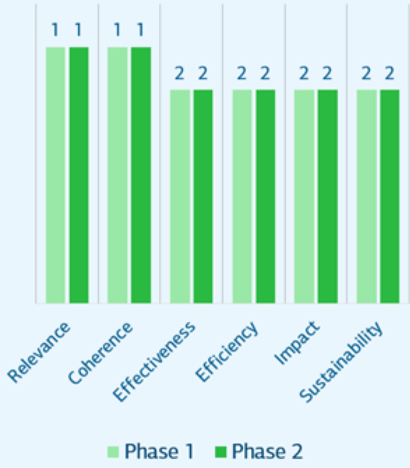
Ex-post evaluation
Investments in children's human capital, Tunisia

Title	Investments in children's human capital based on a sustainable and inclusive social protection system (1 and 2)
Sector and CRS code	16010 Social security
BMZ number	2020 68 369 (Phase 1) and 2021 68 532 (Phase 2)
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Recipient and executing agency	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
FC financing volume and instrument	EUR 12 million (Phase I) and EUR 10 million (Phase II), budgetary grant
Project duration	2020-2022 **Reporting year** 2025 **Sample year** 2025

Overall rating

successful (both phases)



1: very successful – **6:** completely unsuccessful

Project objectives and implementation

The outcome-level objective was to improve access to adequate food and basic health and education services for children from the poorest and most vulnerable households in Tunisia. At the overarching development policy level, the aim was to mitigate the negative socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for these households in the short term. Key measures included monthly cash transfers, one-off payments at the start of the school year, funding for information campaigns and strengthening the human and technical capacities of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Key findings

The project was successful for the following reasons, among others:

- It was the first cash transfer programme in Tunisia to promote early childhood development. It pioneered the gradual introduction of child benefits for children from families in need.
- Its production efficiency was high thanks to the use of existing structures and systems and a high proportion of funds going directly to the target group.
- The cash transfers reached all eligible families and helped to alleviate hardship. Nevertheless, it was not possible to prevent an increase in poverty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises.
- The legal enshrinement of the entitlement to monthly transfer payments for children under the age of 6 took place shortly before the end of the project and underlines its relevance and structural effectiveness.

Conclusions

- Cash transfers are an efficient and effective tool for alleviating acute hardship.
- Through accompanying monitoring measures and targeted personnel and technical support for the administration, structural effects can also be achieved in emergency aid projects.
- Extensive monitoring studies have proven the effectiveness of the measure and supported the decision to continue funding it from the national budget and to acquire further donor funds.

Contents

List of abbreviations

AMG I	Assistance Mediale Gratuite
AMG II	Programme d'accès aux soins à tarifs réduits
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CRES	Centre for Research and Social Studies
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EPE	Ex-post evaluation
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FC	Financial cooperation
FC E	FC Evaluation
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
HDI	Human Development Index
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MAS	Ministère des Affaires sociales
MV	Module proposal
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PNAFN	National Programme of Assistance to Needy Families
PA	Project appraisal
PCR	Project completion report
PV	Project proposal
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TND	Tunisian dinar
TC	Technical cooperation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	US dollar
WB	World Bank

Overview

General conditions and classification of the project

The two-phase project was part of the BMZ's coronavirus emergency programme. The COVID-19 pandemic that broke out in early 2020 had a significant social and economic impact on Tunisia. To contain the spread of the virus, nationwide lockdowns were imposed and schools and shops were ordered to close. These measures had a particularly severe impact on the poorest households. Many employees, especially those in the informal sector, were no longer able to work or could only do so to a very limited extent. This led to significant reductions in income or even a complete loss of income. At the same time, prices for food and other basic consumer goods rose.[1] For many children, especially those from poor and vulnerable households, malnutrition, lack of immunisation and inadequate access to other health services, as well as being forced to stay away from school, were direct consequences of the pandemic-induced economic crisis and supply shortages.

At the beginning of the pandemic, a UNICEF study predicted an increase in child poverty from 19% to between 25% and 29% in the same year (UNICEF, 2020). Real gross domestic product per capita fell by 9.8% in the first year of the pandemic.[2] High unemployment, especially among young people, rose to 17.7% in 2020, exceeding pre-revolution levels (13% in 2010). Despite strict and early containment measures, the pandemic also hit the country hard in terms of health in 2021. Due to overburdened hospitals, Tunisia had the highest COVID-19 mortality rate on the African continent and in the Arab world.[3] . The health situation only eased with the arrival of large quantities of vaccines and medical supplies from EU Member States.

Due to its emergency aid nature, the first phase of the project was reviewed in August 2020 under an expedited procedure and began implementation in November of the same year. Funding for the second phase was approved the following year, providing for an extension of transfer payments until the end of 2021 and an expansion to cover the now increased number of eligible children.

At the time of the evaluation in 2025, Tunisia faces enormous economic, political and social challenges. The country is increasingly governed in an authoritarian manner. Economic growth is stagnating at a low level (with high unemployment and poverty rates.[4] In addition, persistently high inflation, particularly for food, is hampering the country's development opportunities and harbours a high potential for social conflict. Due to its high foreign currency debt and low currency reserves, coupled with high refinancing requirements, Tunisia is also very vulnerable in terms of its external economy.

Due to the good data availability, the evaluation was carried out as a desk evaluation. The report is based primarily on FC project documentation, extensive monitoring data, an external evaluation report on the project evaluated here (PlanEval, 2022), another external evaluation report on an FC follow-up programme from 2025, the final report from UNICEF, and virtual interviews with KfW project managers, UNICEF staff and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MAS).

Brief description

To mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, needy Tunisian families across the country received monthly financial support in the form of top-up cash transfers for children aged 0-5 between November 2020 and January 2022, as well as a one-off payment at the start of the 2021 school year for their school-age children. In addition, the project included accompanying measures aimed at improving the living conditions of beneficiary families in the long term while supporting Tunisia in modernising its social protection system. The complementary measures included awareness-raising campaigns and training for social workers in the areas of health, hygiene, nutrition, education and early childhood development, the strengthening of local structures and central administrative structures, and comprehensive monitoring and research activities. The project aimed to improve the material living conditions of families and promote child-friendly development. UNICEF was the project sponsor and grant recipient.

[1] After the nationwide lockdown was imposed at the end of March 2020, around half of households in the poorest 40% in Tunisia stated in a representative survey that they were no longer able to pay their monthly fixed costs (UNICEF, 2020b).
[2] Measured in international dollars at purchasing power parity. Per capita income fell from 13,250 to 11,956. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=TN (Last accessed on 24 November 2025)
[3] https://www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/ipfz/Projektdatenbank/Investment-in-tunesische-Gesundheitskapazit%C3%A4ten-in-der-Covid-19-Krise-Phase-2-55842.htm (Last accessed on 24 November 2025).
[4] The IMF forecasts a growth rate of 1.6% for 2024 and 2025, the lowest in North Africa.

Breakdown of total costs

	Phase 1 (plan)	Phase 1 (actual)	Phase 2 (plan)	Phase 2 (actual)
Investment costs (total) in EUR million	12.0	12.0	10	10
Own contribution in EUR million	0	0	0	0
External funding in EUR million	12.0	12.0	10	10
of which BMZ funds in EUR million	12.0	12.0	10.0	10

