, social care and social assistance had been provided in various ways to the vulnerable population. Significant changes have been achieved with the adoption of the new law. It singled out a unique role for non-governmental organizations in providing social services, although it does not specify all the details yet.

Before piloting the new community-based social services, the basis for recognizing a person in need of social services were disability, old age, work injury and occupational disease, loss of a breadwinner, loneliness, orphan-hood, homelessness, lack of accommodation, forced migration and domestic violence.

Social care institutions mainly provides social services in Turkmenistan at home and stationary institutions, as well as semi-stationary when services are provided at certain times of the day. Generally, social services in the country are provided by both state organizations of the social care system and civil society organizations.

If social institutions were created relatively recently, then residential homes have existed since the 90s. The country has a network of specialized care centres, which provide social care and services to the elderly, people with disabilities and children. Usually, these institutions provide social care at the expense of the state budget.

Users of social services, taking into account their individual needs, are provided with social care in everyday life, medical and psychological services, employment, and legal assistance, i.e.in, protecting their rights and legal interests. In terms of coverage, the emphasis is made on specific categories, and not all vulnerable population categories receive the necessary assistance. Although after the Joint Program initiative, a new law on social services was adopted that sets out a universal coverage approach. In particular, Joint Program promoted a

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<sup>5</sup> World Social Protection Report for 2017–2019, ILO

new function for assessing the potentially vulnerable population. Also, the Law prescribes an assessment of social service needs, thus applying the population targeting method.

The social services are predominantly financed by the centralized budget of Turkmenistan and local budgets, as well as funds received in the form of charitable or donor assistance; however, the last one is less practised.

Social assistance and services in Turkmenistan are categorical, i.e., services are provided to specific citizens. Often the assistance the State provides is not always sufficient for individuals to meet their needs. Whereas the community-based social services approach would ensure guarantees of social justice and, at the same time, targeted approaches would release financial resources to provide social protection to those who need it.

## 1. Brief description of the Joint Program

Turkmenistan has taken many important initiatives to harmonize national legislation with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, the social services system uses outdated approaches and does not yet provide adequate protection for all those in need. The Government of Turkmenistan has prioritized a reform of social services in its medium-term national development programs (National Action Plan for the implementation of the Socio-Economic Development Program for 2019-2025 of the President of Turkmenistan and National Action Plan for the Realization of Children's Rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022). Seeking transformational changes and applying international standards and practices, the government of Turkmenistan requested support from the UN Country Team to implement the national priorities aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Considering the need to strengthen the social protection system of Turkmenistan, in 2020, the UN team launched the Joint SDG Program “Improving the social protection system through the introduction of inclusive and high-quality social services at the community level”. The project document was prepared by UN agencies (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and UNODC) jointly with government organizations.

«Providing community-based services means having high quality services accessible to families in the least restrictive setting possible. A community-based system of care requires systems to see the home, school, and neighborhood of the family from an asset perspective, and to identify the natural supports in these familiar surroundings as part of a strengths-based approach»

Source: Child welfare Information Gateway (United States of America),  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/reform/soc/history/community/>

**The general objective** of the Joint Program was to ensure the readiness of the social protection system to provide inclusive, quality community-based support services. People are left behind now and isolated in their homes without family support, experiencing violence, neglect or abuse or languishing in residential or hospital care because there are no community-based social services to support independent living in the community. The JP aimed to design social services that meet vulnerable people's needs and build a social protection system ready to provide inclusive, quality community-based social services.

The **specific objectives** were to support the achievement of key sector policy objectives and improve national protective and preventive measures aimed at eliminating isolation risks and vulnerabilities of people through better access to quality social services. The JP aimed to



improve the current social service delivery system, reach out to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable population and address their specific needs.

The JP had the following expected outputs:

- ⇒ Output 1 - An inclusive community-based social service model is developed, with its key elements prototyped to address multiple vulnerabilities of the most in need and ready for scaling up;
- ⇒ Output 2 - Legislative and regulatory framework is reinforced, and institutional mechanisms established to facilitate the introduction of the new community-based social service delivery system;
- ⇒ Output 3 - The country’s social work and social service workforce capacity is strengthened.

### Time frame and geographical coverage

The Joint UN Program was launched in January 2020 and ended in June 2022. The JP activities were rolling out in all velayats of the country. For example, community-based social services were piloted in 20 etraps (districts) out of 59 etraps of all six velayats (regions). In contrast, 12 specialized social services were piloted (and continue to operate) only in Ashgabat and two velayats - Lebap and Mary.

**Participating United Nations Organizations Agencies (PUNOs):** The joint program was jointly implemented by UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and UNODC, who had different roles and tasks. Below is a table describing the roles of each UN agency.

*Table 1 Participating UN organizations and their roles*

UNICEF	<p>Ensure the overall lead on planning, assessment, supporting implementation, analysis and monitoring to the Joint Program.</p> <p>Provide strategic support to the government partners for implementation of the Joint Program and the resulting social service model. This also includes support establishment of theory and practice of social work, support to recruitment, deployment, and professional supervision of 45 social workers in 20 districts across the regions of Turkmenistan. <b>(Output 1)</b></p> <p>Support establishment of theory and practice of social work in Turkmenistan.</p> <p>Develop national standards of higher education, curricula and programs for social work adapted to the national context. <b>(Output 3)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Design and piloted new types of social services for children with disabilities, children without parental care, and children at risk of separation from parents – <b>children (Output 1)</b></li> </ul>
UNDP	Build capacity of social service workforce, training up to 400 new and existing

practitioners, including social workers, allied workforce professionals, social work managers, social service providers at national, regional and local levels **(Output 3)**.

UNDP also had to evaluate the current system and design mechanisms, namely:

- Conduct inventory of existing social services and assessment of needs of the Joint Program target groups
  - Conduct socio-economic analysis of new social services to demonstrate their advantages vis-a-vis the existing model of social service provision
  - Pilot a social contracting mechanism to foster civic participation in the social service provision and expand the range of services to the Joint Program target groups
- » UNDP also had to design and pilot new social services to people with official status of disability, elderly people living alone and people with chronic illnesses – **disabled, older and sick (Output 1)**.

UNFPA Lead the work on the review of the existing national legislation and development new legislation and bylaws to sustain new social services, identifying gaps and making recommendations for creating a legislative and regulatory framework to sustain the proposed new system of community-based social services **(Output 2)**.

- » UNFPA also had to design and pilot social services that ensure the rights and protection of women and girls facing gender-based violence and various reproductive health risks – **girls and women. (Output 1)**

UNODC Development of training packages on co-dependency and social work with families with substance use disorders. Deliver trainings for social workers and allied professionals on special aspects of working with vulnerable groups such as people with substance use disorders, youth at risk of substance use, youth in contact with criminal justice system and their families **(Output 3)**.

- » UNODC also had to design and pilot services for youth at risk, including those in conflict with the law, and families/parents with substance use disorders, and develop models of parent support to reduce risky behavior among adolescents – adolescents, **youth, adults (Output 1)**.

Source: Terms and references

**Financial Resources:** The total amount of the UN Joint Program is USD 2.350.000 of which USD 1,920,000 is the SDG Fund contribution and USD 430,000 is the Participating UN organizations' contribution.

## 2. Evaluation process

### 2.1. Description of the evaluation

#### 2.1.1. Rationale

The Evaluation brings a knowledge-base for developing the national strategies for further reform of the social services system in the country. The Evaluation aims to provide guidance and recommendations for further development of social services in Turkmenistan.

The Evaluation was conducted by the end of the UN JP. The timing of the Evaluation was critical as the Government requested the UN to provide technical assistance in preparing a Road Map of the next steps. Moreover, the Government started drafting a new long-term Socio-Economic Strategy. Thus, the Evaluation, which is the first independent assessment of the JP, shall help to shape the programming and policymaking processes.

#### 2.1.2. Purpose of evaluation

The subject of this evaluation is the SDG Joint UN Program “Improving the system of social protection through the introduction of inclusive quality community-based social services”.

The evaluation aimed to generate evidence-based knowledge that is expected to help enable any adjustment necessary for the planning and implementation of the current United Nations Sustainable Development and Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025. The evaluation’s findings will contribute to an update of the UN Common Country Analysis, the reporting of the country on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and potentially SDG-related progress reports or other situation analyses. Also, the results shall be helpful to enable the Government to take over the implementation of social services piloted by the JP and understand key barriers and implementation issues that Government may face.

#### 2.1.3. Objectives

The UN JP evaluation assessed the joint Program using five OECD-DAC criteria: relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, impact and coherence of the Joint Program, to analyse the remaining bottlenecks and barriers that impact the inclusiveness of social protection.

The main objectives of the evaluation were:

- Assessment of relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, impact and coherence of the Joint Program;

- Assessment of role of the Joint Program in establishing the community based social services;
- Assessment of contribution of the UN Joint Program to SDGs acceleration and UN coherence.
- Assessment of role of the Joint Program in increasing awareness about community based social services among key stakeholders and beneficiaries.
- Assessment of extent to which the JP has contributed to achievement of national development priorities;
- Design the recommendations to guide policy-level decision-making by PUNOs and the key relevant stakeholders on social services system reform;
- Development of recommendations for integration of the 12 specialized services into the national social service system;
- Identification and documentation of successes, challenges and lessons learnt of the joint program.
- Assessment of Program contribution towards sustainability and scale-up of the community-based social services, including the development of the National strategic document for further reforming the social service delivery system in the country. Development of recommendations for integration of the 12 specialized services into the national social service system.

#### 2.1.4. Scope

**Covered period:** From January 2020 to June 2022.

**Geographical coverage:** The field phase was carried out entirely online due to continued lockdown and travel restrictions. Most of the interviews were held with national stakeholders based in Ashgabat. Local government staff, specialists in social work and social services providers were also interviewed. The geographical scope of the evaluation covered all five velayats and Ashgabat city: Ahal (Tejen, Bagtyyarlyk), Balkan (Serdar, Turkmenbashi, Balkanabad), Doshoguz, Lebap and Mary (Bairamali, Mary).

*Figure 1 Map of Turkmenistan*



Source: Map of Turkmenistan, [www.worldatlas.com](http://www.worldatlas.com)

## 2.2. Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation was carried out mainly by analyzing (a) project data (progress reports, assessments), (b) case studies that aim to explore specific situations, and (c) interview findings. The case study provided in-depth changes at national and local levels focused on specialized services, whereas the interviews complemented the information gaps and clarified key points and concerns.

### 2.2.1. Evaluation framework

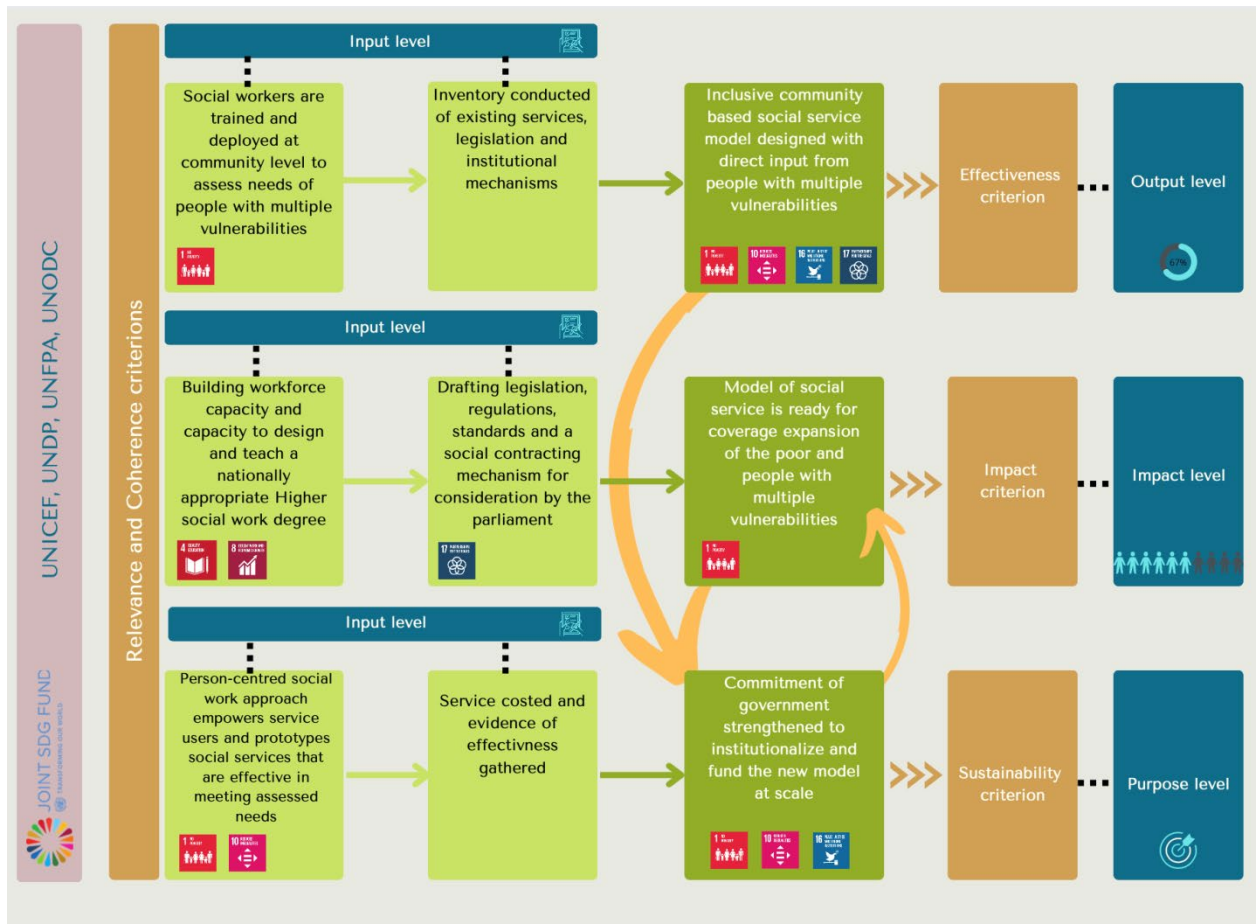
**Theory of change:** In the project document, the Theory of Change of the Joint Program is structured as follows. If (a) an Inclusive community-based social service model is designed and (b) if Government is strengthened and committed to institutionalising and funding the new model at scale, then (c) a new model of social service is ready to go to scale and accelerate the achievement of substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable groups.

The ToR does not explicitly stipulate to have a re-constructed theory-based design for the evaluation. However, the consultant proposed an adapted structure based on consultation and feedback from the evaluation managers (UNICEF) to prepare a theory of change design. The ToC has been adjusted to associate interventions to various SDGs, distinguish the levels of change, associate evaluation criteria to each level of change, and link the program's interventions to the chain of change.

The evaluation determines whether the envisaged change happened, the contribution of the Joint Program to it and whether tasks were achieved. To answer key evaluation questions, the consultant therefore examined:

- ➔ How the Theory of Change has operated towards outcome, and
- ➔ What interventions contributed to overall JP implementation to produce a change of perception on new social service approaches, and what next steps should be undertaken.

Figure 2 Visual reconstruction of the Theory of Change



Source: reconstructed by the author

Based on this, the evaluation process involved contribution analysis, wherever possible, of the extent of the project’s contribution to these changes. The evaluator interviewed UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and UNODC agencies, Government counterparts (especially with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population) and Civil society organizations (social service providers). Since there is a recent survey carried out by the end of the Program in 2022, social service users have not been interviewed. The survey contains valuable information on the scope of needs of target groups, quality of life and social integration of service users, and level

of satisfaction with the new social services. The evaluation was based on a document review. The findings of the desk phase were validated and consolidated by interviews.

The evaluation provides a summative character and takes a qualitative approach to answer the evaluation questions stipulated in terms of Reference, with an indication of specific Judgement Criteria and Indicators, as well as the relevant data sources. Based on initial consultations and documental analysis, the consultant used during the interviews only specific questions. The specific evaluation questions formulated in annex no. 1 were indicative and guided the consultant during interviews. The ToR Evaluation questions were answered based on the collection and analysis of answers to the specific evaluation questions. Data, publications and perceptions shared by the stakeholders served as a source of information for the specific questions.

### 2.2.2. Evaluation criteria

The work has pursued an evaluation using a methodological framework OECD-DAC criterion. This framework defines six evaluation criteria – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact and coherence. These criteria provide a normative framework used to determine the merit or worth of an intervention of the JP. They serve as the basis upon which evaluative judgements are made. The use of the criteria depends on the purpose of the evaluation.<sup>6</sup>

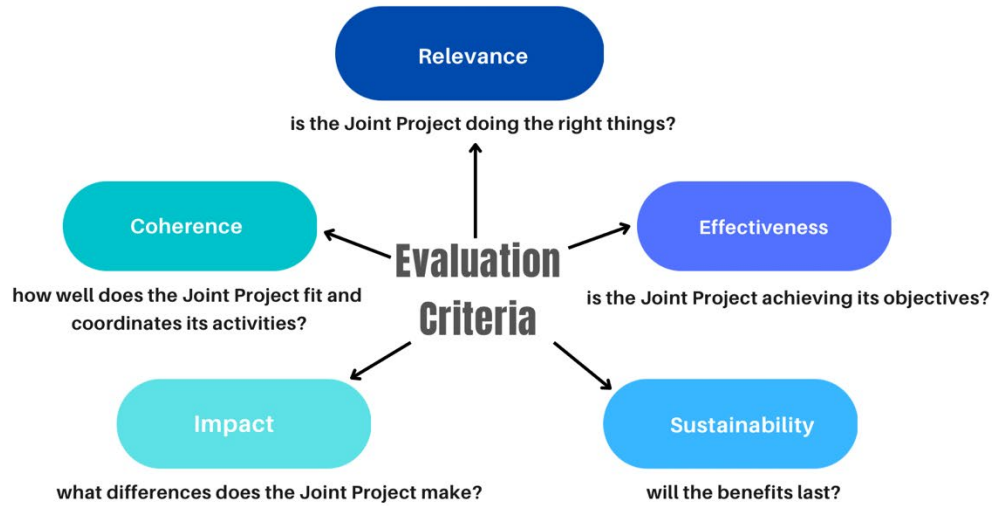
Considering the aims of the evaluation, requirements specified in the ToR and consultation feedback of the meeting organized with UNICEF and other PUNOs, as well as available data and tools, the evaluation covered only five criteria of the framework: relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and coherence.

### *Figure 3 Evaluation criteria*

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<sup>6</sup> Evaluation Criteria OECD DAC <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>





Source: designed by the author

The efficiency criteria have been excluded because, first of all, it does not correspond to the evaluation's goals. Secondly, choices between when resources are used and when results are delivered are crucial; however, results and total costs may accrue over many years, so the actual efficiency at the time of the evaluation may not reflect the entire picture. Thirdly, the available efficiency data does not reflect a complete picture, mainly due to COVID restrictions that caused numerous activities delays.

### 2.2.3. Data collection and workplan

#### *Reports and publications*

The consultant received around 111 different documents from the PUNO. In Annex 4, the list of reviewed documents is included (annual reports, statistics, case studies, development plans, legal documents and other reports).

#### *Interviews*

Further data collection took place within the interview phase: for this, a list of stakeholders and specific questions (in Russian) for each particular organization was prepared. Interviewees received the specific questions by e-mail before the interview started. It allowed an interviewee to prepare.

Semi-structured interviews covered all evaluation questions and were conducted predominantly with members of the Joint Program working group, as well as social service providers and social workers. Interviews were conducted at central and local levels (Ashgabat and velayats). In particular, the consultant interviewed the government organizations, participating UN organizations (PUNOs) and civil society organizations (social service



providers). Taking into account the leading role of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population and UNICEF in the Joint Program, special attention was given to these organizations. Social workers from all velayats (Ashgabat, Lebap, Mary, Akhal, Balkan and Doshoguz) were also interviewed (see annex 2).

### *Evaluation workplan*

The work plan was prepared based on the ToR requirements and discussed with PUNOs during the kick-off meetings. The table below presents the timings for the delivery of the project reports.

The evaluation process has been carried out in four phases:

- (a) an inception stage - This stage was devoted to a systematization of the evaluation, the clarification of the key issues that were addressed and a preparation of the evaluation methodology.
- (b) a desk stage - This stage is when the document analysis took place. The analysis included a brief synthesis of the existing literature relevant to the evaluation.
- (c) a field stage – This stage was dedicated to interviews with stakeholders. It started after approval of the Inception Report by UNICEF (and other PUNOs).
- (d) a synthesis stage - This stage was devoted to the preparation by the consultant of final document: The Final Report. It entailed the analysis of the data collected during the desk and field phases.

The table below shows the timeframe for the delivery of the evaluation’s deliverables.

