



**Evaluation Of The Trilateral South-South
Cooperation Programme Between The
Government Of Brazil & UNICEF**

**2013-2018
Executive
Summary**

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Evaluator:
Articulação Sul



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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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Presentation 4

Introduction 7

Evaluation objectives & methodology 10

Theory of change 14

Findings 17

Main contributions

Main challenges

Conclusions & next steps 29

On effectively supporting partners' capacity development

On supporting horizontal Brazilian and UNICEF TSSC

On knowledge management

On the Programme design and the need for strategic adjustments

Lessons learnt 34

Recommendations 38

Presentation

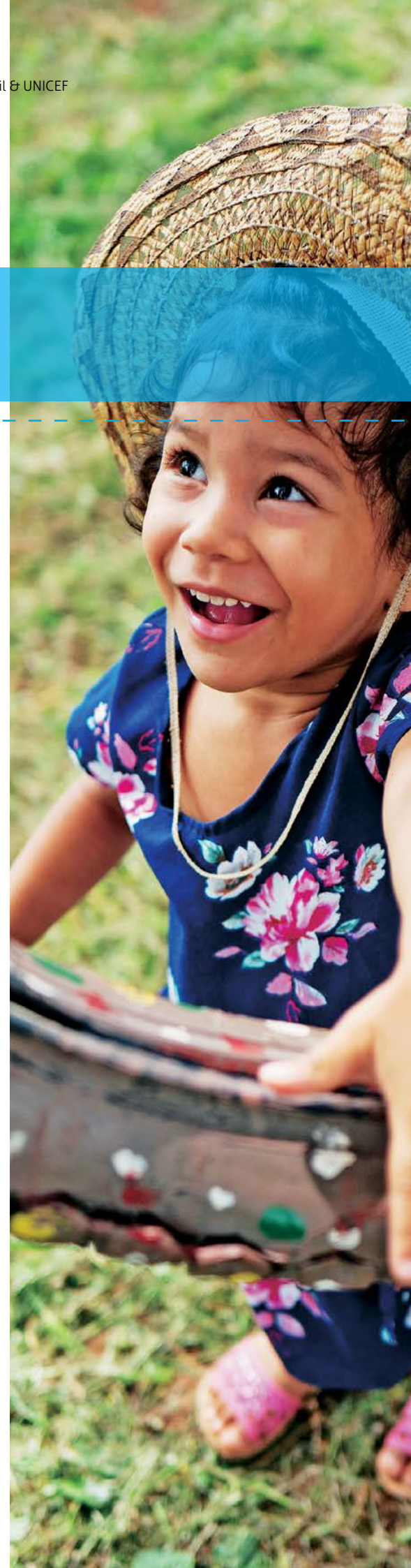
As we all know, humanity is currently facing a global challenge without precedent. As the world strives to respond to the situation, the call for solidarity and collaboration between and among nations is greater than ever.

Sharing information, good practices and lessons learnt – including through innovative South-South Cooperation mechanisms, such as virtual knowledge exchange – not only helps countries to create and adapt solutions to their given contexts, but it also helps us all to think through and develop new and improved solutions, as it is in dialogue with others that new ideas emerge, and progress occurs.

It is with this backdrop that we, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency of the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations, and UNICEF Brazil, present the findings of the recent external evaluation of our joint Trilateral South-South Cooperation programme; a programme that seeks to promote international cooperation, based on horizontal exchanges of knowledge and technical know-how, in favour of equitable and sustainable development for children and their families.

This independent external evaluation assesses and analyses progress within the scope of the Trilateral South-South Cooperation (TSSC) programme of the Government of Brazil and UNICEF Brazil, looking at the scope of six years of implementation with 16 partner countries. The evaluation brings relevant knowledge around tested TSSC mechanisms and identifies a series of key lessons on what works for children, what doesn't and why this is so, highlighting good practices and persisting challenges.

Summative and formative in nature, the external evaluation seeks to generate useful knowledge, especially with regards to the





joint application of South-South Cooperation and child-rights principles, by assessing and documenting results at output and outcome levels, looking at the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Following the concluding remarks, the evaluation brings a list of strategic recommendations for programme adjustments. Expectations are that the insights brought about by the evaluation will not only help inform the future directions of the Brazil-UNICEF TSSC programme, but also the broader agenda of international cooperation in Brazil and beyond.

We wish you a pleasant reading!



Ambassador Ruy Carlos Pereira
Director, Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC)
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Representative to Brazil
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Introduction

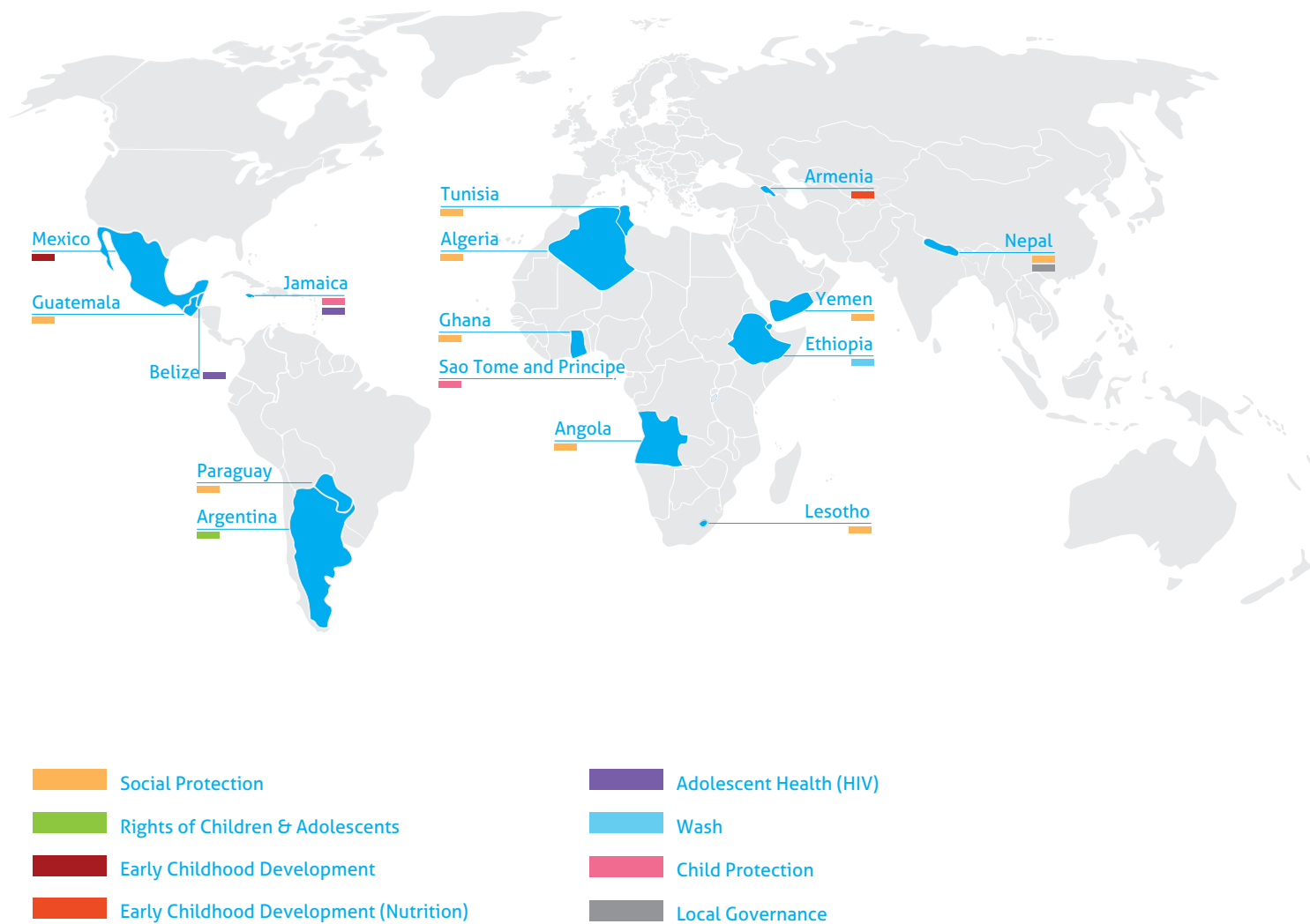
In 2011 the Government of Brazil (GoB) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) formally agreed on a Global Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the overarching objective of promoting the equity agenda for children, adolescents and women through Trilateral South-South Cooperation (TSSC). The MoU served as a starting point for the Brazil-UNICEF Trilateral South-South Cooperation Programme (hereinafter the Programme). In 2013, following the signature of the MoU, UNICEF Brazil (BCO) and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) signed a Cooperation Agreement, which set out the terms, objectives and financing for the Programme.