Table1: *Breakdown of costs.*

Map of the project region

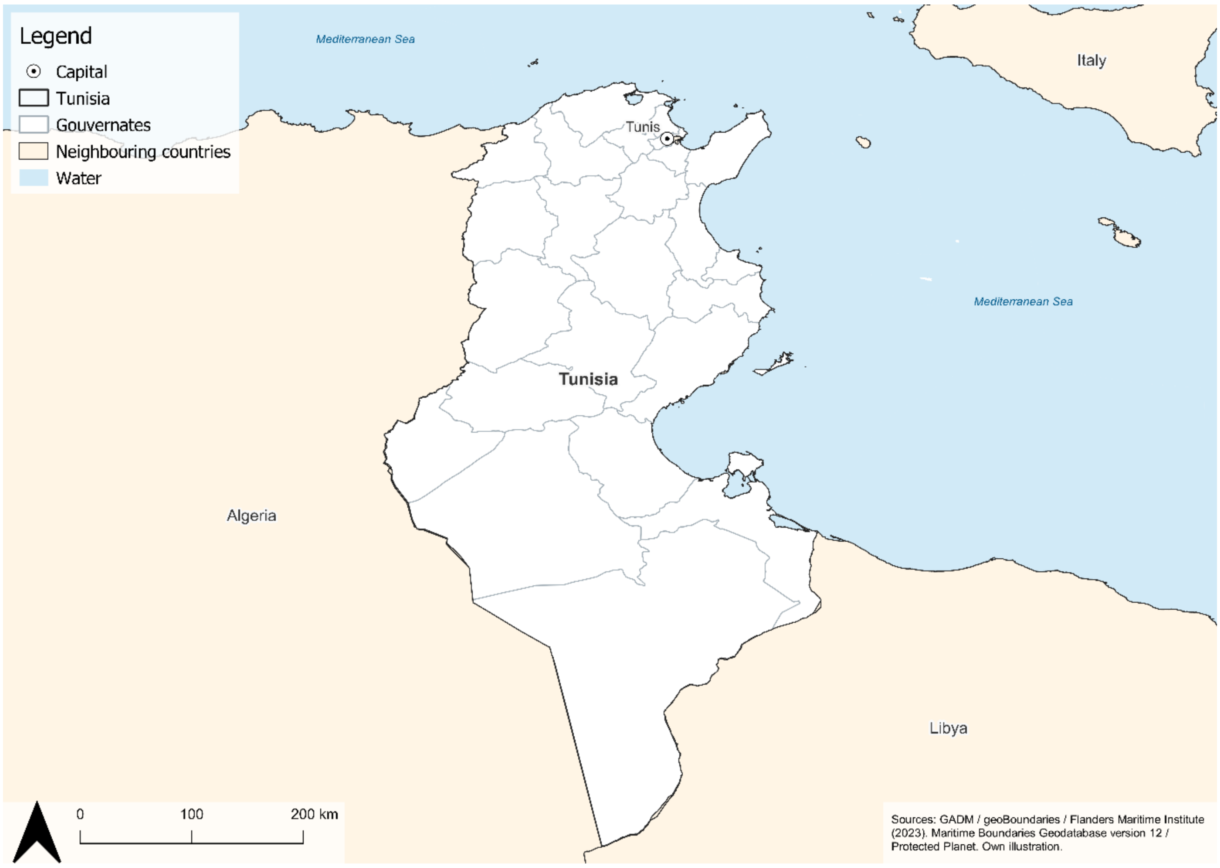


Figure 1: *Map of the project country Tunisia.*

Project-specific strengths and weaknesses of the project

The strengths include in particular:

- Pioneering work: The project was the first cash transfer programme in Tunisia to promote early childhood development. It thus played an important pioneering role in the gradual introduction of child benefits for children from families in need.
- Strong implementing partner: UNICEF was selected as a strong implementing partner, having worked in Tunisia for decades and cooperating closely with the responsible Ministry of Social Affairs. The choice of implementing partner enabled the project to be implemented efficiently, effectively and in close alignment with the needs and capacities of the target group and local administrative structures.
- Appropriate instruments: The payment of cash transfers was a proven and efficient means of alleviating hardship.
- Holistic approach: Despite its focus on short-term cash transfers, the project succeeded in strengthening local administrative structures in the long term, thereby contributing to the sustainability of its effects. One factor in this success was the personnel and technical support provided to the Ministry of Social Affairs (MAS) and financed from project funds.
- Use of partner systems: A key success factor was the integration of the project into existing structures, the use of existing technical and human resources at the MAS, and the resulting switch to electronic data processing and, ultimately, digitalisation. This made it possible to reach a large number of families from the outset and to extend the transfer payments to an even larger target group during the implementation phase.
- Monitoring and accompanying studies: By collecting extensive monitoring data and financing additional studies, important insights were gained into the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation modalities and the effects of the support services. These insights promoted the legal anchoring of financial support services for children aged 0-5 years.
- Structural effects: Despite its emergency aid character, the project has had structural effects. By demonstrating the positive effects of the transfer payments and the accompanying capacity-building measures at the responsible ministry, it has made an important contribution to the institutionalisation of child benefits for children from poor families aged 0-5 and has also paved the way for the extension of transfer payments to children between the ages of 6 and 18.

The weaknesses include in particular:

- Amount of transfer payments: Despite the proven effectiveness of the measures, the amount of the transfer payments was not sufficient to achieve adequate access to food, education and health services and sustainability in improving living conditions. One of the reasons for this is the sharp rise in inflation as a result of the pandemic and the war between Russia and Ukraine.
- Delays in payments to those in need: There were regular delays in the payment of monthly transfer payments. A major reason for this was a lack of personnel capacity at MAS and technical and organisational challenges in regularly reconciling and updating databases. For some beneficiaries, this led to higher transaction costs, stress and uncertainty, and in some cases even to transfers not being collected.
- Inefficiencies in the registration and payment process: The registration process for eligible families was sometimes lengthy and not always transparent for the target group, leading to a temporary increase in the administrative workload for social workers, who initially had less time for educational work as a result. The lack of special counters at the post offices making the payments led to long waiting times in some places, with an increased risk of infection.
- There were also delays in the implementation of communication and awareness-raising measures. Insufficient information about new government benefits meant that some eligible families did not receive their payments.
- Awareness-raising measures regarding the existence of the complaints mechanism (free telephone hotline and electronic platform) had little effect. Many beneficiaries are still unaware of the formal complaints mechanism. Instead, complaints are mainly addressed directly to social workers.

General conclusions/lessons learned

- Effectiveness of cash transfers: Cash transfers to children from families in need can be an efficient and effective tool for alleviating acute hardship. This is demonstrated by the experience gained from this project and by scientific meta-studies. Depending on how they are structured, cash transfers enable recipients to use the money independently and in line with their needs. The instrument thus has the potential to strengthen self-determination, dignity and control over one's own situation.
- Emergency aid projects can have a structural impact: even if the focus is on short-term cash transfers, structural effects can be achieved through accompanying monitoring measures and personnel and technical support from the responsible administration. In the present case, the establishment of a comprehensive database and the evidence generated on the effectiveness of the project measures contributed to the legal anchoring of the cash transfers. However, a decisive factor here was also that the Tunisian government already had the political will to expand the social system.
- Design of information campaigns: SMS messages are an important and efficient tool in modern information and awareness-raising campaigns. Nevertheless, such campaigns should be conducted across various channels (radio, TV, posters, newspaper advertisements). If there is too much focus on SMS messages, there is a risk that households will not be reached due to illiteracy, network problems or frequent changes of mobile phone provider.
- Accompanying impact monitoring pays off: Accompanying research and monitoring activities to investigate their effectiveness are particularly useful for newly introduced policy measures. In the case under review, several telephone surveys were conducted with a representative sample of beneficiaries. The findings on the effectiveness of the cash transfers supported the decision to continue the measures from the state budget and to acquire further donor funds.

Assessment according to OECD DAC criteria

Relevance

1. Alignment with policies and priorities

With the selection of UNICEF as the project executing agency and its focus on content, the project was closely aligned with Tunisia's priorities. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Tunisian government had drawn up a national action plan (*National COVID-19 Response Plan for Tunisia*). This plan identified the mitigation of the negative socio-economic consequences of the pandemic as a cross-cutting issue. In addition, in January 2020, the government introduced the new *AMEN Social* social security system, which integrates existing programmes to support vulnerable and needy families. The institutionalisation of social transfers for children is provided for in Tunisia's National Development Plan 2023-2025.

The project was part of the BMZ's Corona Emergency Programme and had the same objective as this programme (alleviating the negative consequences of the pandemic for vulnerable groups). The project design aimed to reduce poverty and inequality and strengthen human rights, gender equality and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, and was thus aligned with the quality characteristics of German development cooperation. The planned provision of computers to the MAS and support for the modernisation and expansion of the management information system promoted the digitalisation of the country. The chosen approach also contributes to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly with regard to the right to social security, health, education and adequate living conditions.

2. Alignment with the needs and capacities of stakeholders and beneficiaries

In addition to the health effects of the pandemic, the significant negative economic consequences for poor population groups, especially children, and the consequences for their education, health and nutrition were identified as core problems. The project targeted children and young people from Tunisia's poorest families who were entitled to support from the national social security system *AMEN Social*.

At the time of the audit, Tunisia already had three national systems for identifying and supporting vulnerable and low-income population groups: the *Programme National d'Aide aux Familles Nécessiteuses* (PNAFN), the *Assistance Médicale Gratuite* (AMG I) and the *Programme d'accès aux soins à tarifs réduits* (AMG II). These have been part of AMEN Social since its establishment in 2019. PNAFN targets the poorest tenth of the Tunisian population and, in the 2020 audit year, provided monthly transfer payments of TND 180 to approximately 230,000 families in need (MV, 2020). Two years later, the number of beneficiaries had already risen to 285,000. In addition, since May 2020, these families have been receiving 10 TND/month for each child aged 6-18. The national free healthcare programme comprises two components: free medical care and hospitalisation for low-income population groups (AMG I), and reduced rates for medical care and hospitalisation (AMG II). Approximately 285,000 households receive support through AMG I. As the eligibility requirements for PNAFN and AMG I are very similar (household income, ability of the head of household to work, and presence of family members with disabilities or chronic illnesses), the majority of PNAFN households are also eligible for AMG I. AMG II is aimed at low-income households that are slightly less vulnerable than those covered by AMG I and PNAFN. AMG II supports approximately 620,000 households with an annual subsidy of 10 TND for medical care.