*Table 2 Timing for activities and deliverables*

<b>What</b>	<b>Time</b>
Initial desk review: preparation (inception phase)	22 April – 30 April 2022
Inception Report: drafting	01 May - 11 May, 2022
Desk review (data collection phase)	12 May - 22 May, 2022
Online interviews (data collection phase)	23 May – 3 June, 2022
Draft Final Evaluation report: drafting (processing data phase)	4 June - 30 June, 2022
Final Evaluation Report (feedback on draft evaluation phase)	1 July - 31 July, 2022

### 3. Users of the report

The primary users of the evaluation are the Government, represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the national coordinating body, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population as the Lead National partner, key sectoral ministries and PUNOs. The other relevant stakeholders include other UN agencies, IFIs, CSOs, and line ministries not directly engaged in the Joint program implementation, as the secondary users.

The findings of the evaluation might be used as a basis for discussions, planning and programming between UN, Government of Turkmenistan and other key national and international stakeholders. The knowledge generated by the evaluation will be used by:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the coordinating body, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection as the Lead National partners, key sectoral ministries to identify and further address existing barriers to support social protection reform agenda and strengthening the system of social service delivery at community level to ensure the scale up;
- PUNOs (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and UNODC) for taking stock of lessons learnt and best practices and informing revision of their respective programs towards strengthening the social services system as well as to contribute to the relevant knowledge generation and dissemination.

### 4. Norms, standards and ethical considerations

The evaluation followed the UNEG Norms and Standards<sup>7</sup>, with particular focus on the following:

**Utility.** The findings of the evaluation (analysis, conclusions or recommendations) are supposed to be relevant and precise to inform decision and actions.

**Independence.** The evaluator was impartial and free from undue pressure throughout the evaluation process.

**Impartiality.** The evaluation was based on objectivity, professional integrity and absence of bias.

**Ethics.** Evaluator respected beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment as well as rights of institutions and individuals.

**Confidentiality.** The evaluator ensured anonymity and confidentiality, that interviewees could provide information with confidence.

**Validity.** The evaluator ensured the accuracy of the information gathered during the preparation of the reports and is responsible for the information presented in the final report.

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<sup>7</sup> UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016) <https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/example/UNEG-evaluation-standards-2016>

The Evaluator complied with the ethical principle, while carrying out the evaluation, which includes:

- Bear in mind the purpose, usefulness and necessity of the evaluation;
- Avoided conflict of interest;
- Engaged appropriately and respectfully with participants at all evaluation stages;
- Bear in mind values of dignity, diversity, human rights and gender equality, particularly behave professionally and ethically on sensitive topics such as domestic violence, drug consumption and discrimination;
- Ensured accuracy, completeness and reliability, fair and balanced reporting that acknowledges different perspectives;
- The evaluator was responsible for ensuring that all data collected is stored and protected appropriately.

### **Ethical considerations**

No ethical approval is required for this evaluation. In accordance with methodology framework and data collection analysis, no children and other vulnerable groups were directly or indirectly involved in the evaluation. In order to make, vulnerable people's voice heard, the evaluator analyzed surveys that have been carried out by PUNOs and reflected relevant observations in the Final Report. Assuming, that surveys have been organized by following key ethical principles and standards.

## 5. Evaluation findings

This chapter contains key findings of the evaluation and summative assessment for each OECD criteria (poor, medium and high).

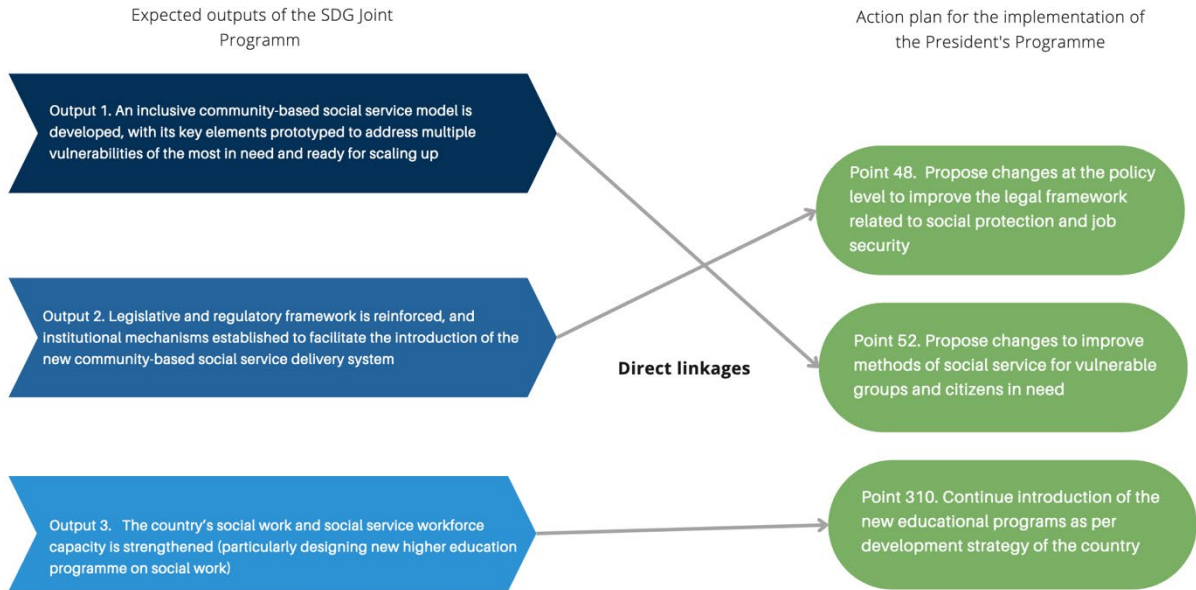
### 5.1. Relevance

Criterion	Assessment level	Reasoning
Relevance	<b>High</b>	The Joint Program is a timely and relevant initiative to reform the national social services system. The Program was designed jointly with national stakeholders and UN agencies. The goals, objectives, activities of the Program and other initiatives were undertaken mainly taking into account the needs and priorities of the country. All national development plans aim to create more inclusive social services. For example, the President's Program for 2019-2025 and other strategic documents include activities on reforming the social care system. Also, the piloted social services fully meet the population's needs. For example, most users of social services were satisfied with the assistance provided. Many stated that new social services have positively contributed to socialization, employment, rehabilitation of family relations and, in general, improvement of life levels.

#### 5.1.1. Actuality of the Joint Program in the context of national priorities

The Joint Program is a relevant and timely UN initiative on reforming the social care system. The Program was designed jointly by UN agencies (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and UNODC) and national stakeholders. The goals, objectives, activities of the Joint Program and other initiatives were undertaken mainly based on the priorities of the country, such as The Program of the President of Turkmenistan on Socio-economic Development of the Country (2019-2025). The President's Program includes measures for the reform of the social care system. Under this Program, government organizations should propose new models and approaches to social services, mainly focusing on vulnerable population groups (Program Action Plan, paragraph 52). These changes were to be proposed by the Government in 2019-2020. Although the Joint Program started a few years later, it still was a highly relevant UN initiative as the Government took no sufficient social policy measures for the National Program implementation.

*Figure 4 Linkages between the SDG Joint Program and the national priorities of Turkmenistan*

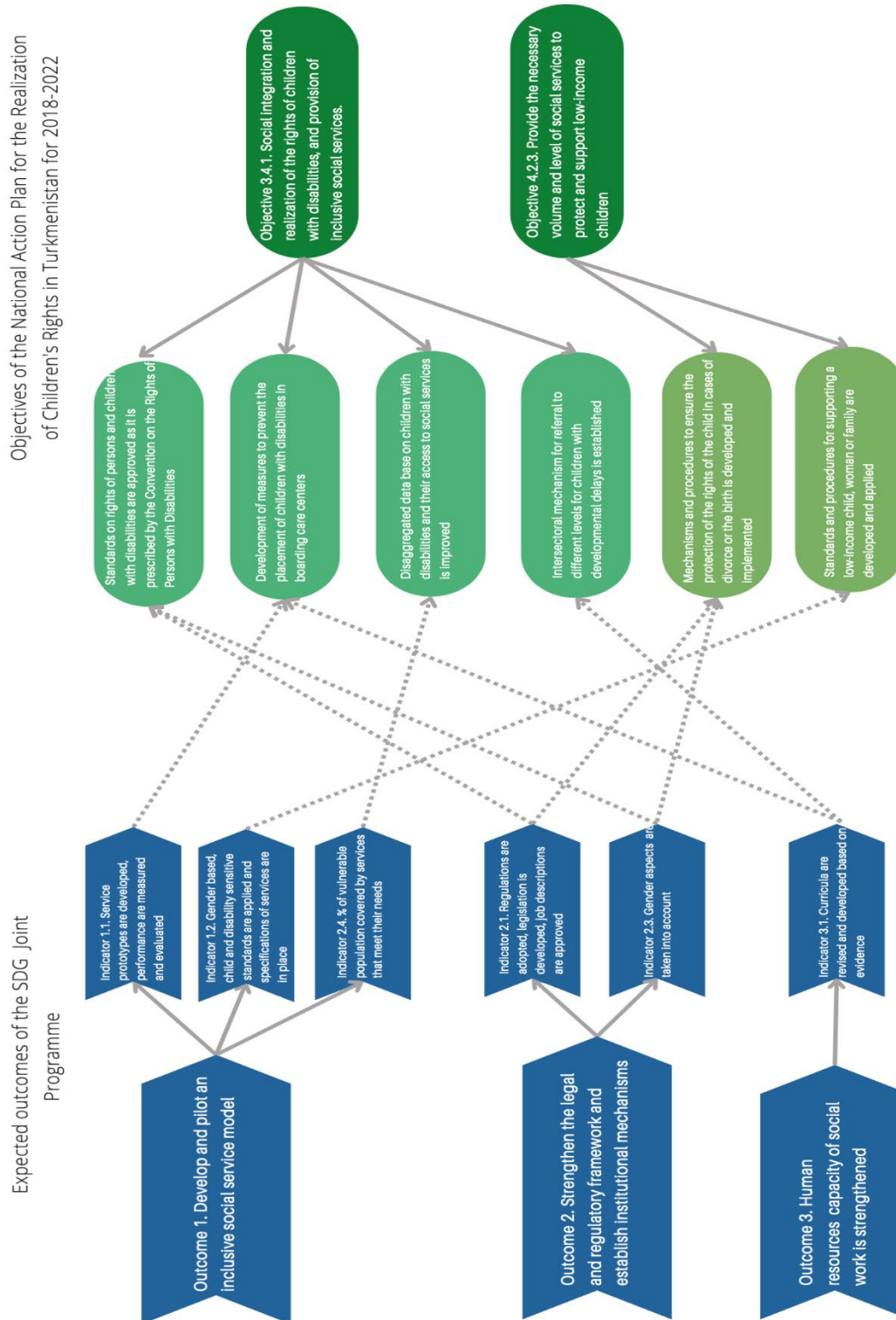


Source: designed by the author

Also, the National Plan of Action for Realization of Children's Rights (2018-2022) contains several tasks for reforming the social care system. Its fundamental goal is to create more inclusive social services for children with disabilities and vulnerable children. Some of the most relevant objectives, having common goals with those of the Joint Program, are the following:

- preventing the placement of children in social care institutions;
- development of a mechanism of State order of Social Services;
- introduction of social work;
- strengthening of assistance to children in need, especially to children with disabilities and to children, living in single-parent families;
- updating the legislation of the social service system;

Figure 5. Contribution of UN Joint Program towards the realization of the national priorities: Objectives of the National Plan of Action of Children's Rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022



Source: designed by the author

On the one hand, it would be good if similar UN Programs start on time without delay. It would contribute to sustainability, synchronization of activities and, of course, an acceleration of SDGs achievement. On the other hand, the JP requires careful planning, considering the complexity and number of UN agencies involved in this process. Planning needs to be operational enough to ensure synchronization between the Government and the UN.

The Government of Turkmenistan was one of the leading promoters of the Joint Program and the additional initiatives that have been undertaken under the auspices of the Program. For example, the Government requested technical assistance from the UN agencies, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Turkmenistan has established a Support hotline for free advice to victims of violence.

“Even after the completion of JP, the Government stays committed to further rolling out specialized social services in velayats and to national implementation of higher education curriculum on social work”

*Interviews, June 2022*

Moreover, the piloted social services proved very useful for the service users. Social services were able to quickly adapt to external changes to meet the needs of vulnerable population groups, children, low-income families and the elderly. In general, the new model of social services has been designed in such a way that it could provide the necessary social care support. However, users of services did not know what to expect from such services mainly because they did not encounter them before.

“When my wife deceased, I thought that keeping the newborn in the Baby house with full care from professionals is best for my baby. However, social worker explained about importance of family environment for healthy development of my child, and when I made this decision of bringing her back home, I didn’t expect that I would get so much support from my mother and sister for caring about my baby”

*Service User, JP blog “Social Inclusion Ensures Equal Opportunities in Turkmenistan” 2022*

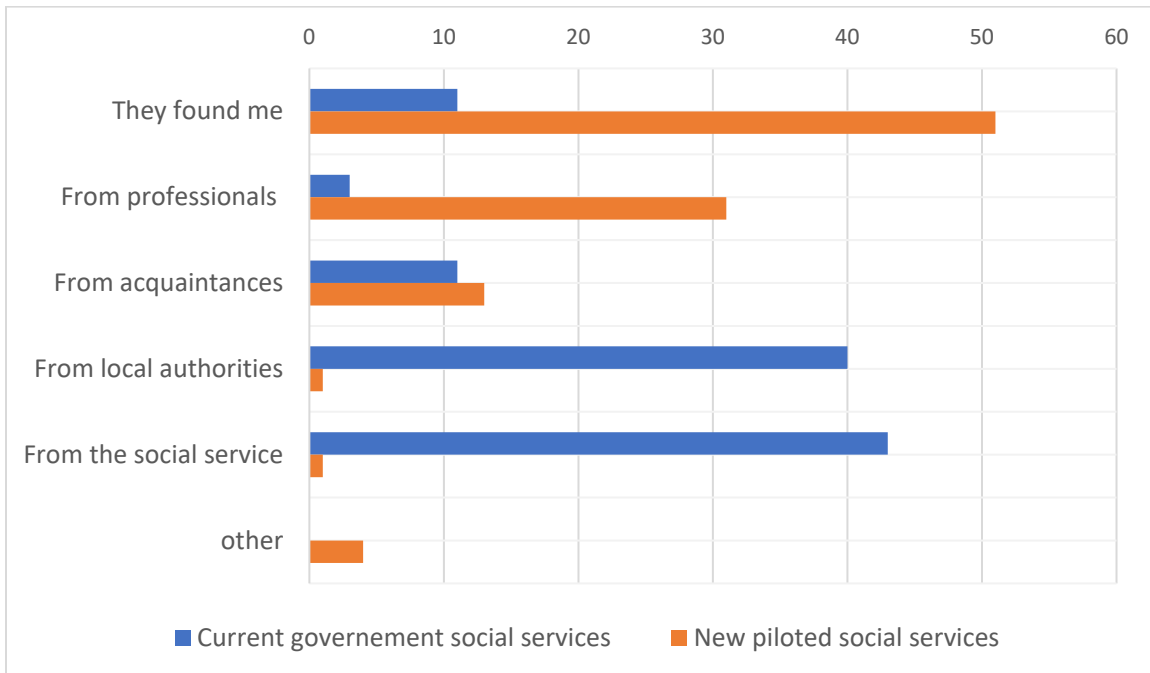
Even though the beneficiaries of social services expected financial support to a large extent, many positive aspects were identified in new social services. This cannot be considered a shortcoming. On the contrary new model of social services turned out to be an innovation. For example, the socio-economic situation of more than 1000 persons was assessed. JP has applied an active method of identification of vulnerable people. It was an essential step toward transforming the current system and innovation, in particular the assessment of needs and subsequent planning for the delivery of social services.

For example, the results of the survey showed (see Figure 8) that beneficiaries of current social services are mainly informed through contacting social service institutions (43%) and local authorities (40%), whereas new piloted social services were aimed at identifying vulnerable



people. More than 50 percent of respondents said they did not apply for social services. They were identified by new specialists in social work.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 6 Responses in % of beneficiaries of the social services to the question: “How did you know about this social service?”



Source: The report SAPI “Social Cost-benefit analysis”, 2022

Users' initial expectations before using new services were related to cash payments, particularly food and assistance because the social protection system is traditionally formed around cash benefits. In contrast, new social services have a more comprehensive range of assistance and turned out to be more demanded (see Figure 9).

Users of pilot social services were satisfied with the quality of social services provided. For example, some beneficiaries identified the improvement of relationships with their families; in particular, they noted the opportunity to socialise with people and re-experience belonging to their family or cope better with loneliness.

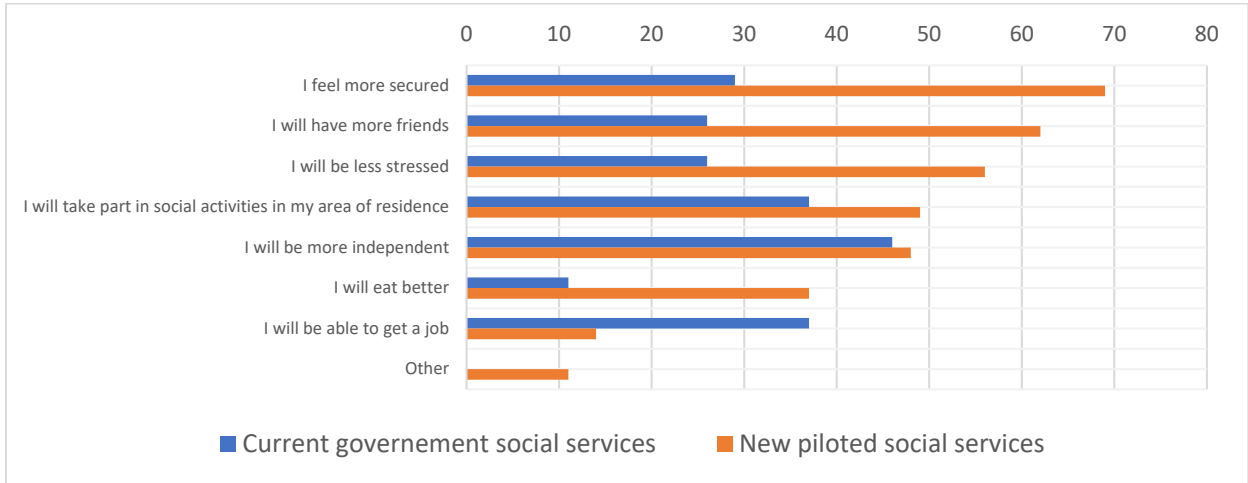
“I am so happy to get such social care and medical support. I wish such services continue to help people like me to survive. This gives us a hope and strength to overcome all the hardships associated with our illness. It helps us to live a normal life”

*Service User,  
JP Blog “Promoting Social Inclusion Through Care and Support”, 2021*

<sup>8</sup> The report SAPI “Social Cost-benefit analysis”, 2022



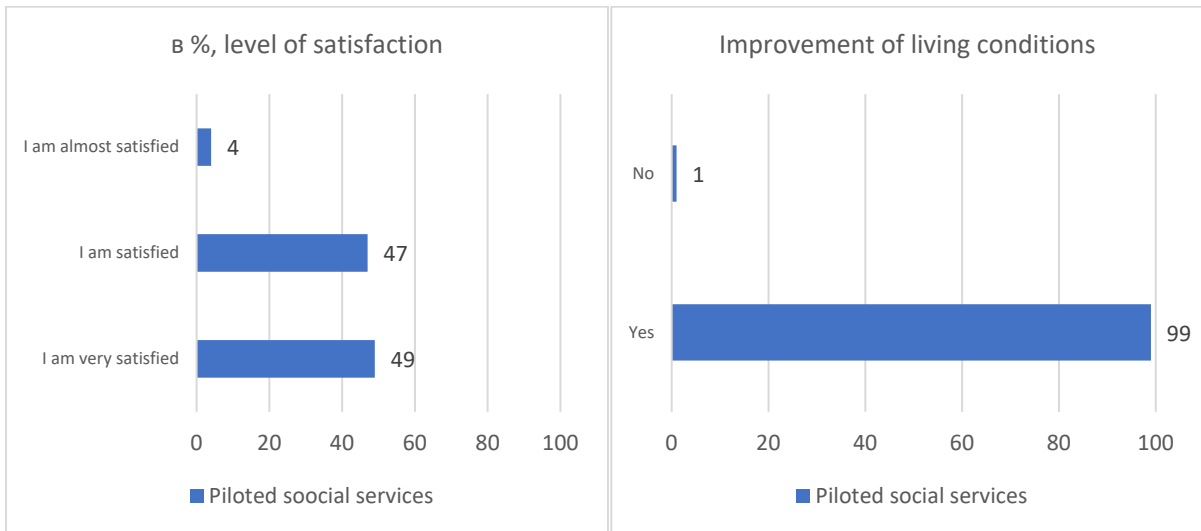
Figure 7 Responses, % of beneficiaries of social services to the question: “What changes do you expect in your life in coming days, weeks, months, and years as a result of a new social service use?”



