

2014 Regional Analysis Report

UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional
Office (LACRO)



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Acronyms

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| AIDS | Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome |
| AEPT | Asociación Civil Educación para Todos / Education for All Association |
| APR | <i>A Promise Renewed</i> |
| ARV | anti-retroviral |
| CARICOM | Caribbean Community |
| CECC/SICA | Central American Cultural and Educational Coordination / Central American Integration System |
| CEDAW | <i>Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women</i> |
| SISCA | Central American Social Integration Secretariat |
| CLADE | Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education |
| CO(s) | Country office(s) [UNICEF] |
| COAR | Country office annual report |
| CPAP | Country programme action plan |
| CPD | Country programme document |
| CPMS | Child protection minimum standards |
| CRC | <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i> |
| CRPD | <i>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</i> |
| DHS | Demographic and Health Survey |
| DRR | Disaster risk reduction |
| e-PAS | Electronic performance appraisal system |
| ECD | Early child development |
| ECLAC | Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| GAVI | Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| HACT | Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers |
| HIV | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| HQ | Headquarters |
| IADB | Inter-American Development Bank |
| ICT | information and communication technology |
| INCAP | Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama |
| LAC | Latin America and the Caribbean |
| LACRO | UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean |
| LMT | LACRO (UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean) Management Team |
| LSS | Lazos Sur-Sur / Laços Sul-Sul (South-South Ties) |
| MDG(s) | Millennium Development Goal(s) |
| MICS | Multi-indicator cluster surveys |
| MoRES | Monitoring Results for Equity System |
| MMR | Maternal mortality rate |
| MTR | Mid-term review |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NYHQ | New York Headquarters [UNICEF] |
| OAS | Organization of American States |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| OECS | Organization of Eastern Caribbean States |
| OEI | Organization of Ibero-American States |
| OOSC | Out of School Children |
| PAHO | Pan American Health Organization |
| PFP | Private fundraising and partnerships |
| PSA | Public service announcement (US) / Public information film (UK) |
| RAM | results assessment module |
| REDLAC Caribbean | Risk, Emergency, and Disaster Task Force Inter-Agency Workgroup for Latin America and the Caribbean |
| RMT | Regional management team |
| RO | Regional office |
| ROMP | Regional Office Management Plan |
| SICA | Central American Integration System |
| SP | Strategic Plan [UNICEF] |
| SSC | South-South cooperation |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNAIDS | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS |
| UNDAF | United Nations Development Assistance Framework |
| UNDG-LAC | United Nations Development Group- Latin America and the Caribbean |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNESCO IIEP | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Institute |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WASH | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene |
| WFP | World Food Programme |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

1. Overview

1.1 *Executive summary*

Over the course of 2014, the UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean continued to contribute to achieving substantive results for children, adolescents and women with special attention to the most excluded and disadvantaged children and adolescents while at the same time addressing emerging issues such as increased programmatic attention to adolescents ('second decade of life') and leveraging the 'data revolution' to support the rights of every child.

With the exception of Haiti, all countries in the LAC region have middle-income status with some countries even shifting to high-income status. However, considerable inequalities persist in many of these countries while the capacity of key stakeholders – particularly of sub-national government entities – to address children's rights remains limited. While UNICEF continues to achieve results for children with a focus on equity, it is acknowledged that the region also has a great responsibility to demonstrate the added value of UNICEF's presence for such purposes, as well as the responsibility of increasingly contributing to global and regional public goods and increasing the contribution of selected countries to the global regular resources. The regional office has made a significant effort to define such UNICEF added value in upper middle-income countries and high-income countries, and to critically analyse the type of programmes and application of the right mix of strategies to respond to these expectations.

In 2014 important advances could be registered towards the results of the Global and Regional Programme as described in the Regional Office Management Plan 2014 – 2017. Results include, but are not limited to, the following:

The ongoing Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) has gained increased government attention and is continuing to yield results in ensuring that children start school at the right age and that more emphasis is placed on quality and relevance of secondary education; limiting the factors that cause children to drop out before concluding basic education. In its programming efforts, the region also moved forward with focusing more attention on the rights of adolescents and on children living with disabilities. Child migration (particularly of children from Central America to the United States) has also required particular attention. This situation demonstrated the need for continued attention to the multiple determinants that cause child migration, such as violence and poverty but also challenges with the effectiveness and reach of child protection systems. Good progress was also registered with the implementation of the Elimination Initiative (with five countries reporting figures in 2014 that meet the elimination targets for vertical transmission of HIV). The regional office continued to support countries in their analysis of public investment in children and in designing child-focused social protection systems. Substantive progress has been made in obtaining better, disaggregated data on the situation of children through support of the implementation of Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and other surveys where required. Implementation of these surveys provided countries with evidence of the progress made towards the MDGs (final reports), while at the same time providing a baseline for several of the sustainable development goals (yet to be decided on). Implementation of the Gender Action Plan as well as the rollout of major global strategies (such as the global communication strategy) and initiatives (such as A Promise Renewed) remained regional priorities.

These advances provide an overview of just some of the progress made by the regional office in obtaining results for children through implementing the Global and Regional Programme and supporting country offices in the implementation of their programmes. The gap created by fewer contributions from traditional donors is partially met by an increase in income from Private fundraising and partnerships

(PFP) in the LAC region, but several more years will be required before sufficient income is generated from PFP-countries in LAC to finance all UNICEF supported programmes in the region.

Efforts to further refine the Office Management Plans and better define the activities of the Global and Regional Programme and Development Effectiveness required major effort by all sections in the regional office. These efforts were concluded towards the end of 2014, ending the first year of the four-year office management plans.

Collaborative partnerships also played an important role in the advances gained in 2014; such as the development and initial implementation of a detailed joint work plan between Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and UNICEF to formalise the ongoing successful collaboration on several fronts for the reduction of maternal, infant and child under nutrition and its determinants; and a partnership with Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) that has enabled UNICEF to generate a body of evidence on social protection systems. This will be used as an advocacy tool with governments, providing recommendations on improving their social protection policies and programmes to gain better results for children. The regional office also continued strengthening ties with sub-regional inter-governmental organisations such as CARICOM (Caribbean Community) and South American Community of Nations (SICA) while reinforcing efforts with the regional chapter of the Global Movement for Children. Additionally, increased emphasis was placed on strengthening links with the private and corporate sector in order to create innovative alliances that benefit the rights of children in the region. For example, the region gained substantive traction in dealing with the extractive industries, which are often located in areas where the most excluded and disadvantaged children live.

In operations and human resources, the region continued moving towards greater use of shared service hubs to ensure that maximum resources are put towards achieving results for children rather than on back office functions. 2014 was the first year when the Panama Hub was up and running in its full capacity, now servicing seven country offices in addition to the regional office, with other offices to be added in the future while shifting to the Global Shared Services Centre in the second half of 2015.

Other efficiency and effectiveness efforts were also initiated. For example, the LAC regional office challenged 'low risk' country offices to identify processes, procedures and system requirements that could be limited, reviewed or adapted to reduce the time required for internal reporting and accountability purposes, and to focus on interacting with key stakeholders to deliver results for children.

Finally, the regional office continued emphasising the importance of pursuing UN-coherence, in line with the QCPR agenda. Both at regional and country levels, UNICEF is considered an important contributor to UN-coherence efforts.

1.2 Trends and progress relevant to children and women

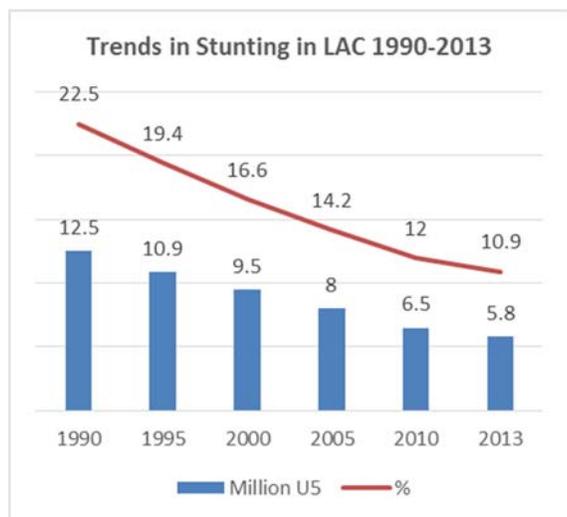
Regional progress on the MDGs and the Millennium Declaration

MDG 1 – eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The world reached the goal of halving extreme monetary poverty five years ahead of the 2015 deadline. For its part, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) as a region met the target by reducing the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day from 12 per cent in 1990 to 6 per cent in 2010.¹ Moreover, it is expected that by the end of 2015 extreme poverty in LAC will decrease to 4.3 per cent, yet still affecting approximately 26 million people.² It is important to note that progress has not been equal; while 14 countries have achieved sufficient progress to meet the target and a further three are set to reach the goal by the end of 2015, four countries are seriously off target.³

Regarding hunger, the goal of reducing by half the prevalence of underweight in children under-five years of age is expected to be achieved by most countries in LAC.⁴ As a region, this proportion fell from 7 to 3 per cent between 1990 and 2012. In terms of undernutrition, the proportion of people affected

decreased by almost half – from 15 to 8 per cent between the periods 1990-1992 and 2011-2013; hence the region is also on track to attain this target by the end of 2015.⁵ Nevertheless, if looking at the stunting (rather than prevalence of underweight) indicator – which measures cumulative growth deficits and better predicts health and wellbeing in adulthood – the proportion of children suffering from moderate or severe malnutrition increases by up to 11 per cent, signalling that fewer countries are on track.

Stunting trends in LAC region 1990 – 2013⁶



Stunting and wasting levels have been halved in LAC since 1990. While one might assume that this is primarily due to economic growth, this is not always the case; unacceptably high levels of stunting and anaemia persist in several countries that have experienced economic growth. National averages frequently hide major disparities in certain geographical areas or among population groups; stunting is most prevalent among the poorest and least educated, in particular indigenous children who are two times more likely to be stunted than their non-indigenous counterparts. The region is also characterized by increasing overweight and obesity, which is often present in the same groups who are still suffering from undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, resulting in a triple burden of malnutrition (the coexistence of food insecurity, undernutrition and

overweight and obesity) with wide variability across countries. For example, stunting affects 5 per cent of the under five population in Jamaica, while in Guatemala it affects almost half (48 per cent).⁷

Among the challenges faced by the region in meeting the first MDG, two stand out as the most persistent: vulnerability and inequality. Regarding the former, while millions of people have been lifted out of extreme poverty, many remain vulnerable to the external shocks of the economy, natural disasters or the death of a household member, which can cause individuals to fall back into situations of hunger and deprivation. In order to safeguard against this, efforts to build social protection systems must be strengthened. Regarding the latter, as expected from the most unequal region in the world, progress has not been achieved by everyone: indigenous peoples, afro-descendants, rural populations and, especially, children and adolescents still fall behind the rest of the population in almost every socioeconomic indicator. Therefore it is important to have an equity approach that unmask the variance of averages, identifies the nature and causes of deprivation and promotes positive outcomes for the most disadvantaged and excluded children.