The project provided for the financing of monthly supplementary payments of TND 30 (TND 20 from FC funds, TND 10 from Tunisian budget funds) for children under the age of 6 from households that were already receiving support from either PNAFN or AMG II and thus belonged to the lowest income quintile. At the time of the PA, just under 8% of the Tunisian population was under the age of 6. Around a quarter of these children lived in poor households. The amount of the proposed transfer payments was based on a 2019 study, which found that an annual transfer of TND 350 could lead to a significant reduction in poverty (CRES, 2019). The monthly transfer payments were initially planned to run for 8 months (phase 1) and then for a total of 13 months with the signing of the financing agreement for phase 2. In addition, one-off payments of TND 50 were to be financed at the beginning of the new school year for children aged 6-18 from PNAFN and AMG II households. These were to supplement transfer payments by the MAS in the same amount. The increased one-off payment was intended to counteract the increased opportunity costs of returning to school for children from disadvantaged families after several months of closure during the lockdown, thereby preventing even more children from poor backgrounds from dropping out of school.[5] The one-off payments were only to be made to households whose children were registered at school for the 2020/21 school year. This rule was intended to encourage registration and was stipulated by the MAS. This meant that a significant proportion of children in need would fall through the safety net. According to an interview with UNICEF, this affected 24,000 children (PlanEval, 2022). No guidelines were

[5] Even before the pandemic, Tunisia had high school dropout rates. According to UNICEF data in the project application, the dropout rate in the second cycle of secondary education was 27%. Only 49% of children completed secondary education.

provided regarding the use of the transfers. This allowed beneficiaries to decide for themselves how to use the funds and to spend the money according to their individual needs and requirements. The instrument thus explicitly took into account the needs of the target group and at the same time had the potential to strengthen their self-determination and control over their own situation.

To ensure that social benefits actually reach the intended target group, registered beneficiaries of national programmes are regularly assessed for poverty and vulnerability using a dual approach. To this end, *proxy mean tests*[6] are carried out at the central level. The verification also includes cross-checks with other administrative databases, such as land ownership, taxes and social security. In addition, social workers examine the living conditions of transfer recipients at the municipal level. Scientific studies commissioned by the World Bank show that, despite existing weaknesses, the programmes are generally successful in terms of targeting and actually reach predominantly poor people (Mouaddeb et al., 2022).

The transfer payments were to be forwarded to the beneficiaries by MAS via the national social security fund (Caisse de Sécurité Sociale) and paid out by post.

The design did not include any specific measures to promote gender equality. However, according to a UNICEF study, girls were particularly affected by the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, especially through school dropouts and child marriages for economic reasons, so the project still had great potential to promote gender equality (UNICEF, 2020). The monthly cash transfers were aimed at children aged 0-5 who had not previously received any social benefits from the state. In this respect, the project promoted social inclusion, especially for families who had not previously been reached by aid programmes, or only to an insufficient extent.

3. Appropriateness of design

The design provided for temporary transfer payments to children from poor families, as well as complementary measures to strengthen the capacities of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the parents of the children receiving support. Cash transfers are considered an efficient and effective tool for emergency aid. The transfers were intended to increase purchasing power in the short term and enable beneficiaries to invest in their children's education, health and nutrition. This is sensible and important from a social and economic perspective: the first years of life are crucial for children's cognitive, social and emotional development. Good nutrition and healthcare in early childhood help to prevent disease and improve overall health. With the help of accompanying measures, including awareness campaigns for beneficiaries, training for social workers and the strengthening of local and central administrative structures, structural, lasting improvements to the social system should also be achieved. Overall, the concept was appropriate, realistic and suitable for solving the core problem.

As the project was not assigned to an EZ programme at the time of the audit, no impact logic was established in the MV. This can be reconstructed on the basis of the target system and indicators as follows. The theory of change is essentially based on the assumption that cash transfers for 0–5-year-old children from poor, vulnerable households will stabilise their financial situation in the short term and improve the children's nutritional status and access to basic social services in the areas of health and education (outcome). Early childhood development should also be promoted by raising parental awareness (through communication campaigns) of balanced and healthy nutrition, hygiene, education and non-violence. Complementary to this, the structures of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MAS) should be strengthened by financing

technical equipment (computers), training and work tools for social workers. This should create and expand the necessary administrative conditions for the payment of transfers and the support of beneficiaries. The support measures should also enable the MAS to plan and implement efficient and sustainable processes that will allow for investment in children's human capital beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. At the overarching development policy level (impact), the aim was to mitigate the negative socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for vulnerable children in Tunisia and, at the same time, to contribute to maintaining the Tunisian state's capacity to act. By financing project-related data collection on the targeting, costs and effects of cash transfers, the aim was to create a robust data basis for the establishment of a national MIS and thus strengthen evidence-based decision-making.

The project's objectives and the underlying impact chain are plausible, both from today's perspective and at the time. Minor changes were made to the original target system as part of the EPE, but these do not diminish its relevance in this case. The indicators were largely appropriate.

4. Adaptability – response to change

[6] Proxy mean tests are an established method for identifying households and individuals in need, which is often used in the distribution of social benefits. Instead of directly measuring income or wealth, certain "proxies" are used (e.g. household size, self-reported income, loss of the head of household, physical or mental impairments, housing tenure). A recent World Bank study concludes that PMT is the most feasible approach for the Tunisian context for the following reasons: 1) The informal sector still accounts for around 50% of jobs in Tunisia. This means that reliable data on earned income is lacking for around 50% of the workforce. 2) Administrative data required for more sophisticated approaches is not available. (Source: Mouaddeb et al., 2022).

The adoption of two decrees in May 2020 led to comprehensive reforms of the social system, as a result of which existing restrictions on the receipt of transfer payments to a maximum of three children per household and to children older than 5 years were lifted. This led to a sharp increase in the number of children aged 0-5 from low-income households eligible for transfers, from approximately 40,000 to 129,000 children in December 2021. Similarly, the number of children aged 6-18 eligible for one-off payments at the start of the school year rose from 290,000 to 310,000 in 2020. As the funds for phase 1 of the project were only designed to support 50,000 children, additional selection criteria had to be developed to determine the 50,000 most needy children, which led to slight delays in implementation. The additional needs were covered by funds from phase 2. The adaptability of the project has a positive impact on the appraisal of its relevance.

Rating summary of relevance: very successful (1, both phases)

The project was and remains highly relevant. It was closely aligned with the national strategy for dealing with the consequences of the pandemic and the goals and priorities of German development cooperation. It was very well suited to promoting the reforms of the social protection system that were already underway at the time. Cash transfers were chosen as a suitable instrument for supporting Tunisia's poorest families. Despite the shortened planning period, the concept was well thought out and appropriate for stabilising the financial situation of poor households in the short term while strengthening the Tunisian government's social protection system in the medium to long term.

Coherence

5. Internal coherence

At the time of the PA, the project was not assigned to any development cooperation programme and was financed by special coronavirus funds. Its measures and objectives were in line with UNICEF's overarching programme objective at impact level. When the development cooperation programme "Good Governance" came into force, the project was incorporated into it. While the project supported vulnerable families in covering the costs of access to early childhood education, a complementary cooperation project between German TC and UNICEF aimed to strengthen the supply side of early childhood education measures. Within the FC portfolio, there are significant synergies with the two phases of the FC follow-up project (nutrition-sensitive cash transfers, BMZ No. 2022 011 19 and 2023 011 41), under which additional FC funds totalling EUR 37 million were made available to continue financing the one-off payments at the start of the school year and to finance cash transfers to needy children in the 6-18 age group. Within the framework of bilateral cooperation, the FC also supports reform measures in the area of public administration, in particular the digitisation of administrative files. However, this does not result in any direct synergies with the project under consideration.

The measure is consistent with international norms and standards to which German development cooperation is committed.

6. External coherence

Before the measures began, the Tunisian government had already passed the draft law for the introduction of AMEN Social. The project funds were used to make transfer payments to 0-5-year-old children from AMEN households for the first time. The project thus directly complemented and supported the Tunisian government in its efforts to improve basic social security for children. Existing and already functioning electronic programme databases and transfer systems of the partner were used to make the transfer payments.

The project measures were implemented in coordination with the activities of other international donors, including JICA, USAID, the EU and the World Bank (WB), largely coordinated by UNICEF. However, an official coordination group co-chaired by UNICEF, the WB and the EU was not established until the first half of 2023.