Source: The report SAPI “Social cost-benefit analysis”, 2022

Most beneficiaries of social services, both pilot and existing ones, reported a high level of satisfaction. Although pilot social services gave two or three times more self-confidence, a sense of security and social inclusion, users still show some uncertainty in new services. It can be explained by the fact that the services are at an early stage of development, and the new social services approach is still not familiar enough to the beneficiaries.

Figure 10. The level of satisfaction and the standard of living improvement



Source: The report SAPI “Social Cost-benefit analysis”, 2022

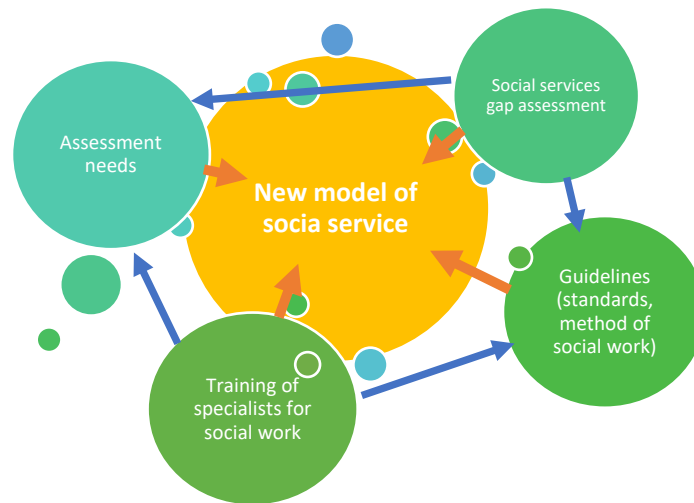
### 5.1.2. Pilot social services and the needs of the sector of social protection

A new social services model was developed based on the needs assessment of vulnerable groups of the population and on the assessment of existing social services. It allowed identifying the gaps in the current system of social care. A new model fills the coverage gaps and consists of inclusive approaches to guarantee human rights and people's needs. Thus, piloted social services provide adequate access to services and the possibility of exercising the rights of the population, particularly the vulnerable ones.

*"Piloted social services filled the gaps existing in the policy and provided social services to vulnerable people"*

*Interview 2022*

*Figure 8 Factors of influence on the development of a new model of social care*



Source: developed by the author

New social services included.

- such assistance as personal assistance for people with disabilities;
- Social and medical services at home for people with chronic diseases who need rehabilitation and home care;
- family assistance services for families in difficult life situations, including for families with children with disabilities;
- Kinship care and other alternative services of family care for children without parental care;
- responsive and preventive services in case of gender-based violence;

- support services for young people leaving care in order to reintegrate into society;
- Services for families where parents suffer from a harmful addiction.

Although some essential activities were carried out, particularly activities on awareness, the survey results were contradictory. They showed the dual expectations of beneficiaries from piloted social services. Most of the beneficiaries expected financial support (68%) and access to health services (76%), which the Joint Program provided to a small extent. It can be explained by insufficient awareness of target groups about new social services. Also, people expected to support in obtaining administrative documents (66%), consultations (62%), psychological assistance (51%), acquiring new knowledge and skills, and legal assistance. People did not expect the assistance that was planned by the new social services, such as accompaniment, consultations, individual home assistance, and socio-psychological assistance.<sup>9</sup>

New specialists in social work conducted a needs assessment of the target groups and provided social services based on the assessment results. For example, they assessed more than 1132 potentially vulnerable households/families in 20 etraps. For this, 45 new specialists in social work underwent 45-day basic social work training and received detailed practical guidance on how to work with vulnerable groups. Initially, new specialists acquired the appropriate skills and knowledge to apply new approaches to assess and meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups at the community level.<sup>10</sup> Guidelines were developed jointly with national stakeholders.

“I know how to conduct need assessments of people in difficult life situations that we will further use for creating individual support plans. It is very important to take an individual approach in social work.”

*Social Work Specialist,  
JP Blog “Discovering a new helping profession – a specialists of social work”, 2020*

“It took a while for us to develop necessary skills and now most of my colleagues are building bridges between different agencies and social service providers so that beneficiaries would have an opportunity to use all available resources in their communities,”

*Social Work Specialist,  
JP Blog “Social Inclusion Ensures Equal Opportunities in Turkmenistan”, 2022*

At the next stage, social workers were deployed in 20 etraps (districts), including the capital Ashgabat, thus ensuring their presence in all five velayats (regions) of Turkmenistan. The deployment of specialists in social work to all velayats of the country created conditions for an intensive exchange of experience and knowledge between specialists. The current network of specialists in social work may also contribute to a coverage extension of social services from the administrative centre or piloted etrap to all other etraps. The model of social services

<sup>9</sup> The report SAPI “Social Cost-benefit analysis”, 2022

<sup>10</sup> Annual report on the progress of the Joint Program for 2020

implemented at the velayat/etrap should be adapted to the local conditions of each velayat, considering the distance and number of vulnerable people.

### 5.1.3. By-laws, rules and job description of social workers and the needs of the vulnerable groups of population at the local level

Joint Program conducted a comprehensive analysis of the legislation and developed a set of recommendations for amendments. JP also prepared legal documents for rolling out community-based and specialized social services and developed the specifications for social workers on the etrap level and 12 specialized services.<sup>11</sup> Draft documents and adopted legal acts, according to the JP interim evaluation report for 2020, fully comply with international standards, guarantee gender equality and inclusiveness, and empower vulnerable groups of the population (children, women, girls, youth, persons with disabilities and the elderly). In particular, suggestions were made to amend the Social Protection Code and other laws in the following areas:

- Delivery of social services
- The concept of social work
- The concept of social services
- The concept “social worker”
- Guarantees of citizens’ rights for social care
- Types of social services
- Social services management

Suggestions for legislative changes are aimed mainly at extending social services and access for vulnerable population groups. These innovations, in particular the creation of mechanisms for contracting the non-governmental organizations (outsourcing of specialized social services), should reduce the administrative load on state institutions.<sup>12</sup> This package of recommendations was preliminary discussed with national stakeholders and then submitted to the Parliament of Turkmenistan<sup>13</sup>. A new legal framework is based on rights, adjusted and focused primarily on the beneficiaries’ needs, as well as on the effectiveness of the social care system, which is highly relevant considering the challenges Turkmenistan faces.

## 5.2. Effectiveness

Criterion	Result	Reasoning
Effectiveness	<b>High</b>	The Joint Program has undertaken all the planned measures to prepare for the piloting of new social services and has achieved good results. The JP measures increased the population coverage and the list of new

<sup>11</sup> Annual report on the progress of the Joint Program for 2021 year

<sup>12</sup> Annual report on the progress of the Joint Program for 2022 year

<sup>13</sup> Interview 2022

		<p>social services that the vulnerable groups of the population need. The Joint Program has developed a model of community-based social services, 45 new specialists in social work have been trained and employed, a new law on social services has been adopted, a large number of employees of Social Services national system, social workers, relevant specialists and other government officials have been trained.</p>
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### 5.2.1. Objectives and achievements: the most effective measures

The Joint Program has made significant inputs to prepare for the piloting of new social services, within the framework of which a good understanding of new social services has been formed among government organizations, particularly about modern approaches to service delivery.<sup>14</sup>

The Joint Program has faced unforeseen difficulties because of a pandemic. Some measures, in particular training activities, have been postponed or adapted to new challenges.

«The pandemic significantly influenced the project's progress. In particular, some activities were debugged, and others were adapted»

*Interview 2022*

Generally, the JP measures have extended both the coverage and the list of new social services. New categories of beneficiaries, namely the elderly, children, persons with disabilities and women, have improved their access to new social services. In fact, before the launch of the JP, social services provided outside the residential care centres covered only the elderly and adults with disabilities. The JP covered the gaps, which significantly increased coverage, provided additional social services, and included new categories of vulnerable population groups. The following measures were undertaken:

- New types of social services have been designed that have covered new categories of the vulnerable groups of population (result 1).
- A new law on social services was developed and enacted. Also, on the basis of new law, by-laws and other internal legal documents were drafted, but they have not yet been legislated. Also, JP developed specifications for specialist in social work of the etrap and for 12 specialized services (result 2).
- 45 new specialists in social work have acquired new skill in needs assessment and case management and then deployed. Other national staff, experts, specialists and social workers acquired new skills and knowledge (result 3). The state budget started financing the job positions of 45 specialists in social work.

During the piloting, the new social services were subject to rigorous monitoring and analysis, the results of which were presented in 2022 to the working group members and included in

<sup>14</sup> Interview 2022

the final analytical report of the JP<sup>15</sup>. The effectiveness was measured, and the cost of new social services was estimated in this analysis.

*Table 3 Regional comparison of piloting social services*

Produced activities /regions	Ahal Velayat	Balkan Velayat	Dashoguz Velayat	Lebal Velayat	Mary Velayat	Ashgabat
Specialists in social work trained in techniques, assessment, administration, case management	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Two/three specialists in social work are deployed at etrap level	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
New specialized social services are introduced*	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Funds allocated for the payment of wages to specialist on sociwl work of the etrap and piloting community-based social services	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Developed and tested a mechanism for service providers hiring	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Needs assessment was made and the preferences are taken into account	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social services meet the standards	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

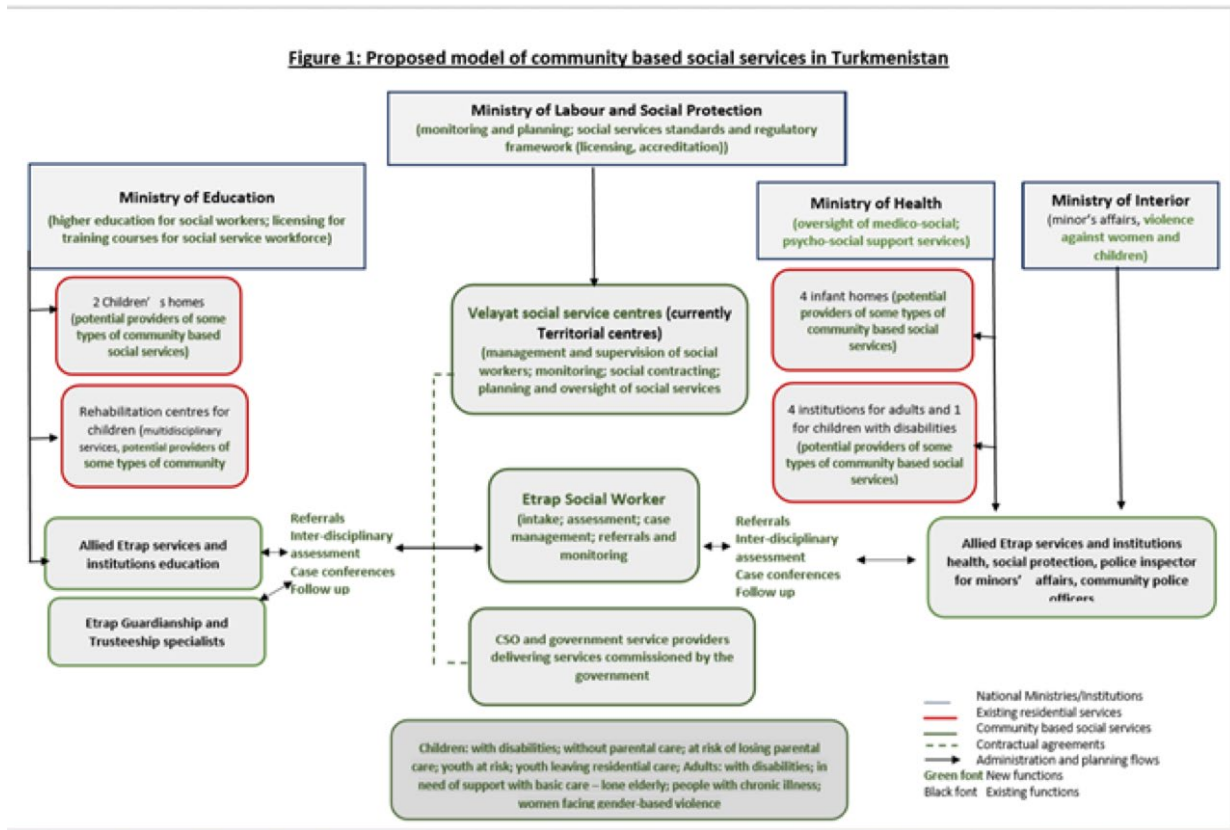
Source: developed by the author.

### Pilot social services

The JP carried out two critical types of activities on social services. First, a new type of community-based social service was piloted. For this purpose, 45 new specialists in social work were trained and deployed in etrap of the country, who applied case management approaches. Specialists in social work identify vulnerable groups, assess their needs and provide social services based on needs assessment. If these persons needed social services provided by other institutions (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Ministry of Defense and territorial administrations), then the specialists directed the needy person to the appropriate institution to receive the necessary assistance. For example, as part of this pilot, about 5,000 people's need was assessed, of which approximately 3741 persons (or 778 households) received the necessary assistance from the specialist in social work or were directed to relevant social services of other institutions.

<sup>15</sup> The final meeting the JP workgroup Executives, 2022

Figure 9 The proposed model of community based social services



Source: JP Project document

Secondly, the JP designed and piloted 12 specialized social services. According to the results of specialized services piloting, approximately 235 persons and their family members (567 people) used the new specialized social services in addition to new community-based social services (at least five months). Specialized social services operate as complementary support of the essential services and thus meet the specific needs of vulnerable people. However, specialized services are still not legislated. Also, some fundamental notions have not been worked out that impede the full-scale development of a specialized social service.

«The country does not have the legal base for the implementation of the specialized services for women, who are victims of family violence »

Interview 2022

As part of 12 specialized social services piloting, the most vulnerable categories of the target groups received specialized care, namely:

- 24 children with disabilities and their families
- 29 families with children in difficult life situation



- 7 infants from orphanages and their families in order to re-integrate into the family
- 19 adolescents, who left the boarding school
- 45 young people of risk group and their families
- 75 women victims of family violence
- 5 women at risk of unwanted pregnancy or abandonment of their newborn baby
- 50 men and women with disabilities
- 50 elderly women and men without family care
- 37 persons recovered from chronic diseases

An economic analysis of new social services has been carried out to influence the government's decision on the need to introduce new social services. The economic analysis included estimates of new social services introduction and expansion costs. Also, related measures have been taken to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the JP inputs.

#### Law-making activities

The JP provided technical support in the development of many legal documents, as well as other law-making technical assistance. For example:

- A new law on social services was drafted and adopted in 2021;
- The draft of “National Plan for the development of social services for 2022 – 2030 years” was developed;
- Draft of the Social Work Program was developed (job descriptions, quality standards, social work manual);
- An analysis of the legislation was also carried out, and recommendations for amendments were proposed. For example, a set of legal amendments have been introduced into the Code of Social Protection.

All these law-making activities were aimed at institutionalizing new community-based and specialized social services, in particular at fixing the job posts of specialists in social work and their independent functioning apart from the JP. For example, the National Plan for the Development of Social Services included measures to fix new social services in the national system and the transition to the de-institutionalization of social services.

*Table 4 Law reform: results*

Legislative activity	Results
Identification of social services	A new law on social services was adopted (Articles 1, 4, 17, 18 of the Law). Project documents for specialized social services were developed, but were not legislated.
Requirements to	A new law on social services was adopted, which set the quality standards



<b>Delivery of services</b>	(Article 19 of the Law).
<b>Requirements to service providers</b>	The draft documents on the realization of specialized social services were elaborated and the mechanisms of social contacting were developed, but were not legislated.
<b>Regulation on community-based social services</b>	A new law on social services was adopted, regulating the General Provisions on social services.
<b>Social services quality standards</b>	A new law on social services was adopted, which set the quality standards (Article 19 of the Law).
<b>Regulations for the delivery of social services</b>	A new law on social services was adopted (Article 20, 21, 22 of the Law).
<b>Commitment of the Government to budget the community-based services</b>	The State budget allocated the funds for financing the work of 45 new specialist for social work. But it will have to finance about 1000 additional specialist for social work. The mechanism of State financing of specialized services is not adopted.

urce: author

Although the law was adopted and the Code of Social Protection was amended, other vital documents were not adopted. On the one hand, this can significantly slow down the reform process and create difficulties for the effective functioning of new social services. On the other hand, specialized services have not yet been ready for nationwide implementation. In particular, legal measures such as state social order of social service were not legislated, and no budgetary allocations were made for specialized social services by non-governmental providers of social services. It is recommended to continue piloting because this service cannot yet be independently implemented. As the evaluator observed, this happened because of the Government's unwillingness to implement these services through non-governmental organizations<sup>16</sup>. The choice of three velayat for piloting specialized social services was justified by the presence of potential service providers in these areas<sup>17</sup>. It would be worthwhile also to focus on increasing the potential and prominence of non-governmental organizations in the eyes of the government— especially those who did not collaborate with the government before.

### Training

The Joint Program and international institutions designed training Programs on the basic theory and practice of social care, based on which a number of training workshops and training were held. In the first stage, 10 national trainers were selected who were trained online. In the second stage, the Joint Program launched an eight-month cascade training for social workers and other government staff. Over 700 representatives, including 45 specialists in social work, employees and chiefs of state and non-governmental providers of social services, and relevant specialists underwent a 200-days training. The eight-month cascade training began in

<sup>17</sup> JP Interim Assessment 2020 and the interview 2022

November 2020. The training was conducted both online and full-time by international and national trainers in all velayats of the country.

«The workshops were very interesting and useful».

The most of interviewees of working work said,  
*Interview 2022*

After the training, the potential of all the above-mentioned categories of social services employees was upgraded; they knew the fundamental theories of social work and acquired relevant skills to apply new approaches to assessing and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable groups at the community level.

“I thought I was tolerant, but these training increased my potential of acquiring informed tolerance, that is understanding issues of vulnerable people and improving my professional competency of working with them”

*JP Article on Discovering a new helping profession – a specialists of social work, 2020*

Also, the Joint Program has designed a higher education program to build a labour force in social work, mainly to ensure an increase in the number of new social work specialists. Representatives of the academic sector, government officials, and representatives of NGOs took part in the training and development of the curriculum.

#### Lesson learned

The training of ten national trainers proved to be a good lesson. Although this was an unplanned measure, ten trainers now represent a significant resource for future capacity building. The main reason for this measure was the significant restrictions imposed by the pandemic. International trainers could not enter Turkmenistan, and online training for national partners was ineffective. Therefore, it was decided to train local trainers, who then were involved in training local specialists from both the government and the non-governmental sectors.

### 5.2.2. Gender and Inclusive aspects

#### Gender aspects in documents

A new model of community-based social services contributes to the empowerment of women and girls, boys and men, and vulnerable groups of the population, thus having a mechanism for discussing gender inequality.

Legal documents contain norms aimed at eliminating any type of discrimination and barriers to accessing social services. For example, Article 5 of a new law on social services (2021) prescribes the principles of how social services must operate. It states ensuring equal opportunities for the use of social services (Article 5, paragraph 1). Also, the Law on Social Services writes social inclusion (Article 4, paragraph 1). Draft normative documents have fully

taken into account gender aspects, the inclusiveness of the elderly, people with disabilities and children for general and specialized social services.<sup>18</sup>

JP developed new norms that correspond to the international standards and ensure equality, inclusiveness and empowerment of vulnerable population groups. However, two specialized social services have been created and piloted that are specifically intended for women experiencing family violence, as well as women with an unplanned pregnancy or at risk of abandoning their child at birth. The Joint Program has developed documents regulating specialized services, but this is still at the pilot stage. The relevant public authorities have not yet adopted them at the legislative level.

Within the training and recruitment of new social workers, at least half of the specialists in social work are women. Trained and hired social workers of the pilot social services and relevant professionals of the social sector were trained on gender aspects and its relationship with other vulnerabilities such as disability, poverty and violence.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, training materials have contained standard operating procedures on gender-based violence.

An analysis of the Joint Program cases shows that the proportion of women needing assistance and services increases with age. The Joint Program has helped raise awareness of the need for gender-sensitive social services in older age.

### Disaggregated data

The JP disaggregated data by men, women, boys and girls, including women and girls with disabilities – 54% of assessed people belonged to the female gender.<sup>20</sup>

### Gender budgeting

The Joint Program promoted state budgeting of a new system of community-based social services. JP developed documents on budgeting and contracting the specialists in social work, such as working time norms for the "social work specialist" profession, payroll and working hours calculation, job description, and personnel specifications. For example, the joint Program prepared an information note for the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection on budgeting the job functions of specialists in social work for 2021. The paper contained the critical information that the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection could use in technical consultations with Ministry of Finance and Economy.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Interim assessment, 2021

<sup>19</sup> Interim assessment, 2021

<sup>20</sup> Interim assessment, 2021

<sup>21</sup> Annual Progress Report, 2020

The JP conducted a gender audit of the proposed budget allocations for new social services and developed recommendations for forming a gender-responsive budget based on the audit results. The JP developed gender equality impact projections and took account of gender aspects in its cost-benefit analyses. A gender audit was incorporated into the economic analysis.<sup>22</sup>

### 5.2.3. Public awareness of the social services and skills development

#### *Guidelines, country documents and training Programs*

Six training modules have been developed to further education and professional development. For example, an eight-month online course and full-time training for national trainers and social service employees were conducted based on the developed modules. They began in November 2020 and were completed in 2021. The JP has developed a case management manual. These activities were the basis for elaborating training materials and modules for social workers, support staff, managers, and service providers and for social workers' guidance. Further, the Government can use these materials independently.