MDG 2 – achieve universal primary education: The rate of net enrolment in primary education has remained at 94 per cent since 2000.⁸ In fact, with respect to previous years, statistics have shown a decreasing trend in universal access to primary school in some countries. According to the Global Monitoring Report and the regional ongoing work on the Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI), about 2.9 million primary school-aged children do not attend school in the region (one in every 20); one in 10 children attending primary school have not attended preschool and half enter late, increasing their risk of dropout. Children in rural areas, from ethnic groups, engaged in child labour or with disabilities are the most excluded from educational opportunities.

MDG 3 – promote gender equality and empower women: According to the UN 2014 MDG report, the ‘vulnerable employment rate increased in Latin America and the Caribbean’ but the gender gap in the region has closed in recent years. In education, gender parity has been achieved at primary level, with a gender parity index for gross enrolment ratio of 0.99 in 2012. In secondary education, girls are outnumbering boys with a gender parity index for gross enrolment ratio of 1.07, an increase of 0.1 since 2000. This reflects a regional tendency of more girls than boys attending and finishing secondary

education. School life expectancy (total number of years of schooling) in pre-primary, primary and secondary is equal for boys and girls. The survival rate to the last grade of primary education is slightly higher for girls than boys although when looking at grade repetitions across all grades of primary education, boys are 3.2 times more likely to repeat than girls, a situation which increases the risk of dropout. According the OOSC Regional Report, drop out tends to occur in the transition to or during secondary and the risk is higher for boys than girls (one in every four compared with one in every five respectively). In politics, the proportion of seats held by women in single or lower houses of national parliament rose from 15 to 26 per cent between 2000 and 2014. Also, over 41 million girls under 19 years of age (almost 40 per cent of all girls) in LAC now live in a country with a female head of the state.⁹

According to the ECLAC regional report on the examination and evaluation of the Declaration and Beijing Platform of Action, the region has advanced in terms of the abolition of discriminatory legislation, the adoption of legislation on gender equality and violence against women, and the adoption of laws and policies in compliance with the CEDAW Committee recommendations. In addition, women from all cultures have gained political ground. In recent years there have been advances in the recognition of women's rights in sectors of the indigenous movements in the Pluri-national State of Bolivia, Ecuador and Guatemala. Indigenous and Afro-descendent women have articulated the struggle for gender equality through their demands for collective rights (for example, the case of Afro-descendent female leaders in Brazil). It is important for such advances to continue in order to improve the situation of indigenous women and girls in the region.

A major challenge – where UNICEF has and will have a key role to play – will be to articulate and increase the visibility of girls' issues with the women's and children's rights agendas. Some advocacy achievements were made in this area; girls are explicitly mentioned in the outcome declaration of the 20th year celebration of the Belem do Pará Convention and also in the ECLAC analysis of the country reports for the Beijing+20 review. In fact, 13 of the countries in Latin America underscored the need to support specific groups differentiated by age, particularly older women and girls. In the Caribbean report, a chapter was specifically dedicated to the problems that girls face in the sub region, highlighting the fact that they constitute one of the most vulnerable groups.

MDG 4 – reduce child mortality: Regional progress in child mortality has been promising. Nevertheless, it remains highly heterogeneous; a child in Haiti is 10 times more likely to die in the first month of life than a child in Cuba. Furthermore, inequities within countries remain worrisome, calling for a progressive application of the Universal Health Coverage with an explicit attention to the most disadvantaged children first. Beyond the traditional maternal and child mortality indicators, the region has seen an increase in the proportion of under-18 burden of diseases (quantified in terms of disability-adjusted life years or DALY) due to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), and an increase in its risks factors, including overweight and obesity, inactivity and smoking, and alcohol and substance abuse among adolescents.

MDG 5 – improve maternal health: In the LAC region, a 40 per cent reduction in maternal mortality ratio (MMR) was observed between 1990 and 2013 (from 140 to 85/100,000 live births). The Caribbean remains the sub-region with higher rates (190/100,000 in 2013); influenced by the high MMR in Haiti (380/100,000 in 2013). There are an estimated 9,300 maternal deaths a year in the region; in 2013, approximately two thirds occurred in six countries: Brazil, Mexico, Haiti, Colombia, Guatemala, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Both the Caribbean and Latin America continue to report high birth rates among adolescents (as measured by the adolescent fertility rate),¹⁰ trailing only Sub-Saharan Africa, with early childbearing increasing health risks.¹¹ In eight countries in Latin America, 20 per cent of girls give birth before the age of 18. In Nicaragua, Honduras and the Dominican Republic this figure is one in every four.¹²

MDG 6 – combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: The strong partnership between the LAC regional office and other UN partners, especially PAHO and UNAIDS, helped to achieve changes to the

trend of vertical transmission (VT) of the HIV virus. Since 2010, a strategy and plan of action for the elimination of VT has been developed and carried out in the region. As a result, more pregnant women were tested for HIV (from 18 per cent in 2010 to 74 per cent to date). Access to anti-retroviral treatment (ARV) for HIV-positive pregnant women in the region also increased: from 59 to 93 per cent. The provision of these HIV services has led the VT rate of HIV to decrease from an estimated 18 per cent in 2010 to an estimated 5 per cent in 2014. All countries in the region have progressed in the prevention of VT and have been able to make information available for monitoring both the care given to mothers and to exposed children.

Despite these important achievements, some challenges still affect the most deprived mothers, children and adolescents infected or living with HIV and AIDS. Prevailing high levels of stigma and discrimination prevent those infected to seek services. The gap in service delivery also poses a challenge, as HIV services are not yet available at every level of the health service cascade. Further, the profile of the HIV epidemic is changing; adolescents and young people do not see themselves as vulnerable to the virus, therefore affecting prevention efforts. Other issues such as political instability, unsafe internal and cross-border migration, violence, natural emergencies, new health-related threats (such as cholera and Chikungunya) and poor (re)distribution of wealth push many people into a dire situation, making them more vulnerable to HIV and AIDS.

MDG 7 – ensure environmental sustainability: Although the percentage of the population in the LAC region benefiting from potable water and sanitation services has increased over the last two decades,¹³ the ECLAC-UNICEF analysis of multi-dimension child poverty from 2012 found that most of the deprivations underlying child poverty in the region were attributable to gaps in access to sanitation facilities, housing, and drinking water,¹⁴ with considerable disparities continuing between rural and urban areas. In addition, it is estimated that air pollution exceeded the recommended particulate limits established by the World Health Organization (WHO) in at least 27 cities in the region, 10 of which are capital cities. Children are particularly vulnerable to the deterioration in air quality in the region.¹⁵

MDG 8 – develop a global partnership for development: In recent years, the visible gap of official development assistance (ODA) directed to the LAC region has been filled by remittances, access to private finance, foreign direct investment (FDI) and the increasing stake of China in the natural resources of a sizeable number of countries in the region. Various regional economic and political integration bodies¹⁶ are replacing former relations of dependency, and the economic bonanza has allowed the LAC region to assert itself globally. Political alliances among like-minded governments have facilitated a cheap oil supply through Petro Caribe to a number of countries in the region.

Besides the fact that this classification does not cover the various dimensions of development of countries, it is widely perceived in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean as posing a challenge for securing the affordable and sustainable resources for development. SIDS are mostly MICs and thus unable to access concessional loans, forcing them to incur debts with private financial markets at onerous rates. Added to the stringent conditions of the IMF, this compounds their debt in the long term. Regarding technology, mobile/smart phone subscriptions and internet access are very high in the LAC region, which opens up new possibilities with respect to participatory monitoring for accountability of social services as well as the ability to reach and partner with individuals in the region and the world more quickly and at a lower cost.

Major trends in relation to the CRC, CEDAW and CRPD

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): The CRC Committee adopted concluding observations on the Saint Lucia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela state reports on the implementation of the CRC and on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela implementation of the two Optional Protocols. Pre-sessional working groups were held for state reports submitted by Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Honduras and Mexico on the implementation of the Convention, for Honduras and Uruguay

state reports on the implementation of the two Optional Protocols, and for the Cuba state report on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC).

On both the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Saint Lucia state reports, the Committee congratulated the states for the adoption of legislative and policy measures in many areas and made recommendations dealing with budget allocation and data collection. On the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela report, the Committee made further recommendations on the dissemination of the CRC, raising the minimum legal age of marriage for boys and girls to 18, and the prevention of all forms of discrimination, violence, sexual abuse and exploitation among others. On the Saint Lucia report, the Committee made further recommendations dealing with the development and implementation of a national plan of action for the implementation of the Convention, the establishment of an independent mechanism for monitoring human rights, including a specific mechanism for monitoring children's rights, corporal punishment and positive forms of discipline, and child sexual abuse, among others.

Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): Violence against women and girls, stereotypes in the education sector, trafficking of women and girls, and adolescent pregnancy are common trends that affect women and girls in most countries across the region. This is confirmed by the examination carried out by the CEDAW Committee in 2014 of two state reports: Peru and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Regarding both countries, the Committee acknowledged the advances made in legislative reform, policy and institutional frameworks. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Committee also acknowledged the eradication of illiteracy among young people and the measures taken to ensure equal access to education for girls and women at all levels of education. On the Peru report, the Committee noted the efforts by the State to issue identity documents, in particular to rural and indigenous women and children. Some of the concerns raised to both countries deal with the levels of violence against women, the multiple forms of discrimination that certain groups of women face – such as indigenous and afro-descendant women and women with disabilities –, trafficking of women and girls, and the high numbers of teenage pregnancy. In addition, during pre-sessions, the CEDAW Committee examined the State reports submitted by Ecuador, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): Many challenges remain in the region, such as the lack of reliable data on children with disabilities in the region (particularly for indigenous and afro-descendant populations); their access to health; institutionalisation; education services (children with disabilities are overrepresented in out-of-school children figures); discriminatory practices; violence, neglect and abuse; and absence of services in rural and remote areas. The Costa Rica country office has undertaken studies relating to this issue, and the Dominican Republic and Peru country offices are currently in the process of doing so. The Costa Rica country office is leading an ongoing initiative in Central America to reduce vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities.

In 2014 the CRPD examined State reports from Ecuador, Mexico and Costa Rica and acknowledged the adoption of laws and policies by the three countries. Nevertheless, common concerns raised by the Committee include the use of inappropriate and pejorative terminology in some legislation in Costa Rica and Mexico, multiple forms of discrimination – including against women –, the fact that there are no surveys on the situation of children with disabilities – including indigenous children – who are placed in institutions, abandoned, become victims of abuse or live in poverty or in rural settings (in Costa Rica), the high rate of child abandonment and institutionalisation of children with disabilities, the prevalence of the welfare approach for their care, the limited scope of specific measures in rural and indigenous communities (Mexico), and the lack of formal mechanisms to ensure their participation (Ecuador).

Regional political trends

Seven presidential and/or general elections were held in 2014 in Uruguay, Brazil, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia. There was continuity in five of the seven countries, with the exception of Costa Rica and Panama.

A volatile political climate was witnessed in several countries. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's political climate has not improved, indeed has worsened by the fall in oil prices. In Mexico, violence has reached intolerable levels and mobilized society like never before. The disappearance of 43 rural students – as well as other secondary students – in the southern state of Guerrero has encouraged massive public demonstrations in the whole country, many of which were led by students.