The second phase of the project followed on seamlessly from the first phase and was also designed to complement the World Bank's COVID-19 Social Protection Emergency Response Support Project. After the transfer payments from FC funds expired at the end of January 2022, further funding was provided from World Bank funds. Contrary to the plan, however, the World Bank funds could not be paid to households in need until June 2022, with a retroactive payment of five months from February 2022 to the National Social Protection Agency ( ). Complementing the transfer payments from the FC and the World Bank, USAID financed the one-off payments at the start of the 2022 school year and the general child benefit payments for 6-18-year-olds from vulnerable households, which could not be covered by funds from the FC follow-up project. When more children eligible for transfers registered at the start of the 2022 school year than MAS had expected, the surplus was financed from residual funds from the project evaluated here.

The results and recommendations of the accompanying evaluation financed by FC funds were made available to other donors and taken into account in the development of the joint action plan by UNICEF, the World Bank and MAS. According to UNICEF, the findings from the accompanying studies benefited the beneficiaries of transfer payments to 0-5-year-old children in January 2022.

Rating summary of coherence: very successful (1, both phases)

The project is characterised by a high degree of internal and a very high degree of external coherence. Particularly remarkable is the excellent coordination of support services provided by various donors. This has made it possible to ensure continuous monthly support for children from Tunisia's poorest and most vulnerable households to date.

Effectiveness

7. Achievement of objectives

The objective adjusted within the framework of the EPE was: Children from Tunisia's poorest and most vulnerable households have improved access to adequate food and basic health and education services.

The following indicators were used to measure the outcome objective:

Indicator	Status at time of review	Target value at EPE (review)	Actual value at PCR	Actual value at EPE
(1) Percentage of beneficiaries who state that their children have improved access to basic social services, including health services, as a result of receiving cash transfers.	n.a.	60% by the end of 2021	...	74.3% of households with children aged 0-5 and 70.9% of households with children aged 6-18 Target value achieved
(2) Percentage of children whose nutritional situation has improved as a result of cash transfers.	n.a.	60% by the end of 2021	...	82.8% of all households (86.6% of PNAFN and 79.1% of AMG II households) Target value achieved
(3) Percentage of supported 3-5-year-old children who attended a pre-school facility.	69.7% in February 2021	No deterioration between February 2021 and end of 2021		86.1% of all households (84.4% of PNAFN and 87.7% of AMG II households). Target value achieved
(4) Percentage of girls aged 0 to 18 out of the total number of children and young people receiving subsidies under PNAFN and AMG II.	51	51% at the start of the 2021/22 school year		51% at the start of the 2021/22 school year Target value achieved
(5) Stress level of beneficiary households with regard to their children's needs.	Measured as the number of weekdays on which parents do not feel able to adequately ensure the well-being of their children. The baseline value is taken from wave 1: 5.5 days or 79% of the days in a week.	A reduction of 30% between wave 1 and wave 4, corresponding to a target value of 3.85 days or 55% of the days.		The number of days in wave 4 was 4.6 days. This corresponds to a decrease of 16%. Target value not achieved

Table 2: *Outcome target achievement.*
Source: *PlanEval, 2022; PCR; UNICEF, 2023.*
Note: *For indicator 3, the target values were formulated ex-post in the EPE.*

The target was largely achieved. Details are discussed in the following section.

8. Contribution to the achievement of objectives

During the 13-month implementation phase, almost all children aged 0-5 from the two lowest income deciles received a monthly child allowance of 30 TND for varying lengths of time (UNICEF, 2023). According to UNICEF's final report, the number of children supported by project funds rose from 50,000 at the end of 2020 to 116,000 in mid-2021 and 129,000 in January 2022 (UNICEF, 2023). According to official MAS registration figures from December 2021, 49% of the children supported were girls.

A further 310,000 schoolchildren aged 6-18 received a one-off transfer payment of 50 TND in addition to a transfer payment of the same amount from MAS at the start of the 2020/21 school year (UNICEF, 2023). In 2022, 465,000 schoolchildren received a transfer payment of 100 TND at the start of the school year, financed from the state budget, the World Bank and, to a lesser extent, FC (40,233 children were supported directly from FC funds). 52% of the young people supported were girls (UNICEF, 2023).

Telephone surveys of beneficiaries financed from project funds[7] and the external evaluation (PlanEval, 2022) showed that targeting was generally successful and that the majority of the intended target group received the transfer payments. There were isolated cases in which payments were either not made or were not collected by beneficiaries from post offices in time, i.e. within a three-month period (PlanEval, 2022).[8] A World Bank study also shows that, due to methodological shortcomings in the beneficiary selection process, a small number of ineligible families also receive transfer payments (Mouaddeb et al., 2022).

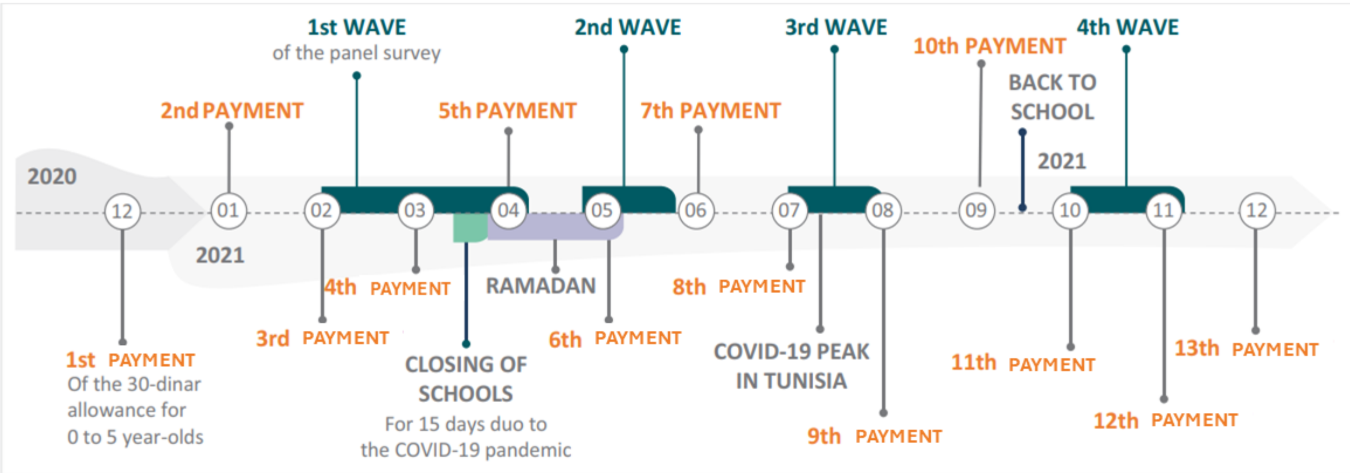


***Figure 2**: Illustration of the timeline for transfer payments and survey waves.*
***Source**: Own illustration based on PlanEVal (2022).*

According to the beneficiaries surveyed, the transfer payments were mainly used for food, school supplies and other school-related expenses (especially transport costs), as well as masks and medicines (PlanEval, 2022). Overall, the survey results paint a predominantly positive picture of the effects of the cash transfers. In the last survey wave in October/November 2021, around three-quarters of the parents surveyed stated that their 0-5-year-old children had improved access to basic social services, including health services, as a result of the monthly transfer payments (indicator 1) (IPCIG, 2022). In February of the same year, this figure was still 60%. Among households that benefited from one-off payments at the start of the school year for their 6-18-year-old children, the approval ratings were slightly lower at around 70% (PlanEval, 2022). According to the respondents, the main barriers to access included a lack of transport and increased prices (PlanEval, 2022).

Just under 83% of the households surveyed also believed that their children's nutritional situation had improved (see Figure 3). However, the effects diminish as household size increases, especially among PNAFN beneficiaries, who are even more vulnerable than AMG II beneficiaries (IPCIG, 2022). At the same time, further analyses showed that, despite the improvement, the variety of food available to children remained inadequate in many cases. According to the findings, only just under 17% of the households surveyed met the FAO's minimum standard of at least six different food groups per day for children aged 1-5 (IOCIG, 2022). Even if the standard were lowered to 4 different food groups, only just under half of those surveyed would have sufficient food diversity available. There were no significant changes in this regard between the first and fourth survey waves (IPCIG, 2022).

[7] The telephone panel surveys of beneficiaries of payments for children under 6 years of age were conducted in 4 waves. In the first wave, 1,535 households were surveyed (767 PNAFN and 768 AMG II), and in the fourth wave, 1,414 households were surveyed. In addition, two telephone panel surveys were conducted with 945 households each whose children received a one-off payment at the start of the school year. Source: PlanEval, 2022.
[8] Frequently cited reasons for this include SIM card changes (meaning that beneficiaries did not receive the text message notifying them of the cash payment), illiteracy (text messages could not be read), network problems in rural areas and language barriers. Some grants were not claimed because beneficiaries were concerned about crowded post offices or were not informed about the payment and then did not have enough time to collect it.