#### Training and qualification of specialists in social work

Firstly, the Joint Program conducted training targeting a wide range of multidisciplinary professionals working at different levels in social protection, health, law enforcement, lawmaking and service delivery (i.e. training for social service providers, various specialists and teachers of higher educational institutions). JP organized training for the staff of the social sector, non-governmental sector, managers of the social sector, relevant specialists and others, as well as trained new specialists in social work who have been deployed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population. The training primarily focused on providing new inclusive community-based social services. International educational organizations and national trainers were involved in the entire training process. To date, 45 days of full-time training (introductory course) for 45 specialists and about 200 days of training have been delivered for 700 staff of the social care system and various specialists. JP also designed a curriculum for higher education.

Moreover, the Joint Program has ensured the inclusiveness of representatives of different government and non-governmental sectors and the development partners in the decision-making process. For example, the JP working group was created to strengthen the operational capacity of participating national organizations and UN agencies.

#### Public awareness

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<sup>22</sup> Annual Progress Report, 2021

The Joint Program has taken many measures to inform the population and government partners about piloted social services. On the one hand, these measures aimed to achieve public and state awareness; on the other hand, to motivate them to implement and use new inclusive social services. The mass media, volunteer organizations, and civil society were involved in raising the hardships faced by vulnerable population groups. JP prepared brochures and information leaflets, advertising videos, booklets, and published articles on the Internet. JP drafted blogs and prepared videos about social integration. For example, advertising in social networks reached a broader target audience and promoted a new model of social care and, in general, the Joint Program activity. “Word of mouth” also worked well. Most of the assessed people transmitted the information to others - according to the assumptions of the annual progress report, one person informed three others.<sup>23</sup>

New specialists in social work were also involved. In addition to assistance, they also informed the population about social services. They distributed information booklets and carried out explanatory work. As a result, the population, particularly the target group of vulnerable categories, became more informed and gained trust in new community-based social services.

The social workers have been trained. In most cases, the JP training was practical, productive and of high quality. The workshops were less relevant in other cases, particularly considering participants' professional interests.

*Interview 2022*

Employees of social protection-related sectors, healthcare, education and justice, heads of social services, khyakimliks (local administration) and other leaders on the etrap and velayat levels also joined to raise awareness and understanding of social work and the role of social workers among the population. For example, as a result of this work, the proportion of women needing assistance and services has increased.

### 5.3. Sustainability

Criterion	Assessment level	Reasoning
Sustainability	High	One of the main achievements of the Joint Program is the development and adoption of a new law on community-based social services. Many specialists in technical and management areas have acquired new knowledge and skills for independent implementation of new models. Also, other regulations documents (standards, guidelines, higher education curriculum) have been developed that can provide further development of social services system.

<sup>23</sup> Interim assessment 2021



### 5.3.1. Codification of new social services

#### Legal documents

JP carried out the analysis of the entire social sector legislation at the beginning of the project. One of the main achievements of the Joint Program stands for the drafting and adoption of a new law on community-based social services.<sup>24</sup> It prescribes a new model of social care and the activity of a specialist in social work.<sup>25</sup> However, this law is a significant implementation. Despite this, the law does not fully reflect international practice and does not entirely contain international standards. There are some gaps. For example, regarding the second level, specialized social services, it is mentioned in the law on non-governmental organizations that there are also rights and obligations of social services providers. However, there are no norms regulating the financing of social service providers and social contracting mechanisms.<sup>26</sup>

Although the implementation of specialized services has not been yet approved, the JP has prepared the legal framework for specialized services, which MLSP uses in practice. For example, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection plans to continue elaborating and delivering new specialized services in its territorial centres for the elderly, persons with disabilities and children. Also, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection can use these documents to institutionalize and ensure financing. The government is generally willing to continue working in this direction, but they expect optimistic results from piloting social services.

“The national system is not ready to implement some specialized services (for example, the specialized service on gender-based violence). However, some UN agencies will pilot even after the completion of the Joint Program”

Interview, May 2022

Although the system cannot introduce specialized social services at the moment, it will be possible in the medium and long term. Introducing specialized social services requires adopting legal documents prepared by the Joint Program (social contracting mechanism, regulating social service providers). It also requires the supply of the social services sector with both labour force and financial resources. In the long term, it requires the development of a network of non-governmental organizations (service providers) to expand the range and coverage of services.

#### Guidance and tools

<sup>24</sup> Annual progress report 2021

<sup>25</sup> Interview 2022

<sup>26</sup> Law on social services 2021

The Joint Program has prepared some documents and carried out several analyses that contribute to further implementing new social services. For example, the Joint Program prepared a Social Work Manual approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. The manual includes a code of ethics for specialists in social work. It was the basis for the development of all training modules. This manual is composed of three chapters:

- I. Theories and concepts of social work;
- II. Assessment;
- III. Case management, i.e. the manual for specialists in social work, deployed to territorial subdivisions at etraps level and guidance on communication with the population to create a shared understanding of social work and social services.

JP drafted analytical reports such as an analysis of the development of a community-based social services model, including the need for the number of specialists in social work with different options for their appointment throughout the country. JP elaborated on this, taking into account international and regional experience, particularly the national context of Turkmenistan. Also, various options for financing the job positions were presented, including a description of the current system of social services, the number of services users, types of services, information on the cost of the services, and personnel standards. Also, JP drafted the draft of the National Plan for the social service development to 2022-2030. This plan describes the structure of the proposed model of social services. MLSP has already used this plan while identifying new goals in the National development strategy till 2050. The plan continues to be a valuable source of information for long-term planning of social services development.

#### Competencies of social workers and managers

The Joint Program carried out some training activities in which public employees and the employees of the social care system have acquired a broad understanding of the new approaches to social services delivery. The presented information at the training workshops was utterly new and, to some extent, difficult to understand, but the feedback from the participants was quite positive.<sup>27</sup>

All 45 specialists in social work have received rigorous training, where they received the necessary knowledge to pilot new social services. Also, during the piloting, they worked closely with non-governmental providers of social services.

#### Good practice

JP suggested making the specialists in social work a part of the labour force of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection from 2021. It laid the foundation for developing a community-based social service model and provided the finance from the state budget.

For example, the Joint Program issued grants, carried out calculations, and the MLSP, in turn, developed internal regulatory documents on the procedure for salaries paying to 45 new specialists in social work. Thus, the Government has taken on specific tasks to carry out. It contributed to the

<sup>27</sup> Interview 2022



rapid evolution of the JP achievements and significantly increased the potential of the involved state institutions. All this together significantly has strengthened the sustainability of the JP measures.

In general, specialists in social work have acquired new skills and knowledge to implement new social services. Nevertheless, the main problem remains the lack of qualified staff to ensure the full implementation of social services. The Joint Program has developed a higher education curriculum to address this issue. JP designed various scenarios to increase the number of new specialists in social work through graduates of higher educational institutions on the newly developed education curriculum.

### 5.3.2. Sustainability of results

#### Expectations and experiences

High and technical level cooperation through the Steering Committee and Working Groups, supported by regular PUNO meetings and national partners, has led to the Government of Turkmenistan maintaining a substantial stake in the processes and results of the Joint Program. This practice has led to good results. Namely, JP provided technical assistance in drafting the new Law on Social Services. The approved financing for 2022 of MLSP specialists in social work in 20 etraps is a good sign that the results of the Joint Program will be institutionalized, and funding for growth will cover all etraps (districts).

“This is a very ambitious programme, the goals of which are quite attainable in close cooperation between UN agencies and national partners both at the national and local levels”

*JP Blog “National stakeholders from all over the country get acquainted with UN – Turkmenistan Joint Programme on community-based social services», 2020*

Some governmental authorities are still sceptical about implementing new specialized services, mainly through non-governmental organizations. For example, the Ministry of Finance and Economy has shown less interest in this issue, whereas the MLSP recognizes the particular significance of non-governmental organizations. It is also necessary to note the difference in attitudes towards potential providers among state and non-state institutions. Undoubtedly, preference is given to state institutions as potential providers of specialized social services.

In general, the Government reckoned the assistance provided by the Joint Program very positively. However, community-based social services require further improvement. For example, the new law did not cover some of the critical standards proposed by the Joint Program. It was because the persons, who made decisions on the final version of the law, were most likely less involved in technical discussions or disagreed with the proposed standards. It can lead to misinterpretation of the fundamental processes. It is a normal process of any reform - usually not static. Reforms are full of debates and discussions, and legal norms can be improved over time. Moreover, this is a good indicator of the democratic process of the system reforming. Government representatives expect to continue this work by JP and are committed to reforming the social services system.



## 5.4 Impact

Criterion	Assessment level	Reasoning
Impact	Medium	The Joint Program changed government officials' understanding of community-based social service approaches. Specialists in social work have acquired competencies in inter-sectoral matters, case management and assessing peoples' needs. However, NGOs not involved (others) in JP have not gained due recognition among some government bodies as providers of specialized social services, although the Government highly appreciates their work and cooperation with them.

### 5.4.1 The capability of social workers and service providers to meet individual needs of vulnerable groups of population and to ensure their social inclusion

Considering a series of organized workshops and the skills acquired by specialists, the trained staff is practically ready to provide new community-based social services. Specialists in social work have gained extra capacity (knowledge, skills and behaviour). Specialists in social work completed 45 days of training and 18 months of practice. It is undoubtedly a significant basis for social work management, but not as significant and sufficient as what could be provided by 4-year study at the university. Specialists in social work have demonstrated high potential. However, this training and practice is only the beginning of a long process of creating a professional social service workforce.

Most of the interviewed specialists in social work said about their absolute readiness and ability to provide these social services. The main obstacle, in their opinion, is the lack of financial resources to ensure the employment of new social workers. To this should be added the absence of the necessary structures and departments at the local level, within which specialists could be employed, and the lack of financial resources for operational costs. Although, to some extent, further capacity building is still required. For example, the JP proposes to ensure the training and recruitment of at least three social work specialists in each etrap by 2023, with the consequent increase in number.

### 5.4.2 Demonstrated importance of NGOs in the coverage of vulnerable groups of population and satisfaction of needs

The perception of a new approach to delivering community-based social services changed. However, NGOs have not gained due recognition among some government bodies as providers of specialized social services. Also, the new social service law does not contain social

contracting mechanisms, and a by-law on social contracting has not yet been adopted.<sup>28</sup> Also, there is a significant shortage of NGOs specializing in social issues, creating significant difficulties in expanding specialized social services.<sup>29</sup>

### Good practice

Specific measures contributed to changes from within the organization. For example, JP transferred funds to the account of the Ministry, which drove the Ministry to develop all the necessary internal documents. Having these documents makes the Ministry manage the process independently.

There is also the necessity to elaborate legal provisions that would allow civil society organizations to participate more effectively in the delivery of social services and become recognized stakeholders of the national social protection system.

## 5.5 Coherence

Criterion	Evaluation level	Reasoning
Coherence	High	Interdepartmental cooperation between the Government and the UN and internal cooperation of each party with various specialized organizations proceeded successfully. MLSP and the UN Resident Coordinator chaired regular meetings of the JP steering and technical committees. The JP committees comprised critical national partners, NGOs and development partners. Documents produced by the Joint Program were coordinated with the Government, working group members and external partners.

### 5.5.1 Coherence of new model of social services with other sectors

#### Sectoral relationship

JP discussed the preliminary recommendations for legislative amendments with the Majlis (Parliament) and ministries.<sup>30</sup> It helped to tackle possible contradictions and policy gaps.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2021-2025 confirms the shared vision and partnership between the Government of Turkmenistan and the UN system. The Joint Program contributes to Result 5 of Result 4 in the new Cooperation Framework: “Regulatory framework and technical opportunities developed for the implementation of the social protection system for the quality inclusive community-based social services delivery”. The program makes an essential contribution towards implementing national strategic priorities regarding human capital strengthening, raising the standard of living, people-oriented social policies and social services, as well as implementing human rights national plans of action and other sectoral strategies.

<sup>28</sup> Interview 2022 and New Law on Social Services, 2021

<sup>29</sup> Interview 2022

<sup>30</sup> Annual report on the progress of the Joint Program for 2020

The JP also complies with the Emergency Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) to COVID-19. The Government of Turkmenistan developed SERP with the support of the UN Country Team (UNCT). Guided by the UN Framework Program for the urgent socio-economic response to COVID-19, SERP considers the national priorities of the Government of Turkmenistan, The Program of the President of Turkmenistan on Socio-economic Development of the Country for 2019-2025, the Development Concept for Digital Economy 2019-2025 and the International Economic Development Program for 2020 -2025 years.<sup>31</sup>

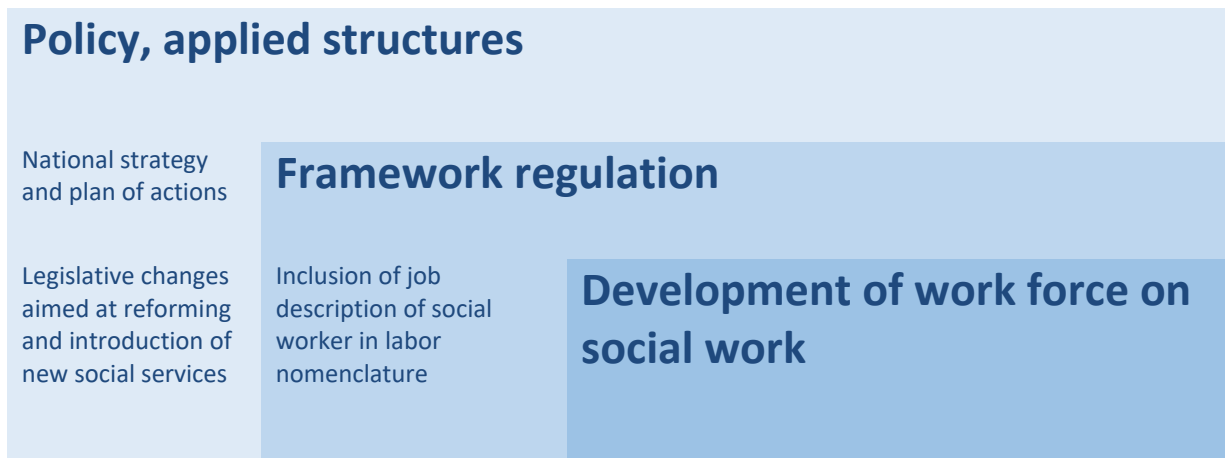
### Consultation with the representatives of public sectors

The Joint Program has united a wide range of national partners and has created inter-sectoral coordinating mechanisms. This coordinated method ensured close cooperation, synchronization of actions and responsibility for the shared objectives of PUNO instead of focusing only on their tasks. The JP committees constituted national partners, including the Majlis (Parliament), the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Statistics Committee, NGOs, development partners and PUNO.<sup>32</sup>

### 5.5.2 Internal coherence of JP measures

JP technical committees held weekly coordination meetings. Many JP measures are a natural continuation of previous work and recommendations. For example, the recommendations of the report on the Action Plan for the development of social services and human resources of social services for 2018-2028 were reflected in the project document of the Joint Program. It contains such components as the development of legislation and standards, piloting new social services, capacity building and designing a university curriculum.

*Figure 10 Main components offered by the conceptual approach of the UNICEF Action Plan for 2018-2028*



<sup>31</sup> Annual report on the progress of the Joint Program for 2021

<sup>32</sup> Annual report on the progress of the Joint Program for 2020

Financing mechanisms	Standards of services Monitoring system  Plans for reforming institutional social institutions and services for adults	Create the Social Work faculty and education standards	Train social workers on needs assessment in piloted etraps and train local government staff	Pilot new social services
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*Source: UNICEF Report on the Plan of Action on the development of social services and human resources of social services for 2018-2028, 2018*

Broad participation of the UN agencies certainly has a positive impact. Nevertheless, there are also negative factors that are worth paying attention to. The SDG Report on lessons learned<sup>33</sup> revealed that the multiple participation of the UN agencies in joint programs might create specific difficulties in terms of harmonization, implementation of tasks and approaches to work. Difficulties may arise on highly technical issues where some UN agencies do not have sufficient expertise. Nevertheless, this was not the case for JP in Turkmenistan. JP coordinated all activities well, and each PUNO contributed to JP synergy.

#### Good lesson

Significant results were achieved thanks to the well-coordinated work of the Joint Program. Coordination went well due to weekly meetings and teamwork of all PUNOs. They provided technical assistance to national partners and shared a unified vision of how social services should develop in Turkmenistan.

#### 5.5.3 Coordination JP with other development partners and the UN agencies

The Joint Program has increased the synergy of projects and created the conditions for avoiding UN agency's measures duplication. It was achieved through harmonising UN agencies' activity, co-financing capacity-increasing activities, sharing and applying knowledge, and using recruitment/purchase mechanisms by other UN agencies to hire local consultants.<sup>34</sup>

Also, the JP regularly provided information on work progress and achievements to the UN country team in Turkmenistan. UN country team arranged meetings to focus on strategic issues and joint declarations and coordinated approaches to work with government partners at all levels.

<sup>33</sup> Lessons learned from SDG Fund, 2019

[https://www.sdgfund.org/sites/default/files/sdg\\_fund\\_lessons\\_learned\\_report\\_2019\\_v3\\_web\\_cover1-merged.pdf](https://www.sdgfund.org/sites/default/files/sdg_fund_lessons_learned_report_2019_v3_web_cover1-merged.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> The UN annual report 2021, March 2022

## 6. Cross cutting issues: human rights, gender and disability inclusion

The JP designed a new model of inclusive community-based services for children at risk of separation from parents, children without parental care, children with disabilities, youth at risk, women facing gender-based violence, people with disabilities and older persons in need of support with basic everyday care.

**Legal documents** have been drafted for community based and specialized social services to address needs of the JP's vulnerable groups (children with disabilities, without parental care, at risk of separation from parents; people with disabilities; people in need of support with basic care; women facing gender-based violence; youth at risk). Legislation amendments fully complies with the standards and ensures the gender equality, disability inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable groups. JP undertook the following key activities and developed tools to address various vulnerabilities of target groups:

### *Human rights*

- Human rights mechanisms are a foundational pillar of the theoretical framework of the model of social work and social services in the ToC. The guidance for social workers took international human rights mechanisms as the foundation for all social work development, focusing on CRC, CRPD and CEDAW but also CESC and UPR. This guidance formed the basis for all training and communications activities, advocacy, and supervision of the developed social services practice.
- Human rights are core to the principles in the Law on Social Services and the supporting regulatory framework that was developed with support from the JP, including the service specifications for the Community social workers in the etrap and the specialized services which directly reference core human rights instruments.
- The proposed service models are rights-based, tailor-made, beneficiary-centred and in the process of their implementation, promote respect to the rights of service users as well as ensures that the social services are more sustainable, effective and accessible for beneficiaries, ensuring participation and empowerment of beneficiaries (children, women, girls, youth, disabled and elderly).

### *Gender aspects and disability inclusion*

- gender audit of the proposed budget allocations for newly piloted services. Introduce adjustments to make the proposed budget more gender-responsive. Developed projections of gender equality impact and mainstream gender in all cost-efficiency analysis.
- Worked with media to report issues of Joint Programme, such as people with disability, people in need of basic care, youth at risk, victims of gender violence, etc.

- Monitoring data has been disaggregated for men, women, boys and girls including women and girls with disabilities – 54% of people whose needs were assessed by the etrap social workers were women.
- Gender based violence standard operating procedures have been developed and incorporated into training modules for allied workforce and social workers;
- Piloted social services are gender responsive and social workers who are working in them have been trained to be aware of gender and its intersection with other vulnerabilities including disability, poverty and violence.

## 7. Measures towards SDGs

**Target 1.3:** Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures, including minimum levels of social protection, and provide significant coverage for poor and vulnerable groups of the population by 2030.

Based on the needs assessment of target groups, and inventory of social services was developed:

- » theoretical framework document describing a model of community-based inclusive social services.
- » guidelines, principles/manuals. They were agreed upon with national stakeholders and used for capacity-building of social and allied workers.
- » The draft of the National Plan of the development of the social service in Turkmenistan was elaborated. This plan describes the structure of the proposed model of social services.