There is growing evidence that in countries such as Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, violence is deliberately directed at children and adolescents. Schools can become magnets for such violence; some reports show that schools are used as places of forced recruitment or coercion, whether by gang members waiting nearby or even from within the schools.¹⁷ Even the daily commute to and from school can be fraught, especially if children have to cross the invisible lines marking the territories of rival gangs.¹⁸

The peace process in Colombia is ongoing, despite being momentarily disturbed by the kidnapping of an army general in an area controlled by the guerrilla and their subsequent release. In Haiti, the Prime Minister announced in late December that he was resigning along with several ministers. This came in the wake of anti-government protests and a commission's call for him to step down and clear the way for long-stalled local and legislative elections.

A major development was the thawing of US-Cuba relations in the last days of 2014. Finally, it is worth noting the growing political and economic recognition that the *Alianza del Pacífico* is gaining in relatively short time (since 2011). Currently, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru are the official members but Panama and Costa Rica are expected to join soon.

This region has a track record of working toward economic and political integration. However, a number of separate and sometime opposing political and economic groupings and 'blocks' have emerged, making it challenging for the region to achieve a common position on several issues that are critical for its development.

In the Caribbean, the Caribbean Community - CARICOM - presented its new Strategic Plan 2015-2019. The plan aims at repositioning CARICOM and making strides forward in sustainable economic and social development, while addressing environmental issues. These themes are closely linked with the 'Samoa Pathway', the outcome document of the Third International Conference on Small Island Development States that took place in 2014.

Regional economic trends

In 2014, GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean grew by 1.1 per cent,¹⁹ the lowest rate of growth since 2009 but in line with the slowdown of many emerging economies. The slow recovery of the global economy (China and the European Union in particular), the fall in price of raw materials, and the volatility in financial flows are perceived as the barriers to better performance. As heterogeneous as the region is, significant differences in growth rates were observed; while some of the largest economies such as Argentina and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela contracted or, in the case of Brazil, showed little growth, other – smaller – economies like Panama, the Dominican Republic, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia and Nicaragua accounted for a remarkable growth rate above 4.5 per cent. The Caribbean sub-region had an economic performance above the average of the LAC region (1.9 per cent), with Guyana's GDP growing at 4.5 per cent but Saint Lucia's contracting 1.4 per cent. It is worth

noting that for many countries the recovery has been financed with loan commitments from China. In 2014, Chinese loans to the region (US \$22 billion) were more than those of the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank combined.²⁰ In 2015, the region is expected to experience a moderate economic recovery and GDP is projected to grow 2.2 per cent, and significantly higher for the Central America sub-region (4.1 per cent).²¹

The good economic performance of the region in previous years has led to a decrease in people living below 4 dollars a day; from 41.7 per cent in 2000 to 25.3 per cent in 2012. Nevertheless, some of the people leaving poverty remained vulnerable.²² The people with a per capita income between 4 and 10 dollars a day grew 3.4 percentage points over the same period (from 34.4 per cent to 37.8). This population does not now face a situation of poverty, but neither does it enjoy the level of security that defines the middle class,²³ hence there is a continuous risk to return to poverty if exposed to shocks. Nevertheless, the middle class expanded from 21.9 to 34.3 per cent, equivalent to 81.6 million more people living on an income between 10 and 50 dollars a day.²⁴

Collaboration with the private sector and individuals

Partnerships with the private sector and individuals continued to flourish in LAC. By the end of 2014, UNICEF in the region had mobilized more than US \$72 million (by far the best result to date). The most significant source was donations from individuals that generated US \$39 million (55 per cent), followed by US 20 million donated by the Carlos Slim Foundation (28 per cent) to the global eradication of Polio, and about US \$12 million generated from corporate partnerships (17 per cent).

A total of 474,353 individuals gave a regular, monthly donations at the end of the year; about 40 per cent of them are in Argentina and the rest from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. In all, the number of individual contributors to UNICEF in LAC increased by 12 per cent from 2013 and represented approximately 10 per cent of the global total.

Corporate partnerships continued to play an important role. While direct donations from corporations decreased slightly from 2013, an increasing number of partnerships have centered on reaching more individuals through a corporate pathways to pledge. In many ways corporations have helped the strong growth in individual fundraising; in Ecuador collaboration with banks and financial institutions helped UNICEF mobilize large groups of monthly donors; in Brazil innovative work with utility companies has yielded good results. Further, corporate partnerships have been growing in the countries that do not have dedicated private sector teams, with US \$ 1.6 million being raised last year.

On Trusts and Foundations, the Slim Foundation in Mexico has committed to donating US \$100 million to UNICEF over the next five years for the global push to eradicate Polio. This follows the foundation's first donation of US\$ 20 million in 2014.

Non-financial engagement with companies continues to gain momentum in the region. The organization's priority areas of working with the extractive industry, telecommunications sector and food and beverage companies have made important progress. In 2014 corporations in 12 countries have taken actions to incorporate child rights into their corporate sustainability strategies. There have also been important pilot experiences with the extractive sectors in Peru, Colombia and Brazil, engaging with five companies to identify and manage their impact on child rights – they are expected to expand in 2015. The regional office also organized a special workshop on engagement with the extractive industry with participation from many LAC country offices and partners. The discussion and the training conducted during the workshop helped to further advance this important issue in the region.

The regional office focused its communication efforts with external partners on the CRC@25 celebration, held on 20th November. Individual projects were achieved with six partners in the region: CNN in Spanish, NTN24 cable TV, Agencia EFE, Grupo Diarios de las Américas, Latin Trade and

Estrategia y Negocios (E&E). Of particular impact were the partnerships with CNN, NTN24 and Agencia EFE. NTN24 prepared four special reports and interviews on key issues, which were aired for over 100 minutes on news and talk shows, to present the challenges and opportunities for children in LAC. CNN in Spanish elaborated five reports on existing and emerging issues relating to child rights. All were televised around the time of the anniversary.

Finally, Agencia EFE and UNICEF undertook #25porlaniñez, a series of 25 print and TV interviews with leading figures in LAC, which were distributed to over 100 media organisations in the region. On average, each interview was published 41 times in different media throughout the region. In the area of sport, the regional office worked with Cartoon Network (CN) in the production of a TV public service announcement (PSA) cartoon featuring the Brazilian National football team Captain, Neymar Jr. in support of the *Vamos Jugar*²⁵ initiative for safe and inclusive sport in all LAC municipalities. The PSA had high rotation on CN as well as its sister channel Boomerang, with an estimated airtime value of US\$ 1.5 million.

Implications of the regional trends on the strategic position of UNICEF in LAC

Considering the political and economic trends in the region, UNICEF continued to advocate for addressing the rights of the most excluded and disadvantaged children. At the same time, UNICEF increased efforts to position emerging issues (globally and in the region), including further efforts to create a large 'movement' for children's rights in LAC, consisting of individuals, civil society and the private sector. Considerable investment was made in addressing the rights of adolescents ('second decade') and using the 'data revolution' for obtaining better evidence on whether all rights of all children in LAC are being fulfilled, and where necessary to advocate for targeted, equity focused action.

In the area of health, emphasis is given to maternal and neonatal mortality, to the reduction of inequities and to an analysis of the health system strengthening measures that would ensure equitable progress in the key indicators. The analysis of the epidemiological trends of mortality and burden of diseases in the population of 0-18 years old, as well as of the overall context and country capacities, have led the LAC regional office to start engaging in strategic discussions – both within the region and with HQ – on emerging areas of work, such as the prevention of NCDs, adolescent health and the health response to violence.

In the area of HIV and AIDS, traditional donors are shifting their focus; less resources and attention are being paid to certain issues, including HIV and AIDS, since they are not a priority for most LAC countries. Other important actors and donors are almost exclusively prioritising ARV treatment and working with key affected populations, leaving very little space for broader prevention efforts and addressing the needs of adolescents, who do not necessarily fit into these categories. This is having an impact on UNICEF ability to influence national HIV policies, priorities and allocation of limited resources, and may contribute in the long term to more HIV-related stigma. The 'end of AIDS' discourse, while positive in that it highlights the tremendous progress achieved in the past decade, may also have the undesired effect of diverting attention from HIV (both in governments and society in general), as it suggests the epidemic has already been eliminated. Working with the most vulnerable adolescents, including MSM, sex workers/victims of sexual exploitation, adolescents living with HIV and those in detention, calls for a more cross-sectoral approach and for UNICEF to have a bolder voice on certain issues, such as the rights of children and adolescents with non-traditional sexual orientations or gender identities, or the need to more actively promote HIV testing for adolescents.

In the area of nutrition, UNICEF support to achieving quality nutrition results for children and mothers in LAC will continue to focus on addressing undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies to show that equitable elimination of stunting and anaemia in the foreseeable future is not only possible but also achievable. UNICEF will also invest in applied research to build the evidence base for interventions to

reduce overweight and obesity, and refine programmatic approaches to be scaled up. To underpin the success of these priorities we will strengthen our advocacy with decision makers to secure the required political and financial commitment to tackle malnutrition, increase the effectiveness of our communication and – perhaps most importantly – empower communities and civil society to take ownership of the process.

Violence aimed at key educational actors remains prevalent, undermining children’s educational rights. Teachers and other educational staff can fall prey to extortion schemes, such as gangs imposing a ‘war tax’ before they will allow teachers to go about their work.²⁶ Further, they can be killed for perceived wrongs, such as giving a gang-affiliated student a failing grade.²⁷ The relationship between violence and education may be mutually reinforcing; the lack of meaningful educational opportunities is commonly cited as an underlying factor for escalating the spread of gangs and violence. At the same time, high levels of violence can push out students who are in school, exacerbating educational exclusion. This creates a negative spiral: increased exclusion, increased vulnerability, and increased potential for violence.²⁸ On early childhood development (ECD), the regional policy agenda for ECD has benefited from progress made by key governments such as El Salvador, Honduras, Chile, Costa Rica and Colombia and the continuation of others, such as Brazil, Uruguay, Peru and the Dominican Republic that have positioned ECD comprehensive policies and programmes as a government priority.

Attention has been drawn in 2014 to the high number of unaccompanied children from Central American countries traveling northwards and those arriving in the USA. While UNICEF has been working on the issue of child migration for more than a decade, the situation has given rise to an opportunity for UNICEF to bring attention to the complex set of vulnerabilities, deprivations and inequities that motivate child migration. Armed violence has been identified as one of the main drivers for migration, giving a political momentum for advocacy and partnerships on this topic. The LAC regional office has coordinated the development of a multi-country approach that entails both the immediate humanitarian response and the longer-term prevention and institutional strengthening. This has in turn led to greater collaboration between UNICEF and the IOM and UNCHR, and the involvement in the Regional Conference on Migration (CRM) discussion.