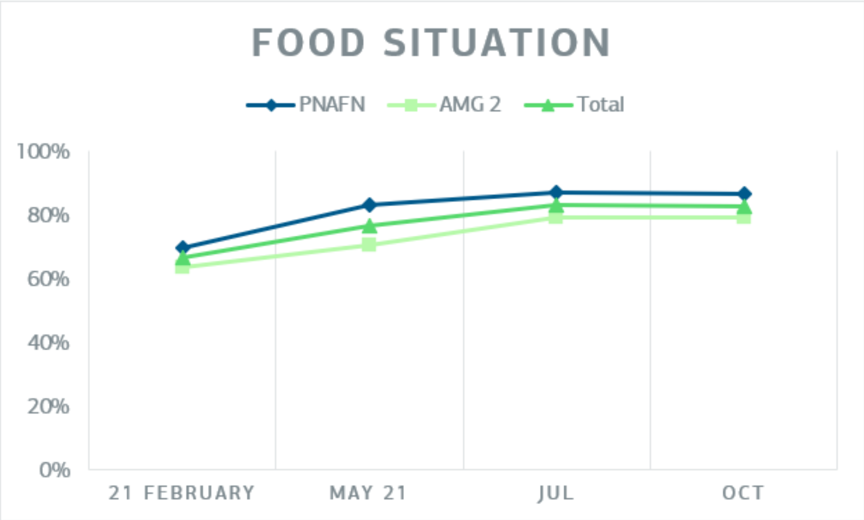


Figure 3: *Proportion of beneficiary households whose food situation has improved.*
Source: *Own illustration based on PlanEval (2022).*

The take-up of pre-school facilities for 3-5-year-olds from supported households varied over the implementation period and averaged 75%. As illustrated in Figure 4, the pre-school attendance rate increased over time. The external evaluation attributes the sharp increase in the rate between May and July 2021 to the awareness-raising measures on the relevance of early childhood education that were carried out during this period (PlanEval, 2022). In 2024, the preschool attendance rate for 5-year-olds nationwide was 89.3% (UNICEF, 2024).

For the 6-18 age group, the school attendance rate at the start of the 2020/21 school year was 92%. As the FC portion of the one-off payment at the start of the school year could only be paid out after a delay of several months, no direct link between the school attendance rate and the payment can be established. The survey results showed that in many cases the one-off payments were only sufficient to cover a limited portion of school-related needs (PlanEval, 2022). In order to raise awareness of the one-off payments among those eligible to receive them, videos promoting the programme were published on UNICEF's Facebook page and the MAS website in September 2020, and posters were displayed in the decentralised structures of the MAS. Nevertheless, there were cases where eligible families did not apply for assistance due to a lack of knowledge about the programme's existence (PlanEval, 2022). The majority of those who were aware of the programme said they had heard about it through word of mouth. These findings suggest that the information campaigns on this measure had only very limited effectiveness.

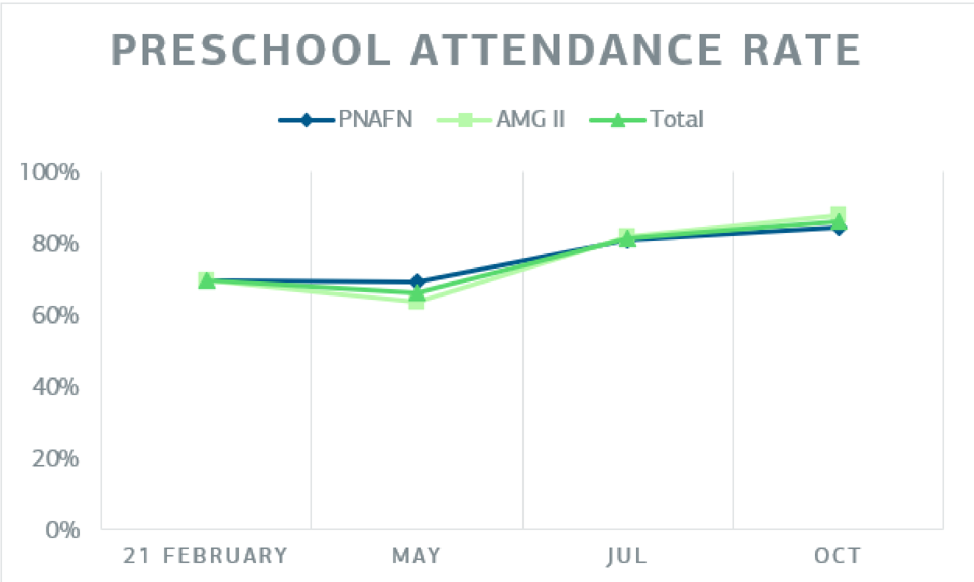


Figure 4: *Preschool attendance rate of subsidised 0-5-year-old children from PNAFN and AMG II households.*
Source: *Own illustration based on PlanEval (2022).*

The data presented show that the (subjectively perceived) nutritional situation and access to educational facilities and health services improved on average over the reference period. It is reasonable to assume that the transfer payments from the project made a relevant contribution to this. At the same time, in the last survey wave in October 2021, only just under a quarter of respondents stated that the transfer payments were sufficient to ensure the well-being and access to basic social services for their 0-5-year-old children. The precarious situation in which the beneficiary households found themselves during the implementation phase despite regular transfers (and often still find themselves today) was also reflected in the persistently high stress levels of the beneficiaries (indicator 5). During the first three survey waves, 80–90% of parents with children under the age of 6 stated that they were unable to provide for their children's well-being. Only in the last survey wave was a significant decline in stress levels observed, with only 61% of respondents stating that they suffered from constant stress. As the respondents had already been receiving the transfer payments for a relatively long period of several months at that point, they may have developed a certain degree of confidence in the reliability of the payments, which reduced their stress levels (PlanEval, 2022).

The monthly transfers were paid out in the form of postal orders. Long distances to the nearest post office, a lack of special counters for paying out the transfers and a general overload of post offices sometimes led to long waiting times and considerable transaction costs for the beneficiaries. Concerns about an increased risk of infection in crowded post offices, as well as a lack of notification about the receipt of transfers, meant that some beneficiaries did not collect the transfers to which they were entitled within the three-month period (PlanEval, 2022). Since no alternative, more efficient means of financial settlement were available either at PA or during the implementation period, there is no conceptual error that could be attributed to the project.

In addition to direct transfer payments, the project supported the establishment and expansion of the Tunisian social protection system by financing equipment (computers and laptops) for MAS, training measures and equipment for approximately 1,300 social workers. According to the social workers, the allocation of service telephone numbers and unlimited credit improved their ability to work and their care options (PlanEval, 2023).

With the help of technical and financial support for MAS, the registration process for beneficiaries of one-off payments was largely automated, so that in September 2022, around 70% of families eligible for transfers received payments for their children within the first week of school. In previous years, this proportion was significantly lower. The registration requirement for receiving transfer payments has dramatically improved the data available on the actual extent of poverty among children under the age of 6 in Tunisia. Other achievements of the project included financing the printing costs of 500,000 health cards and purchasing teaching materials for 55 preschools in particularly disadvantaged regions of the country.

The transfer payments were accompanied by financial support for national communication campaigns to accelerate the registration of households in need, as well as awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of education, early childhood development, good parenting practices in the home and the existence of the complaints mechanism. The results of the external evaluation paint a mixed picture with regard to the effectiveness of the various communication channels and campaign content. While just under 80% of households stated that they had received information about the transfer payments to which they were entitled via text message, only 30% had received information about the importance of early childhood development, education and nutrition (PlanEval, 2022). The survey results also underscore the relevance of additional communication channels, especially radio, in order to reach illiterate and non-French-speaking households. Delays in the implementation of communication campaigns on health issues and good practices in early childhood care have a minor impact on effectiveness in terms of the objectives.

The above examples suggest that within the vulnerable target group, families with lower levels of education or a lack of literacy skills were partially excluded by the choice of SMS as a frequently used communication tool. The external evaluation also reports cases in which the application process overwhelmed some families and prevented them from receiving transfer payments due to a lack of assistance from social workers and authorities (PlanEval, 2022). In isolated cases, people from particularly poor backgrounds reported discrimination on the part of the authorities. Despite a positive overall picture, the results suggest that some vulnerable families and their children have fallen through the net. Unfortunately, it was not possible to quantify these cases ex post.

The results of an external evaluation of the follow-up phases of this project from 2025 show that the information campaigns about the complaints mechanism had only a limited impact. Many beneficiaries are unaware of the existence of the free complaints hotline and the electronic platform. Instead, complaints are mainly made verbally to social workers.