Also, the measures mentioned below have contributed to the realization of Target 1.3:

- » The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection recruited and deployed a new social services staff (specialists). Specialists obtained the appropriate skills training to provide a new model of inclusive community-based social services.
- » JP analyzed national legislation, policies and regulations in the field of social protection and drafted a new law on social services. The Law on Social Services was presented and approved by Parliament in December 2021. The law guarantees the extension and improves access and coverage.
- » Draft regulations have been developed for community-based and specialized social services. New standards meet the needs of vulnerable groups of the population (children with disabilities, left without parental care, at risk of separation from their parents, people with disabilities, people in need of primary care assistance, women facing gender-based violence, young people at risk).
- » Higher education curriculum in social work was drawn up with the participation of the Ministry of Education and leading national universities. It should replenish the labour force while expanding social service coverage.

**Target 10.4:** Adopt policies, particularly fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve equality.

- » The legislative amendments aim to provide more effective financing mechanisms, enable civil society organizations to participate in the delivery of social services and become recognized stakeholders of the national social protection system. However, Mejlis (Parliament) has not yet adopted them. The JP provided the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection with a regulatory framework for their deployment at the etrap level. Forty-five

specialist positions were included in the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection budget in 2022.

- » The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection provided technical assistance in negotiations with the Ministry of Finance and Economy on financing social work positions and social services. Calculating the cost of the services and creating appropriate financing mechanisms were also carried out.

**Target 16.1:** Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related mortality

- » The proposed theoretical framework of a new model of social services, as well as training and proposed legislative amendments, aims to address various forms of violence, primarily domestic violence, gender-based violence and violence against children.
- » JP developed draft legal documents on preventing violence and protecting victims of violence (standards of work procedures and specifications for specialized social services).



## 8. Conclusion, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

This chapter sets out the Evaluator’s conclusions on the overall performance of the Joint Program. It also presents the key lessons learned from the strengths and weaknesses of the way the Joint Program was implemented, which, along with the recommendations, can help optimize the approach to future support of similar technical assistance.

### Conclusion

Overall assessment of the evaluation confirms that, as set out in the results framework and program document, the Joint United Nations Program supported significantly the Government towards implementation of national priorities and needs of Turkmenistan. JP made a transformative change in the current system of social service delivery, reached out to the most deprived and vulnerable population and addressed their specific needs.

The information gathered through interaction between new specialists in social work and people with multiple vulnerabilities helped to contribute to the design of the service model – high levels of need for individual support were identified for people with disabilities, children and older people. Scale of need for GBV services have not been identified but feedback from women experiencing GBV and receiving specialized services has helped to build understanding among key decision-makers of the need for these services. Prototype (pilot) services have documented change in people’s lives and the meeting of needs resulting from the service provision both by specialized services and the etrap specialists in social work. Services have been costed and other kinds of data gathered to inform government decision-making and to build commitment of government to fund and roll out the new model at scale. Government’s commitment is demonstrated by:

- ⇒ budget allocations for 45 social worker positions;
- ⇒ a new law on social services;
- ⇒ MLSP regulations adopted to institutionalise the Etrap specialists in social work;
- ⇒ partial integration of specialized services into the MLSP Territorial Centres;
- ⇒ agreement between MoE and MLSP that new social worker degree courses will be launched in September 2023 initially for 50 social work students;
- ⇒ inclusion of social service development into national strategies 2022-2030 and 2050.

A core workforce has been established with 45 trained specialists in social work and 10 trained social work trainers as well as a group of 15 academics and university teachers. A social contracting mechanism has been tested by UN agencies contracting NGOs to deliver services and MLSP has positively assessed NGOs as potential service providers, whereas other Ministry of Finance remain skeptical in NGOs role. The documentation developed by the JP for the model social services is being used by the government for further development of the etrap social worker model and some of the specialised social services. The JP itself increased

coverage of services during 2.5 years of implementation and at the end of June 2022 the government is ready to begin scaling up.

### *Relevance*

The JP was relevant given the strategic priorities of the Government and the United Nations development. It is also well aligned with UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and UNODC country-level priorities and the SDGs (particularly SDGs targets 1.3, 10.4 and 16.1). Its relevance to the needs of the vulnerable groups in Turkmenistan was evident. The JP was designed to simultaneously address the system's capacity issues and challenges faced by vulnerable people and those with specific needs by providing community-based and specialized social services. The joint programme was appropriate for this approach, given the needs of the target group and the types of change the programme set out to achieve.

### *Effectiveness*

The Joint Program achieved all of its envisaged outputs, and made significant progress towards its one planned outcome. The JP measures increased the population coverage and the range of new social services that the vulnerable groups need. Substantial contributions were noted in strengthening national stakeholders' capacity, developing a new community-based social services model, capacity formation and deploying 45 new specialists in social work, preparing a set of legal documents and adopting a new Law on Social Services.

### *Sustainability*

One of the main achievements of the Joint Program is the development and adoption of a new law on community-based social services. Many specialists in technical and management areas have acquired new knowledge and skills for independent implementation of new models. Also, other regulations documents (standards, guidelines, draft of higher education curriculum) have been developed that can provide further development of social services system. Nonetheless sustainability risks exist. These include a lack of higher education curriculum on social work that can produce and supply the social services system with a new labour force.

### *Impact*

The JP had made essential contributions given both influencing the enabling environments for community-based social services and specialized social services and extension of social protection coverage. Considerable progress was also made regarding deploying new specialists in social work and establishing a case management approach, adopting a new law on Social Services, and enhancing Government's and social providers' capacities to implement social services effectively. The JP has undoubtedly made significant contributions to all the SDGs with which it was aligned. It also made significant contributions to enhancing the empowerment of

vulnerable groups. However, NGOs as providers of specialized social services have not fully gained due recognition among some government organizations. Also, government officials at central and local level need to strengthen their capacity to implement new social services. This is why more time and efforts are needed before the impact of the JP can be tangibly realised.

### *Coherence*

Interdepartmental cooperation between the Government and the UN and internal cooperation of each party with various specialized organizations proceeded successfully. MLSP and the UN Resident Coordinator chaired regular meetings of the JP steering and technical committees. The JP committees comprised key national partners, NGOs and development partners. Documents produced by the Joint Program were coordinated with the Government, working group members and external partners.

The JP can be considered certainly a successful joint project delivered by UN agencies in Turkmenistan.

### *Key Lessons Learned*

The key lessons learned are emerging from the review and analysis of project documents and interviews with key informants.

- ⇒ The Joint Program promoted multilateralism and proper joint programming that started with joint planning and analysis at the design stage of the JP, with the active participation of national stakeholders and UN agencies. Accurate planning of JP required adequate time and effort devoted to analyzing policy gaps, national needs and challenges. It also required an assessment of internal and external available resources that could be leveraged to implement the JP activities.
- ⇒ Strong coordination between the PUNOs and a coherent technical oversight approach has helped to build a unified understanding of social work and social services among all stakeholders including government partners, NGOs and local authorities and has also contributed to strong ownership of the JP processes and results by the government, especially the MLSP.
- ⇒ The rapid pace of implementation inherent in the JP and its inherent nature as a catalytic initiative focused on accelerating the pace of implementation of the SDGs means that some aspects of implementation have not kept pace and particularly the development of a professional workforce that is, for example, competent to support the implementation of the new Law on Social Services.
- ⇒ Training of social workers was hampered by having to move to online training of trainers instead of direct training by experienced social work experts. This is why flexibility was a success factor in flattening the learning. A short-, medium- and long-term plan is needed to support the steady expansion and continuous professional development of the social work and social service workforce.

- ⇒ Local authorities were not extensively involved in early stages of JP implementation, apart from training and information events in pilot etraps, but were heavily involved in providing support for the etrap social workers once they were deployed. Further training and building of capacity in social work and social services is needed to further strengthen the role of local authorities in further roll out of the system.
- ⇒ Specialized social services had limited time to demonstrate their effectiveness and to document the transformational results that they can help to achieve. While key informants have increased understanding of the need for specialized social services, more time is needed for a full picture to emerge of the kinds of services that are a priority and the level of coverage that is required.
- ⇒ The risk is that capacity-building efforts can fail if the government does not ensure a national social services system with supplies of the labour force. An institutional brain drain, which is further raised by the principle of frequent staff rotation in public agencies as well as a lack of the system to produce a new labour force – hampers the ability of the national social services system to expand social services.

### Recommendations

The JP largely met its goals and the logic of the intervention was proven. This evaluation found many areas of solid performance in the JP under review. Lessons learned, however indicate challenges exist in several areas including workforce expansion and strengthening, rolling out specialized services and building understanding and competencies in local authorities where etrap social workers are deployed. The evaluation focuses on areas where follow-up is needed to ensure the sustainability of JP inputs. Recommendations are designed around critical issues presented in the Chapter on Evaluation Findings and connected with the assigned stakeholders (UN and Government). Thus, the recommendations are intended for the UN and the Government. These recommendations build on the achievements of the JP while taking into consideration the lessons learned:

#### Recommendations for the UN

- ⇒ **To consolidate the results from the first phase of the Joint Program.** The JP has prepared many studies, standards, operational guidelines, training materials, evaluation reports, brochures, and materials. It is recommended to disseminate the achievements and knowledge widely at all levels of government and across sectors including etrap and Velayat Khakimliks, education, health, social protection, police and civil society. PUNO should also continue cooperation in promoting knowledge among academia, development partners (bilateral, multilateral and multi-donor banks), private sector as well as among the wider population.
- ⇒ **To continue piloting new social services, mainly specialized social services, implementing the higher education curriculum, and working on the adoption of legal documents through the implementation of the second phase of the JP.** The Joint Program has

achieved many positive results, but some unrealized targets require further work, which, if not executed, can negatively affect the sustainability of the results. It is recommended to prioritize capacity building over the rapid further scaling up implementation of the system of social services piloted by the Joint Program to ensure that expansion of the workforce keeps pace with the expansion of the network of community-based services in the etraps and of specialized services. The targets of the Joint Program were quite ambitious, although most of them JP has achieved. The Joint Program inherently was catalytic, i.e. short-term, with specific objectives. It was ambitious but realistic, as most of the objectives for model system testing were achieved. Strengthening, institutionalization and deepening development of these foundations should be the next step. The next stage should be implemented slowly, with moderate ambition. The capacity building of the labour force in social work and social services throughout the country will take time. It will be introduced gradually. Also, to avoid complications, it is necessary to concentrate on the capacity of government staff and new specialists' and involve social services champions among the government's leadership and the President's office to build understanding of the need for and long-term support and investment for the expansion and further strengthening of the system of social services. Policy development requires time and high-level expertise to be effective. Efforts aiming to support the process of policy development need to employ a variety of complementary strategies, including advocacy.

- ⇒ **To continue the capacity building of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population and local governments.** The PUNOs have an ongoing role in further in straightening the capacity of MLSP to make the case to the government for social services development and wider coverage of the vulnerable population. MLSP also can be supported in its role in leading stronger local decision-making process to implement social services successfully. Monitoring and evaluation of social services and social protection more widely will help to generate data not only for stronger decision-making based on evidence, but also for stronger advocacy within government at different levels to support decision-making. Building a strong M&E system from the outset will help to avoid challenges further down the line in terms of planning for the development of services, identifying effective services and identifying gaps in services. It will also support transparency and the case for investment.
- ⇒ **To strengthen the role and importance of NGOs at the highest levels of government and state institutions.** To choose velayats where social services are developed to a lesser extent and initiate building the capacity of NGOs to deliver services in these areas. It is also necessary to focus on increasing the potential and image of non-governmental organizations in the eyes of the Government. The number of NGOs in Turkmenistan is limited. Moreover, not all of them work with social issues. Only a few NGOs, primarily JP participants, have shown the Government their advantages and value. Many NGOs do not have a development strategy and often depend on one leader. If the Government opts for

developing a mixed social services market involving private providers and NGOs, it may bring new professional forces. PUNOs can play a role in identifying champions within the government who understand the added value that NGOs can bring to social service provision and support them in raising awareness with the Ministry of Finance and other parts of government that may have less knowledge about non-government social service provision. This will mean building understanding of regulatory mechanisms, accreditation, standards and monitoring and inspection as part of the full cycle of social service commissioning.

- ⇒ **The number and content of training should be adapted to the needs of central and local stakeholders.** In particular, the training for local government employees, managers and professionals should be increased with a focus on community-based social services. This will help to support introduction of the Etrap social workers in new etraps and further deepen understanding and strengthen the operating environment in existing pilot etraps. Training of local and central stakeholders can also help to build support for the development and expansion of coverage of specialized social services including family strengthening and child protective services, personal assistance and other services to support independent living for people with disabilities and services that prevent and respond to domestic violence. Training can also be used as a way to raise awareness and mobilise community resources in support of older people without family support and other vulnerable groups.
- ⇒ **To promote good practices of other countries with a context similar to Turkmenistan.** Not all social service models apply to the context of Turkmenistan. For example, the social contracting mechanism can generate some scepticism, whereas a poorly developed NGO network would stagnate the development of social contracting. Learning lessons from countries in the region with mixed markets of social services such as Russia, China Kazakhstan, Moldova may help to build understanding and demonstrate good practices of ways to regulate mixed markets that can be more readily adapted for Turkmenistan. Learning from countries that are further afield with mature social service systems, whether mainly government provided, or mixed, can also help to expand the vision of what may be possible in Turkmenistan – Sweden (which is mainly government provided) and the UK (mixed market of social care services) are both options for consideration.

#### Recommendations for the Government

- ⇒ **To start implementing the social work curriculum in higher education institutions.** It must secure the workforce for the upcoming expansion of social services. Otherwise, the reform may slow down. Social service specialists play a unique role in service delivery to vulnerable population groups. Institutional memory and professionalism of as many specialists as possible positively affect the general process of development of the social services system. The current employees have high-quality knowledge about social services,



great motivation for social work, and a desire to help the needy. It is a positive factor for the system development. However, the current resources need specialized knowledge and are in dire need of an expanded labour force with new competencies in social work. That is why adopting and implementing a higher education curriculum is so important. Moreover, offering reasonable remuneration for work and decent working conditions is vital. It will help significantly to reduce the possible staff turnover in the future. It will take time for the first cohort of students to graduate from a three- or four-year degree course. In the meantime, an interim measure could be establishing a resource at the MLSP or a government further education institution that can continue to train new social workers and provide continuous professional development for existing social workers created during the JP. The government should seek support from PUNOs and other development partners to support this initiative with expertise not only from Turkmenistan but also from other countries with established social work academic institutions that can further build social work education provision. Countries such as Turkey, China and Georgia all have strong social work education institutions that meet international standards and can help develop a cadre of social work teachers and trainers with relevant competencies adapted for Turkmenistan.

- ⇒ **To adopt the by-law on social contracting including regulatory mechanisms that can help to ensure service standards are met.** It is necessary to adopt critical mechanisms, such as social contracting mechanisms, regulation of social service providers, financing, and quality standards for social services. It will help reduce the load on government agencies in providing social services and, simultaneously, expand the coverage of specialized social services in very remote areas, i.e. expand the coverage of groups with more complex needs such as domestic violence where the government has less experience. Therefore, it is suggested both expanding geographic reach and coverage (that can be partly done through etrap structures and systems) and thematic/content of social services where NGOs may have more expertise in some cases. For example, organizations of people with disabilities may have more extensive experience in working with disabled people, and therefore become reliable potential service providers. In any case, the government has to play an active role in building the capacity of NGOs as service providers.
- ⇒ **To adopt recommendations on legal tools in the national system of social services.** In particular, adopt the National Strategy for the Development of Social Services. The policy should be finalized and approved before the start of the second phase of the Joint Program in order to provide targeted and coordinated assistance for the new policy implementation. It should also form the basis for monitoring and evaluation of the further implementation of the second phase of the JP and any further adjustments to the plan should be made on the basis of evidence generated by M&E systems.
- ⇒ **To ensure the gradual expansion of social services from the piloted etrap to all neighbouring etraps, and so on, until all etraps of velayat will be covered.** The model of

social services implemented at the velayat/etrap should be adapted to the local conditions of each velayat, considering the distance, concentration and number of different vulnerable population groups and other factors. Experienced specialists in social work should be involved in the process of intensive exchange of experience and acquired knowledge. This will help to ensure as far as possible that the expanding workforce is supported by adequate professional supervision from more experienced social workers and that quality standards are maintained.







## Annexes

### Annex 1. Evaluation matrix

<b>1. Relevance</b>			
<b>General Evaluation questions</b>	<b>Judgement criteria</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Source of information</b>
EQ.1.1. How relevant was the JP to priorities/policies at the national level and to the needs of the target groups?	<p>JP interventions are supporting national priorities (strategies, action plans)</p> <p>JP interventions are responding adequately to the needs of target groups</p>	<p>Number of JP outputs are in line with national strategies</p> <p>Number of beneficiaries are satisfied with social services package.</p>	<p>Key informer interviews (working group members of the Joint Program).</p> <p>National strategies and action plans.</p> <p>Statistics.</p> <p>Surveys.</p> <p>Case studies.</p>
EQ.1.2. Are the piloted specialized services coherently tailored to the needs of social protection sector at local level and to the reality of the different regions of Turkmenistan taking into consideration the principle “leave no one behind”?	Specialized services aim to cover the excluded groups of population.	<p>Number of needs assessment of vulnerable groups carried out in piloted regions.</p> <p>Number of findings on needs reflected in new model of specialized social services.</p>	<p>Key informer interviews (working group members of the Joint Program).</p> <p>Progress reports.</p> <p>Literature review.</p> <p>Surveys.</p>
EQ. 1.3. Are the by-laws, rules, SOPs and job	Social workers specialists are	Number and content of laws,	Key informer interviews (working

<p>description of social workers coherently tailored to the needs of vulnerable population at local level?</p>	<p>mandated to respond to the needs of vulnerable population</p> <p>Rules and documents are clear and comprehensive that considers a variety of situations regarding the people's needs.</p>	<p>rules, job descriptions of social works specialists that contains professional obligations towards needs of vulnerable groups are drafted</p>	<p>group members of the Joint Program).</p> <p>Surveys, Needs assessments</p> <p>Legal documents</p> <p>Gap analysis reports</p>
<p><b>2. Effectiveness</b></p>			
<p><b>General Evaluation questions</b></p>	<p><b>Judgement criteria</b></p>	<p><b>Indicator</b></p>	<p><b>Source of information</b></p>
<p>EQ. 2.1. To what extent were the objectives and results achieved as planned? Were there any areas (technical or geographical) in which the pilot intervention was the most effective in delivering its results? If so, what factors contributed to this?</p>	<p>All three outputs have been achieved as planned</p>	<p>Number of piloted social services, including specialized social services</p> <p>Number of legal frameworks drafted</p> <p>Number of personnel trained and deployed</p>	<p>Key informer interviews (working group members of the Joint Program).</p> <p>Project statistics and progress reports.</p> <p>Mid-term evaluations.</p>
<p>EQ. 2.2. To what extent were gender and equity aspects effectively mainstreamed and delivered in the JP?</p>	<p>Gender perspective is reflected in the content of national policies on social services</p>	<p>Number of gender aspects included in legal framework and social services</p>	<p>Key informer interviews (working group members of the Joint Program).</p> <p>Project reports.</p>

		Data collected is disaggregated based on gender aspects  Gender responsive budget for the Program completed and gender mainstreamed in the cost efficiency analysis.	Case studies.  Statistics.
EQ. 2.3. To what extent has the JP contributed to the awareness raising on social services, development of knowledge and dissemination (guides, tools, country briefs, trainings) among key stakeholders and beneficiaries?	People are better aware of social services.  Stakeholders are better equipped with necessary knowledge on new social services	Number of social workers trained and capable to provide new social services  Number of guides, tools, country briefs and training packages developed  Number of promotional campaigns organized	Key informer interviews (working group members of the Joint Program).  JP progress reports.  Statistics.  Surveys.
<b>3. Sustainability</b>			
<b>General Evaluation questions</b>	<b>Judgement criteria</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Source of information</b>
EQ. 3.1. To what extent has the interventions of the JP	National legal framework	Number of legal documents that	KII with key stakeholders (working