Regarding social inclusion, economic performance has stalled in some countries, which will represent a challenge not only in terms of poverty reduction but also the degree of security that their labour markets are able to provide their workers. It will therefore be essential to maintain adequate levels of social spending to enable people to cope with the risks associated with economic slowdowns, especially in households with children. In some countries expansion will continue, providing an opportunity to invest additional resources for the development of young children – proven to be the most cost-effective intervention in life.²⁹

On gender, the Gender Action Plan 2014-2017 (GAP) provides a roadmap for work in the LAC region. Regarding the four targeted gender priorities,³⁰ it is important to note that one of the most crucial problems affecting women and girls in the region is gender-based violence (including sexual violence, sexual commercial exploitation, domestic violence, sexual harassment, femicide and physical and emotional violence). Across the region, prevailing violence, organised crime, high levels of impunity and gender stereotypes further exacerbate this problem. Therefore the UNICEF country offices will be supported to strengthen their support to prevent gender-based violence, and not only in a humanitarian context. Early union and early marriage also remain a problem, with some country offices working on legal reform efforts to address this. The high rates of adolescent pregnancy in the region have led country offices to enter into partnerships with other UN agencies and invest more resources in this issue. Given that these human rights issues affect mostly adolescents, focus on this age group is essential to advancing the gender agenda in the region. These are clear opportunities for UNICEF and UN agencies to continue successfully advocating for the inclusion of girl child issues in the women’s rights agenda.

In September 2015, a summit of heads of state will adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The new development agenda will be based on the preliminary set of 17 Goals and 169 accompanying targets proposed by the GA Open Working Group (OWG) on the SDGs, many of which target children directly. To be able to measure progress on these new targets, the international community is calling for a data revolution that will allow for timely and high quality data for decision-making and to measure global, regional and national progress. Therefore, UNICEF in LAC will need to step up support to national governments and statistical offices in the region so that they are able to implement the very demanding new data collection requirements in the new development agenda. The LAC regional office should play an important role in ensuring that all countries in LAC are well equipped to monitor the SDG indicators affecting children, ensuring adequate desegregation of the data to be able to monitor the situation of the most disadvantaged children.

Despite the exchange devaluation in Argentina and other political situations that may affect fundraising activities, the region is still showing growth and becoming increasingly attractive for the investment of long-term sustainable and unrestricted income. The majority of the funds raised in 2014 were used for UNICEF supported programmes in these countries, but increasingly private sector income from the region is contributing to global and regional programmes. US \$6 million went to unrestricted regional thematic funds (RTF) and global regular resources, with support to the RTF continuing through a US\$1.3 million gross contribution.

1.3 Humanitarian assistance

The LAC region has the second highest number of natural disasters in the world³¹, predominantly occurring during the hurricane season between May and November. Almost 70 per cent of the disasters recorded in 1970-2009 were related to floods and storms, which have – in absolute numbers – increased in the past decade. Drought-related disasters are also rising, with 3.5 times as many in the past decade, compared to 1970-1979. While most emergencies in the region are small in scale, they can affect the lives of many children, particularly those that are already living in vulnerable situations.

In 2014 the region faced several emergency situations, affecting over 2 million people. The regional office has provided support to the affected country offices, in needs assessment and the elaboration of UNICEF components of inter-agency multi-sectorial response proposals, as well as ensuring timely coordination with OCHA and REDLAC partners at regional and national levels. The following have been the most important emergencies and humanitarian situations throughout the year:

Floods and hurricanes affected more than 700,000 people in the Caribbean, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Paraguay and Mexico. In Dominica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) and Saint Lucia, floods left tens of thousands without pipe water supply and compromised drinking water sources. Damage to schools and educational materials, as well as the use of schools as emergency shelters, affected children's access to education. Country offices' provided affected communities with WASH, education and child protection supplies to improve the health and hygiene situation and minimise disruption to education. Governments were also supported to roll out the psychosocial programme Return to Happiness, benefitting 2,897 children. In Haiti, flooding in the North and North West Departments affected about 15,000 households and crops, with possible consequences for next year's harvest in these areas, impacting household economy and overall nutritional status. The country office, with support from the regional office, provided WASH, nutrition and non-food emergency supplies for 5,000 families.

Populations in the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Paraguay were also severely affected by floods (335,000 and 250,000 people respectively), with a strong impact on the daily lives of children. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, UNICEF co-led the WASH, education and child protection clusters, together with national and departmental governments. The country office response plan reached 47,322

people (including 7,354 children under five) through interventions in education and ECD; child protection; nutrition; and WASH. In Paraguay, in coordination with the Ministry of Education, Secretary of National Emergency and Secretary of Children and Adolescents, UNICEF provided psychosocial and protection assistance to 2,000 children and adolescents in 20 temporary camps for displaced persons; as well as interventions in education (including the installation of mobile classrooms). In response to the emergency in Mexico caused by hurricane Odile in September, UNICEF implemented back-to-school and psychosocial support interventions, benefitting 12,500 children in Baja California and Sinaloa.

Prolonged droughts affected Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua, causing major food insecurity with a more than 70 per cent reduction in maize and bean harvest for the spring crops and affecting more than 2.5 million people. Following the drought, several areas have also been affected by heavy rains and floods, which may worsen food insecurity and malnutrition in the first quarter of 2015 before the next harvest. In Guatemala, the country office coordinated with other UN agencies to deliver a number of nutrition interventions, including treating some 4,500 children under five and women with acute malnutrition. In Honduras, the country office collaborated with WFP and the Ministry of Health to support an assessment of the effects of limited access to food on the nutritional status of children under five in the most affected municipalities. The office is also carrying out WASH and nutrition interventions, the latter to prevent acute and severe malnutrition for approximately 7,300.

The same countries and the Dominican Republic have also been affected by the protracted harvest loss caused by the coffee fungus. Having started in 2013, it is likely to last for at least another three years while new plants reach maturity, resulting in drastically reduced livelihoods for the populations that are highly dependent on this crop. The WFP estimate that approximately 145,000 households have suffered either moderate or severe food insecurity. Across the countries affected, UNICEF country offices have been supporting emergency fundraising efforts. For example, the El Salvador country office together with PMA, PAHO and FAO formulated a CERF proposal to address the coffee rust and the food security emergency.

In Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, the migrating children crisis involved the repatriation of 12,000 children in 2014. Most of these children were returned from Mexico.³² In Honduras, UNICEF is leading the child protection cluster and has facilitated the development of a rights-based protocol for comprehensive care and protection of repatriated children, including family reunification and medical care. Psychosocial support for repatriated children and adolescents has been implemented through the Return to Happiness programme, reaching 5,374 children. In both Guatemala and El Salvador, the country offices are working closely with the respective governments to respond to the crisis. In the latter, UNICEF has reached an agreement with the Government to support undocumented children under the age of two (who have migrated to the US, are located in countries of transit or destination, or are repatriated to El Salvador and have been received in the Integral Care Centre for Migrants of the Directorate General of Immigration). The country office has also delivered 400 kits with food and non-food items.

Regarding epidemic situations, Chikungunya, an infection caused by the Chikungunya virus, has spread from the Caribbean islands to other Central and South American countries with 729,178 cases reported and 113 deaths³³. UNICEF has been monitoring the situation and, in close coordination with PAHO-WHO, has supported Ministries of Health in the most affected countries to implement communication campaigns for prevention and to strengthen their preparedness plans. Cholera, despite a significant reduction of the incidence – in 2014 there were 21,037 reported cases and 216 deaths³⁴ – continues to represent a threat in Haiti and efforts are still required for its elimination. UNICEF continued responding with its partners, focusing both on immediate needs – through sensitization, delivery of cholera kits and improvement of water sources, vaccination, and improved access to sanitation for people living in IDP camps – as well as on activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of government institutions. Also, UNICEF continues to monitor the reported cases of cholera outside Haiti, including Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Mexico.

In Colombia, despite the positive signs in the peace negotiations, the armed conflict continues to generate human rights violations against children, including forced displacement, recruitment into armed groups, sexual violence (especially for girls), confinement or limitation of mobility, and death or mutilation from landmines and other explosive devices. According to the 2015 Strategic Response Plan, the total affected population is 4.8 million, 1.8 million of which are children (38 per cent of the population under 18).

1.4 Equity case study

Five years after UNICEF announced its intention to refocus its organizational priorities on equity, the LAC regional office takes this opportunity to share an example of how equity has been promoted across the region:

Out-of-School Children Initiative in the LAC region

The Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) is a global initiative between UNICEF and UNESCO, and is the main focus of UNICEF-supported education programming around the world. Following its launch in the LAC region in 2010, the region was the first to complete a report directed at governments across the region. The report outlined that still more than 20 million children in LAC are out of school.

The OOSCI model is innovative in that it proposes a model to quantify not only the children and adolescents currently out of school (actual/present exclusion) but also the millions that attend school but are falling behind and risk early dropout (potential/future exclusion). It measures actual exclusion in the final year of pre-primary, in primary and in lower secondary, and measures the risk of future exclusion in primary and lower secondary. Risk of future dropout is considered moderate if a child has an age-grade gap of one year, or severe if a child has an age-grade gap of two or more years.

When implementing this model, the UNICEF country office typically supports the government, acting as the main coordinator for the work. The role of the regional office on the other hand is often multi-faceted: contribution of financial resources, identification of technical resources, and assuring quality throughout the study – for example by providing feedback on the final draft of the report. In the LAC region, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics is normally involved in an OOSCI study and provides advice on the development of the statistical profiles.

Since its launch in LAC, work on the initiative has continued to deepen. Three national OOSCI reports have been completed (the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, and Colombia) as well as a sub-regional report in Central America through the inter-governmental policy body CECC-SICA (published in 2013). In 2014, the regional office supported the completion of reports by Honduras, Nicaragua (RAAN region) and Paraguay (Chaco region). Costa Rica and Paraguay also began work on a national OOSCI report, and several states and territories of the OECS have agreed to undertake a sub-regional report. Haiti is in the preparatory stage of a national study.

The initiative has had considerable impact. The governments in Central America and the Dominican Republic (CECC-SICA) maintain statistics on the five dimensions of educational exclusion using the OOSCI conceptual framework, with updated data and trends available by region and by country. In Brazil, a national inter-sectorial OOSCI working group meets twice a year to review the progress achieved by their strategies to bring children back to school, and in collaboration with local authorities have launched a broad-based communication campaign – *Fora da escola não pode!* (Out of school, just won't do!). This targets 21 of the municipalities in the sisal (a species of Agave) production region in the northeast, one of the most vulnerable in the country.

Colombia has also seen gains. In coordination with the national Ministry of Education, the Norwegian Refugee Council and War Child, a strategy was launched to search for out-of-school children and adolescents in the five departments with the lowest school coverage rates (Cauca, Putumayo, Córdoba, Norte de Santander and Nariño) and provide them with adapted and flexible education opportunities to conclude formal education. A diagnosis of residential schools in remote, rural areas (where 30 per cent of students are indigenous, 70 per cent live in extreme poverty, and many face the risk of forced recruitment by armed groups) and the development of specific policy recommendations for their improvement and reduction of dropouts have also been launched.

In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, OOSC methodology is used in the definition of the Education Strategic Plan in El Chaco Region (which includes five of the poorest municipalities in the country) while for the first time in its history, Honduras had a full school year cycle of 200 days in 2014. The Ministry of Education also used the OOSC study to inform its policy changes.

