



Partnerships with International Financial Institutions

Good Practice Note

Evaluation of UNICEF's Social Protection Responses towards Universal Child Benefits



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Introduction

Partnerships with international and regional financial institutions and funding agencies are increasingly important for UNICEF's work on social protection. UNICEF recognises that, while governments have primary responsibility for financing social protection programmes, they often require additional resources to provide comprehensive sustainable coverage. International Financial Institutions (IFIs) play a growing role in mobilising resources and supporting countries to design and implement social protection programmes for children and finance child grants.

In recent years, UNICEF intensified engagement with IFIs and regional financial institutions to mobilise large-scale resources for governments to finance social protection for children and child grants. Strategic partnerships between UNICEF and IFIs on shared priorities and crisis response have become increasingly relevant in strengthening UNICEF's evidence-building, advocacy, and capacity development efforts towards establishing and expanding child benefit programmes globally. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises, donor agencies, including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), have scaled up their financing and operational footprint globally. The growing involvement of donor agencies and IFIs in social protection opens up opportunities for UNICEF to utilise its programmatic expertise, established partnerships with ministries, and on-the-ground presence to establish collaborative partnerships for

technical assistance and procurement support. In 2020, UNICEF tripled its programme and procurement agreements with the World Bank by signing 79 programmes and procurement agreements across 48 countries.¹

UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 recognises the importance of collaborations with IFIs to leverage international finance and mobilise domestic resources for interventions that tackle child poverty and build resilience.² Despite diverging views on approaches to social protection, UNICEF's recent prioritisation of collaborating with IFIs presents an opportunity to acknowledge innovative strategies employed by certain Country Offices (COs) in establishing partnerships with development finance institutions. For instance, UNICEF's strategic partnership with the World Bank in Tunisia supported the introduction and expansion of child grants in the country, and the collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Mongolia contributed to expanding the government's Child Money Programme (CMP). These good practices demonstrate the potential for collaboration between UNICEF and IFIs to mobilise resources and support countries in designing, financing, and implementing effective child-sensitive social protection programmes. This document highlights good practices that can provide valuable insights and guide other countries to adopt and implement.



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Highlighted Good Practices

UNICEF Tunisia’s partnership with the World Bank supported the government in introducing and expanding child benefits

Summary of the Approach

Recognising the potential of the World Bank to support the introduction of quasi-universal and universal child grants in Tunisia and its instrumental role in the country’s policy reforms, the UNICEF Tunisia CO initiated strategic dialogues with the donor agency. The partnership aimed to jointly provide technical assistance to the government, build an evidence base, and provide policy advice on establishing the child benefit allowance. In 2017, UNICEF and the World Bank formalised their partnership by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU helped unify and streamline their guidance and recommendations to the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister’s Office. The CO’s partnership with the World Bank contributed to the Government of Tunisia’s decision in 2019 to establish and subsequently expand a child grant. The government established a steering committee represented by the Ministry of Social Affairs and other members — including UNICEF and the World Bank— to prepare a plan to progressively universalise the grant.

<p>Key Results Achieved</p>	<p>By strengthening collaboration with the World Bank, the CO supported the establishment and expansion of the child grant in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The CO’s partnership with the World Bank led to effective advocacy for introducing the child grant. The World Bank provided compelling evidence on the effectiveness of replacing subsidies with quasi-universal child grants for vulnerable households, which significantly supported UNICEF’s advocacy efforts. As a result of these initiatives, the government submitted a draft law to the Parliament in 2019, proposing the creation of a social protection floor that included a child benefit. The draft law was subsequently approved in the same year.^{3 4} ▶ The CO’s focus on building a strong evidence base, including fiscal space analysis and positioning the grant as a human capital investment, contributed to mobilising the World Bank’s financing commitment. In 2021, the World Bank approved a USD 300 million loan to the Government of Tunisia to extend the monthly child benefits to 125,000 additional children between 0-5 years old in 2022 and 2023.⁵ ▶ In September 2021, UNICEF, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported the Ministry of Economy and Finance by organising a workshop on setting up a national dashboard monitor for the Sustainable Development Goals.⁶ One of the tool’s main focus areas is child-sensitive budget allocations and spending. The dashboard monitor is helping UNICEF to support the government in safeguarding social spending on child grants and other child-focused social protection schemes.
<p>Lessons Learnt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Partnerships with IFIs are a gateway for mobilising international financing and strengthening UNICEF’s child grant advocacy and domestic resource mobilisation efforts to increase government funding. The case of Tunisia demonstrates that emergency cash transfers can serve as initial steps towards establishing trust and confidence among governments and other stakeholders in child benefits as a viable and effective policy option.