The Programme seeks to foster a space for policy and technical dialogue among Southern countries, to discuss child-relevant policies, showcasing and adapting Brazilian experiences, technologies and lessons learnt. It aims at supporting partners in prioritising the rights of children, adolescents and women, at different policy levels, and their capacity to effectively develop or improve policy frameworks to achieve sustainable results for the most disadvantaged children and young people. It also aims at contributing to champion the child-rights agenda, bolstering political buy-in and commitment to the enforcement of child-rights, as well as mobilising appropriate budgetary and financial resources to achieve sustainable and robust policy frameworks focused on the rights of children, adolescents and women.

The Programme relies on the engagement of Brazilian institutions and public officers who have first-hand experience in tackling development challenges, as well as on the capacity of UNICEF to play a broker and a convener role, enabling access to relevant policy knowledge under its mandate. The Programme emphasises the importance of a horizontal cooperation, and thus partners are expected to play an active role throughout the entire process of engagement so as to ensure continuous alignment and responsiveness of the Programme to partner country demands, as well as to foster partner

autonomy and ownership over the initiative. Finally, when it comes to the financial arrangements of the Programme, it mainly provides 'seed-money' to fund study tours (either isolated or under the scope of a project), and to serve as a trigger for mobilising additional resources.

Figure 1 The geographical outreach of the programme, as per thematic programme area





This external evaluation covers the time period between 2013 and 2018. Throughout these six years of implementation the Programme provided support to 16 countries, sharing Brazilian experience in areas such as Social Protection, Child Protection, Local Governance, Early Childhood Development, Adolescent Health and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). Throughout this same time period, the Programme responded to 20 different demands and promoted 42 study tours. Figure 1 represents the geographical outreach of these initiatives.

Evaluation objectives & methodology

The objectives of this external evaluation were both summative and formative¹. On the one hand, the evaluation aimed at capturing results, explaining how those occurred and reflecting upon how the Programme contributed to given change processes. On the other hand, it sought to identify and come into terms with major challenges and bottlenecks faced by the Programme. It assessed the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the programme strategies, including the quality of its activities as well as its contribution to sustainable outcomes in partner countries. It also assessed the engagement of the Programme at the national level in Brazil, with Brazilian implementing agencies as well as within UNICEF globally. As such the evaluation gathered lessons learnt on how the Programme functions as well as on its specific contributions to outcomes in partner countries. Building upon the evidence and the analysis of the overall programme strategies, the evaluation also provides recommendations to inform future programme design.

1. Whereas a summative evaluation aims to analyze an initiative in order to present its value and impact, usually carried out at its end, a formative evaluation, normally conducted in the implementation process, aims to present the strengths and shortcomings of an initiative through its operational schemes so that the project might be revised accordingly. For more informations, available at: <<https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/UNEG-Handbook-for-Conducting-Evaluations-of-Normative-Work-Final-ENGLISH.pdf>>.





The evaluation looked to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1 How relevant is the work of the Brazil-UNICEF TSSC Programme?
- 2 How effective was the Brazil-UNICEF TSSC Programme in supporting countries to strengthen their capacities in order to achieve positive results for women and children, with a focus on girls and vulnerable populations?
- 3 What is the likelihood of sustaining the positive results over time?
- 4 To what extent has the management of the Programme ensured timelines, quality of outputs and an efficient utilisation of resources aiming at achieving its objectives?

In order to answer these questions, the methodological approach of the evaluation was built upon three intertwined assumptions regarding the nature of the Programme, namely:

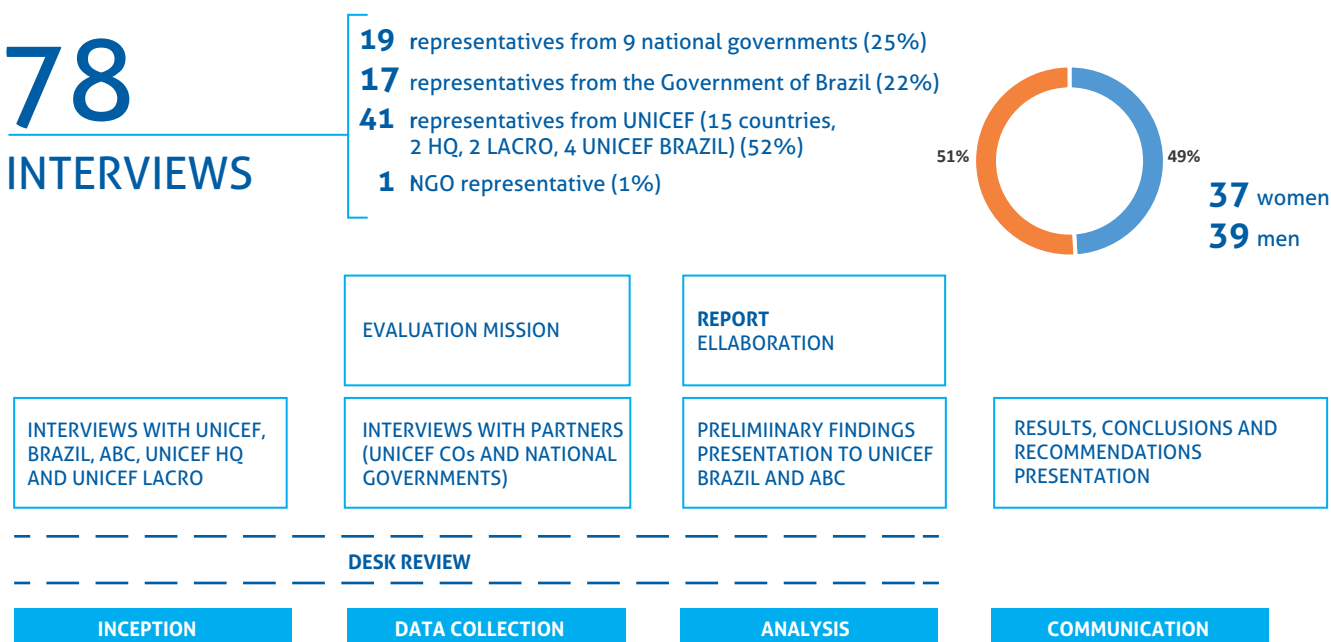
- (I) the Trilateral South-South Cooperation (TSSC) principles, which underpin the overarching strategies of the Programme;
- (II) the characteristics of its capacity development support work; and
- (III) the perspective on Equity for Children and Gender Equality. In this regard, the evaluation is essentially qualitative, reflecting the capacity development approach of the Programme as well as the diversity of partner countries and their various forms of engagement with the Programme. In order to engage the main primary users of this evaluation, namely UNICEF BCO and ABC, the evaluation framework was constructed based on a close dialogue with these two stakeholders.

The evaluation covered the period from 2013, when ABC first transferred funds to UNICEF for programme implementation, up to and including December 2018. A total of 78 semi-structured interviews were conducted with partner countries, UNICEF Country Offices (COs), UNICEF Headquarters (HQ), UNICEF Regional Offices, UNICEF Brazil's staff, and representatives from the GoB (implementing agencies and ABC representatives). The evaluation team also carried out an extensive desk-review as well as one evaluation mission to a partner country. The evaluation findings are based on the inputs gathered from 15 out of the 16 partnerships developed within the period assessed.