<p>contributed to sustainability of results, especially in terms of codifying international social services standards into national legislation, policy and practice?</p>	<p>contains new approaches, principles and norms on new social service</p>	<p>include international standards are drafted</p> <p>Number of guiding tools applying international standards are developed</p> <p>Number of social workers trained by applying international standards</p>	<p>group members of the Joint Program).</p> <p>Legal documents.</p>
<p>EQ. 3.2. To what extent has the JP supported the long-term buy-in, leadership and ownership by the Government? How likely will the results be sustained beyond the JP through the action of Government and other stakeholders and/or UNCTs?</p>	<p>Perception of Government stakeholders and development partners.</p>	<p>Positive/negative commitment of Government.</p>	<p>KII with key stakeholders (working group members of the Joint Program).</p>
<p>EQ.3.3. What are the existing capacities of regional and etrap authorities to start restructuring the existing system and further scaling up social work all over the country?</p>	<p>Perception of Government stakeholders and development partners.</p>	<p>Financial resources are allocated</p> <p>Social workers are trained</p> <p>Institutional framework is</p>	<p>KII with key stakeholders (working group members of the Joint Program).</p> <p>National and local budgets</p> <p>Resolutions and</p>

		ready for use	strategies.  Government reports.
EQ.3.4. What are the major factors which influence the scaling up of specialized social services nationwide and the incorporation of social workers in the public system?	Perception of Government stakeholders, UN agencies, CSOs.	Factors that are enabling extension of coverage (horizontal and vertical)  Factors that are enabling smooth deployment of social workers by public system	KII with key stakeholders (working group members of the Joint Program).
<b>4. Impact</b>			
<b>General Evaluation questions</b>	<b>Judgement criteria</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Source of information</b>
EQ.4.1. To what extent were social workers and service providers in the country able to address individual needs of vulnerable groups and ensure their social inclusion?	Perception of Government stakeholders, UN agencies, CSOs.	Number of social workers are qualified and trained  Number of social service providers are equipped and trained to provide support	KII with key stakeholders (working group members of the Joint Program).  Survey

EQ.4.2. To what extent did the JP create a multiplier and catalytic effect on the CSOs development in the country and demonstrated their important role in reaching out to the vulnerable groups and addressing their needs?	Perception of Government stakeholders, CSOs.	Positive/neutral /negative	KII with key stakeholders (working group members of the Joint Program).
<b>5. Coherence</b>			
General Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Indicator	Source of information
EQ.5.1. To what extent the proposed Social Service Model is coherent with other public policies?	Social Service Model is harmonized with public policies.	<p>Number of interlinkages between sectors established.</p> <p>Number of consultations with other public sectors are held.</p> <p>Standards and service specifications, SOPs in place including mainstreaming of gender-responsive, child-sensitive and disability inclusive approaches approach</p>	<p>KII with key stakeholders (working group members of the Joint Program).</p> <p>Progress reports.</p>
EQ.5.2. To what extent the JP interventions have been	JP is undertaken actions towards	Number of consultations	KII with key stakeholders (working

<p>internally coherent and harmonized to achieve its outcome?</p>	<p>internal coherence to achieve its outcome</p>	<p>with government organizations, PUNOs, CSOs held.</p> <p>Number of joint publications and researches carried out</p>	<p>group members of the Joint Program).</p> <p>Progress reports.</p>
<p>EQ.5.3 To what extent have the participating United Nations organizations (PUNOs) been coordinating the JP with development partners and other UN agencies to avoid overlaps, leverage contributions and catalyse joint work?</p>	<p>Perception of Government stakeholders, CSOs.</p>	<p>Coordination committee created</p> <p>Number of UN joint meetings organized</p> <p>Number of external stakeholders invited to JP meetings.</p>	<p>KII with key stakeholders (working group members of the Joint Program).</p>



## Annex 2. List of interviewed organizations

<b>Duration:</b> 23 May 2022 – 03 June 2022 (2 weeks)				
<b>Location:</b> remote interviews (Online)				
<b>1st week</b>				
<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Participants (to be filled during interviews)</b>
23.05.2022 Monday	10:00-12:00	<b>ЮНИСЕФ</b> <b>Группа социальной защиты и защиты детей</b>	Technical discussion on strategic support to the government partners, social service model, theory and practice of social work, curricula and programs for social work	Aysenem Agabayeva, UNICEF Social Policy Specialist  Furkat Lutfulloyev, UNICEF Child Protection Specialist  Serdar Bazarov, UNICEF Child Protection Officer  Joanna Rogers, Svetlana Ryjicova (JP Chief Technical Advisory team)
23.05.2022 Monday	14:30-16:30	<b>Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population</b>	Technical discussion on all aspects of the program implementation and reform of the community based social services. The discussion will mainly depend on the mandate of the department/branch	14:30-15:20 JP Secretariat  15:30 – 16:30 Directors of Territorial Centers and social work supervisors from each velayat and

				Ashgabat city
24.05.2022 Tuesday	10.00-12.00	<b>UNDP</b> Inclusive Growth Project Team	Technical discussion on capacity building activities and new social services to people with disability, elderly people and people with chronic illnesses	
24.05.2022 Tuesday	14:30-16:30	<b>UNFPA</b> Gender Project Team	Technical discussion on drafting legislation on new social services as well as operational standard procedures on gender-based violence, unintended pregnancy and reproductive health risks	
25.05.2022 Wednesday	10.00-12.00	<b>UNODC</b> Project Team	Technical discussion on piloting services for youth at risk and capacity building on co-dependency and social work with families with substance use disorders and youth in contact with justice system.	
25.05.2022 Wednesday	14.30 - 15.30	<b>Mejlis (Parliament)</b> Social Protection Committee	Policy discussion social policy outcomes and further steps, particularly on legislation and normatives related to the new community based social services	
26.05.2022 Thursday	10.00 - 11.00	<b>Ministry of Finance and Economy</b>	Technical discussion on fiscal spaces, sustainability and projections	

26.05.2022 Thursday	14.30 - 16.00	<b>Ministry of Education</b>	<p>Technical discussion on social service providers and referral bodies</p> <p>Technical discussion on Bachelor program for the Social Work profession.</p>	<p>14:30 – 15:20 Specialists responsible for the Guardianship and Trusteeship Committee, inclusive education, and disability</p> <p>15:30-16:30 Specialists from the Higher and Vocational Education department related to the new Social Work Bachelor Program development</p> <p>Representatives of educational establishments, who have been part of the JP Educators pool (Medical University, Turkmen State University, IUHD, Turkmen State Institute of Economy and Public Administration, Seyidi Pedagogical institute, Kekilov Pedagogical School, Academy of Civil</p>

				Servants)
27.05.2022 Friday	10.00 - 11.00	<b>Ministry of Health and Medical Industry</b>	Technical discussion on social service providers and referral bodies	
27.05.2022 Friday	14.30 - 15.30	<b>Ministry of Internal Affairs</b>	Technical discussion on social service providers and referral bodies, particularly Inspectorate on Minors Affairs	
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> week</b>				
30.05.2022 Monday	10.00 - 12.00	<b>National Red Crescent Society</b>	Technical discussion on social service providers and specialized social services for people with chronic illnesses	
30.05.2022 Monday	14.30 - 16.30	<b>“Yenme” CSO, Ashgabat</b>	Technical discussion on social service providers and specialized social services for the people with disabilities, elderly people living alone; specialized social services for youth at risk, including those in conflict with the law, and families/parents with substance use disorders	
31.05.2022 Tuesday	10.00 - 12.00	<b>“Keyik Okara” CSO, Ashgabat</b>	Technical discussion on social service providers and specialized social services to women and girls facing gender-based violence and various reproductive health risks	

31.05.2022 Tuesday	14.30 - 16.00	<b>National Def and Blind Society</b>	Discussion on social service providers and coordination	
01.06.2022 Wednesday	10.00 - 12.00	<b>“Beyik Eyyam” CSO,</b> Turkmenabat city, Lebap Velayat	Technical discussion on social service providers and specialized social services to women and girls facing gender-based violence and various reproductive health risks	
01.06.2022 Wednesday	14.30 - 15.30	<b>Ministry of Justice</b>  Participating officials in the JP	Technical discussion on coordination and involvement in the project	
02.06.2022 Thursday	10.00 - 11.00	<b>Institute of State, Law and Democracy</b>  Participating officials in the JP	Technical discussion on coordination and involvement in the project	
02.06.2022 Thursday	14:30- 15:30	<i>Ministry of foreign affairs</i>	<i>Courtesy meeting with high level officials: explores coordination barriers and good practises. Discussion on alignment of the JP results with the National strategic priorities and their sustainability</i>	
02.06.2022 Thursday	16:00- 17:00	<i>UN Resident Coordinator</i>	<i>Courtesy meeting with high level officials: discussion on cohesiveness of the JP and sustainability issues.</i>	



### Annex 3. Literature review

1. Proposal for a joint SDG program “Improving the social protection system through the introduction of inclusive and quality social services at the community level”.
2. Joint Program Annual Progress Report 2020
3. Joint Program Annual Progress Report 2021
4. 6-month information on the implementation of the joint program: an integrated policy portfolio for LNOB and social protection
5. Survey on "Pilot Social Services"
6. 2020 Mid-Term Portfolio Review Questionnaire
7. Report by UNICEF in Turkmenistan "Assessment of social services" Joanna Rogers, Vasilina Dybaylo, Ashgabat, 2015
8. Consolidated questionnaires with a full set of data
9. Family case studies
10. UNICEF Turkmenistan Report on the Action Plan for the Development of Social Services and Human Resources for Social Services 2018-2028, P4EC Advisory Group, Partnership for Every Child, Russia, 2018
11. Presentation of the Primary analysis of data obtained from the assessment of the need for social services, 2021
12. Child Protection SDG Report for the SDG Foundation’s Joint Program for the Development of Quality, Inclusive Community-Based Social Services in Turkmenistan, Joanna Rogers, 2020 Technical Advisory Team Leader
13. Review of NGOs and Civil Society in Turkmenistan, Asian Development Bank, 2008  
<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/28973/csb-tkm.pdf>
14. Global Social Protection Report 2017-2019, ILO
15. Decree of the President of Turkmenistan on increasing wages, pensions, state benefits, scholarships for students and listeners in Turkmenistan, 2021
16. Child Welfare Information Portal,  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/reform/soc/history/community/>
17. Law of Turkmenistan "On Social Services", 2021
18. Law of Turkmenistan “On State Guarantees for Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men”, 2015
19. National Action Plan for the implementation of the Program of socio-economic development for 2019-2025 of the President of Turkmenistan
20. National Action Plan for the Realization of Children's Rights in Turkmenistan for 2018-2022);
21. Action plan for the development of social services and personnel of social services for 2018-2028, 2018
22. SAPI Report “Analysis of Costs and Social Benefits”, 2022

23. Summary of Key Findings of the Policy and Legislation Review
24. Joint Program Article on “Discovering a new helping profession – a specialists of social work”, 2020 <https://www.jointsdgfund.org/article/discovering-new-helping-profession-specialists-social-work>
25. Lessons learned from SDG Fund, 2019  
[https://www.sdgfund.org/sites/default/files/sdg\\_fund\\_lessons\\_learned\\_report\\_2019\\_v3\\_web\\_cover1-merged.pdf](https://www.sdgfund.org/sites/default/files/sdg_fund_lessons_learned_report_2019_v3_web_cover1-merged.pdf)
26. UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016)  
<https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/example/UNEG-evaluation-standards-2016>
27. JP Blog “Promoting Social Inclusion Through Care and Support”, 2021  
<https://www.jointsdgfund.org/article/promoting-social-inclusion-through-care-and-support>



## Annex 4. Terms and references

### UNICEF Country Office in Turkmenistan

#### Terms of Reference

#### **International Individual Consultant for Evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund Program “Improving the system of social protection through the introduction of inclusive quality community-based social services”**

#### **Turkmenistan**

**Duration:** 1 April 2021 – 30 July 2022 (70 days)

**Location:** Out-of-country, in case if lockdown restrictions are reduced, one visit to Turkmenistan to be planned (Ashgabat city and selected velayats)

#### **Background**

Turkmenistan took a range of important steps to harmonize the national legislation in line with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Nonetheless, given the general lack of data, it is difficult to assess the impact of the social protection mechanisms and services, in particular those related to children and families and hence to develop policies that will “leave no one behind”.

The existing system of formal social services has not changed substantially since Soviet times and is highly centralized with most services provided by state institutions. The social protection system in Turkmenistan includes state guarantees for pension insurance for citizens, social allowances for specific categories of citizens, as well as social assistance measures for veterans and people with disabilities. Since 2017, the state implements a Program on housing construction for the most vulnerable groups of population, including people with disabilities to ensure their full inclusion into all facets of society.

Understanding the deep need in Improving the system of social protection, a Joint UN Program was initiated in 2020 and aimed at introduction of inclusive quality community-based social services. The Program was jointly prepared together with the national stakeholders, and UN Agencies (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNODC). [The Joint Program \(JP\)](#) started in January 2020 and will be completed in 2022. The Joint SDG Fund Program “Improving the system of social protection through the introduction of inclusive quality community-based social services” (UN JP) covers the period from 2020-2022. The geographical scope of the joint Program is nationwide with the community based social services being piloted in all regions of the country and 12 specialized social services being piloted in the capital and 2 other regions (Lebap and Mary velayats). It is based on the Joint Program Document and the Theory of Change (attached in Annex A) and the associated Workplan 2020-21. The workplan was partially modified in 2021 due to the extension of the Program until June 30, 2022.

Under the Joint UN Program, an Inventory of social services was conducted as a baseline assessment<sup>35</sup> by UNDP in 2020 in order to identify the types of social services and coverage that was available before the start of the Program. The assessment established that there were existing social services delivered under the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population. It was confirmed that only the territorial social assistance centres owned by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection have the non-institutional care services available to a limited number of adults with disabilities and older people. Availability of non-institutional care services for children and families is even more limited. Some alternative social services have been developed by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) - services for victims of human trafficking and migrants, advisory services for vulnerable people and families, services for women victims of domestic violence, services for children and adults with disabilities and persons with disabilities on a small scale and with limited availability outside the main cities. In looking at other available services for children the recent child protection system assessment<sup>36</sup> identified that residential care institutions are the most commonly available social services, and that despite commitments to family care in the legislation there has been an overall increase of 6% in the number children living in institutions from 2017 to 2020. This rate is more than double for children with disabilities where a 13% increase is recorded.

Within the framework of the Joint Program, the model of community-based inclusive social services started emerging across the country. With the technical support provided by the UN Agencies, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population established social work practice in the field liaising with the local authorities and allied workforce representatives to identify the most vulnerable among the JP target groups. Social work specialists conducted individual and complex assessments, developed individual support plans for connecting the vulnerable population to the existing services in 20 districts of the country. This resulted in over 500 cases covering over 800 households concerning 2335 people including 934 children, 362 people with disabilities and over 200 older people. Based on the analysis of the findings, a variety of scenarios for integration of a model of inclusive community-based services in the existing social protection system was presented at the Quarterly Working Group meeting in May and at the Third High-Level Steering committee session in June 2021. The analysis also set the ground for the launch of 12 specialized social services, piloting the new services for the children at risk of separation from parents or without parental care, children with disabilities, youth at risk (including adolescent girls, graduates of residential care institutions, and those in conflict with the law), women facing gender-based violence, families with substance use abuse, people with disabilities, and older persons in need of support with basic everyday care. The evidence generated from the pilots and social work assessments continues feeding in the ongoing data analysis to determine the optimal structure for the inclusive community based social worker service and the specialized services.

To ensure that the developed model is viable, sustainable and can be smoothly integrated into the system, the legislative review was conducted simultaneously with the model rollout. A team of international and national consultants worked on the revision of the Social Protection Code, introducing the new concept of inclusive and community based social services into the revised drafts. Considering that the scope of information to be introduced and amended exceeded 30% of the Social Protection Code original content, Mejlis Milli Gengesh (Parliament) together with the working group members

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<sup>35</sup> JP Inventory of Social Services, 2020, UNDP within the framework of the SDG Fund Joint Program “Improving the system of social protection through the introduction of inclusive quality community-based social services”

<sup>36</sup> Child protection functional assessment, 2021, UNICEF within the framework of the SDG Fund Joint Program “Improving the system of social protection through the introduction of inclusive quality community-based social services”

agreed on extracting the new concept into a separate Law on Social Services, that was adopted in December 2021.

Meanwhile, advocacy efforts of the established government inter-sectoral coordination mechanism for the Joint Program resulted in the Cabinet of Ministers' Resolution to allocate state budget to cover the salaries of 45 social workers in 2022.

Detailed Service Specifications, Terms of References, Ethical Code, Staff training plans have been developed for each of the 12 pilot specialized services; the instructions for preparation of the minimum standards and operational manuals, including job descriptions and operating procedures are being prepared as the services are piloted by the Participating UN Agencies (PUNOs) represented by UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNODC (see detailed information in the Table 1. *Key Stakeholders*).

*The overall impact* of the JP is expected, that people who are left behind now, and who are isolated in their homes without support of family, experiencing violence, neglect or abuse or languishing in residential or hospital care because there are no community based social services to support independent living in the community, will contribute to the design of services that can meet their needs. They will receive information and services, will be empowered to participate in community life and the economy and will be supported to overcome barriers to access other services such as health, education, social assistance and employment. New professionals with competencies in professional social work will appear, where there are currently no professionals currently able to work with the most vulnerable and left behind. The government will be equipped and prepared, by the end of the JP, to go to scale and accelerate considerably the pace for achieving SDG 1.3 and coverage with social protection of the most poor and vulnerable.

It is expected that in 2022, children with disabilities, children without parental care, children at risk of separation from parents, people with disabilities and older persons in need of support with basic care, women facing gender-based violence and youth at risk in the focus areas will have access to quality community-based social services managed by the professional social workers and qualified service providers in the country to address their individual needs and ensure their social inclusion.

The JP implementation is expected to create a multiplier and catalytic effect on the CSOs development in the country, which currently face significant barriers for registration and operation in the country. Engagement of the CSOs in the JP implementation will demonstrate their important role in reaching out to the vulnerable groups and addressing their needs and help expand the space for CSOs as social providers in the country and ensure their financial sustainability. It will also create an opportunity for systemic and accelerated change for the SDGs implementation in the country. Particularly, through costing and budgeting of social services, the JP will help the UNCT to engage with the Ministry of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan on strategic discussion regarding the SDGs integration into the national budgeting process which has been identified by the MAPS as the key bottleneck for the SDGs achievement in the country. The JP will also address the issue of data collection for the missing SDG indicator 1.3 and coverage by social protection system of the most vulnerable groups of population.

### **Evaluation Rationale, Purpose and Objectives**

**Rationale:** The Evaluation will be conducted by the end of the UN JP and will provide the guidance and recommendations for further development of social services in Turkmenistan. Since the Program will be completed in June 2022, beginning of the Evaluation in March 2022 will bring efficient results in developing the National strategic document for further reforming the system of social service provision in the country. The timing of the evaluation is critical as UN was requested by the Government to

support with the development of a Road Map further reforming the system of social service provision in the country.

Moreover, Government initiated development of new Socio-economic Strategy until 2052. Thus, the evaluation, which will be the first independent assessment of the JP, will help to shape the programming and policymaking.

**Purpose:** The main purpose of the evaluation is to **generate substantive evidence-based knowledge** by identifying good practices and lessons learned from the implementation of the JP. The results of this evaluation will be highly useful to enable any **adjustment/redirection** necessary for the planning and implementation of the current United Nations Sustainable Development and Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025 and will provide a basis for the development of the new National Program in the area of the social protection and facilitate the UN joint advocacy efforts for the national scale up of the new specialized services, also creating enabling political environment for these services. The evaluation findings and recommendations will also contribute to strengthening UNICEF contribution to the realization of child rights and protection of children's access to quality services. The evaluation's findings will also inform the update of the UN Common Country Analysis, the reporting of the country to Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and potentially SDG-related progress reports or other situation analyses.

**Objectives:** The UN JP evaluation aims to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, coherence and, to the extent possible, impact of the Joint Program, to analyse remaining bottlenecks and barriers that impact inclusiveness of social protection.

The main objectives of the evaluation are:

- Rigorously assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, coherence and, to the extent possible the potential impact of the Joint Program
- Assess the role of the Joint Program in establishing the community based social services and provide recommendations for the development of the quality assurance system for social service work with consideration of normative frameworks, system of supervision and support, system for licensing and accreditation and data collection systems.
- Rigorously assess contribution of the UN Joint Program to SDGs acceleration and UN coherence.
- Assess the role of the Joint Program in increasing awareness about community based social services among key stakeholders and beneficiaries.
- Assess the extent to which the JP has contributed to achievement of UNSDCF 2021-2025 outcome/s and national development priorities
- Provide recommendations to guide policy level decision-making by PUNOs and the key relevant stakeholders on social services system reform.
- Provide recommendations for integration of the 12 specialized services into the national social and child protection service provision system.
- Provide recommendation on how to better incorporate gender equality and equity issues, including disability into the social services provision reform.
- Identify and document successes, challenges and lessons learnt of the joint Program.

- Assess Program contribution towards sustainability and scale up of the community-based social services, including the development of the National strategic document for further reforming the system of social service provision in the country.