9. Quality of implementation

According to the FC managers, UNICEF proved to be an excellent implementation partner. The very close and cooperative collaboration between UNICEF and the government agencies, as well as UNICEF's clear focus on supporting and expanding Tunisia's strategies and programmes, are among the key success factors of the project. The quality of implementation is also reflected in the fact that UNICEF, together with MAS, has succeeded in coordinating the activities of various international actors in such a way that almost seamless financing of basic child security has been guaranteed from the end of 2020 to the present.

There were delays in the implementation of the measures, mainly due to a lack of human and technical capacity and time-consuming procedures. At the beginning of the implementation phase, the payment of transfers to children required the establishment of a database for children under the age of 6, which led to delays in the initial payment. Due to the (still existing) lack of interoperability between the AMEN database and the registration and birth registers, coupled with a simultaneous increase in eligible applications, manual comparisons between the databases and manual cross-checks were and are necessary. This, together with the audit of eligibility at central level (rather than at local level by social workers directly when the application is submitted), regularly led to delays in payments during the project period. The delays detract from the otherwise high Quality of implementation.

10. Unintended effects (positive or negative)

In order to prevent false expectations among the target group and social tensions, information and awareness-raising measures communicated that the cash payments were temporary and targeted the most severely affected groups. To prevent abuse, a close monitoring system was established: social workers were mobilised to conduct appraisals of the registration and regular attendance of children at school. The information campaigns also provided information about the existence of national complaint procedures. Overall, there are no signs of negative unintended effects.

Rating summary of effectiveness: successful (2, both phases)

The results of the telephone surveys show that the nutritional situation for children aged 0-5 and their access to educational institutions and health services improved significantly over the reference period of the cash transfers during the implementation period. However, no progress was made in diversifying the food supply. Overall, the objective at outcome level was largely achieved. This can be plausibly attributed to the support provided by the project. In addition to the targeted transfers, important success factors were the measures to strengthen the capacity of social workers, the high quality of implementation on the part of UNICEF, and the use and further development of existing partner systems. Delays in registering beneficiaries, making payments and launching information and awareness campaigns, as well as procedural weaknesses, slightly impaired effectiveness, which is nevertheless appraised as successful overall.

Efficiency

11. Production efficiency

The planned costs of EUR 22 million were spent in full, with only minor deviations in the distribution of costs between the various outputs (see Figure 5). By far the largest item was expenditure on Output 1. In addition to financial transfers to households, this also included the transaction costs of the postal service and expenditure on expanding and updating the database. Around 75% of the project funds directly benefited the target group in the form of transfer payments. At 13%, the implementation costs, including overheads for UNICEF, were slightly below the planned amount and were well invested given the high quality of implementation.

By using existing structures (e.g. trained social workers from the MAS) and systems (PNAFN and AMG II), implementation costs were kept to a minimum. At the same time, this made it possible to reach a large number of families from the outset, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the measures. The low transaction costs for the cash transfers (2.2% fees on the disbursement amount) and the fact that the communication campaigns were able to draw on mechanisms that had already been developed and used in other UNICEF programmes also had a positive impact on production efficiency.

There were some delays in the disbursement of monthly transfers and one-off payments at the start of the school year due to technical problems and staff shortages (see effectiveness). The extent to which this affected the target group cannot be quantified within the scope of the evaluation. In the qualitative interviews conducted as part of the external evaluation (PlanEval, 2023), those affected reported that the delayed payments and lack of information about them meant that they sometimes had to pay higher transport costs and other transaction costs. This reduces Production efficiency.

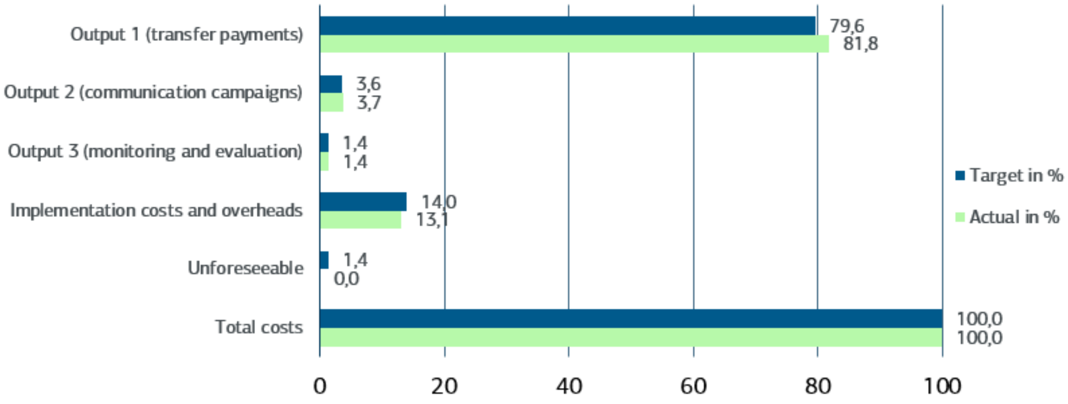


***Figure 5**: Illustration of the planned and actual costs of the outputs and services provided as a percentage of the total costs in EUR.*
***Source**: Own illustration based on PCR.*

12. Allocation efficiency

It is impossible to say with certainty whether a different approach or allocation of resources would have achieved greater impact. Alternative approaches were not examined during the design phase due to the urgency of the situation. However, the evaluation team considers it highly plausible that the chosen approach maximised its potential impact in the specific context and that alternative approaches would not have achieved greater impact. Cash transfers are considered an efficient and effective emergency aid tool. In addition to the direct benefits from the beneficiaries' perspective (flexible, needs-based use), they can usually be provided more quickly and, in most cases, more cost-effectively than in-kind benefits, particularly since, in this case, existing systems could be used for both the selection of beneficiaries and the processing of payments. They also strengthened the local economy, as it can be assumed in this context that the transfers were spent predominantly locally and in full.

Rating summary of efficiency: successful (2, both phases)

Thanks to the use of existing structures and systems and a high proportion of project funds that directly benefited the target group and could be used in line with their needs, the production efficiency of the project is high despite minor setbacks due to delayed payments. There are no indications that an alternative approach or a different distribution of costs between the various measures could have achieved greater impact with the same level of funding.

Impact

13. Overarching developmental changes

The objective adjusted within the framework of the EPE was to mitigate the negative socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for children from the poorest and most vulnerable households in Tunisia in the short term.

The following indicator was used to measure the impact target.

Indicator	Status at time of review	Target value at EPE (review)	Actual value at PCR	Actual value at EPE
(1) Proportion of children aged 0-5 from the lowest income quintile who receive monthly transfer payments.	0	>90	100	100% in 2025 Target value achieved

***Table 3**: Impact target achievement.*
***Source**: Data from CRES and UNICEF, 2024.*

According to UNICEF, all eligible children under the age of 6 from the lowest income quintile currently receive a monthly transfer payment of 30 TND. The goal of alleviating hardship among the neediest families in the short term has been achieved.

14. Contribution to overarching intended developmental changes

The results of both qualitative interviews conducted as part of the external evaluation and quantitative telephone surveys underscore that the transfer payments financed by project funds made an important contribution to cushioning the negative effects of the pandemic and thus to achieving the target. Depending on the survey wave, 60% to at times even 85% of the families surveyed stated that the transfer payments were moderately to very important for covering their basic needs (PlanEval, 2022). The decline in approval ratings between the third and fourth waves is not explained in the underlying source. The project played a significant role in achieving universal coverage of families in need.

At the same time, the results also reveal that, despite transfer payments, beneficiary families had to struggle daily to provide their children with a minimum of adequate nutrition and access to health and education services. In most cases, the improvements achieved were not sufficient to bring about sustainability in precarious living conditions (see effectiveness). In many cases, these conditions even deteriorated despite the transfer payments due to high inflation. For example, child poverty in Tunisia rose from 19% before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic to 26% at the end of 2021 and to 28.4% in 2023 (CRES and UNICEF, 2024). Poverty rates are particularly high in rural areas. The increase in poverty was reflected in the steady growth in the number of eligible children during the project implementation period. The project has made a significant contribution to ensuring that families additionally affected by poverty receive financial support for their 0-5-year-old children.

A major cause of the increase in child poverty is the sharp rise in inflation since September 2021, particularly for food. The average annual inflation rate between September 2021 and December 2023 was 7.8%, the highest recorded in Tunisia in the last three decades (CRES and UNICEF, 2024). As poorer households spend a higher proportion of their consumer expenditure on food, inflation had the effect of increasing poverty. Although no causal link can be proven, we consider it highly plausible that without transfer payments and other support measures, child poverty would have risen even more sharply.