78 INTERVIEWS

Figure 2 Evaluation process and inputs gathered



Source: Prepared by Articulação Sul

The chosen methods allowed for triangulation of information and evidence. More specifically, the high number of stakeholders interviewed was used to tackle the inherent subjectivity of this method, through the triangulation of different stakeholder perceptions. Desk review supported the evaluation to gather more precise information, not only on the activities carried out by the Programme, but also on partners' contexts and their child-sensitive policies relevant to the programme activities. It is also worth mentioning that, although only one evaluation mission was carried out, the evaluation team looked to dedicate additional efforts to those countries with which the Programme established more continuous relations to reach out for a broader number of interviewees and conduct further desk research on partner country contexts.

Finally, the evaluation team followed the principles, norms and standards laid out by the United Nations Evaluation Group and by UNICEF. The evaluation process aimed at ensuring: utility; integrity, independence, impartiality and transparency; privacy, confidentiality and respect of rights; fair representation and avoidance of harm; respect for dignity and right to self-determination; credibility; and compliance with codes for vulnerable groups.



Theory of change

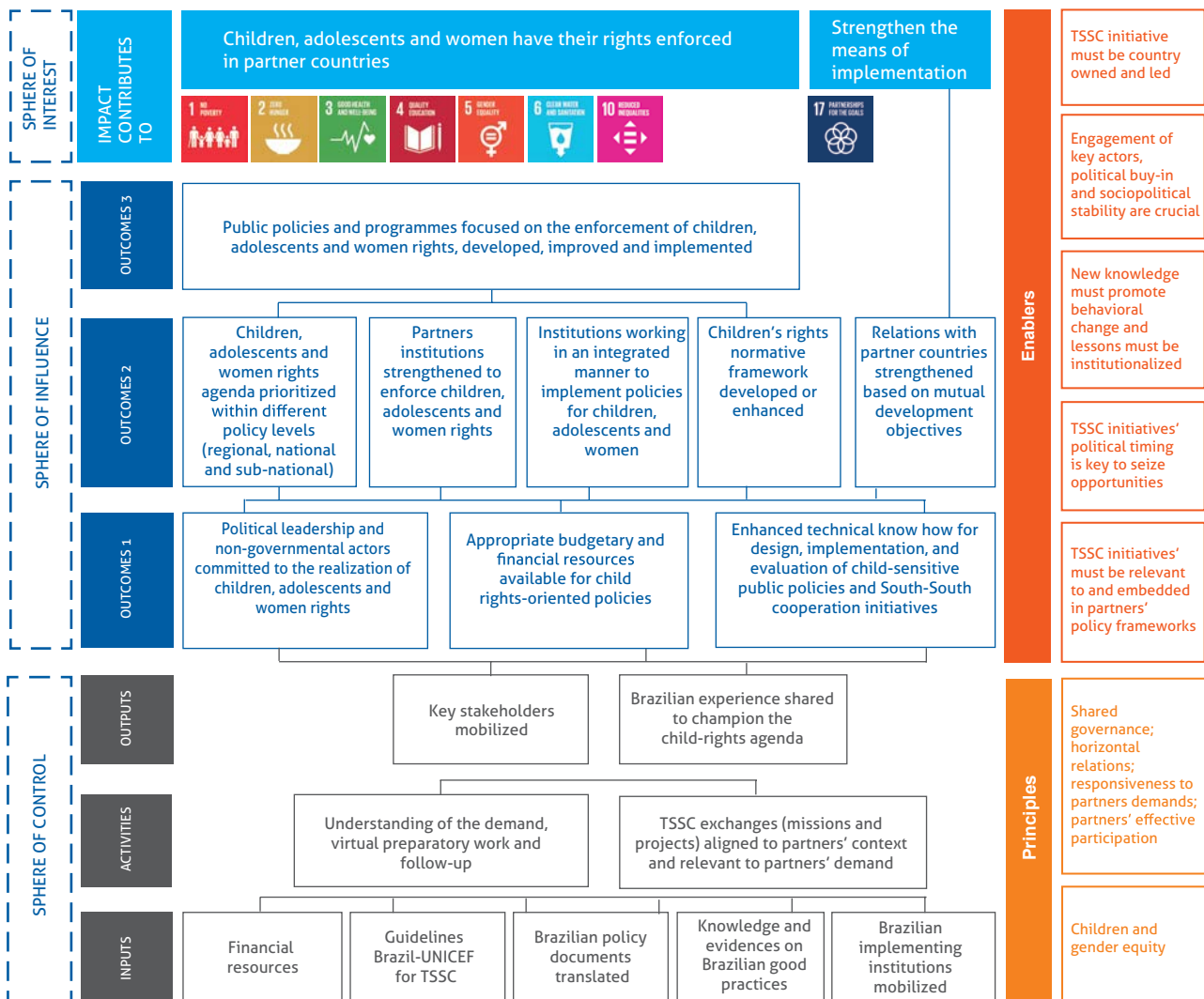
While ABC and UNICEF have continuously developed and improved programming and planning tools, such as the joint programmatic and operational guidelines that were developed in 2015 and updated in 2017, and the more recent conceptual framework for a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning System (developed in 2019), the programme has been implemented without any formal Theory of Change (ToC). A ToC brings together the goals, underlying beliefs, and assumptions guiding the Programme strategy, all of which are critical for producing change. It puts forward the expected causal relationships between Programme interventions (inputs and outputs) and desired outcomes, viewed as pre-



conditions for the achievement of long-term goal(s). The outcomes state the hypothesis on how strengthened capacities should contribute in the short, medium and long-term to sustainable impacts for children and the most vulnerable. In order to guide this evaluation, and in dialogue with the UNICEF BCO and ABC during the inception phase, the evaluation team elaborated the ToC represented in figure 3 below.

Due to the Programme's multi-country intervention characteristic, its ToC reflects the aggregated and crosscutting outcomes that could apply to all partner countries, as well as its knowledge management component.

Figure 3 The TSSC Programme Theory of change



Source: Prepared by Articulação Sul

The underlying principles of the theory refer to TSSC's own nature, as well as to UNICEF's mandate. On the one hand, shared governance, partners' effective participation and horizontal relations are key to ensuring continuous alignment and responsiveness to partners' demands, as well as to fostering partners' autonomy and ownership over the initiative. On the other hand, children's rights and gender equity are crosscutting principles that should guide the theory. Finally, to hold the theory true, a set of enablers of success was identified: TSSC initiatives must be embedded in partners' policy framework and be country owned and led; high-level political engagement is crucial, lessons must be institutionalised, and political timing is key to seize opportunities.