Looking ahead, new countries are considering undertaking an OOSC study. The regional office is also pushing the OOSCI agenda forward in several ways. A number of countries are expanding the use of the methodology to upper secondary (including the Eastern Caribbean), which requires a more complex analysis given the greater number of variables (upper secondary may not be compulsory; some adolescents may be exercising a legally recognized right to work; there is greater variety in educational services for this age group; some may be combining studies with family responsibilities). Furthermore, some countries are working together to use the analysis to inform sub-national policy and programming (Central America and the Eastern Caribbean).

2. Analysis of programme strategies and results: Development effectiveness

Development effectiveness refers to activities intended to support the attainment of programmatic results, rather than directly contributing to a result. Most regional office development effectiveness activities take the form of technical assistance, quality assurance and/or oversight to a country office, to strengthen their performance in achieving results as defined in their respective country programmes.

2.1 Development effectiveness (DE) analysis

Health

During 2014, in order to facilitate the implementation of the country programmes in accelerating progress in maternal, neonatal, child, and health related areas, major technical assistance by the regional office was provided through on-site missions to the eight priority countries of Haiti, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Argentina and Uruguay. Remote technical assistance was also provided for conducting the bottleneck/theory of change analysis and selecting the indicators/targets on child survival and development in preparation of the new CPDs in the region. Guidance was given to all country offices on funding opportunities (for example, GAVI BP 2015 for Haiti and GAVI beyond for GAVI graduating countries), expansion of partnerships as well as leveraging of resources (regional and country neonatal alliance, closer collaboration with PAHO and with the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) under the Gates funded project) and any other technical assistance solicited on a regular basis. Assistance to Haiti on the cholera response has also been carried out on a regular basis, in close collaboration with HQ and the country office.

A regional health and nutrition network meeting for country office health and nutrition focal points was held in September 2014. Apart from technical updates and updating the context of the region within the post-2015 agenda and in relation to the strategic plan, meeting participants agreed on the minimum standard for all country offices. Namely, monitoring the health and nutrition inequities in health and nutrition indicators; advocating for relevant health and nutrition issues; emergency preparedness and resilience. The constitution of clusters for more in-depth discussions and action on themes relevant to the diverse situations of each country (unfinished agenda, maintaining A Promise Renewed and new challenges) was also agreed upon, paving the way for more efficient support in the future. Capacity building needs were also identified in close collaboration with New York HQ.

HIV and AIDS

As part of quality assurance, the regional office revised all key country documents and reports in consultation with the country offices. On technical assistance, each point of contact with national authorities provided an opportunity to discuss the current health system and promote the integration of HIV/VT within broader maternal neonatal child health (MNCH). Ongoing technical assistance was provided to UNICEF colleagues as well as the Ministry of Health, National Aids Team, NGOs and other strategic partners.

While there remains a lot to achieve in the island of Hispaniola, technical assistance from the regional office has enabled both countries (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) to move in the right direction to reach the Elimination Initiative (EI) targets. Governments and staff are sensitised and committed, nevertheless the political tension lead to very slow progress particularly when it comes to bi-national initiatives to control the disease within the migrant population of women, children and young people.

On oversight, all CPAP, CPD, AWP, MTR, SITAN and COAR have been reviewed accordingly and comments provided. Advocacy to countries to prioritize EI in their planning has continued and funds were made available by the regional office to leverage HIV within country office programmes. Coordination with UN agencies and other strategic partners continue throughout.

Support was provided to develop the effectiveness of country office programmes and interventions in the area of HIV and adolescents. Country visits were undertaken to assess the situation and ongoing interventions in Guyana, Suriname, Argentina, Guatemala, Brazil and Haiti. Visits included the provision of technical assistance and oversight, as well as identification of challenges and suggested courses of action. As a result, all assisted countries refined – to varying extents – their work in this area. In the case of Brazil, beyond the aforementioned support, the LAC regional office was further involved in advising the country office in the implementation and reporting of a major MAC-funded project in the city of Fortaleza, which provides prevention and treatment services for the most vulnerable adolescents through a mobile unit.

Support was also provided to Nicaragua (in the development of the country concept note to the Global Fund), the Dominican Republic (the funding for adolescents and advice on the first stages of a comprehensive adolescent assessment), Jamaica (the funding and minor advice on their work on adolescent key populations), Belize (the funding and advice on planning interventions for the most at risk adolescents), Ecuador (the funding and on-site support for its first national meeting of adolescents and young people living with HIV) and Bolivia (support to its secretariat role in the *Laços Sul-Sul* initiative, including for the bi-annual meeting in Cochabamba).

WASH

The regional office has provided support to the country offices that have a WASH component in their CPD (such as WASH in schools, hygiene promotion, sanitation), as well as on fundraising (the allocation of thematic funds, WASH in school specific funds). Specific support has been provided to the Haiti country office in relation to the high level dialogue on the national rural sanitation campaign, linked with the long-term national cholera plan. Further, the regional office has provided the opportunity for the Haiti and Bolivia country offices to participate in Global WASH meetings, in representation of the LAC region.

An agreement has been reached between the LAC regional office and the HQ WASH team on the inclusion in the 2015 LAC regional office work plan of an equity analysis of WASH coverage and governance indicators in the region, as well as a strategic review and recommendations for future UNICEF involvement in WASH in the region. This will provide strategic guidance to the regional office and country offices for future programming. Tasks will be performed in close collaboration between the HQ WASH Section and the LAC regional office child survival and development cluster.

Nutrition

A strategic vision for nutrition programming in the region, including a regional situation analysis introducing new priorities like adolescent nutrition, overweight and obesity, and practical proposals for how UNICEF may work to accelerate progress in nutrition was prepared to guide country offices in this area. The regional health and nutrition network meeting in September was an important opportunity to identify and disseminate good practice and innovation. Three sub-regional workshops on the sustainable elimination of iodine deficiency were coordinated in Ecuador and Guatemala, with the participation of key stakeholders from 13 countries. Haiti received extensive support with strategic planning and programme efficacy and efficiency through two support missions. Quality assurance was provided to Guatemala (CPD, CPAP), Nicaragua (MTR), Ecuador (CPAP) and Bolivia (MTR). In addition to support to individual country offices, external documents were elaborated and shared with all nutrition focal points on 33 occasions.

In relation to fundraising, the LAC regional office prepared a multi-country proposal on stunting and a proposal for the UNICEF contribution to the *Mesoamérica sin Hambre* initiative, which was submitted to the Government of Mexico. In addition, support was provided to country offices in relation to DEVCO funding (Haiti and Guatemala) and SDGI funding (Ecuador and El Salvador).

There were nevertheless constraints to the provision of support by the regional office to country offices. In recent years, political commitment to address public health disparities and reduce undernutrition in LAC countries has reached unprecedented levels, but often the financial allocations in national budgets do not provide adequate support of national plans. Further, external financial and technical assistance from development agencies and other donors to address public health disparities in the LAC region has decreased significantly.

In order to better respond to the changing context and needs, UNICEF country offices are shifting their focus from project focused support to higher level upstream advocacy but these requirements are not always matched with appropriate capacity building and re-profiling of staff. Several countries are still dealing with high levels of undernutrition and are unprepared for the nutrition transition implications of the current increase in overweight and obesity.

Education and Early Childhood Development (ECD)

In 2014, the LAC regional office delivered key support on education and ECD to country offices that presented new CPDs or undertook MTRs: Guatemala, Venezuela, Paraguay, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, and Nicaragua. As part of this process, the education section provided technical support for the review of SITANs, and the application of planning tools such as MoRES, theory of change and result based management.

Country offices with a new national government (Chile, Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama) received technical support to revise and strengthen their strategy on education and ECD to engage with the new government counterparts. The upstream work of the Honduras country office contributed to the development and approval of a National Plan for the Universalization of Pre-Basic Education in the next three years. The Costa Rica country office focused on the expansion and improvement of early learning opportunities for young children, and a curriculum reform to improve preschool and first grade primary education was concluded. The office also culturally adapted Care for Child Development models for indigenous children in the Ngäbe and Buglé communities and launched an innovative discussion on new approaches to increase learning in education following a 'Ted talk' model. The Panama country office took advantage of the evidence generated through studies on ECD investment; services on ECD mapping; and the OOSCI analysis, to influence the ECD and education agenda in the new Government's National Plan.

A regional meeting of education focal points was held in June with participants from 23 country offices. This served to identify challenges and opportunities in the priority areas of secondary, learning, education in contexts of armed violence, intercultural bilingual education (IBE), and OOSCI in order to guide education programming. The regional office also organised a training workshop on education in emergencies to build the capacity of UNICEF education officers and partners, including key tools and standards, humanitarian architecture, coordination and response planning. In follow-up, particular cases were discussed through webinars and face-to-face meetings; an example is the ECD webinar series that the section launched in 2014 on the topic of ECD and disability. The regional office also provided technical assistance to country offices to select new ECD and education staff and/or help them in their induction of their programmatic areas (Mexico, Suriname, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Chile, Jamaica and Ecuador).

Regarding education specifically, the regional office provided technical support to the Mexico, Argentina, Honduras and Peru country offices to strengthen their secondary education component. The regional

office supported the Costa Rica country office to negotiate with the new Ministry of Education to launch a new OOSC study to help reduce drop-out rates. The Eastern Caribbean and Haiti were also supported in the process of launching new OOSC studies, while country offices in Paraguay, Honduras and Nicaragua were supported to conclude their studies as well as in engaging with governments in bottleneck analysis and potential policy responses. Venezuela received technical assistance and quality assurance in their efforts to reengage with the Ministry of Education regarding the production of key evidence on quality education in the region and violence in and around schools. To support Panama to engage with Government counterparts, the regional office prepared key regional information on vocational education and training, and other key secondary education issues. Guidance on education indicators was given to several countries, among them Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and Colombia. As part of a national coalition, the Colombia country office launched a relevant and innovative Education Rights Index, while Guatemala improved their monitoring capacity and MoRES implementation. Suriname, Mexico and Peru received technical assistance on teachers' policies and Suriname, Costa Rica, Argentina and Colombia on ICT-based school interventions.

Regarding ECD, the regional office assisted several country offices to provide technical support to the government for the design and implementation of integrated ECD and family support policies, to strengthen inter-sectoral coordination and capacity-building for the implementation of ECD services, and to address lingering equity issues and exclusion but also to further address the emerging links between ECD and violence. For example, the Belize country office provided support to the Government to generate an ECD model that would integrate current fragmented interventions offered by different ministries for young children and their families. In Costa Rica, the country office conducted a SITAN on ECD that gave visibility to the dispersion of ECD services and enabled the National Child Institute to resume working on the definition of a national ECD policy. The Honduras country office contributed to the establishment of an inter-sectoral technical commission on ECD to reach consensus on the conceptual and strategic approach for ECD policy implementation in the country. Further, technical cooperation agreements have been established with the governments of Colombia and Cuba based on their experiences in the development of the Integrated Care approach and a family and community based model for ECD.

Lastly, regarding education in emergencies, the LAC regional office organized a training workshop to promote better preparedness by enhancing surge capacity in the region and by building on the capacity of UNICEF education officers and partners to support education in emergencies, including key tools and standards, humanitarian architecture, coordination and response planning.