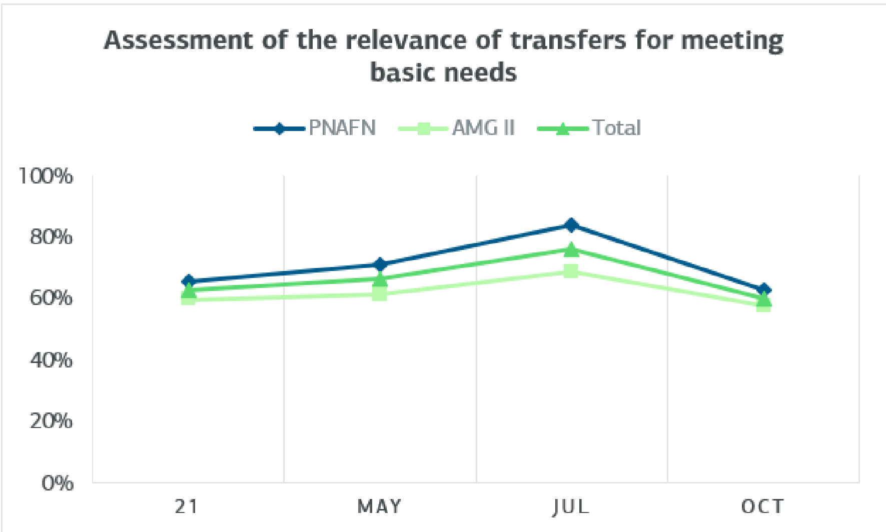


Figure 6: *Percentage of respondents who stated that cash transfers made an important contribution to meeting their basic needs.*
Source: *Own illustration based on PlanEval, 2022.*

The structural effects of the project are particularly noteworthy. The 13-month transfer payments to children under the age of 6 and the capacity-building measures supported MAS in its efforts to introduce regular financial social transfers for children from poor families in Tunisia and to strengthen the structural foundations for this (adequate IT equipment, adaptation and expansion of databases, further training of staff, improved data on poverty) for this. According to UNICEF, the project made an important contribution to the institutionalisation of child benefit in January 2022 for children from poor families aged 0-5 and is also paving the way for the expansion of transfer payments to children between the ages of 6 and 18.

15. Contribution to overarching unintended developmental changes

The evaluation team is not aware of any positive or negative unintended development policy changes.

Rating summary of impact: **successful (2, both phases)**

The project has contributed significantly to universal coverage of the neediest families with support services. According to those affected, the transfer payments made an important contribution to mitigating the negative socio-economic consequences of the pandemic. The overarching objective was thus achieved. Nevertheless, given the sharp rise in inflation, particularly for food, the transfer payments were not sufficient to prevent an increase in child poverty in Tunisia. However, as poverty incidence would probably have risen even more sharply without the transfer payments and significant structural effects were also achieved, the development policy appraisal of the project is nevertheless assessed as successful.

Sustainability

16. Capacities of beneficiaries and stakeholders

The current financial situation of the target group remains precarious and has not changed significantly compared to the initial situation due to external factors, in particular the sharp rise in food and energy prices.

According to UNICEF, the MAS currently employs approximately 1,500 social workers who work in a total of around 270 branches (UNICEF, 2023). UNICEF and KfW project managers perceive the staff to be largely competent and highly committed. There are still some shortcomings in terms of the quality and scope of the advice provided (PlanEval, 2022). Another challenge is the continuing scarcity of resources: there is a lack of transport, adequate office equipment, technical equipment and sufficient operating resources (e.g. fuel, mobile phone credit). Further structural challenges include the continuing lack of interoperability between the AMEN database and the birth registers of the registry offices and the ongoing processing of applications at central level (see effectiveness). On a positive note, however, applications can now also be submitted online at . This is a relief, at least for those households living in a region with functioning internet.

One success for the financial support of poor children is the 18% increase in the MAS budget, which has been enshrined in law since September 2024. This not only expands the MAS's financial scope for action, but also signals that the expansion of the social system is an important concern for the Tunisian government. The slow progress of digitalisation in central administrative processes has also increased the efficiency and effectiveness of MAS services in recent years. At the same time, there is still a great need for reform in this area in particular.

17. Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities

Over a period of 13 months, the project helped Tunisia's poorest families with cash transfers to at least cushion the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the amount of the transfers was not sufficient to achieve sustainability in the social and economic situation of the target group. Anecdotal evidence shows that the awareness-raising measures financed by project funds and continued in subsequent years have strengthened parents' educational skills in the areas of nutrition, hygiene and education.

By co-financing training courses for social workers and equipping them with mobile phones and computers, the programme contributed to further training for staff and an improvement in the counselling services offered. The project also supported the merger of AMEN Social's databases on children eligible for transfers and the Ministry of Education's school registration database, which was largely driven by the World Bank and UNICEF. Previously, beneficiaries had to appear before the responsible social workers before the start of school and apply for support manually. According to UNICEF, the automated comparison of the databases now means that around 80% of eligible families receive the one-off payment automatically and on time at the start of the school year. This reduces the workload of social workers and the time and stress for those entitled to transfers. Today, social workers reportedly have more time for the actual care and counselling of social benefit recipients.

The project also contributed to the modernisation and expansion of the registration programme for social assistance beneficiaries. The implementation of the measures required the creation of a digital database for children under the age of 6 from beneficiaries, as previously there was no incentive for families to register their children due to a lack of financial support. As a result, the number of children aged 0-5 formally registered in the databases rose from 40,000 to 129,000 by the end of 2021 (UNICEF, 2023). According to UNICEF, more than 150,000 children under the age of 6 were registered in the databases and receiving monthly transfer payments in the year of the evaluation.[9] The punctuality of payments has thus increased significantly compared to the implementation period. Another relief for the target group was the introduction of cash cards, to which the transfers are digitally credited and with which beneficiaries can also withdraw the amounts at ATMs. However, only about one-third of post offices currently have ATMs.

UNICEF also attributes the MAS budget increase to the evidence generated in the accompanying monitoring and research studies on the effectiveness of transfer payments.

18. Durability of impacts over time

The sustainability of the effects over time is crucially linked to the financial capacities of the MAS and the fiscal leeway of the Tunisian government to ensure the continuation of cash transfers to the most needy families beyond the funds provided by the FC and other international donors. Tunisia has been in a severe economic and political crisis for years. In the year of the

[9] The World Bank reports a total of 156,000 children for the year 2024. https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/80c50f4cc6c081e16cd67957f83cd93a-0280012024/original/Fact-Sheet-Q3-24-WB-SPJ-EN.pdf [Last accessed on 24 November 2025].

evaluation, Tunisia's economy continued to suffer from the consequences of the war between Russia and Ukraine. In addition, drought-related crop failures and water shortages are putting pressure on the country. The economic challenges have led to a steady increase in the number of people who have slipped from the contribution-based to the non-contribution-based social programme. This is increasing the demand for transfer payments at a time when the budgetary situation is tight. Tunisia's public debt has risen rapidly over the past 10 years (by 77%) and stood at 83.7% of gross domestic product in 2024 (IMF, 2024). The IMF forecasts a further increase in debt to 89.7% of GDP by the end of this decade.

Despite liquidity constraints, the Tunisian government is continuing to implement AMEN Social. At the beginning of 2022, a presidential decree made the support payments for children aged 0-5 under the AMEN social programme binding, initially financed by loans from the World Bank and JICA. According to UNICEF, funding from donor funds is secured until 2026. Similarly, entitlement to school grants of TND 100 at the start of the school year has been enshrined in law since 2024. In October 2025, the Tunisian government published a new draft *finance* bill (*loi de finances sociale*) for the 2026 budget, which provides for a number of new taxes and levies as well as increases in certain existing levies in order to strengthen the social security systems and ensure universal social protection and universal health insurance.[10]

In principle, there would be further fiscal leeway through the dismantling of existing subsidies. The Tunisian government finances a comprehensive subsidy system, particularly for basic foodstuffs and energy. Subsidies in these areas accounted for around 4% of Tunisia's GDP in 2019. Counter-financing of monthly transfer payments to children in needy households would be possible with a moderate reduction in energy subsidies, as evidenced by a 2019 study commissioned by the MAS and conducted by UNICEF and CRES (CRES, 2019). According to this study, the annual cost of monthly transfer payments of TND 30 for children from AMEN Social households is estimated at 0.12% of GDP. The cost of a universal child benefit of the same amount would be just under 0.95% of GDP.[11] From a poverty and distribution perspective, child benefit payments are clearly preferable to energy subsidies.[12]

In view of the new draft law, the fiscal leeway that exists, at least in theory, for reducing subsidies, and the fact that both the monthly transfer payments to children aged 0-5children and the one-off payments at the start of the school year are now enshrined in law, we consider it very likely that these benefits will continue to be paid from the Tunisian budget beyond 2026, despite the tight budgetary situation. This is also supported by the fact that reducing transfer payments would be politically costly due to habituation effects and the high number of beneficiaries.