### **The Object of the Evaluation, its Use and Users**

Object of the evaluation is Joint SDG Fund Program “Improving the system of social protection through the introduction of inclusive quality community-based social services”. This summative evaluation comes at the end of the Joint Program by June 2022 and will offer the opportunity to critically and rigorously assess the Joint Program contribution to the system of social protection through the introduction of inclusive quality community-based social services in the country. The purpose of the JP is to make a transformative change in the current system of social service delivery in Turkmenistan, to reach out to the most deprived and vulnerable population and to address their specific needs. The Program designed a new model of inclusive community-based services for children at risk of separation from parents, children without parental care, children with disabilities, youth at risk, women facing gender-based violence, people with disabilities and older persons in need of support with basic everyday care. The Program piloted a community-based social worker model engaged in identification, assessment and case management as well as piloting specialised social services to meet specific needs and support people to live independent lives in their communities. The JP developed a mechanism for social contracting, improved a social work curriculum and supported drafting of legislative amendments and other institutional framework (standards, service specifications). The JP supported establishment of a government inter-sectoral coordination mechanism, as well as support economic analysis and advocate for the new system of community-based social services to be incorporated into the state budget. Designed model was fully taken over by the government in February 2022 and it is planned to be scaled up by 2025 to fulfil the commitments under the existing national development and human rights plans, including on children.

**The population group(s) covered under UN JP:** children at risk of separation from parents or without parental care, children with disabilities, youth at risk (including adolescent girls, graduates of residential care institutions, and those in conflict with the law), women facing gender-based violence, families with substance use abuse, people with disabilities, and older persons in need of support with basic everyday care

### **The Key stakeholders:**

Table 1: Key stakeholders and their contribution towards the JP

<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Contribution towards the activities of the NAP</b>
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	National Coordination body and co-signer of the JP
Ministry of Labour and Social	Lead National Partner on implementation of the JP,

Protection of Population

and the Secretary of The Joint SDG Fund Program on the introduction of inclusive quality community-based social services. Key partner, leading in all aspects of the Program implementation and reform of the community based social services. Co-Chair of the JP Steering Committee and the Working Group.

UN RC

Coordination body from the UN Side, ensuring the strategic focus and sustainable approach to the JP implementation. Co-Chair of the JP Steering Committee.

UNICEF

Ensure the overall lead on planning, assessment, supporting implementation, analysis and monitoring to the Joint Program, with the support of the Technical Advisory team to ensure a coherent, consolidated, technical and sustainable approach to developing social work in Turkmenistan.

Provide **strategic support** to the government partners for implementation of the Joint Program and the resulting social service model. This also includes **support to recruitment, deployment, and professional supervision of 45 social workers in 20 districts** across the regions of Turkmenistan.

Support establishment of theory and practice of social work in Turkmenistan. **Develop national standards of higher education, curricula and programs** for social work adapted to the national context.

Design and pilot new types of social services **for children with disabilities, children without parental care, and children at risk of separation from parents.**

Co-Chair of the JP Working Group.

UNDP

**Built capacity of social service workforce** by delivering 2500 person days of training up to 400 new and existing practitioners, including social workers, allied workforce professionals, social work managers, social service providers at national, regional and local levels.

Conducted **inventory of existing social services and assessment of needs** of the Joint Program target groups as part of training of social service workforce



and their work in the field

**Conduct socio-economic analysis** of new social services to demonstrate their advantages vis-a-vis the existing model of social service provision and support a case for their introduction into the country's social protection system by the Government of Turkmenistan.

Design and pilot new social services **to people with official status of disability, elderly people living alone and people with chronic illnesses.** In this area, UNDP will lead the work on approbation of a social contracting mechanism to foster civic participation in the social service provision and expand the range of services to the Joint Program target groups.

UNFPA

Lead the work on the review of the existing national legislation and development new legislation and bylaws to sustain new social services, identifying gaps and making recommendations for creating a legislative and regulatory framework to sustain the proposed new system of community-based social services.

Ensure that developed Standard Operational Procedures on addressing gender-based violence and prevention of the unintended pregnancies are introduced into the new social service package.

Design and pilot social services to ensure **the rights and protection of women and girls facing gender-based violence and various reproductive health risks.**

UNODC

Development of **training packages on co-dependency and social work with families with substance use disorders.**

Deliver **trainings for social workers and allied professionals** on special aspects of working with vulnerable groups such as people with substance use disorders, youth at risk of substance use, youth in contact with criminal justice system and their families

Design and pilot services **for youth at risk, including those in conflict with the law, and families/parents with substance use disorders, and develop models of parent support to reduce risky behaviours in**

## adolescents

Mejlis (Parliament)

National partner, supporting the legislative review and adoption of the new Law on Social Services together with the MoLSP and with technical support from UNFPA

Ministry of Finance and Economy

National partner, supporting the fiscal space creation for the social services reform. Was engaged in budget allocation for the 45 social work specialists from the 2022 State Budget, together with the MoLSP and with technical support from UNICEF

Ministry of Education

National partner, supporting the creation of Bachelor Program for the Social Work profession. Responsible for identification of the higher education establishment and teaching capacity building with technical support from UNICEF.

Represent the state social service providers and referral bodies from the Education sector.

Ministry of Health and Medical Industry

Represent the state social service providers and referral bodies from the Health sector.

Ministry of Internal Affairs

Represent the state social service providers and referral bodies. It has Inspectorate on Minors Affairs which has a strong presence in communities, works closely with pedagogues and families and to an extent performing some of the functions of social workers for child protection services.

Ministry of Justice

Member of the Steering committee and the Working Group

Institute of State, Law and Democracy

Member of the Steering committee and the Working Group

National Red Crescent Society

Represent the social service providers in the CSO Sector. Member of the Steering committee and the Working Group. Partner in piloting specialized social services for people with chronic illnesses together with UNDP.

“Yenme” CSO, Ashgabat

Represent the social service providers in the CSO Sector. Member of the Steering committee and the



#### Working Group.

Partner in piloting specialized social services for the people with official status of disability, elderly people living alonea together with UNDP and specialized social services for youth at risk, including those in conflict with the law, and families/parents with substance use disorders in partnership with UNODC.

“Keyik Okara” CSO, Ashgabat

Represent the social service providers in the CSO Sector. Member of the Steering committee and the Working Group.

Partner in piloting specialized social services to secure rights and protection of women and girls facing gender-based violence and various reproductive health risks in partnership with UNFPA.

“Beyik Eyyam” CSO, Turkmenabat city, Lebap Velayat

Represent the social service providers in the CSO Sector. Partner in piloting specialized social services to secure rights and protection of women and girls facing gender-based violence and various reproductive health risks in partnership with UNFPA.

National Def and Blind Society

Represent the social service providers in the CSO Sector. Member of the Steering committee and the Working Group

**The primary users** of the evaluation are the Government, represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the national coordinating body, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population as the Lead National partner, key sectoral ministries and PUNOs. The other relevant stakeholders include other UN agencies, IFIs, CSOs, and line ministries not directly engaged in the Joint Program implementation, as the secondary users.

The findings of the evaluation will be used as a basis for discussions, planning and programming between UN, Government of Turkmenistan and other key national and international stakeholders. The knowledge generated by the evaluation will be used by:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the coordinating body, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection as the Lead National partners, key sectoral ministries to identify and further address existing barriers to support social protection reform agenda and strengthening the system of social service provision in community level to ensure the scale up and coverage of those “left behind”

- PUNOs (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and UNODC) for taking stock of lessons learnt and best practices and informing revision of their respective Programs towards strengthening the social services system as well as to contribute to the relevant knowledge generation and dissemination.
- PUNOs for further sustainability discussions for scaling up the Program results across all the outputs and specialized services supported by PUNOs with lessons learnt and identification of possible adjustments.
- Other UN agencies and relevant development partners to identify potential synergies and avoid overlaps in planning and implementation of interventions in area of social protection
- UNCT to assess contribution to SDG acceleration and to promote the UN coherence.

### Scope

**Period to be covered:** From January 2020 to date.

**Geographical coverage:** The geographical scope of the evaluation will be in Ashgabat and selected by the Consultant regions (velayats). Specific sites in the regions will be identified for the visit in consultations with the Joint Program team during the inception stage, as required. In case of the continued lockdown, the visits will be substituted by the online calls.

**Programmatic coverage and Theory of Change:** The evaluation will cover all Outputs of the UN JP (see Annex 1 for more details). Theory of change presented in the Annex to this ToR.

The JP aims to achieve **one outcome**: *the social protection system is ready to provide inclusive quality community-based social services.*

This outcome makes a major contribution to accelerating achievement of SDG Target 1.3 especially in relation to achieving substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable. In order to make the necessary changes and reforms to the system so that inclusive, quality, community-based social services can be delivered to the most vulnerable and left behind, **three outputs** must be achieved:

1. A practical model of such services must be developed and tested including all elements needed to prepare for scale up and full national implementation – gatekeeping and referral mechanisms, standards, standard operating procedures (SOPs), service specifications, trained staff etc. The practical model must address multiple vulnerabilities and must be fully adapted for the local community context in Turkmenistan and institutionalised at all levels – district, regional and national. It will also test different modalities of service delivery – through social contracting of CSOs and through state service providers or Khyakimliks/Gengeshliks.
2. The legislative and regulatory framework that can ensure the institutional and financial sustainability of the new model has to be developed, amended and improved to reflect the practical realities and lessons learned from testing the model under output 1 and presented for approval by the Parliament and the Cabinet of Ministers.
3. The social work and social service workforce that can deliver the model of services both during and after the JP has to be created and trained and a mechanism has to be established for ensuring that more social workers and social service workforce personnel can be trained and educated as the system goes to scale.

The Joint Program has **three components** that serve as its outputs, including:

1. Developing an inclusive community-based social service model with its key elements prototyped;
2. Establishing institutional mechanisms and enforcing legislative and regulatory framework to facilitate the introduction of the new community based social services delivery system;
3. Strengthening the country's social work and social service workforce capacity.

### **Evaluation Questions/Framework**

The questions that will guide this evaluation are aligned with the evaluation criteria developed by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)<sup>37</sup>. However, questions may be further fine-tuned during the Inception Phase based on considerations of evaluability, time and resource constraints. The guiding questions for the evaluation against defined evaluation criteria will be further elaborated through evaluation matrix and used as a basis for development of the main data collection instruments (based on online tools for use during face-to-face meetings) such as interviews, focus groups and observations that should be selected considering COVID-19 related restrictions.

#### ***Assessing relevance***

- How relevant was the JP to priorities/policies at the national level and to the needs of the target groups?  
More specifically:
  - a) Is the piloted specialized services coherently tailored to the needs of social protection sector at local level and to the reality of the different regions of Turkmenistan?
  - b) are the by-laws, rules, SOPs and job description of social work specialists in the country coherently tailored also to the needs of vulnerable population at local level?
- How relevant were joint efforts in Program design, implementation and management for addressing the country's development priorities and challenges?
- Has the JP been relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic? What adjustments were made to keep it relevant to the changing needs of its target population?

#### ***Assessing effectiveness***

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<sup>37</sup> The DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability were first outlined in 1991 under the OECD, and they are currently under revision. Please refer to OECD 2019.

1. To what extent were the objectives and results (outputs, outcomes and impact) achieved as planned? Were there any areas (technical or geographical) in which the pilot intervention was more or less effective in delivering its results (outcome and impact)? If so, what factors could account for the difference?
2. To what extent were gender and equity aspects effectively mainstreamed and delivered in the JP?
3. To what extent has the JP contributed to accelerating the implementation of SDGs 1.3, 10.4, and 16.1 at the national level?
4. To what extent has the JP produced a catalytic effect in terms of generating systems change across sectors to leave no one behind?
5. To what extent has the JP contributed to achievement of UNSDCF outcome/s and national development priorities?
6. Are the children/families, served get better and more sustainable solutions as per the principles of social work service provision, social benefits, prevention of VAC, health, education, etc.?
7. To what extent has the COVID-19 affected the achievement of intended results contributing to/reversing the expected impact of the JP?
8. Were there any unintended negative or positive outcomes and, if so, were they appropriately managed?
9. To what extent have the vulnerable groups from the 12 piloted specialized social services benefited from the Introduced community based social services model?. What were the enabling factors to respond to the needs of the targeted groups?
10. To what extent has the JP contributed to the awareness raising on social services, development of knowledge and its dissemination (guides, tools, country briefs, trainings) among key stakeholders and beneficiaries?

#### ***Assessing efficiency***

- How efficiently has the JP been managed in terms of its human / financial resources and organizational / governance structure? Were the available financial, material and human resources adequate to meet the set objectives, including in times of the pandemic?
- To what extent did the JP contribute to enhancing UN efficiency (reducing transaction costs, staff enhancement, leveraging investments in development of tools/capacity development, resource mobilization efforts and partnership arrangements, offering multi-partner funding and operations)?
- What is the level of cost-efficiency for the implementation/functioning of the piloted specialized social services and non-pilot system?

#### ***Assessing sustainability***

1. To what extent has the National Social Services Development Program for 2022-2030 proposed by the JP contributed to sustainability of results, especially in terms of codifying international social services standards into national legislation, policy and practice, ensuring the LNOB principle and enhancing the social protection system?
2. To what extent has the JP supported the long-term buy-in, leadership and ownership by the Government and other relevant stakeholders? How likely will the results be sustained beyond the JP through the action of Government and other stakeholders and/or UNCTs?

3. What are the existing capacities of regional and etrap authorities to start restructuring the existing system and further scaling up social work specialist positions all over the country?
4. What are the major factors which influence the scaling up of specialized social services nationwide and the incorporation of social workers in the official system?
5. How services provided through the NGOs would be sustained and scaled-up?
6. What is the role of NGOs in provision of social services?

#### ***Assessing Impact***

- To what extent JP contributed (or is likely to contribute) to possible improvement of the situation of vulnerable groups identified in the JP?
- To what extent were professional social workers and qualified service providers in the country able to address individual needs and ensure their social inclusion.
- To what extent did the JP create a multiplier and catalytic effect on the CSOs development in the country and demonstrated their important role in reaching out to the vulnerable groups and addressing their needs
- To what extent was the space for CSOs as social providers expanded in the country and ensured their financial sustainability.

#### ***Assessing Coherence***

- To what extent have the participating United Nations organizations (PUNOs) been coordinating the JP with development partners and other UN agencies to avoid overlaps, leverage contributions and catalyse joint work?

#### ***Assessing Disability***

It is expected that the evaluation will adopt equity-based and gender-sensitive approach to understand whether the undertaken interventions managed to address the needs and uphold the rights of the most vulnerable groups in Turkmenistan as well as the root causes of inequities. This is particularly important as the Joint Program is designed with a view of strengthening social protection system by introduction of community based social services to address the needs of the most marginalized groups of population.

In line with the Leaving No One Behind principle and the obligations stemming from the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, even Programs that do not target directly persons with disabilities should ensure that persons with disabilities within targeted population can access the program without discrimination.

The evaluation will therefore also assess:

- To what extent have the joint Program design, implementation, and monitoring been inclusive of persons with disabilities (i.e. accessibility, non-discrimination, participation of organizations of persons with disabilities, data disaggregation)

- To what extent has the joint Programme effectively contributed to the socio-economic inclusion of persons with disabilities by providing income security, coverage of health care, and disability-related costs across the life cycle.

Some guiding questions that may help answering the evaluation questions on persons with disabilities above are provided in the Annex B (attached with this ToR) and could be further elaborated in the evaluation matrix and/or analysis framework.

### Methodology of the Evaluation

The evaluation methodology will be guided by the Evaluation Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), as well as in line with UNICEF's Evaluation Policy, UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluations and Data Collection and Analysis and UNICEF's reporting standards as it was agreed among PUNOs based on the UNICEF's lead in the JP evaluation. It will integrate human rights, gender and equity in accordance with the relevant UNEG guidelines and will be conducted in accordance with the UNEG Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. The evaluation will focus on the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability. The contribution to the impact will also be assessed to the extent possible. The impact of the JP is expected to include that people who are left behind now, and who are isolated in their homes without support of family, experiencing violence, neglect or abuse or languishing in residential or hospital care because there are no community based social services, are receiving support their independent living in the community thanks services available to them locally that meet their needs.

The evaluation will have a theory-based evaluation design with a rigorous quantitative approach to sampling to allow comparison of sites with and without JP and apply a mixed methods approach. Some questions under the effectiveness criterion may need some sort of comparison between the sites with the JP and without it. The proposals are welcome to make suggestions including using any rigorous and cost-effective ways of sampling sites, households, families and beneficiaries including any innovative methods, means, and/or a rigorous case study approach. Methodological rigor will be given significant consideration in the assessment of proposals. Bidders are welcome to indicate preferred methodologies, and succinctly relate these to the objectives of the evaluation and its questions. All efforts should be made in order to strengthen the data collection and analysis which are at risk of heavily relying on interviews with purposefully selected respondents and sites. Given the complexity of the environments in which the UN JP Program is being implemented a relevant perspective should inform evaluation approaches and methodologies, rather than simple linear causal models. The theory of change should be re-constructed, if required, in a way that shows UN contribution to a Social protection system strengthening through a range of Program approaches. While the evaluation methodological approach will be finalized at the inception phase, initial advice on the comprehensiveness of the evaluation approach is expected at the proposal stage.

**Data collection:** Relevant data should be collected from Program beneficiaries and key implementation stakeholders and partners (implementing NGOs, partners, the central and local authorities, MLSP, UN,

etc.). The consultant should consider conducting a survey among the respondents. For data collection purpose, an international consultant will develop an evaluation design, to undertake interviews and analysis, as well as train Young SDG Ambassadors<sup>38</sup> to support the Consultant in this process from the regional perspective. The international consultant will work with SDG Ambassadors under guidance of the UNICEF CO and in close cooperation with both Ministries and other partners. Taking into account that Young SDG Ambassadors will be involved in data collection, they will be trained by the international consultant on data collection process and ethics to ensure that all ethical aspects are followed. If focus groups or interviews with children and/or parents, youth at risk, women facing gender-based violence, families with substance use abuse, people with disabilities, and older persons in need of support with basic everyday care will be planned and approved, confidentiality and consent will also be taken into account.

**Stakeholders' engagement:** While all stakeholders are important, a special emphasis will be placed on direct beneficiaries of the interventions i.e. children at risk of separation from parents or without parental care, children with disabilities, youth at risk (including adolescent girls, graduates of residential care institutions, and those in conflict with the law), women facing gender-based violence, families with substance use abuse, people with disabilities, and older persons in need of support with basic everyday care). They will be enabled to communicate their priorities and needs, and participate in the evaluation process. This will be important for the assessment of the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the JP Program. Children and parents will be invited online to provide their insights through Ministry of Education and Ministry of labour and social Protection, based on identified by the Ministry lists. Youth at risk, women facing gender-based violence, people with disabilities and older persons will be invited by the CSOs.

**Location of the Evaluation:** online (with potential visits), covering selected velayats, based on the desk review of the International consultant. The final list of sites/ institutions as well as respondents will be defined and agreed between the consultant and UN.

**Mode of data collection:** Considering, that in Turkmenistan there is no officially COVID registered case, face-to-face data collection gatherings by SDG Ambassadors with potential respondents are possible. However, the requirement is to follow a 2-meter distance, to have protective tools (masks, gloves, sanitizers) and to have a limited number of people, depending on the room size. If COVID related restrictions will remain, all interventions will be conducted online.

**Desk review of reference materials,** including monitoring reports and other sources providing secondary data, project monitoring and reporting documentation, official and administrative statistics, regulatory framework and other related documents. Evaluations relevant to the UN JP and other similar resources should also be sampled for review and analysis. This is important to understand other initiatives

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<sup>38</sup> SDG Ambassadors - competitively selected young advocates on the Sustainable Development Goals, supporting with youth engagement and awareness raising about SDGs ([UN kicks off second SDG Youth Ambassadors Contest in Turkmenistan | United Nations in Turkmenistan](#))



undergoing in social protection area and the role of UN in this process. The evaluation is expected to generate clear outcome descriptions and comparators, and to harvest secondary data and apply some level of analysis at the national and velayat levels. All these materials will be prepared by UN Data Officer. If the volume is too large, the bidders are welcome to suggest approach to select the most appropriate.

The following list includes general information sources related to country context in general and social service provision system in particular that should be used for desk review and further elaboration of methods for data collection:

- UNSDCF 2016-2020
- UNSDCF 2021-2025
- Turkmenistan MAPS Report
- UNICEF Strategic Plans 2018-2021
- UNICEF Gender Action Plans (2018-2021)
- UNFPA Strategic Plan 2021-2025
- Country Program documents of all PUNOs for 2016-2020 and 2021-2025
- UNCRC, UNCRPD, CEDAW and UPR recommendations;
- MICS 2015-16
- MICS 2019 (TBD)
- National Programs evaluations
- NAP 2018-2022
- NAP on Gender Equality for 2021-2025
- SDG Progress reports
- Assessment of the multi-sector response system to gender based violence
- SitAns on: children and women, PwDs, Youth, gender norms, women with disabilities
- Child protection system assessment in Turkmenistan, 2021
- Documents prepared and developed by the Joint Program
- Other relevant documents

**Data analysis:** While evaluation bidders are expected to offer a gender, cultural and linguistic sensitive approach that will include field-based data collection and/or validation of findings from document analyses and survey findings, we propose that two types of analyses be given due consideration: Data analysis must measure the extent to which the UN JP is contributing to the implementation of Social Protection in Turkmenistan and to what extent Social Protection contributed to the implementation of SDGs. The analysis will cover findings according to determined evaluation criteria, yet, should also



demonstrate statistical validity between variables such as socio-economic and political issues and any other assumptions and risks that can potentially have effect on changing the course of the expected results.