Findings

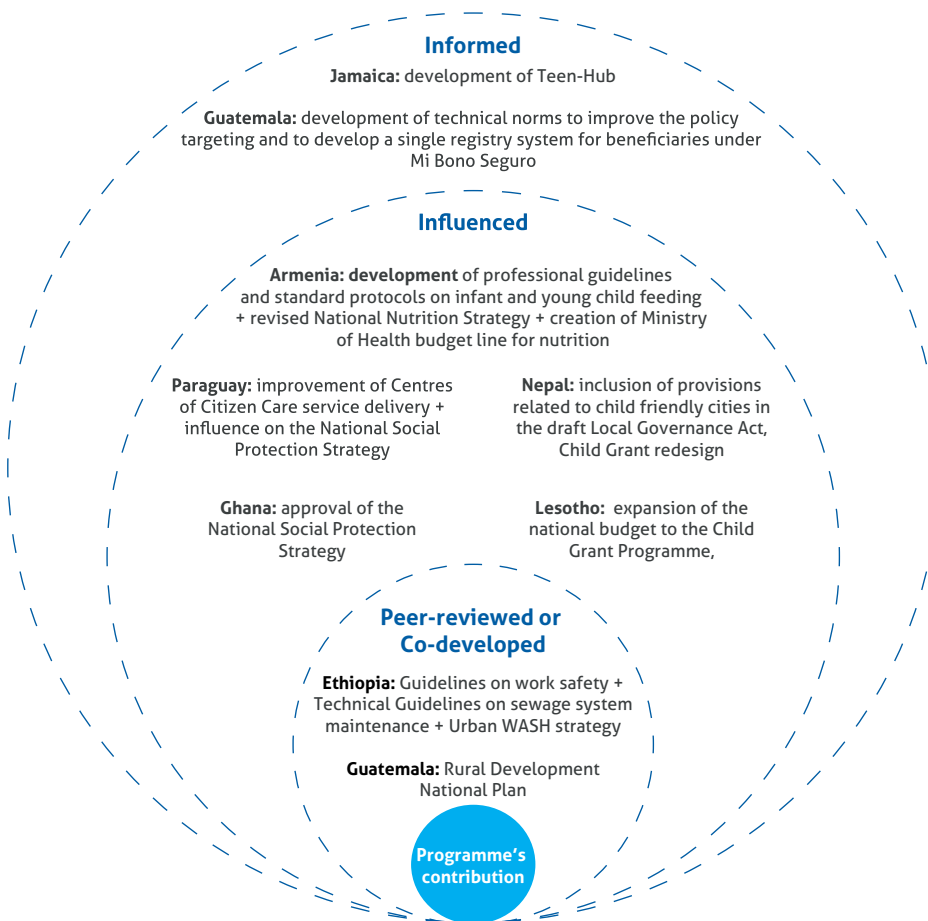
The evaluation assessed that the Programme was effective in supporting the improvement of policy frameworks and raising awareness on rights-based approaches to social policies that bring positive impact on vulnerable children. The Programme has managed to leverage resources and reach important policy results, demonstrating its value for money. It also contributed to strengthen and improve Brazilian and UNICEF practices in TSSC.

Against this positive backdrop the evaluation also assessed promising future areas of improvement. This includes evidence generation and knowledge management as well as strategic adjustments in the overall programme design and methodologies. Attending to such proposed ad-

justments, the Programme will be better placed to bolster its capacity to support partner countries and, at the same time, renew its relevance in tandem with shifting contexts and priorities in Brazil and within UNICEF.

In order to provide a comprehensive overview of the findings and conclusions, the following subsections provide a crosscutting analysis of the main contributions and challenges of the Programme. The section is followed by a text box that provides further specific findings with regards to each evaluation criteria.

Figure 4 Programme contribution to the enhancement of partners’ Policy Frameworks



Source: Prepared by Articulação Sul

MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS

Supporting partners' capacity development

There is strong evidence on the Programme's contribution to significant outcomes in a number of partner countries. These contributions are linked to the enhancement of policy frameworks, instruments and protocols for the implementation of said policies and actions; deep changes in mind-set regarding a rights-based approach to social policies for vulnerable children; and the development of child-oriented inter-sectorial policy agendas. Furthermore, in the countries where the Programme managed to secure a longer-term collaboration, contributions have also been witnessed with regards to increased technical know-how among partners on policy design and implementation.

To achieve these important results, two sets of enablers were identified. The first one refers to the strongest set of programme elements, namely:

- I) the high quality and well-tailored study tours;
- II) the capacity to bring together diverse multi-stakeholder delegations, including governmental representatives, lawmakers and civil society, to foster techno-political and inter-sectorial mobilisation;
- III) the diversification of the Brazilian implementing agencies engaged in the exchanges, through an effective mobilisation of subnational actors in Brazil;
- IV) the horizontal character of the implementation where similarities and empathy among public officers fostered more effective forms of knowledge exchange;
- V) the capacity to leverage resources; and
- VI) the engagement of embassies to assist in political mobilisation of partners and to raise the political relevance of the exchanges.

The second set of enablers refers to factors more related to conjuncture that contributed to a fertile ground for implementation. These are

- I) the capacity to timely respond to political windows of opportunity, notably regarding on-going government-led policy efforts;
- II) a good matchmaking between the availability of Brazilian experiences, partner-country priorities, and the ability of UNICEF CO to screen and channel demands;

'ABC is very serious and has the right tools and proceedings to activate the cooperation'

'The added value was having Brazilian experts to think together with the government on the possibilities of adaptation and implementation'

'Brazilian experts had an active hearing, understood our needs and were very honest about what worked and what did not work in Brazil'

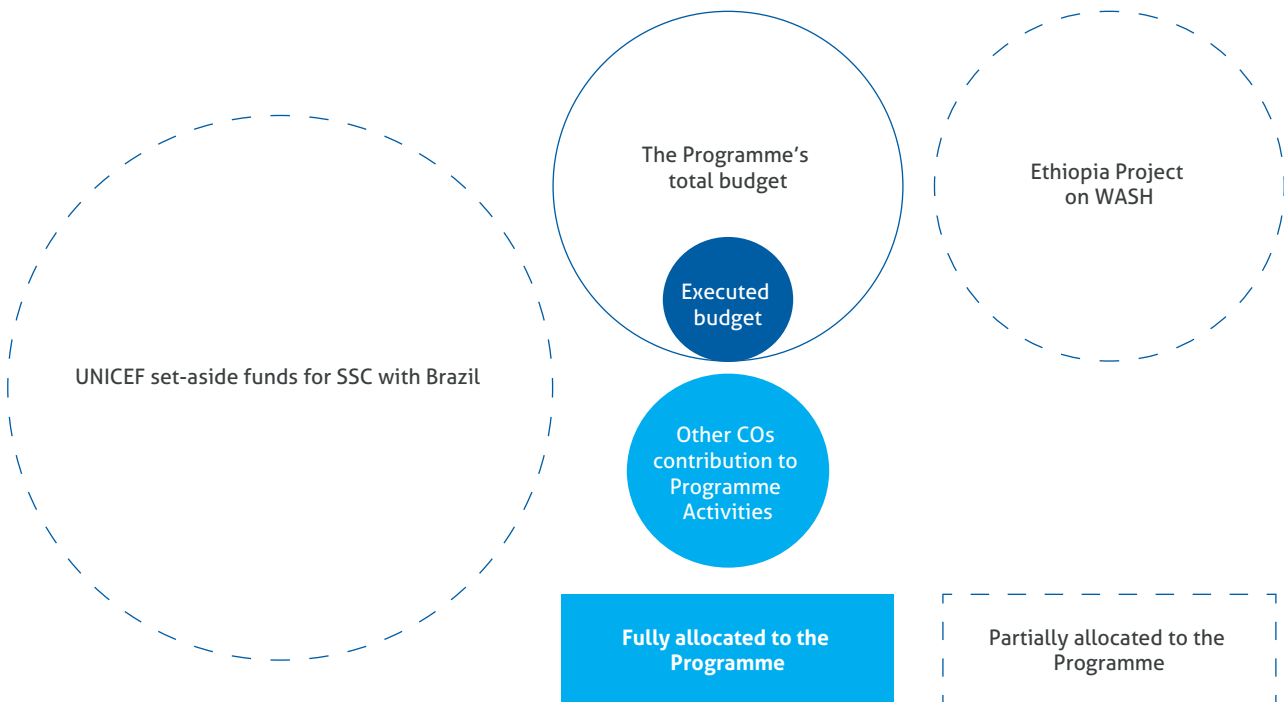
III) the value of having programme activities contributing to larger government-led programmes where UNICEF, the Brazilian SSC and/or other international development actors were also strongly involved.

Return on investment

The Programme proved itself a great value for money. It contributed to the results in partner countries with a considerable small investment of its own funds, while leveraging its budget 3.5 times within UNICEF alone. Moreover, the Programme contributed to resource mobilisation strategies of partner countries, leveraging resources from other development partners to support implementation or to scale-up initiatives that were under the cooperation with Brazil. The Programme’s budget thus fed into a much larger amount of resources dedicated to support partner country initiatives.