UNICEF Mongolia and the Asian Development Bank produced complementary evidence to support the government in expanding the Child Money Programme

<p>Summary of the Approach</p>	<p>In response to a request from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the UNICEF Mongolia CO and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) collaborated to produce two complementary studies in 2020 assessing the impact of top-ups to the Child Money Programme (CMP) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ADB focused on a microsimulation analysing government policies' impact, adequacy and coverage to reduce poverty, including the CMP.⁷ UNICEF conducted a rapid assessment of the programme's implementation, beneficiary satisfaction and grant use.⁸ The studies comprehensively evaluated the socio-economic impact of increasing the transfer amount during the emergency. The collaboration between the CO and the ADB demonstrated the value of strategic partnerships for assessing the effectiveness of child-sensitive policies. By leveraging the expertise of two organisations and using different evaluation methods, the studies provided a comprehensive evaluation of the programme, which was vital in informing the government's decision to expand the CMP by increasing the benefit size by five times in 2020. The increased transfer amount as a result of emergency top-ups continued throughout 2022.</p>
<p>Key Results Achieved</p>	<p>The partnership between UNICEF and the ADB contributed to the following achievements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The transfer size of the CMP increased from MNT 20,000 to MNT 100,000 (USD 7.6 to USD 38)⁹ per month. Additionally, beneficiaries of social welfare pensions, including vulnerable groups, received MNT 100,000 for eight months in 2020.¹⁰ Top-ups led to an overall increase in benefit size by five times by the end of 2020, benefiting 96.6 per cent of registered children. ▶ The CO's advocacy for sustaining the increased transfer size and the jointly developed evidence played a vital role in influencing the government's decision to allocate 576 billion MNT (approx. USD 219,261)¹¹ to fund the top-up during the first half of 2021.^{12 13} The increased transfer size continued throughout 2022.¹⁴ ▶ The ADB utilised evidence produced by the CO to support the agreement that partially financed the top-ups during the pandemic.¹⁵ This evidence-based approach helped ensure emergency assistance was efficiently and effectively allocated to the most vulnerable. ▶ By utilising the existing CMP system, the social protection system's responsiveness to emergencies was improved, strengthening the government's capacity to aid households during future crises. This approach ensured the social protection system was better prepared to assist individuals in need during emergencies and provide timely support.^{16 17}
<p>Lessons Learnt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ UNICEF can leverage partnerships with IFIs to produce evidence that informs policymaking and financing. Jointly developed evidence can increase ownership among government officials and development partners, leading to effective policy outcomes. ▶ Advocacy strategies that leverage evidence produced through partnerships between UNICEF and IFIs can yield positive outcomes in expanding child benefits. The CO's advocacy efforts, informed by the ADB's evidence, contributed to the government's decision to improve the adequacy of the CMP. While the programme covered a high proportion of children before the pandemic, the partnership further strengthened adequacy and expanded coverage. ▶ Vertical expansion of cash transfer programmes, through the provision of additional top-ups in response to a shock, can serve as an effective entry point for sustaining the increase in transfer amounts. Partnerships between UNICEF and IFIs can identify these opportunities through evidence generation and advocacy initiatives.

Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CMP	Child Money Programme
CO	Country Office
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MNT	Mongolian Tughrig
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States Dollar



Endnotes

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August 2023