In addition to the fiscal challenges, staff shortages at MAS are hampering the sustainability of the project and the social programme. In June 2023, it was decided to include potential beneficiaries in the transfer programme who had not previously been registered in the AMEN Social system or in the CNSS and CNRPS databases. This has led to a significant increase in the workload for social workers at the national level, which continues to this day (External Evaluation, 2025). The lack of staff and work resources, as well as the lack of training and information for social workers, reduce their ability to closely monitor and stay informed about the various social programmes. Social workers need to be provided with additional human and material resources to enable them to better serve the population and ensure mobility for necessary visits. This reinforcement also includes continuing training for social workers at the national level and improving the flow of information between the local, regional and central levels.

Rating summary of sustainability: successful (2, both phases)

The project has contributed to strengthening the capacities of the MAS and paved the way for the legal establishment of monthly transfer payments to children under the age of 6. The institutionalisation of support services has improved the resilience of the target group. The biggest challenge to the sustainability of the effects is Tunisia's economic crisis, which has been ongoing for years. This has led to an increase in the number of eligible families and at the same time restricts fiscal leeway. However, given the now existing legal entitlement, the high political costs associated with a permanent suspension of payments and their high economic "return", we consider the chances of continuing the transfer payments to be favourable. Accordingly, we appraise sustainability as successful.

[10] https://pm.gov.tn/fr/detail-decision/2840 (last accessed on 3 November 2025).
[11] The exact figures depend on future developments in GDP, the subsidy and wage ratio, and debt servicing. The figures given here in the text should therefore be interpreted as rough guidelines.
[12] If universal child benefit were introduced, the share that would benefit the poorest income decile is estimated at 15%, while that for the richest decile would be 6% (CRES, 2019).

Overall assessment: successful (2, both phases)

The project succeeded in securing the nutritional situation and access to educational facilities and health services for children aged 0-5 from Tunisia's poorest families during the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby helping to alleviate their hardship. However, it was not possible to prevent an increase in child poverty during the pandemic and the polycrisis of the following years. Given the scale of the crises and the limited resources available, this would not have been feasible and cannot be attributed to the project. It is likely that the level of poverty would have been even higher without the support provided. Beyond providing immediate crisis support, the project strengthened the MAS's human and technical capacities and achieved structure-building effects. The legal enshrinement of the entitlement to monthly cash transfers for children under the age of 6 took place shortly before the end of the project and underlines its relevance.

Given the tense economic situation, risks to sustainability remain. However, due to the institutionalisation of transfer payments and the high economic return on investment in children's human capital, it seems likely that support payments from the national budget will continue for the time being. Overall, we therefore appraise the project as successful.

Contribution to Agenda 2030

Universal applicability and inclusiveness: The project contributes to the achievement of several Agenda objectives: poverty reduction (SDG 1), ending hunger, food security (SDG 2), good health and well-being (SDG 3) and quality education (SDG 4). Access to basic services in the areas of nutrition, health and education, as well as improving the living conditions of poor and vulnerable groups, are anchored as goals at the outcome and impact level. By explicitly supporting children from Tunisia's lowest-income families, the project also contributed to SDG 10 (reducing inequality). The project focused on the use of existing social protection systems and made use of these during implementation. Support for particularly vulnerable households was provided in close coordination with other development partners and complemented their measures.

Interplay between economic, environmental and social development: The project followed a holistic development approach with a focus on the social dimension. Environmental aspects did not play a role in the project context, and there are no known interactions with the environmental development dimension. The measure is consistent with international norms and standards on the participation of particularly disadvantaged groups. The cash transfers financed from project funds were beneficiaries of poor and particularly vulnerable households in Tunisia. The project was therefore inclusive and in line with the fundamental principle of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind.

Methodology

Evaluation methodology

The ex-post evaluation follows the methodology of a rapid appraisal, i.e. a data-based, qualitative contribution analysis, and represents an expert opinion. The project is attributed effects based on plausibility considerations, which are based on a careful analysis of documents, data, facts and impressions. Where possible, this also includes the use of digital data sources and modern techniques (e.g. satellite data, online surveys, geocoding). The causes of any contradictory information are investigated, attempts are made to resolve them, and the assessment is based on statements that are confirmed by several sources of information (triangulation), where possible.

The analysis of the effects is based on assumed causal relationships, documented in the impact matrix developed during the project appraisal and updated during the ex-post evaluation, if necessary. The evaluation report sets out arguments as to why certain influencing factors were identified for the effects observed and why the project under review probably made a certain contribution (contribution analysis). The context of the development measure is taken into account in terms of its influence on the results. The conclusions are put into relation to the availability and quality of the data basis. An evaluation concept serves as the reference framework for the evaluation.

The method offers a balanced cost-benefit ratio for project evaluations, on average, with a balance between knowledge gain and evaluation effort, and allows for a systematic assessment of the effectiveness of DFG projects across all project evaluations. Individual ex-post evaluations cannot therefore meet the requirements of a scientific assessment in the sense of a clear causal analysis.

The main objective of the evaluations (knowledge interest) is to measure impacts, provide accountability, promote transparency and enable institutional learning.

Type of evaluation:

Remote without national experts (desk review).

Key questions of the evaluation according to the evaluation concept:

- How effectively does national targeting reach the poorest of the poor? How robust is the system against fraud and abuse? How were beneficiaries informed about the transfer payments to which they were entitled?
- What contribution has the project made to the creation of long-term structures? How exactly has the existing system been strengthened?
- What impact did the delays in finalising the selection list (which did not begin until December) have on the target group in terms of the project's objectives?
- What impact did the transfer payments have on the nutrition, health and education situation of children from poor, vulnerable households?
- How efficiently were the funds used? What proportion of the funds reached the target group? Were existing systems used efficiently?
- Could greater impact have been achieved through alternative use of funds?
- What proportion of children from poor and vulnerable households currently receive regular transfer payments from social welfare systems? What impact did transfers have on child poverty and living conditions?
- Do social workers have sufficient resources to visit beneficiaries regularly and support them?
- Was there follow-up funding? Will the Tunisian government continue the transfer payments in 2025?
- Given the rapidly growing budget deficit and enormous structural problems, how much financial leeway does the Tunisian government have? What is the current status of negotiations with the IMF and other international donors regarding the reduction of energy subsidies?Text...

Non-public (internal) documents

Internal project documents (MV, PCR, annual reports), UNICEF reports to KfW, secondary specialist literature, strategy papers, external evaluation reports.

Directory of public sources

***CRES** (2019): Feasibility studies on the guarantees of the National Social Protection Base. Executive summary. Available online at:* https://www.cres.tn/uploads/tx_wdbiblio/resume-socle-final.pdf *[Accessed on 16 August 2025]*

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Data sources and analysis tools

Data from telephone panel surveys among the target group during project implementation: Telephone panel surveys of beneficiaries of payments for children under 6 years of age were conducted in four waves in 2021. In the first wave, 1,535 households were surveyed (767 PNAFN and 768 AMG II), and in the fourth wave, 1,414 households were surveyed. In addition, two telephone panel surveys were conducted with 945 households each whose children received a one-off payment at the start of the school year. In addition, focus group discussions were held with beneficiaries as part of an external evaluation (PlanEval, 2022), the results of which were also taken into account in the present evaluation. As part of a follow-up project, further telephone surveys were conducted on the effects of the one-off payments at the start of the school year. These were also taken into account here. Due to the very good data situation, no on-site visit was necessary.

Project sites visited

No project locations were visited.

Interview partners and modality (in person, virtual/by telephone, in writing)

Project executing agency (virtual), Ministry of Social Affairs (virtual)

The following aspects limited the evaluation

The employee responsible for overseeing the project at the Ministry of Social Affairs retired during the evaluation phase and, despite several attempts, was no longer available for an interview. It was therefore not possible to reflect the perspective of the ministry responsible for the project.

Assessment methodology

A six-point scale is used to assess the project according to OECD DAC criteria, with the exception of the sustainability criterion. The scale values are as follows:

Level 1 Very successful: results significantly above expectations

Level 2 Successful: results fully in line with expectations, without significant shortcomings

Level 3 Moderately successful: results below expectations, but positive results predominate

Level 4 Moderately unsuccessful: significantly below expectations and negative results dominate despite recognisable positive results

Level 5 Unsuccessful: despite some positive partial results, the negative results clearly dominate

Level 6 Highly unsuccessful: the project is useless or the situation has deteriorated

The overall rating on the six-point scale is based on a project-specific weighting of the six individual criteria. Levels 1–3 of the overall rating indicate a 'successful' project, while levels 4–6 indicate an 'unsuccessful' project. It should be noted that a project can generally only be classified as "successful" in terms of development policy if both the achievement of objectives at the outcome level (effectiveness) and impact level, as well as sustainability, are rated at least as "moderately successful " (level 3).

Imprint

Responsible: Evaluation Department of KfW Development Bank

FZ-Evaluierung@kfw.de

KfW Bankengruppe
Palmengartenstraße 5-9
60325 Frankfurt am Main, Germany