‘The selection of individuals who go on the tours was key. To have the key decision-makers able to galvanize support. It reached the right level of officials and also the right institutions. We had the agencies that were able to draw the lessons and the right people to multiply them’

Figure 5 Programme budget vis-à-vis other financial resources leveraged



Source: Prepared by Articulação Sul

‘ The seminar was appropriate to the assessment we had done. The country was in the early process of structuring its Social Protection Programme, therefore visiting and getting to know the experience of other countries was important’

‘ High returns, without any doubt. I am not aware of any other initiative that has delivered as many results with so little invested’

‘ Brazil has shown what UNICEF can do through SSC’

‘ The experience in Brazil played a very important role in developing our Global Policy. And every document was sent to us before going to the Executive Director. Brazil was by far the most influential’

Supporting Brazilian and UNICEF's TSSC

The Programme contributed to strengthen and improve Brazilian and UNICEF practices in TSSC. On the Brazilian side, the Programme contributed with the set-up of clear methodologies and instruments that were mainstreamed to other TSSC initiatives of Brazil. On the UNICEF side, Brazil is seen as a pilot experience of a structured partnership with a Southern government, and it contributed greatly to the organizational guidance on SSC. The Programme also contributed to practical learning among UNICEF COs on how to apply TSSC principles to programme work, particularly the principle of horizontality.

MAIN CHALLENGES

Supporting partners' evolving priorities and contexts

The evaluation also assessed partnerships that did not yield substantial results, identifying important challenges that hindered the Programme from being more assertive regarding partners' priorities and contexts. Those challenges affected the relevance and effectiveness of the Programme and had a negative impact on partners' ownership of programme activities.

The first challenge relates to the constantly evolving nature of partner priorities and the insufficient capacity of the Programme to adapt to such changes. From the time of an initial formal request from a partner country, demands often evolved, either due to further consolidated understandings on how the Programme could contribute to address the specific needs, or due to shifts in partners' political contexts and political priorities. Further on the latter, economic challenges led to changes in political leadership, high turnover of counterparts, financial restrictions, and changes in policy priorities; all of which made the Programme less relevant.

The second challenge relates to the fact that, in many cases the Programme overly relied on demands that were formally aligned with UNICEF Country Programme Documents (CPDs). However, even when responsive to agreed priorities of CPDs, some demands represented UNICEF influencing priorities and were met with only a feeble commitment from the government. Thus, in these cases programme implementation did not feed into sustained government-led efforts.

The fast-paced context in partner countries requires further capacities in governance so as to forge greater liaison with national government counterparts and thereby ensure continuous relevance of programme activities in the face of shifting contexts. This can be enhanced through greater political mobilisation and presence on the ground, aiming at securing high-level engagement and, at the same time, providing timely updates on how processes in partner countries are unfolding. This also means identifying windows of opportunity, such as unfolding policy or programme reforms that have a strong political leadership from national government counterparts. In these changing political landscapes, it is important to ensure that the Programme is able to align itself with long-term inspirational visions and objectives of partner countries. At the same time, on the short term, it needs to respond to more immediate needs and target specific policy improvements. In both cases, the Programme needs to be equipped to provide more continuous support and further enhance its follow-up capacity.

Programme design

The seed-money and open-portfolio approaches have allowed the Programme to be flexible enough to take advantage of context-specific opportunities and have proven themselves to be key assets of the Programme. Nevertheless, those approaches also have limitations. In half of the cases, the Programme had an ad hoc and scattered character, promoting limited and circumscribed exchanges with no structured methodology for follow-up. This hindered the Programme from moving beyond the sensitising effect of study tours as to promote more meaningful contributions to relevant changes. Furthermore, when partners are unable to mobilise additional funds, the contribution of the Programme is very discrete. Considering the amount of partnerships that the Programme entails, this fragmentation represents a risk to its effectiveness, as partners may not perceive the Programme as strategic. This points to the need for a clearer Theory of Change for each partnership and commitment to more lasting exchanges, backed by corresponding appropriate fund allocation.

Hence, by welcoming a wide range of demands the Programme contributed to a portfolio of loose and unstructured partnerships that were not always backed by a commonly agreed strategic thinking on the added value of each party to each context, nor on the expected outcomes. In that sense, there is an increased recognition of the need to complement the demand-driven nature of the TSSC with more focused and strategic thinking on how to enhance the supply side of the Brazilian experien-

‘ Topics we chose for TSSC need to be very well thought through. It really needs to be on the government agenda. Sometimes the reason the topic was chosen is not clear: a combination of what UNICEF thinks is a critical area and the availability of capacity on the Brazilian side. Then, the government was not that sure and there was no strong buy-in from the government’



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'It is important to have a high-level engagement, but at the same time exchanges must contemplate also the technical level. Decision-makers came back from Brazil with many ideas, but if the technical level is not engaged, those ideas do not move forward. The technical level ensures that knowledge acquired is translated into practice.'

ces. This requires different levels of strategic definitions and decision-making, such as whether to keep an open portfolio or invest in a sector-wise specialisation. Further thought is also required with regards to the balance between, on the one hand, investing on several 'one-off inspirational visits' to Brazil or, on the other hand, downsizing the Programme's portfolio to focus on less but more continuous and comprehensive technical exchanges.

Knowledge Management

Knowledge and evidence generation about the Brazilian experience are important parts of the Programme's Theory of Change, as well as an area of work laid down by the MoU signed between the GoB and UNICEF in 2011. This area has, however, not been fully explored by the Programme. The underlying reason to this is that the management of the Programme has prioritised the allocation of human resources towards the implementation of the TSSC exchanges rather than evidence generation and knowledge management. Nevertheless, it is

worth highlighting that the budget of the Programme allowed room for more sustained efforts also in the knowledge stream. Moreover, knowledge management is a comparative advantage, considering TSSC arrangements with UN agencies, as it can bring an international perspective to this exercise and support more contextualised and qualified policy sharing with other countries.

Assuring benefits for Brazilian counterparts

Another area for improvement pertains to putting strategies in place to assure that the TSSC is delivering on mutual benefits and mutual learning to all parties and, particularly, that it is generating outcomes for Brazilian counterparts. There is a risk that, if mutual benefits and learning are not ensured, technical partners may be discouraged from engaging further with the Programme. Due to its extensive work within Brazil, UNICEF BCO is well positioned to foster a two-way dialogue between Brazil and partner countries. For UNICEF BCO this would also bring programmatic coherence, given that its current CPD sets out indicators for TSSC in both directions – for/in Brazil, and for/in partners outside Brazil. Improvements on fostering and deepening this two-way relation will not only help to strengthen the Programme but will also be a major contribution to Brazilian SSC practices.

Summary of specific findings by evaluation criteria

Relevance

- 1 There is significant evidence on the relevance of the Programme to the full range of partners engaged, namely partner countries, the Brazilian domestic implementing agencies and the Brazilian foreign policy priorities, as well as to UNICEF BCO and UNICEF's global advocacy agenda. However, the evaluation also assessed a relevant number of cases where, while abiding by a formal alignment with CPDs, the Programme overly relied on it to set the scope for the partnerships. In so doing, the Programme was not fully capable of adapting to the partners' rapidly evolving political contexts, which led to feeble commitments from some national counterparts.
- 2 The Programme supported the children's and women's rights agenda, mainly by sharing social protection policies that address vulnerability conditions mostly affecting those groups. To a lesser extent, it supported policies that specifically targeted vulnerable children and girls. It also targeted children and gender issues during the planning and implementation stages of its activities, however this was not mainstreamed, and there are no formal mechanisms in place to assure this is systematically tracked.
- 3 Regarding the design of the Programme, the evaluation assessed that its seed-money and open-portfolio approaches allowed it to be flexible enough to take advantage of context-specific opportunities. Nevertheless, these approaches also led to an ad hoc engagement with partners, based on isolated study visits, which were not enough to promote sustainable capacity development or change in government policies. Finally, the current design does not systematically use the TSSC exchanges to improve technical capacities in Brazil in order to assure a two-way exchange.