Child Protection

In order to help country offices sharpen their interventions on **armed violence prevention (AVP)**, in particular countries involved in the multi-country initiative (Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Belize and Jamaica), the regional office prepared a study systematising effective practices for the prevention of armed violence. UNICEF also conducted mapping information systems, observatories and injury surveillance systems on violence and armed violence with a focus on children and adolescents. The mapping demonstrated how the lack of statistical data and records on the children victims of violence and armed violence is hindering the monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes, as well as measurement of the results achieved.

To support country offices involved in the AVP multi-country initiative, the regional office also prepared a paper documenting and analysing the links between armed violence and private sector processes and practices in Central America, with a special emphasis on private security companies. The studies provide regional overview and analytical information on some of the key drivers of armed violence in the region and are important inputs for the MoRES analytical framework on armed violence prevention.

In support of the implementation of care reform in 10 countries (Cuba, Peru, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Brazil, Guyana, Suriname, and Panama), the regional office with RELAF has developed a model to prevent child abandonment. This seeks to outline responsibilities across sectors, particularly among health personnel; to provide necessary support to families; identify signs of alert; and take necessary action in order to prevent family separation and ultimately the institutionalisation of children. In addition, the regional office in collaboration with RELAF facilitated a study tour in Romania for a select number to look at their experiences of implementing the deinstitutionalization plan.

In support of Caribbean country offices' implementation of the Break the Silence initiative, a **community based model** to mobilise and combat sexual abuse, developed on the basis of the experience in piloting countries (Belize, Guyana and Suriname), will support further implementation of the initiative, focusing on the engagement of local organisations, including churches and schools. Together with a toolkit for monitoring and evaluation and a variety of communication and advocacy material for the Break the Silence initiative in the Caribbean, country offices are now in a strong position to scale up their interventions.

In partnership with Save the Children and Plan International, and in cooperation with the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG), UNICEF organised a regional Training of Trainers on **child protection in humanitarian action** in Nicaragua in October. The training, which gathered some 30 participants – including representatives of governments from seven countries –, contributed to strengthening the collaboration between UNICEF and its partners, and triggered interest among countries in building the capacity of national actors through the replication of roll-out training activities on the Child Protection Minimum Standards in humanitarian action (CPMS).

Country profile documents on birth registration based on the MoRES framework were produced for all countries where UNICEF is present (24 countries), identifying bottlenecks and necessary corrective actions to close the gap for universal birth registration. These country profiles will be presented to governments and decision-makers during the III Regional Conference on Birth Registration (to be celebrated in 2015) along with a document outlining the main strategies that have proven effective to overcome barriers, such as extending services to the most vulnerable population groups.

In response to the increased number of unaccompanied child migrants from Central America and their detention by US authorities, the regional office provided extensive technical guidance to country offices on the development and implementation of a multi-country action plan to address the situation. Together with Save the Children, the regional office produced a manual addressing human rights standards applicable to unaccompanied child migrants, and is contributing to an ongoing assessment of the child protection systems' response (the latter also in collaboration with RELAF). These tools and guidance will help enhance the effectiveness of country-level programmes that outline criteria to determine the child's best interest and social reintegration of children and adolescents.

Social Inclusion

The regional office supported 10 country offices (Peru, Honduras, Belize, Saint Lucia, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay and Nicaragua) to advocate and provide technical assistance for a national system to analyse investment in children and adolescents. The wealth of experience in LAC in this analysis was systematised in a publication presented at the II Second International Seminar on Investing in Children in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Commitment to Equity at 25 years of the CRC in Peru (2-3 October). Further, as a member of a multi-agency working group, the regional office has positioned LAC in the preparatory work leading to a General Comment of Article 4 of the CRC on investment in children, contributed to drafting the scoping document sent to members of the CRC Committee in Geneva for validation, and document good practices in LAC. The regional office also provided inputs for the preparation of the Human Rights Council Meeting on Investment in Children in March 2015, sponsored by the EU Delegation and the Permanent Mission of Uruguay in Geneva. Nine countries in the region embarked on an analysis of investment in early

childhood, with a view to designing a suitably common methodology that allows for comparison across the region. This work was done through SUPI/SITEAL of UNESCO IPE in Buenos Aires.

Seven countries (Argentina, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua) addressed multi-dimensional child poverty, equity trends and projections, investment in children, prospective social policy and legislative change, and social protection in their situation analyses. This was partly the result of active advocacy for a set of well-defined programmatic priorities shared with country offices consistently throughout the year. The first social inclusion regional network meeting provided a great opportunity to map the work that country offices were doing, provide guidance and plan technical assistance around their needs, foster exchange between them, and document good practice.

The regional office also facilitated documentation of country office upstream work and progress in the equity agenda, opening a debate on the nature of UNICEF programming in LAC and allowing the organisation to take stock of progress/success and challenges to be addressed. This led to the identification of a number of initiatives that have shown results at outcome level in terms of influencing policies and programmes, but the documentation of UNICEF contribution in terms of impact remains a challenge. Also, bottlenecks were identified and there is now a blueprint to document progress in equity across the results chain. A thorough analysis, followed by feedback to country offices and presentations to the RMT and the Deputy Representatives' network meeting, proved a successful way to mainstream the thinking and better integrate it in country programming.

Seven country offices (Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Argentina, Haiti, Nicaragua and Colombia) were assisted in the analysis of, or in providing governments with, policy recommendations to reduce child poverty and disparity. The regional office also contributed to the update of the UNICEF-ECLAC guide to estimating child poverty. The aforementioned countries and notably Colombia, with Mexico and Costa Rica, have institutionalised the periodic measurement and analysis of child poverty. On social protection, 14 country offices (Belize, the Dominican Republic, ECA, Haiti, Paraguay, Peru, Bolivia, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Uruguay) were assisted in incorporating a child focus on social protection systems through evidence generation and advocacy in public forums.

Humanitarian Assistance and DRR/resilience

On **emergency preparedness**, the LAC regional office provided technical assistance, oversight and quality assurance to prioritised country offices in order to improve their preparedness levels and strengthen the capacity for emergency response. Missions and trainings at regional and national level were carried out: three emergency simulation exercises (in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador) involving country offices, UN agencies, NGOs and government institutions, to strengthen the response coordination mechanisms among UNICEF and its humanitarian partners; a humanitarian performance monitoring (HPM) methodology was introduced to at least seven country offices; technical and financial support was provided to the education, child protection, health, nutrition and WASH sectors to improve sectorial coordination and preparedness at regional and national level; and the EWEA system was updated by country offices with regional office follow up.

Despite the progress achieved during the year, there is still need to further strengthen the preparedness capacity of all country offices and their national partners. In line with the present UNICEF discussion at global level, a more detailed risk analysis and minimum preparedness standards – and actions – should be agreed for country offices according to the risk, vulnerability and capacity in each country. Preparedness actions should be included in all programme and operations sections.

On **emergency response**, the LAC regional office provided effective support to country offices affected by emergency situations (Barbados, Bolivia, Paraguay, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico) during the initial phase of needs assessment and elaboration of UNICEF components of inter-agency

multi-sectorial response proposals (such as the CERF), the response implementation phase and the evaluation or systematization phase. A timely coordination with OCHA and REDLAC partners was ensured at regional and national levels. As a result, country offices have been able to organise and implement responses to emergencies affecting their countries throughout the year, due to natural disasters such as floods (Bolivia, Paraguay, Mexico and Barbados), droughts (Honduras and Guatemala) and other situations such as the crisis caused by the increase in child migration in Honduras. Regarding this last case, the protection cluster was activated with UNICEF as lead agency and – through the support of the regional office and global cluster financing – a cluster coordinator was deployed.

On **DRR and resilience**, the LAC regional office continued efforts to promote the integration of DRR and resilience building into sectorial programming, both at regional and country level, as a means for linking development programmes with humanitarian action. Regional and sub-regional events were organised – with the participation of UN, NGOs and government officials – in the WASH, education and child protection sectors to enhance national sectorial coordination capacity, share national experiences and disseminate sectorial tools and standards. Moreover, within an inter-agency cooperation, the LAC regional office has continued working to support the country offices to improve the national and sub-national government capacity related to the management and reduction of disaster risk using the key tool: ‘Actions for Children and Youth Resilience Guide for Government’.

Gender

The implementation and adaptation of the GAP has been a priority since its adoption by the Executive Board in June 2014. In this regard, the LAC regional office continued to support gender reviews of country programmes in the region. This is an important step for gender mainstreaming and advancing implementation of the GAP at country level. During 2014, another five gender reviews were conducted in four country offices: Venezuela, El Salvador, Colombia, and Guyana and Suriname. For the latter three offices, gender reviews were conducted after June so the GAP was the main roadmap. A gender revision within the framework of the mid-term review was also carried out in Belize for GAP compliance. Guidance on integrating a gender approach and the GAP was provided to six country offices (Bolivia, Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay and Ecuador) for the preparation of their respective new country programmes or revisions of CPAPs. In addition, a special mission was conducted to Brazil to reinforce the capacities on the GAP and establish priorities.

As part of the efforts aimed at contributing to the GAP, a number of regional and sub-regional tools relating to gender issues in various sectors were elaborated as part of a strategy to provide country offices with materials to advocate in favour of girl’s rights and guide programming with a gender perspective. These included a tool aimed at providing operational guidance on how to integrate gender-based violence in emergency preparedness and response for country offices; regional research on the different legal ages led by child protection; an audio-visual and advocacy material to raise awareness on violence affecting adolescent girls in the region; a guidance on adolescent participation; and an advocacy tool in both English and Spanish on how to apply CEDAW in the region in favour of girls, launched on the International Day of the Girl Child.

As part of the LAC regional office contribution to the GAP, together with PAHO, UNFPA, World Bank and IDB, UNICEF co-organised the international interagency meeting on current evidence, lessons learned and best practices in adolescent pregnancy prevention in the region. The LAC approach to adolescents was presented at the meeting and co-sponsors and participants agreed on follow up actions. UNICEF, together with the same partners and SICA, supported the elaboration and validation of the SICA Regional Strategic Plan on prevention of adolescent pregnancy in Central America and the Dominican Republic. With the same partners (excluding SICA), UNICEF also co-organised a regional meeting on innovation and digital technology on adolescent sexual and reproductive health in San

Salvador. Further, UNICEF participated in the elaboration and validation of the CARICOM Plan of Action to prevent adolescent pregnancy.

On the girl child, one key priority for the LAC regional office has been to advocate among all actors dealing with gender and women's rights in favour of increasing the visibility of issues affecting girls in the region. As a result, UNICEF was invited to take part in the opening ceremony (along with the OAS Secretary General, the Organization of Ibero-American States and the government authorities of Mexico) of the 20th Anniversary of the Convention Belém do Pará held in Mexico on 14—15 May. UNICEF also participated in the panel for a session on the situation of violence against women and girls in the region. The outcome document of the meeting included the issue of violence against girls. Further on this issue, UNICEF with UN Women is conducting an analytical review of violence against girls in the region, and – with UNDP – is producing evidence on discrimination against LGBTBI adolescents. UNICEF attended the preparatory sub-regional Caribbean meeting for Beijing +20 and successfully advocated for the integration of girls' issues in the outcome declaration. UNICEF also attended the regional preparatory meeting for Beijing +20, where girls' human rights issues were highlighted.