### Evaluation Stages

During the **Planning phase** the Consultant should start with a review of UN and its partners' relevant internal documents, including but not limited to project documents, quarterly reports submitted by partners to UN, sitreps, partners' own internal evaluation reports, and policy notes, assessments, reviews etc related to UN JP.

During the **Inception phase** Consultant should work on the Inception Report which should outline detailed scope, evaluation framework; rigorous methodology; sampling of respondents; involvement of Young SDG Ambassadors as part of the Team in field visits, an approach to training Ambassadors to ensure national and local, data collection methods and mode, timeline for activities and submission of deliverables, dissemination plan etc. The Inception phase will be used as an evaluability phase and the Consultant should collect and review all available evidence. The Consultant also should assess reliability of data with focus on disaggregated data for evidence generation to be in line with "leave no one behind" approach, so that evaluation data is disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, age and other categories, where possible. The consultant shall present preliminary observations from the Desk Review and initial methodology and potential questions for further elaboration during the field work. The consultant is also expected to submit a work plan of assignment and to confirm the evaluation methodology and tools with the UN RCO Data Officer and UNICEF CRM Specialist within the framework of the Inception report development, after careful evaluability assessment and review of available data and information.

During the **Fact-finding phase (field work)** the Consultant will be responsible for collecting data in the field with minimum involvement of partners or UN staff, but with the help of the Young SDG Ambassadors, as a representative of a Team on the ground. However, UN will facilitate the data collection and field work required for this exercise. Data collection instruments should be selected considering COVID-19 related restrictions. While the assessment criteria have been set above, UN would like the Consultant to use the mix of contribution analysis and participatory evaluation approaches during all the methods adopted for the assessment alongside other more rigorous approaches. Consultant should conduct data interpretation and conceptual work using disaggregated data (by age, by gender, by place of residence (urban/rural), by the type of the provided services etc). The analysis will be built on triangulating information collected from different stakeholders through different methods including secondary data analysis and documentation review. It should critically examine the information gathered from the various sources and synthesize the information in an objective manner. If contradictory information is obtained from different stakeholders, an effort should be made to understand the reasons for such information, including any gender-based differences. The evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods should also focus on equity, gender and human rights aspects, be responsive and appropriate for analysing the gender equality, human rights issues including child rights issues identified in the scope. Gender equality, equity and human rights considerations will be elaborated by the Consultant during this phase and addressed across the final report.

During the **Reporting phase** the Consultant should draft Evaluation Report and pay close attention to formulating good recommendations, clearly prioritizing 3-5 recommendations for concrete actions. The evaluation report to be produced must be compliant with the UNICEF Evaluation standards and GEROS Quality Assessment System. The Evaluation Report will be made available on the UN website and evaluation reports database. The visualization materials will be developed and used as an advocacy tool. Additionally, the Report will be shared among bilateral and development partners.

During the **Dissemination phase**, the Consultant should pay close attention to involving the key stakeholders. The Evaluation Report will be disseminated to the UN senior management, Programspecialists/officers, including Field Offices. Findings and recommendations will inform the work planning process, as well as the CO's fundraising approach. The findings/recommendations will contribute to the development of the new further strategic document on Social Protection, as well as Road Map on Social Protection strengthening. Although the results of the evaluation will not be known until its completion, UN together with the consultant will work together to prepare an initial dissemination plan to identify key audiences.

#### **SPECIAL CONDITIONS AND LIMITATION**

The following special conditions and limitation are to be taken into consideration:

- Due to Covid-19 situation, no travel is foreseen under this assignment, but support of SDG Ambassadors should help to cover regions.
- Sensitivity of some indicators related to human rights, access to justice, children in conflict with the law and partially on children with disabilities might bring a challenge for evaluators especially during data collection stage, as respondents might not feel comfortable to talk openly.
- Even though all efforts were made to generate and/or access to the needed data, one of the limitations which may also affect the evaluation is the limited availability of data. The available data is not often disaggregated that might hinder assessment, for example, of the gender equality, disability, or equity issues.
- Lack of systematic documentation of the joint Programimplementation and key factors that enabled or affected the implementation process could also be a limitation to the evaluation.
- Interviewing government counterparts for the evaluation may depend on their availability especially during the period of the pandemic. Likewise, vulnerable groups and beneficiaries, in particular children and women, might not be reachable at the time of evaluation, especially during the pandemic.
- Most of the documentation and knowledge products prepared by the Joint Programis in Russian language
- The applicants should discuss the above or other potential limitations in their proposal and propose a methodology mitigating these limitations.

Evaluability assessment will be undertaken during the inception phase based on the data and document review. The identified potential limitations should be closely considered during finalization of the evaluation methodology and data collection tools.

The evaluation report will not be used for academic publishing.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

Adequate measures will be taken to ensure that the process responds to quality and ethical requirements. The consultant is responsible to ensure that the process is in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines<sup>39</sup> and adhere to the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis<sup>40</sup>. The bidders should clearly identify any potential ethical issues and approaches, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the evaluation process in their proposal. Taking into account, that participation of children and parents are subject to Government approval, this could be clarified, only once Consultant starts the Inception Phase and proposes intended meetings and focus groups. In this regards, Ethical Review approval will be required for those interventions, that will include children as respondents (Focus groups, Interviews with children or parents).

The evaluator(s) should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relationships with all stakeholders. Furthermore, they should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual information. All participants should be informed of the context and purpose of the evaluation, as well as of the confidentiality of the information shared. Interviewees should be protected (e.g. references to information sources should remain confidential and the report will not contain names unless explicit permission is granted).

Evaluation methodology should be based on UNEG Ethical considerations and respond to UNEG ethical guidance to evaluation as guiding principle to ensure quality of evaluation process (<http://www.uneval.org/search/index.jsp?q=ETHICAL+GUIDELINES>) as well as on Standard Operations Procedures (SOP) for Quality Assurance and Ethical Standards in UNICEF-supported Research, Studies and Evaluations (RSEs) towards Measurable Results for Children in the CEE/CIS Region and UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis.

***Ethical clearance will be obtained before the fieldwork starts through the official ethical approval by submission to regional LTA holder.***

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS**

UNICEF as a lead-agency on JP takes the accountability of the evaluation. The managerial responsibilities for this evaluation will be with UNICEF Child Rights Monitoring Specialist (CRM Specialist) in partnership with UNRCO Data officer and representative of the Ministry of labour and social protection (Evaluation Managers).

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/102>

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT\\_IV-UNICEF\\_Procedure\\_for\\_Ethical\\_Standards.PDF](https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF)

**The Evaluation Manager and co-managers** will have the following responsibilities:

- Lead the management of the evaluation process throughout the evaluation (design, implementation and dissemination and coordination of it follow up);
- Convene the ERG meetings; Facilitate the participation of those involved in the evaluation design;
- Coordinate the selection of the Consultant;
- Safeguard the independence of the exercise and ensure the evaluation products meet quality standards;
- Connect the Consultant with the wider Programunits, senior management and key evaluation stakeholders, and ensure a fully inclusive and transparent approach to the evaluation;
- Facilitate the Consultant Team's access to all information and documentation relevant to the intervention, as well as to key actors and informants who should participate in interviews, focus groups or other information-gathering methods;
- Provide the evaluators with overall guidance as well as with administrative support; Oversee progress and conduct of the evaluation, the quality of the process and the products;
- Take responsibility for disseminating and learning across evaluations on the various Programareas as well as the liaison with the UN JP Steering Committee;
- Ensure that the TOR, IR and Evaluation Report are submitted to external QA review conducted by external institution;
- Disseminate the results of the evaluation.

The UN Joint Programteam will support UN RCO Data Officer coordinate with key stakeholders at key milestones such as preparation of terms of reference, inception and data collection stage, report validation and discussion of findings and recommendations. UNICEF CRM Specialist will ensure operational support as required, including support in organizing primary data collection where needed to complement data available from the existing monitoring systems and other documents.

**The Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)** will comprise of the representatives of the major stakeholders including Evaluation Managers, UNICEF Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor, UNDCO and the Joint Programteam. PUNO are members of this group and participate equally.

ERG will oversee and advise on the evaluation process starting from the development and validation of the present terms of reference, selection of the evaluator(s), act as liaison between the evaluator(s) and partners/stakeholders involved, validate and ensure quality of the report and contribute to the development of management's response to the evaluation findings and recommendations.

**The ERG will:**

- Provide clear specific advice and support to the Evaluation Manager and the Consultant throughout the whole evaluation process;

- Review the Inception Report and all drafts of Evaluation Report and ensure Final draft meets the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards;
- Review and provide comments and feedback on the quality of the evaluation process as well as on the evaluation products (comments and suggestions on the TOR, draft reports, final report of the evaluation).

**The Evaluation Consultant** will report to Evaluation Managers and conduct the evaluation by fulfilling the contractual arrangements in line with the TOR, UNEG/OECD norms and standards and Ethical Guidelines; this includes developing of an evaluation (implementation) plan as part of the inception report, drafting and finalizing the final report and other deliverables, and briefing the commissioner on the progress and key findings and recommendations, as needed. The final Evaluation Report will be presented to UNCT (the main decision-making structure within the UN) and Steering Committee at the deputy-minister's level. Final report will be approved by the U JP chairs of the Steering Committee.

### **Work plan of the Evaluation**

The evaluation is expected to be completed within 70 days. This might be subject to change depending on the prevailing situation on ground at the time of the evaluation.

The evaluation process at all stages should follow UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis.

The Evaluation Consultant is responsible to submit the following Deliverables (subject to external Quality Assurance):

**Detailed Inception Report (IR)** in English and/or Russian (Electronic version to be submitted within two months after signing a contract and initial briefing with the Evaluation Managers and ERG). This report should be 20 to 25 pages in length and should be in line with UN standards for IRs. The IR should outline detailed scope, evaluation framework; methodology; sampling, field visit timing and modality, data collection methods, timeline for activities and submission of deliverables, dissemination plan). The IR should also include initial data and findings based on the documentary review and final evaluation design/plan. This report will be used as an initial point of agreement and understanding between the Evaluation Consultant and Evaluation Managers. A draft will be shared in advance for comments and approved by the ERG. Final inception report will be presented by the Evaluation Consultant to the ERG and JP Steering Committee, Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor and external QA institution.

**Draft Evaluation Report** in English and/or Russian (Electronic version of the first draft should be submitted after completion of the data collection). The draft report should be in line with UNICEF adapted UNEG Evaluation Report Standards and contain the same sections as the final report and will be a maximum of 60 pages in length (excluding annexes). It will also contain an executive summary of no more than 5 pages that includes a brief description of the context and current situation, the purpose of the evaluation, its methodology and its main findings, conclusions and recommendations. The draft will be shared with the ERG to seek their comments. The drafts report will be quality assured by Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor. The final draft will be quality assured by external QA institution.

**Evaluation Report (Final draft) in English and/or Russian.** The final report should include all received comments and suggestions provided by QA review providers. The Evaluation Report should

systematically answer the key evaluation questions posed. It should fairly and clearly represent the views of the different actors/stakeholders. It should clearly give the conclusions and recommends in a way that is substantiated by evidence. The Final Report should be submitted along with the Power point presentation in English and Russian (electronic version). Presentation should be based on the finalized evaluation report summarizing the entire process, purpose, objectives, methodology, findings and recommendations and conclusions.

**Dissemination plan and advocacy approaches** should be developed as part of the IR and then discussed/agreed with the ERG. Primarily, the result will be disseminated to the UNCT. The findings will be discussed at the UNCT meetings, programmatic reviews to inform the CO's programming. The plan for dissemination and advocacy of the Evaluation result will be cleared by the UNICEF Representative and UNRC.

The Evaluation Consultant should propose a timeline to submit the deliverables in their implementation plan (in proposals). Necessary and adequate time (at least two weeks) should be allocated for review and quality assurance processes of the deliverables by the Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor and External Institution.

Below is a suggested initial timeline:

- April 2022 – Finalizing of Inception report with Annexes;
- May 2022- Data collection and presentation of the preliminary findings;
- June 2022 – Processing of data, analysis and submission of the first draft report;
- July 2022 – Feedback on draft evaluation report and validation meeting and submission of final evaluation report and dissemination.

The Evaluation Consultant should produce the above assessment and conduct the meetings for submitting each Deliverable. Deadline for each deliverable to be agreed between the Evaluation Consultant and ERG.

Activities	Timeframe	Location	Deliverables
<b>Inception Phase: 26 working days</b>			
Introduction discussions on evaluation planning and logistics with ERG	2 working days		
In-depth desk review to gather secondary quantitative/qualitative data, evaluability assessment and preparation of the Draft Inception Report including evaluation matrix, data	15 working days	Home-based	Inception Report, with preliminary observations and data gaps, as well as Questionnaires

collection and analysis tools and Ethical Review (as required). The consultant shall present preliminary observations from the Desk Review and initial methodology and potential questions for further elaboration during the field work.

for Focus Groups to be submitted to Ethical Review, PPT with initial operations form the Desk Review

Consolidating comments and finalizing Inception Report

4 working days

Train Young SDG Ambassadors to support with the identified Focus Groups

5 working days

Home-based

Training Agenda and Training Materials, Schedule for the Focus Groups, Documents for the Ethical review

**Data Collection Phase: 17 working days**

Primary data is collected from target groups and partners based on the methodology described in the inception report.

17 working days (if remotely, then 10 working days should be distributed based on time difference, availability of key informants for interviews and/or FGDs and other possible reasons)

Turkmenistan (or remotely, based on COVID-related travel restrictions)

Presentation of preliminary findings



**Analysis and Reporting Phase: 27 working days**

Preparation of draft evaluation report, with draft PPT on the results	16 working days	Home-based	Draft report and PPT
Validation of evaluations findings and recommendations with key stakeholders	3 working days	Home-based	Presentation and validation of findings and recommendations with key stakeholders and UNCT
Consolidating comments from ERG, Government, UNCT (translations into English or Russian might take time by the consultant) and preparation of the final report	5 working days	Home-based	Final report and PPT
Develop a Dissemination Plan	3 working days	Home-based	Dissemination Plan

**Total: 70 working days**

***Required qualifications and areas of expertise***

UNICEF is seeking to contract an international consultant, corresponding to the following requirements:

**The International Consultant should have the following qualifications:**

- Advanced university degree, preferably in evaluation, social studies or human rights preferably with multi-disciplinary training. A combination of relevant academic background and relevant work experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree;
- At least five years' experience in evaluation, including experience of designing and implementing theory based evaluations; experience in social protection and social service provision area; evaluations using experimental and non-experimental approaches; familiarity with UNICEF and the UN system (CVs required);
- Expertise to analyse and solid knowledge of social services provision within the social protection systems;



- Good understanding of child-sensitive, gender-sensitive and disability sensitive social protection issues;
- Familiarity with UNICEF work and procedures (possible but not necessary);
- Strong analytical skills and statistical data analysis experience;
- Ability to produce content for high standard deliverables in Russian and English;
- Experience conducting remote data collection is an asset;
- Sensitivity towards ethics with regards to human and child rights issues, different cultures, local customs, religious beliefs and practices, personal interaction and gender roles, disability, age and ethnicity.

The **Evaluation Consultant** should also adhere to UNICEF’s Evaluation Policy, to UNEG’s ethical guidelines for UN evaluations and to UNICEF Reporting Standards. Evaluation Consultant members will sign a no conflict of interest attestation.

The **Evaluation Consultant** must demonstrate personal and professional integrity during the whole process of the evaluation. The Evaluation Consultant must respect the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and ensure that sensitive data cannot be traced to its source. Further, the consultant must respect ethics of research while working with children including using age appropriate consent forms, age appropriate data collection, and principle of do no harm. Furthermore, the consultant must take care that those involved in the evaluation have an opportunity to examine the statements attributed to them. The evaluation process must be sensitive to beliefs, manners, and customs of the social and cultural environment in which they will work. Especially, the consultant must be sensitive to and address issues of protection, discrimination and gender inequality. Furthermore, the Team is not expected to assess the personal performance of individuals and must balance an assessment of management functions with due consideration of this principle.

The evaluation should follow UN Evaluation Group Norms and Standards (including ensuring that the planned evaluation fully addresses any ethical issues).

#### **Payment schedule**

Payments shall be made as follows:

- 30 per cent will be paid upon submission of Inception Report;
- 30 per cent will be paid upon presentation of Draft Report;
- 40 per cent will be paid upon submission of Final Report;

#### **Submission of Proposal and evaluation criteria**

The proposal for this consultancy should consist *of technical and financial* parts. While evaluating, 70% will be the share of technical rigor while 30% will be given for budget proposal:

### Financial Proposal

Individual consultants applying for the contract are expected to submit a lump sum financial proposal to complete the entire assignment based on the terms of reference. Number of working days for each consultant should be suggested by an applicant. The lump sum should be broken down to show the details for the following:

Items	Number of persons	Unit cost in USD	Quantity	Total
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**Consultant (45 days in total)**



**International**

**Mission (if COVID restrictions reduced)**



**International (includes flight tickets, car trips, visas, COVID tests, UN terminals, DSA)**

**In Country (includes DSA for field visits)**

Grand Total in USD

Please note that, due to the COVID restrictions travel may not happen, so 2 options need to be specified in the financial proposal with and without travel. If travel is calculated it should include: i) travel costs shall be calculated based on economy class fare regardless of the length of travel and ii) costs for accommodation, meals and incidentals shall not exceed the applicable daily subsistence allowance (DSA) rates, as propagated by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). Details can be found at <http://icsc.un.org>

### **Technical proposal**

Each proposal will be assessed first on its technical merits and subsequently on its price. In making the final decision, UNICEF considers both technical and financial aspects to ensure best value for money. The Consultant first reviews the technical aspects of the offer, followed by review of the financial offers of

the technically compliant vendors. The proposal obtaining the highest overall score after adding the scores for the technical and financial proposals together, that offers the best value for money will be recommended for award of the contract.

Your technical proposal should address all aspects of the above terms of reference. It will be evaluated against the pre-established technical evaluation criteria. As a minimum, your technical proposal should include the following:

- A cover letter, including
- Assessment of suitability vis-à-vis the requirements of this ToR;
- A summary of experience in similar assignments;
- Links to/attachments of examples of similar work;
- Comments and suggestions on the ToR and proposed workplan and deliverables
- CV of each team member (including qualifications and experience)
- References

Please make sure to provide sufficient information/substantiating documentation to address all technical evaluation criteria. The assessed technical score must be equal to or exceed 70 of the total 100 points allocated to the technical evaluation in order to be considered technically compliant and for consideration in the financial evaluation.

<b>Technical Criteria</b>	<b>Technical Sub-Criteria</b>	<b>Maximum Points</b>
		<b>70</b>
<b>Overall Response.</b>	Completeness of proposal	5
	Tenderer's understanding of objectives and how they propose to perform the tasks in order to meet the objectives and requirements of the ToR	10
<b>Points</b>		15
<b>Institution &amp; Key Personnel</b>	Range and depth of individual/organization experience with similar projects	10
	Previous experience of work in ECARO region	10
	Samples of previous work	10
	Key personnel: relevant experience and qualifications of the proposed team for the assignment	10

<b>Points</b>		40
<b>Proposed Methodology and Approach</b>	Description of methodology/timeline	10
	Description of approach to ensure quality of services, absence of conflict of interest and respect of ethical standards	5
<b>Points</b>		15

## Annexes

Annex A – Joint ProgramToC

Annex B - Guiding questions on Persons with Disabilities

## General Terms and Conditions

UNICEF’s general terms and conditions will apply to the contract awarded to the vendor. Please note that, in the evaluation of the technical merits of each proposal, UNICEF will take into consideration any proposed amendments to the UNICEF General Terms and Conditions. Proposed amendments to the UNICEF general terms and conditions may negatively affect the evaluation of the technical merits of the proposal.

UN Joint Program and the participating UN Agencies retain the right to patent and intellectual rights, as well as copyright and other similar intellectual property rights for any discoveries, inventions, products or works arising specifically from the work related from the Joint Program. The right to reproduce or use materials shall be transferred with a written approval of the relevant UN Agency based on the consideration of each separate case. Consultants should always refer to UN Turkmenistan support in developing the materials when publishing the results of the research conducted while in Turkmenistan in academic journals, books and websites.

In the event of unsatisfactory performance, UNICEF reserves the right to terminate the Agreement. In case of partially satisfactory performance, such as serious delays causing the negative impact on meeting



the Program objectives, low quality or insufficient depth and/or scope of the assignment completion, UNICEF is entitled to decrease the payment by the range from 30% to 50% of the contract value as decided jointly by the Contract Supervisor and Operations Manager.