Effectiveness

- 4 There is strong evidence on the capacity to mobilise the right political and technical stakeholders in partner countries. The Programme was also able to reach out to a range of diversified Brazilian stakeholders that contributed with appropriate know-how. The engagement of Brazilian and partner country embassies mattered politically and logistically and contributed to the effectiveness of partnerships. Nevertheless, this potential was not systematically explored.
- 5 There is significant evidence on the effectiveness of the South-South exchanges regarding the sharing of knowledge among partners. This was mainly due to the quality of its planning and organisation as well as the fact that they were mainly based on exchanges among public officers who have first-hand knowledge on the issues under cooperation. Knowledge disseminated was relevant and adequate and provided appropriate information to support knowledge adaptation. Despite having evidence generation as a key strategy, the Programme did not prioritise this stream, which could have further supported the exchanges.

- 6 There is evidence on the contribution of the programme to raise awareness regarding child-sensitive policies in half of the partnerships assessed. This has occurred through (i) tackling the negative and stereotyped image of the most vulnerable groups and strengthening a rights-based approach to social policies; and (ii) fostering the adoption of child- and women-sensitive programmatic options within the existing policies in partner countries.
- 7 The evaluation retrieved evidence of increased technical know-how among participants in those countries that have established a more continuous exchange with the Programme, whereas in the case of those countries that only had a one-off visit to Brazil, it was not possible to establish such a direct relation between programme activities and increased technical know-how. A final set of unintended and positive results relates to the institutional learning within UNICEF on how to work in TSSC.
- 8 When it comes to the contribution to an increased commitment of relevant stakeholders to child-sensitive policies, the evaluation assessed that the Programme contributed to reinforce commitment where some level of commitment was already in place. In other cases, there was no evidence of increased commitment due to several reasons, including political instability in partner countries; de-prioritisation of the agenda; and the limited interaction of several countries with the Programme.

Sustainability

- 9 The evaluation has found significant outcomes regarding improved policy frameworks and instruments in 8 out of the 15 countries assessed. The Programme has also contributed to generate sustainable inter-institutional and inter-sectorial arrangements in 6 countries. Regarding financial commitments, the evaluation retrieved significant results in five countries.
- 10 The evaluation has found evidence of the Programme leveraging resources to scale-up its planned initiatives within UNICEF as well as with other international development actors. The most expressive support came from the UNICEF system itself, which provided an amount 3.5 times greater than that of the initial programme budget.
- 11 The Programme contributed to enhancing relations among partners as follows:
 - I) strengthening UNICEF and Brazil's relations with partner countries; II) strengthening the relations between the GoB and UNICEF BCO and III) favouring SSC initiatives among other countries, as an unintended and positive result.

Efficiency

- 12 The Programme offered good return on investments and was cost efficient. The financial resources mobilised by the Programme were low and have enabled significant results. Nevertheless, the Programme also had a low level of implementation, and it could have financially invested more on evidence generation and knowledge management activities, or on providing further support for partner countries to enhance Programme effectiveness.
- 13 The evaluation assessed an important management challenge: the lengthy negotiation processes, which hindered the potential for seizing windows of opportunity to engage in partners' processes, or to access additional earmarked funds.
- 14 Preparatory work was efficient and supported the mobilization of the right stakeholders to participate in study tours and, at the same time, supported the narrowing down of the scope of such tours, in order to better respond to the needs of partner countries. However, the downside identified refers to the need for a more in-depth briefing of Brazilian experts engaged in in-country technical visits, particularly concerning the contexts of partner countries.
- 15 Follow-up activities were limited. The evaluation retrieved few examples of effective remote follow-up actions to provide further technical support. This was shown to be important to achieve results in terms of adopting new policy frameworks and instruments. Finally, the evaluation assessed a pressing need for a more systematic engagement of UNICEF COs and Brazilian implementing agencies in follow-up activities.
- 16 The Programme procedures and arrangements provided partner countries with clarity on how to engage with the Programme in a timely manner. Although useful and clear the procedures established require a considerable amount of work from partner countries and contribute to the abovementioned lengthy negotiation processes.
- 17 Partnership governance was deemed overall participatory. Nevertheless, the evaluation retrieved cases where activities were left mainly to be dealt with by UNICEF COs, with little participation of government stakeholders. Moreover, Brazilian implementing agencies are very often not directly involved in the communication with partner countries.
- 18 The activities were in synergy with UNICEF in-country efforts as well as with Brazilian SSC and other development partner initiatives. The Programme has successfully fed into on-going development efforts in partner countries, which has further bolstered its capacity.



Conclusions & Next Steps

This external evaluation revisited and assessed the first implementation cycle of the Programme (2013-2018) through four main criteria, namely I) relevance, II) effectiveness, III) sustainability and IV) efficiency. Following the concluding remarks, a proposed way forward is presented, spelling out the main lessons learnt and recommendations for future programme design and implementation. This final section aims not only to summarize the main findings of this in-depth evaluation, but also to propose new, timely, and practical guidelines to strengthen and establish TSSC as a cornerstone strategy in reducing inequalities and guaranteeing the rights of children, adolescents, and youth.

On effectively supporting partners' capacity development

Regarding the effectiveness in supporting partners' capacity development to improve policy frameworks and accelerate progress towards achieving sustainable results for the most disadvantaged children and young people, there was strong evidence on the Programme's contribution to significant outcomes in a number of partner countries regarding: the establishment and/or enhancement of policy frameworks, instruments and protocols; deep changes in mind-set regarding a rights-based approach to social policies that impact on children's rights and lives; as well as setting the directions for a more inter-sectorial and child-rights oriented policy agenda.

In the countries where the Programme managed to secure longer collaborations and promote more diversified activities of knowledge exchange it contributed to increased technical know-how for child-sensitive policy design and implementation, most notably on social policy governance and management, legal frameworks and policy instruments. Moreover, the Programme showed a thorough planning of its budget, since it contributed to these capacity development results in partner countries with a considerable small investment of its own funds, while leveraging its initial budget by at least 3.5 times, only within UNICEF. To this picture, one should add other resources leveraged at country level to support the implementation or to scale-up initiatives that were under

the cooperation with Brazil, with other international development partners, of which there is no record.

The evaluation has also retrieved cases where partnerships within the scope of the Programme did not evolve to substantial results. When looking closer at the underlying challenges and bottlenecks, a clear pattern can be observed in some cases with regards to the ad hoc and scattered character of the Programme, promoting limited exchanges with no structured methodology for subsequent follow-up on domestic processes of partner countries. These limitations hinder the Programme from moving beyond the sensitising and motivational effect of study tours and from promoting more meaningful contributions in terms of change processes, learning, policy development and political gains.

Another important challenge assessed relates to the fact that, in many cases, the Programme overly relied on demands that were formally aligned with the Country Programme Documents (CPDs) to set the scope for the partnerships. However, even while responsive to agreed CPD priorities as well as to influencing priorities of UNICEF, some demands had only a feeble commitment from the government and so, the Programme failed to encourage long-lasting efforts on behalf of partner countries. Hence, in order to maintain its relevance, forge stronger liaison with national government counterparts and improve sustainability, the Programme needs to improve its governance capacity with partner countries to adapt to dynamic contexts. This can be enhanced through high-level engagement, greater political mobilisation and stronger presence on the ground (through Brazilian embassies and/or UNICEF COs).

