

Office of the Secretary of the UNICEF Executive Board
Template for delegations commenting on the draft country programme documents
2023 second regular session

Draft country programme document commenting period: 13 June to 3 July 2023 [18:00 EST]

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

Delegation name: **BELGIUM**

Draft country programme document: **BENIN**

In accordance with Executive Board decision [2014/1](#), draft country programme documents are considered and approved in one session, on a no-objection basis. All comments received by the Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board before the deadline stated above will be posted on the Executive Board website.

	Delegation's comments	Response(s)
General comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Belgium welcomes the joint presentation of the different CPDs (UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP) to the donor community in April. This exercise, which took place at the initiative of the UN Resident Coordinator, is a good example of the One UN Approach so important to us. The three agencies having chosen to work in synergy on their programs, is a good sign of a common effort to ensure greater efficiency to achieve the SDGs. ● Belgium is also grateful for the many references made about the coherence with the UNSDCF 2023-2026 for Benin. At the same time, Belgium feels there is still room for improvement in order to reach the full potential of the UNDS reform: it is unclear to what extent prior consultation took place among the different agencies during the development of the CPDs; it appears that all three agencies used different data sources for their analysis; and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UNICEF appreciates the positive comments on its draft country programme for 2024-26 from the Government of Belgium and welcomes the opportunity to provide additional information that could not be adequately covered in the document of 6000 words. ● UNICEF CO in Benin acknowledges the importance of coherence of data sources and result frameworks. ● Bilateral and tripartite consultations were held before and during the development of the three agencies' respective country programmes, including discussions between the three agencies and the Resident Coordinator Office.

	<p>we would welcome more uniformity in the development of the theories of change, result frameworks and disaggregated indicators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilateral informal exchanges with Belgian delegation/Belgian implementation agency Enabel might have been reinforced during the formulation phase. Such exchanges are essential to us as a core donor and we would like to encourage UNICEF to develop such proactive dialogues with Belgium. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of the UNSDCF 2023-2026 included the design of standardized theories of change, to which the three agencies have contributed and from which their CPDs are derived. Furthermore, a joint multi-year work plan between the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and the Government will be developed to operationalize the Cooperation Framework. • Furthermore, UNICEF will continue to actively contribute to the UNCT monitoring, evaluation and learning group to strengthening data cohesion as part of the continuous investment in data and evidence. • UNICEF CO in Benin acknowledges the importance of the strong partnership with Belgium. • Enabel is an important partner for UNICEF. We were pleased to have Enabel representation during the country programme formulation phase and specifically during strategic moment of reflection for the health programme component (November 2022) which allowed to identify synergies and complementarity to address the needs of children in the country. UNICEF will continue to further engage and strengthen its partnership with the Govt of Belgium in the country.
--	---	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belgium would appreciate the sharing of information about monitoring, learning and evaluation findings from the previous and next CPD's, which we consider helpful from a transparency, accountability and information-exchange point of view. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF CO in Benin acknowledges the importance of exchanging valuable learning from evaluations as a key aspect of accountability and transparency. • UNICEF CO in Benin conducted a mid-term review of the current country programme and an evaluation of the “Child survival and Development” component. Lessons learned from the country programme (2019–2023) have informed strategies and interventions for the new country programme (2024-2026). Two of the main lessons learned which have inspired the new country programme are: a). multidimensional shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the crisis in Ukraine, have highlighted the fragility of social systems, including social protection, and the need to accelerate investments in systems and community resilience to better anticipate, manage and mitigate shocks and stresses. b). the implementation of multisectoral models that provide inclusive and comprehensive packages of essential services while empowering communities to actively lead these efforts and claim their rights, has demonstrated significant results that need to be scaled up. • In addition, in line with UNICEF policies and procedures, an evaluation of the new country programme is planned to take place before the end of the new programme cycle. Relevant stakeholders and partners will be engaged in the evaluation process and key findings will be disseminated.
--	--	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a country with 75% of the population being children or teenagers, half of which suffering major deprivation in their basic needs (increasing prevalence of stunting, poor nutrition, high levels of child labor and child marriage) UNICEF's program is more than welcome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNICEF CO in Benin thanks the Government of Belgium for their appreciation on the relevance of UNICEF's programme to address deprivations of children and adolescents in Benin. Throughout the implementation phase, UNICEF will continue to invest in evidence generation and strong monitoring systems to inform programme strategies and priorities in line with the situation of children and adolescents in Benin.
<p>Comments on specific aspects of the draft country programme documents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget. An overall budget of 112,3MUSD is foreseen of which 33,8M from regular resources and 78,5M from other resources. We note that the proportion of anticipated core resources turns out to be significantly low. As an important core donor, Belgium would like to understand better the reasoning behind this approach. Given the current international budgetary context, such a heavy dependence on additional fundraising through other resources also raises the question on how realistic the proposed budget actually is, how competition for scarce resources between UN agencies will be avoided, and on what basis possible program adjustment will take place in the event of funding gaps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNICEF CO in Benin sincerely thank the Government of Belgium for its important contribution to UNICEF's interventions as a major donor and partner. UNICEF is cognizant of the low proportion of anticipated core resources, in light of the constrained global financial context. However, the CO will build on its positive track record of resource mobilization and expand partnerships with the private sector and bilateral partners to match resource mobilization forecasts and fill the 78,5MUSD gap expected from other resources. Furthermore, given the evolving emergency context in Benin, there is higher donor interest to support resilience and social cohesion programmes resulting in an increase in opportunities for partnerships and resource mobilization.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme priorities. Belgium takes good note of the priorities chosen in the CPD programme, with a special appreciation for protection against violence and abuse, especially for girls, and social protection, which are priorities of Belgian development cooperation as well, with actions planned in these fields in the next Belgian country programme. • Timing and geographic distribution: Belgium takes good note of the geographic distribution of the programme (Alibori, Atacora, Borgou, Donga, Zou, Couffo), some of these zones being an intervention zone of Enabel (Zou, Donga, Borgou). Belgium notes that the programme will be shorter than usual. It would be appreciated if the reasoning behind that choice could be shared. • Therefore, Belgium would like to emphasize the importance of a continued strengthening of its work with the development partners, CSOs and other third party stakeholders, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF CO in Benin appreciates the positive and encouraging comments of the Government of Belgium for acknowledging UNICEF’s efforts to protect children and girls in particular, against violence and abuse, and the reinforcement of social protection. The CO looks forward to continuing its collaboration with Belgium. • UNICEF CO in Benin acknowledges the importance of a strong rationale behind the choices of the geographical coverage. • Alongside UNDP and UNFPA country programmes, UNICEF country programme is for a period of the three years and is aligned with the duration of the UNSDCF and the National development plan PAGII (2024 – 2026). • UNICEF CO in Benin welcomes the comment of Government of Belgium on the importance to strengthen partnerships with development partners, CSOs and other third-party stakeholders.
--	--	--

	<p>including our own implementation agency Enabel, in the search for more synergies and mutual impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF’s programme in Benin is deeply rooted in strategic alliances and strong partnerships with a diverse range of stakeholders, based on shared values, respective comparative advantage, resources and expertise. • UNICEF will further strengthen collaboration for geographical and programmatic complementarity with partners including Enabel to continue to explore synergies and mutual impact for achieving results for children in Benin.
--	--	---