On technical assistance, capacity building on gender mainstreaming across programmes was provided to the following seven country offices through training sessions to UNICEF staff: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guyana and Suriname, Colombia, Brazil, Belize, and Bolivia. The LAC regional office also organised a webinar for country offices to learn from practical experiences of adolescent pregnancy prevention programmes in Colombia and the United Kingdom, one on inclusive education and one on the effects of migration in Central America on women and girls.

Strategic planning and results based management, including MoRES

In 2014, the LAC regional office supported and monitored major planning and programming processes for relevant country offices, in line with evolving corporate strategies and guidelines (such as the Strategic Plan 2014-2017, the Gender Action Plan, revised country programming and review process), including UN coherence and global priorities. Key progress has been made as follows:

The LAC regional office provided technical assistance and quality assurance to four country offices (Venezuela, Ecuador, Guatemala and Paraguay) to facilitate the preparation and submission in 2014 of their draft new country programme documents (CPDs) and country programme action plans (CPAPs). Five country offices (Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Panama and Uruguay) were provided with technical guidance – including webinars (Lync) on the overall CPD preparation process with timeline, bottleneck analysis and preparation of TOC, alignment with the GAP, and introduction of resilience programming – to help in the preparation of new CPDs due to be submitted in 2015. The regional office provided technical support and guidance to a further 13 country offices to help plan and implement the MTR process under the new simplified guidance.

Mainstreaming of MoRES – particularly the bottleneck analysis and link to the design of theories of change – was emphasised and used as an important tool in these strategic planning and review processes. Regional Management Team meetings were used for orientation and discussion with the Representative of each country office entering into a country programme milestone (CPD/CPAP and MTR). In addition, specific country-focused technical assistance was provided to offices developing their CPDs and CPAPs through visits by regional advisors. This included integrated missions to prioritised countries that will be presenting the new CPD to the Executive Board in September 2015 as well as in February 2016.

Throughout the year, the importance of (re)aligning the country programmes to the Strategic Plan 2014-2017 was stressed to each country office, as well as of further prioritising management for results. This was achieved by (1) briefings and discussions at the regional deputy representatives meeting; (2) throughout the process of development of new country programmes; (3) through adjustment of the

ongoing country programmes during the MTR and annual review exercises; and (4) with the preparation of 2014 COARs. Extensive efforts were made to support country offices to more accurately reflect this alignment by adjusting relevant programming codes in VISION, allowing for better reporting on results and performance.

Through these various planning, programme and review processes, the LAC regional office emphasised the importance of linking programming documents (CPDs, CPAPs, MTR/annual review, and CPMP) with the programme management, monitoring and reporting systems (VISION, RAM and COAR) in a coherent manner. This facilitated country office efforts to improve results based management.

The LAC regional office also conducted a mapping of MoRES implementation across the region. This exercise demonstrated that advances have been made in most country offices, mostly in MoRES level 1 and the identification of major barriers and bottlenecks, but that there is still a need to mainstream MoRES in all programmes, rather than in selected themes. To progress with implementation of MoRES level 3 at all levels, LAC regional office support and involvement in all sectors will need to be reinforced.

All country offices provided inputs for an analysis of the progress made by equity-based programming. This analysis, which was presented to the Regional Management Team, highlighted several important findings: a) As most countries are working at the policy level it takes time to achieve results, particularly as removing barriers and bottlenecks in determinants linked to the 'enabling environment' require time and effort and go beyond UNICEF control (for example, legislative processes); b) It is important to prioritise documentation of process and results of UNICEF upstream work in the region in order to better demonstrate results and eventually impact. To this end, the regional office created a new knowledge management post as part of the refinement process of the Regional Office Management Plan starting in 2015.

Communication

The regional office provided technical assistance with a particular focus on the elaboration and rollout of the Global Communication Strategy. The main focus was to support country offices to prepare a strategic analysis of the communication, PFP and C4D components of their work plans and develop an integrated strategy in line with the global communication, and other strategies. Direct support was provided to Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, México and Paraguay. A common set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the LAC region were developed for two issues: CRC@25 and #ENDViolence.

An umbrella communications and advocacy platform around the theme 'Right to Zero' has also been elaborated, which is built on the principles of 'UNICEF's Global Communication and Public Advocacy Strategy, 2014–2017'. The main objectives of 'Right to Zero' are to rejuvenate and strengthen the UNICEF brand, reach new audiences (Millennials and middle-classes), and position UNICEF as the lead agency on children's rights in the region. The platform seeks to protect and integrate children's rights, with Zero as the goal, and is articulated around eight thematic objectives: ZERO children without birth certificates; ZERO children unprotected against natural disasters; ZERO children living in poverty; ZERO girls and adolescent women victims of gender violence; ZERO child deaths from preventable causes; ZERO children and adolescents out of school; ZERO new HIV infections among adolescents; and ZERO adolescent victims of discrimination. The mobilisation platform consists of a communication strategy, a set of proposed Key Performance Indicators, advocacy materials, as well as eight 40-second TV spots and a new UNICEF institutional video for the LAC region. All these materials are available to country offices in four languages with the possibility to adapt locally. The LAC region will continue to embrace this mobilisation platform throughout 2015.

The regional office also developed the communications capacity – particularly in digital media – of the LAC regional office and country offices. Eight capacity building seminars were conducted for country

offices and the regional office to increase capacity to mobilise and influence through digital channels. Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador and Costa Rica received direct regional office support and the Dominican Republic received an in-house training in digital social media. Capacity building was also conducted on market knowledge techniques to identify and engage with Good Will Ambassadors (GWA) and influencers. Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela country offices were provided support for compliance with the global GWA guidelines. An oversight of all UNICEF web and social media platforms in LAC was also conducted and finalised.

Central American country offices were supported on the issue of unaccompanied migrant children in Central America, helping to prepare several multi-country donor proposals and coordinating messaging and other advocacy materials with HQ and country offices.

Regarding strategic representation, the LAC regional office participated as a panellist in two regional conferences: *Cubamotricidad 2014*, where it leveraged the engagement of the Cuban Sports institute in meeting the *Vamos Jugar* indicators; and the 'VI World Congress on Children' rights' in Mexico on digital engagement with the corporate world.

In December 2014, the regional office signed an institutional contract with Impelsys to improve the return on investment on UNICEF publications, their efficiency and effectiveness by; reducing costs associated with printed publications; strengthening regional workforce capacity through training on advocacy and publication processes; and innovating through digital tools to maximise impact. This is a pilot initiative, aligned with the draft of the new global digital strategy and 'UNICEF's Global Communication and Public Advocacy Strategy, 2014–2017'. Also to increase the effectiveness of country offices and to simplify the internal administrative processes when selecting editors, graphic designers and social media managers, the LAC regional office has created a roster of individual contractors that can be used by the whole region.

Situation monitoring

The LAC regional office continued to support country offices in conducting equity-focused analyses of the situation of children and women. In 2014, the regional office provided technical assistance and quality assurance in the development of 10 new ongoing situation analyses through the different phases of implementation, mainly reviewing ToRs and draft reports, and monitoring their implementation during country missions and video-conferences. Regional office support was aimed at ensuring that analyses used the latest disaggregated data, identified the most disadvantaged and discriminated children and included an in-depth causal analysis as well as a solid bottleneck and barriers analysis based on the 10 determinants for effective coverage (enabling environment, supply, demand and quality). The regional office also ensured that findings from the situation analyses were duly used to inform the theories of change for the new country programmes and that UNICEF interventions focus on removing key bottlenecks and barriers that prevent the rights of the most disadvantaged children from being fulfilled.

With the support of eight country offices, the regional office conducted an in-depth, equity-focused analysis on the situation of children in the Amazon region, with a special focus on indigenous children. A data inventory was produced based on the secondary analysis of already existent data sources such as censuses, DHS, MICS and other national household's surveys conducted in the eight countries of the Amazon. Despite the fact that many of the existent sources were not designed for providing results with such a level of disaggregation, the results of this analysis showed compelling evidence of the existent disparities in access to outcomes and services (by region and by ethnicity). Overall, indigenous children in the Amazon have higher levels of stunting; less access to secondary education, to improved water and sanitation, to antenatal care and to having a skilled attendant at delivery; and are more vulnerable to adolescent marriage and adolescent pregnancy. The results of this study were presented and discussed in the regional meeting on children in the Amazon Basin, held in Leticia (Colombia) after

the second RMT, and are being used for UNICEF advocacy on the rights of the most disadvantaged in the Amazon regions.

2.2 Lessons learned

Over the course of 2014, the LAC regional office gained experience and learned new lessons regarding the most effective ways to support country offices in their work to achieve results for children. As illustrated in this section, support has been through the provision of quality assurance, oversight and technical assistance to country offices.

2014 was the first year of implementation of the Regional Office Management Plan 2014 – 2017 and over the course of the year a refinement exercise of the plan took place, aimed at clarifying the differentiation between Development Effectiveness (DE) and the Global and Regional Programme (GRP). As part of the refinement process, indicators were also adjusted. It remains a challenge to maintain the right balance between seeking results related to DE with results in GRP, particularly for sector advisors. Given the high number of country programmes that will be presented to the Executive Board in 2015 (three) and 2016 (12), work plans for 2015 will be analysed in order to provide adequate attention to the DE component.

Based on the continuous demand for technical support by 24 country offices, the LAC regional office continued to invest in the identification of highly skilled technical consultants and Centres of Excellence that could substitute or compliment the direct technical assistance provided by regional advisors. This model was used in the implementation of the Out Of School Children initiative as well as in providing support for the implementation of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys in several countries in LAC. Continued efforts are required to further move forward with such a model, allowing regional advisors to focus on quality assurance and oversight and provide adequate attention to the implementation of the Regional Programme component of the ROMP.

Specific lessons learned include:

Regarding out-of-school children, a key implementation strategy has been to guide country offices to collaborate from the very beginning and in parallel with both the political actors and the statisticians of the Ministry of Education. Despite the limited human and financial resources, applying this strategy is possible, particularly due to the support provided by a multilingual regional centre of excellence, Asociación Civil Educación Para Todos (AEPT). This centre facilitates gathering regional policy trends, lessons learnt and potential solutions. This increases collaboration among the different units with government and enables the findings to be more easily recognised and accepted.

Further, the use of evidence-based studies in planning and the definition of national advocacy strategies and policies increases when country offices are strongly involved in the development and revision of such studies. Using this approach, the regional office launched an interactive process with focal points and experts to revise and conclude a study on learning challenges in LAC. The study includes their contributions and better responds to the context of each country. This process was an opportunity for focal points to catch-up about the current global debate on learning.

In December 2014, in order to improve the effectiveness of interventions on the child protection system UNICEF, Save the Children and Plan International from five countries met to start an initiative for the adoption of a common understanding of child protection system and joint action plan for system strengthening. The adoption of such a document will ensure greater synergy between the actions of the three institutions, facilitate collaboration between actors on the ground, and help in the consolidation of a community-based child protection system. Further, collaboration with Centres of Excellence on different topics – including juvenile justice and migration – has enabled information sharing and dialogue with

country offices, which will eventually lead to joint action and advocacy to advance child protection issues in LAC.