Findings also show the importance that time and timing have for TSSC, especially when it comes to capacity development. The evaluation found that Brazilian experiences in social policies are an important and inspiring response to multiple vulnerabilities related to women, children and gender. Nevertheless, inspirational and motivational effects, enabled by horizontal trilateral cooperation, are often intangible and with non-quantifiable results. Although there is a strong interest in the Global South to learn from a more systemic experience of social protection (such as the Brazilian one) and a willingness to advance on child-rights oriented social policies, in many cases, required national political and/or financial conditions for a broader reform are not in place. Thus, an important challenge for the Programme is to identify possible entry points and ensure that exchange activities are designed in a flexible way that allows for longer-term processes that can inspire policy and capacity transformations as well as short-term engagement in response to more immediate needs of policy or specific structure improvements.

On supporting horizontal Brazilian and UNICEF TSSC

The Programme contributed to strengthen and improve Brazilian and UNICEF practices in TSSC. On the Brazilian side, the Programme contributed to ABC's work with the setting-up of clear methodologies and instruments, such as the Guidelines for TSSC Initiatives, and the development of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning System for Brazilian TSSC. It also provided an important background, based on a learning-by-doing approach, on how to refine and qualify TSSC demands from partners and find the best technical expertise inside the country to respond to those. As such the Programme contributed greatly to the organizational guidance on SSC/HC. It also contributed to practical learning outcomes among UNICEF COs on how to work with SSC principles, particularly regarding demand-driven cooperation and horizontality.

Against this positive backdrop, a major area for improvement refers to the need to put strategies in place to assure greater mutual benefits and, particularly, greater technical learning for Brazilian counterparts. Brazilian counterparts showed great enthusiasm and commitment towards initiatives abroad. However, they have also identified several factors that hindered their possibility to give their best during technical exchanges, such as: lack of proper briefing on the specific contexts and demands of partner countries, lack of feedback on their participation and how to improve, lack of information regarding the developments in partner countries. If not addressed, this could risk discouraging technical partners from further engagement. Improvements on fostering and deepening two-way relations will help the Programme advance and improve, not only by strengthening the Programme as such, but also in becoming a major contribution to Brazilian SSC practices.

On knowledge management

Knowledge and evidence generation on Brazilian experiences is an important input foreseen by the Theory of Change of the Programme as well as in the global MoU signed between the Government of Brazil and UNICEF.

Moreover, knowledge management is a comparative advantage of UN agencies in TSSC arrangements since they can bring an international perspective to this kind of exercise and support policy sharing and adaptation from Brazil across contexts. The fact that the UNICEF BCO SSC team is currently under the Social Policy and Monitoring & Evaluation division is particularly promising in this regard, since knowledge management can be streamlined to also capture the specific needs of

knowledge promotion and adaptation through TSSC. Knowledge about successful policies and experiences at the subnational level in Brazil was highlighted as a particularly promising area where the Programme could add value. Equally relevant, knowledge on Brazilian TSSC practices and lessons learned can also feed into the global work of UNICEF as well as supporting sensitisation of UNICEF COs and Brazilian embassies to the importance of the Programme and to the added value of TSSC arrangements and principles.

On the Programme design and the need for strategic adjustments

The Programme has grown aware of some existing challenges and has recently invested in moving forward in structuring some of the existing partnerships through formal projects. Nevertheless, so far, the Programme has managed to sign only one project document and there are not enough lessons learnt regarding this format to assess its pros, cons and overall effectiveness on moving towards more traditional project-based relationships. Until now, the main lesson learnt regarding projects is that their negotiation processes are even lengthier than the isolated study tours. This is especially due to the various political changes that Brazil and partner countries have gone through, which affected not only project negotiations but also the overall engagement with the Programme of stakeholders in Brazil and in partner countries. Thus, one of the main challenges for the future cycle will be to reflect on when and how an open-portfolio/seed-money based programme could be more strategic and when to move on to more structured projects or other kind of continuous partnerships.

Strategic decisions are also needed to respond adequately to different demands of different country profiles, including Middle-Income Countries (MICs) and Low-Income Countries (LICs). To work with a country that has more financial resources to support exchanges or on-going programmes and established policy frameworks is different from working with a country that is in a more incipient stage of looking into how to best design a new programme or policy. Furthermore, apart from the income-divide different countries might enable different potentials for mutual learning and two-way exchanges. Hence, this type of clarity from the Programme side is also important to answer to the interest of Brazilian implementing agencies with regard to mutual benefits.

Against this backdrop, the decision to welcome and integrate a wide range of demands along the years has contributed to the creation of an



innovative TSSC hub. However it has also generated a loose portfolio of partnerships that were not always backed by a commonly agreed strategic thinking on the added value of each party for each context and/or where the Programme should be heading to in terms of overall objectives and expected results. In that sense, there is an increased recognition of the need to complement the demand-driven nature of the TSSC with a more focused and strategic thinking from the managing parties (namely the GoB, ABC, UNICEF BCO) on how to enhance the offer/supply side of the Programme. These definitions will inevitably imply further revisions of programme methodologies, such as putting in place tools to foster long-term policy and technology adaptation and developing tools and criteria to identify the best bets in terms of where the Programme could invest more efforts.

Lessons learnt

The identified lessons learnt focus on areas that, if improved, can bolster the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the Programme. These include:

- 1 **The design of the Programme needs to be more flexible and move beyond the one-off study tour model so as to be able to respond to demands of partners and to further support capacity development and policy processes in a more comprehensive manner.** This can be achieved through more continuous exchanges (under PRODOCs or other type of cooperation arrangements), as well as through enhancing knowledge management.
- 2 **Partners' demands have different rationales and need different types of responses.** The demands addressed to the Programme were diverse, both in terms of the expected sectorial collaboration from Brazil and the expected outcome of the partnership. Two main clusters - based on their underlying logic - could be identified:
 - I) Lesson-drawing through specific knowledge exchanges: comprising partners seeking alternative solutions to clearly identified problems, clear advice on specific policy gaps, or even seeking Brazilian specific technical/technological experience to fill clearly identified gaps. Based on those needs, countries might require either sensitisation/mobilisation at the political level, or deeper technical exchanges, or both. This kind of demand often generates expectations from partners, in the sense of having strategic (technical) and longer-term exchanges with Brazil.
 - II) Lesson-drawing through broad motivational or inspirational knowledge exchanges: partners aiming to screen good-practices to adopt or reform existing policies. Partners might seek to generate high-level political mobilisation and increased commitment on a particular issue or UNICEF in-country offices may seek to use Brazilian experiences as an extra 'push' in areas that governments have already broadly prioritised. In such cases partners usually did not expect deeper or longer exchanges with Brazil.

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- 3 Alignment with CPD priorities does not guarantee government ownership:** this evaluation has found that, on the one hand, the CPD is a formal set of priorities signed-off between UNICEF and national governments, which allows for the connecting of a specific TSSC demand with a broader medium and long-term planning. On the other hand, alignment with CPD priorities did not always ensure the necessary commitment from the partner government, which in turn brought challenges in terms of ownership within the Programme.
- 4 Contributions of Brazilian embassies and UNICEF COs are key to preparatory work, monitoring, follow-up and political intelligence support,** especially due to their added value of being in the country and being familiar with local stakeholders and context. The programme can take advantage of their local knowledge to better brief Brazilian implementing agencies. Another major area where both actors can contribute further is on the follow-up with the partner government regarding exchanges with Brazil. In order to ensure an effective support for country activities it is important that Brazilian embassies and UNICEF COs have a sustained interest to engage in the TSSC as well as an adequate know-how of TSSC principles.
- 5 Increasing the pool of evidence on Brazilian policies and programmes, including through the documentation of subnational practices in Brazil, can benefit external dissemination across-countries and also promote exchanges of good practices and lessons learned within Brazil.** Concretely, this could be achieved through written briefs on the value of existing child-sensitive policies, their targets, the challenges faced to make them operational and a value-based judgment on their strengths and weaknesses, bearing in mind different social, cultural and institutional contexts.
- 6 In-country presence is key to contextualise exchanges and further support partners' capacity development and policy processes:** scoping missions, in-country training courses and continuous exchanges under a PRODOC are modalities that enhanced the quality of the TSSC exchanges and promoted more sustainable Programme results.

7 Complementarity with other projects is key to enhance effectiveness and sustainability, including through leveraging resources:

I) by having Programme activities contributing to larger governmental programmes where UNICEF is also strongly involved,

II) by having other development partners contributing to the same initiatives;

III) by having South-South cooperation activities happening either bilaterally or through regional blocs. Considering those multiple actors and potential synergies, the findings point to the fact that the Programme's contribution to on-going strategic dialogues between Brazil and its partners, in multi-actor settings and regional blocs, have a much wider effect than single-off isolated study visits.

8 Structural elements that impact the governments' capacity to advance on child- and gender sensitive policies, such as financial capacity, need to be integrated in planning processes,

especially during the initial design process of a given exchange. Notably, the macroeconomic situation of many partners affects the government's financial capacity to sustain or increase social spending, such as external indebtedness, or 'aid dependency', or commodity-dependent economies. This is where UNICEF could play a major role, due to its specific knowledge of partner contexts and policies.

9 The horizontal and participatory nature of the Programme is an important asset that needs to be further enhanced,

particularly in ensuring that government representatives (Brazilian implementing agencies and partners) are included in all phases of the project cycle, including in the planning of follow-up activities

10 Preparatory work is crucial to the quality and effectiveness of the exchanges but needs to be more efficient

in two complementary ways: it needs to be streamlined in order to be more expedient, and it needs to be enhanced in terms of the briefing of Brazilian implementing agencies regarding partner country contexts.

11 The definition of stakeholders to be engaged and mobilised was a crucial aspect for the effectiveness of the TSSC exchanges.

A key learning regarding the definition of stakeholders is that it must be coherent with the objectives of the cooperation and respond to the specific needs for either advocacy/policy development, or technical capacity development, or both.

12 High turnover in partner countries imposes challenges and requires mitigation strategies. Possible strategies to overcome this are:

I) enhancing a close and continuous analysis of the political scenario of partner countries to inform decisions and take timely actions to ensure sustainability;

II) adjusting implementation plans to match political transitions in partner countries;

III) fostering the double engagement, at the technical and the political level, to mitigate the impact of political changes, having the technical level contributing to institutional memory, especially if civil servants are involved;

IV) reaching out to a higher number of stakeholders through more continuous exchanges and providing mechanisms or incentives for partners to disseminate key messages and lessons learnt once they are back in their country.

13 Communication of Programme arrangements needs to be always and explicitly upfront, when it comes to its

I) seed-money nature;

II) possibilities of study-visits unfolding into Projects, and what the criteria are that support this possibility;

III) understanding if exchanges with MICs, as opposed to exchanges with LICs, require a different set of tools (related for instance to: official governance flows for demands and eventually project formalisation, co-funding agreements and modalities of technical exchange activities). To address these issues would benefit the Programme in its relations with different partners and their needs.

Recommendations

The elaboration of the below recommendations was informed by the constant dialogue established between the evaluation team, UNICEF BCO and ABC. Recommendations are all addressed to the Programme itself, which means they should be considered by UNICEF BCO and ABC jointly.

- 1 Promote a new round of strategic planning and programming to discuss the design of the Programme.** This should be done in consultation with the wide network of partners, exploring how the Programme can structure itself to

 - I) be timely mobilised towards more continuous exchanges when opportunities arise (either through projects or new modalities),
 - II) have a regional approach through initiatives like multiannual projects that can attract support from other donors and leverage resources, especially in Latin-America given the similar institutional frameworks of Brazil and other countries of this region as well as to the geo-political priorities of Brazil's Foreign Policy;
 - III) assess current Brazilian technical cooperation offer/supply - at both the federal and subnational level - with the aim to assist in sector-wise prioritisation and specialisation;
 - IV) reduce the size of the programme portfolio to fit a changing scenario in terms of available human resources and political priorities in Brazil; and
 - V) better address the different needs and contexts of MICs and LICs.

Priority: High; **Time-frame:** Short; **Budget implication:** Low
- 2 Spell out the Programme's child- and gender sensitive** approach by developing a clear Theory of Change on how the sharing of policies and programmes impact the lives of the most vulnerable children and women as well as on how the rights of children and women are mainstreamed across programme activities.

Priority: High; **Time-frame:** Short; **Budget implication:** Low
- 3 Develop tools and criteria to identify the best bets through which the Programme can mobilise more efforts and support further results,** in terms of partners' capacity development. Those tools and criteria should be informed by lessons learnt and should include the following strategic elements:

I) identification of multiple alignments and synergies with other Brazilian SSC initiatives, broader government-led programmes where UNICEF is already a leading implementing partner, and other international development cooperation initiatives prioritized by partners;

II) alignment with UNICEF planning and budget cycles as well as with planning cycles of partner countries, including throughout the early stages of new administrations - as this would allow time to develop a more continuous exchange, mitigating the risks of turn-over and political changes; and (iii) enhanced political analysis of demands so as to ensure that these are backed by strong political commitments of all stakeholders involved, government and UNICEF alike.

Priority: High; **Time-frame:** Medium; **Budget implication:** Low

- 4 Enhance programme capacity to tailor initiatives according to demands.** This should be done in close dialogue with partners to align expectations regarding the Programme. To that end, beyond crafting a single study visit, the Programme could work on developing a commonly agreed vision of the expected outcomes of the programme activities. This should be spelled out on the short- medium- and long-term (along the lines of a specific small-scale ToC for each partnership), which in turn would help clarify the kind of learning that is expected by a given partner (i.e. inspirational learning, broad/specific knowledge on policies and programmes) as well as corresponding results (i.e. sensitisation, mobilisation of political buy-in, capacity development).

Priority: High; **Time-frame:** Medium; **Budget implication:** Low

- 5 Enhance the knowledge management component.** This should entail the development of a plan for prioritized knowledge outputs as well as allocation of adequate funding on the long-term to ensure the sustainability of the Programme. Further on this regard, the Programme should consider the following forms of engagement:

I) generation of evidence on the impact that relevant policies have on the lives of women and children;

II) elaboration of policy-smart materials that extract key lessons learnt from relevant policies (i.e. those that the Programme seek to share with partner countries);

III) partnership development in order to avoid relying exclusively on in-house capacity to manage the knowledge component (such par-

tnerships could entail universities, civil society organisations, and other knowledge-based international development initiatives); and IV) liaison and coordination with existing (or set-up of new) “learning communities” around certain public policy areas that are both a priority for the GoB, UNICEF and partner countries.

Priority: High; **Time-frame:** Long; **Budget implication:** High

6 Refine follow-up actions to improve sustainability by

I) developing a follow-up plan for each partnership and ensuring commitment for implementation from all parties engaged;

II) establishing monitoring and communication procedures around progress of implementation with UNICEF COs;

III) involving embassies to have a more up-to-date, context-sensitive analysis and to support high-level engagement;

IV) encouraging and investing in the development of multiplication methodologies and strategies within partner countries; and

V) providing continuous feedback to Brazilian implementing agencies and promote participatory follow-up actions.

Priority: High; **Time-frame:** Medium; **Budget implication:** Low

7 Support UNICEF CO engagement and responsiveness to TSSC through working within UNICEF, in partnership with HQ, to mainstream lessons learnt and to support capacity development for COs to work under TSSC principles.

Priority: Medium; **Time-frame:** Medium; **Budget implication:** Low

8 Enhance programme Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning. The starting point for this should be the implementation of the MEL system, which is currently under development. An evaluation of the Brazil-Ethiopia-UNICEF TSSC partnership on WASH should be prioritised, not only to inform the Programme as such, but also to inform future similar WASH pilot initiatives as well as other projects to come. It is also highly recommended to make use of the present evaluation to promote dialogues with key partners (country representatives, UNICEF offices and GoB implementing partners) in order to discuss results and lessons learnt in a forward-looking way.

Priority: Medium; **Time-frame:** Medium; **Budget implication:** Medium