A one-day social inclusion networking meeting took place in April at the Regional Management Team (RMT) meeting, with the participation of Representatives and social policy colleagues, making for a rich discussion. Participation of Regional Advisers in each other's network meetings proved to be a good way to show country offices the importance of inter-sectoral programming. This was widely recognized by colleagues in their evaluations of participation to the various network meetings. Further, the introduction of clinics during the RMT and Deputy Representative network meeting proved to be a good opportunity for Regional Advisers to have an exchange on strategic topics and elicit their points of view to advance the regional and country agendas.

Regarding emergencies, there have been four major learnings. Firstly, that there is a clear need to further strengthen the preparedness capacity of all LAC country offices and their national partners; in line with the present UNICEF discussion at global level, a more accurate risk analysis and minimum preparedness standards must be defined for each country office according to the risk and vulnerability situation in country and the existing capacity, and follow-up actions must be carried out to ensure fulfilment of the minimum standards. Second, that simulation exercises represent an effective tool to highlight gaps and weaknesses in country offices' preparedness capacity for responding to emergencies, and should be organised with all prioritised country offices involving UN and NGO partners and government institutions. Third, that in order to further improve country office response – including to sudden, slow-onset and atypical emergencies – communication and coordination mechanisms between country offices and the LAC regional office should be strengthened to facilitate support from the latter in terms of technical assistance and quality assurance; and missions may be organised from the regional office to support country offices during the initial response phase for the needs assessment and the elaboration of sectorial response proposals – including coordination with OCHA, partner agencies and government. It is imperative to improve coordination among UNICEF programme sections involved in the response and their respective partners, as well as to adopt a whole office approach and – where possible and in accordance with the needs and resources available – integrate the humanitarian assistance agenda within development programming.

The regional guidance on adolescents that was published in English and Spanish in 2014 has been instrumental in developing country support by the regional office and to move forward with increased emphasis on programming for the 'second decade of life'. Given the gender issues affecting mostly adolescent girls in the region, but also adolescent boys, related mostly to sexual and reproductive health and violence, programming has to have a special approach on adolescents. The GAP will provide additional guidance and focus to programming in the LAC region.

Regarding communications, up-to-date and approved regional rosters of communication experts have been found to efficiently reduce the recruitment timeline by 2-3 weeks. Further, the development of a regional cloud-based eBook delivery platform-library that collects all UNICEF publications in the region will reduce costs associated with printed publications in country offices and help UNICEF to make evidence-based targeted advocacy to enhance social change. Partnerships with regional media (such as the #25porlaniñez project with EFE) are an effective method to unify UNICEF messages throughout the region around the ROMP priorities, leveraging the voice of the organisation and reducing communication risks at national level on locally sensitive issues.

3. Analysis of programme strategies and results: Global and regional programme

Where development effectiveness (see section 2) focuses on regional office support to country offices in UNICEF programme areas (such as health, HIV and AIDS, nutrition and WASH), the Global and Regional Programme (GRP) refers to contributions to each of the Strategic Plan's seven outcomes through global, regional and multi-country initiatives such as A Promise Renewed (APR) and OOSC.

3.1 Global and regional programme (GRP) analysis

Generating evidence to improve policies and programmes for children across multiple countries

In 2014, the LAC regional office continued to play an important role in promoting the generation of harmonised, disaggregated and gender-sensitive indicators on children, women and adolescents in the region and in positioning Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) as a global and regional public good. With the new data collected through UNICEF supported initiatives in 2014, countries had more accurate information to monitor the situation of children and measure progress towards the fulfillment of their rights.

Over the course of 2014, the regional office provided technical assistance and quality assurance in the finalisation, review, publication and dissemination of five MICS reports (Argentina, Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Panama). The regional office also supported the design, fieldwork and analysis of five ongoing MICS surveys (Uruguay, Guyana, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador). Further, two global MICS workshops were organised in the LAC region – one on survey design and one on data interpretation and dissemination. In collaboration with the country offices, the regional office monitored and supported other national initiatives to collect data on children through national household surveys, demographic and health surveys or census in eight countries (the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, Haiti, Brazil and Peru).

Progress was made in the efforts to highlight existent data gaps in the region and promote data comparability and harmonisation by strengthening horizontal cooperation of national statistical offices on children-related statistics. To this end, the regional office continued to support the Statistical Conference of the Americas and its working group on Children and Adolescents Statistics. The Panama Statistical Office currently chairs this group, with the regional office as the technical secretariat. It has a joint work plan for the biennium aimed at filling data gaps and harmonising methodologies on the collection of children indicators in the region. A country data gaps assessment for all LAC countries was completed and disseminated through the NSO members for advocacy purposes.

Dissemination and use of data was promoted through the continued support to the Regional Support Group for DevInfo in LAC and the monitoring of the implementation of the new global long-term agreements (LTAs) for data dissemination. By the end of 2014, 18 countries had at least one functional DevInfo database to monitor the children indicator (Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Mexico, Panama, Suriname, Uruguay, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela).

In 2014 the regional office conducted an in-depth equity-focused analysis on the situation of children in the Amazon region, with a special focus on indigenous children. A data inventory was produced based on the secondary analysis of already existent data sources such as the census, DHS, MICS and other national household surveys conducted in the eight countries of the Amazon. Despite the fact that many of the existent sources were not designed for providing results with such a level of disaggregation, the results of this analysis showed compelling evidence of the existent disparities in access to outcomes and services (by region and by ethnicity). For instance, overall, indigenous children in the Amazon have higher levels of stunting, less access to improved water and sanitation, less access to antenatal care and a skilled attendant at delivery, less access to secondary education and are more vulnerable to

adolescent marriage and adolescent pregnancy. The results of this study were presented and discussed at the Regional Meeting on children in the Amazon Basin held in Leticia (Colombia) after the second RMT, and are being used for UNICEF advocacy on the rights of the most disadvantaged in the Amazon regions.

The regional office also completed a number of sector-specific studies, reports and papers:

In **health**, work is progressing on four regional studies on topics identified as priority gaps to be filled in 2014: a review of key determinants of access to quality MNCH services and relations between models of service, government expenditure on health and equitable access; cost-effectiveness of different approaches to reducing neonatal mortality through the use of List software; regional analysis of Retinopathy of the Premature (ROP); and review of health system response to violence against children in LAC countries. The latter three are being conducted in collaboration with PAHO. A compendium of lessons learned and good practices in UNICEF health and nutrition programming in the region was developed. An initial regional health epidemiological profiling was also performed, to highlight the main causes of mortality and burden of disease in children aged 0-18 years. This has underscored the urgency for UNICEF to consider its contribution towards the prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and its main risk factors. Consequently, work has started in relation to NCDs, including regional research on existing legislation on junk food, drinks and marketing practices in schools and social media (results expected March 2015), as well as a partnership with Sesame Street for a regional project on healthy living, in collaboration with the communication division and the Mexico, Costa Rica and Colombia country offices.

In **nutrition**, collaboration with INCAP is ongoing for a study on food and beverage advertising to children in the region and on influencing healthier habits among school children in Panama.

In **HIV and AIDS**, the regional office has been working closely with PAHO on a number of projects: developing a set of technical norms and strategies to guide programme development and implementation on the elimination of vertical transmission in countries, and producing an updated version of the Elimination in the Americas report. The latter provides a regional overview of some key indicators on the epidemic in the region. Further, UNICEF is making use of the HIV global information system developed by UNAIDS – the Joint Programme Monitoring System (JPMS) – in order to assess regional progress and improve future programming.

In **education**, regional data and trends on out-of-school children have been updated reinforcing longitudinal analyses at regional and country level. Lessons learnt from LAC were included in the OOSC Global Report. On measuring students' learning outcomes, the LAC regional office has supported the UNESCO TERCE Study. The first results of this show that pupil results have improved significantly since 2006. In just four out of the 15 participating countries have average pupil grades declined substantially between 2006 and 2013.

In the context of the Out of School Initiative, the regional office conducted a review of **education services in juvenile justice** facilities to assess the accomplishment of children's right to education, including during detention. Important difficulties were faced due to frequent lack of a clear distinction between informal and formal education, illustrating the poor accomplishment of juvenile offenders' right to follow the formal learning curricula and consequently hampering their possibilities to social re-integration.

In collaboration with SIPI, the regional office has developed a comparative methodology for undertaking country level measurements of investment in ECD. Nine countries (Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Paraguay, Peru), under the leadership of UNICEF country offices conducted and completed an analysis of public social spending in the multiple aspects of early childhood. This effort and methodology will contribute to the creation of a national (country level)

capacity and a policy advocacy platform in the region to advocate for increased allocation of funds for ECD.

In **child protection**, priority was given to birth registration in order to give a final push towards universal birth registration in the LAC region by 2015. Country profile documents based on the MoRES framework were produced for each of the 24 countries where UNICEF is present, identifying bottlenecks and necessary corrective actions to close the gap for universal birth registration. These will be presented to governments and decision-makers during the III Regional Conference on Birth Registration along with a document outlining the main strategies that have proven effective in overcoming barriers, such as extending services to the most vulnerable population groups. Further, in light of the initiative to raise awareness on the situation of children without parental care, UNICEF, in partnership with RELAF, has produced a paper on large care-institutions. This will be used as an advocacy tool to draw attention to the institutionalisation of children in facilities that host high numbers of children, as well as to raise awareness about well-intended charities that – unaware of the child protection risks – continue to support residential care facilities including large-scale institutions. It is hoped that advocacy efforts will trigger reforms throughout the region to address the serious human rights violations suffered by children who are placed in large-scale institutions.

In **social inclusion**, the main purpose of the evidence generated was to review government policies and programmes and, in this respect, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was a key partner. With ECLAC, UNICEF has generated a body of evidence on social protection systems, with country and comparative studies underscoring the child-sensitive aspects of government policies and programmes and recommendations on improving them to gain better results for children. The main recommendations highlighted in these studies included the need to apply the life cycle approach to social protection; have a human rights based system; build systems that are interconnected among sectoral ministries and departments; have strong institutional anchors to be able to coordinate the social protection systems; and have solid information systems that shed light on the population for better targeting.

In 2014, ECLAC and UNICEF published a number of studies, which are listed in section 3.4 of this report. Other publications included a think piece – in partnership with New York University’s Centre on International Cooperation – on the LAC region as a “laboratory of development” in the last 25 years since the adoption of the CRC titled *The Impact of Social Policies on Children in Latin America and the Caribbean* (in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)); a knowledge management piece on [good practices across the region on investment in children](#) that highlights relevant methodological topics and has been used as part of the discussion on the formulation of a General Comment on Article 4 of the CRC and was presented at the international seminar in Lima in October; and five studies on the situation of indigenous children and adolescents in [Colombia](#), the [Amazonian region of Peru](#), [Ecuador](#), [Bolivia](#) and [Mesoamerica](#).

Influencing regional policy and/or the production of regional public goods

In **health**, in collaboration with key partners under the umbrella of the A Promise Renewed (APR) initiative, work progressed in tracking health inequalities in the LAC region. Resource mobilisation efforts resulted in a grant from USAID for the regional office to take the lead role in the communication and advocacy of APR, to support a regional communication and advocacy strategy, and to support nine LAC priority countries (Haiti, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Panama) in high level advocacy and policy dialogue to mobilise political and technical leadership to reduce inequalities in health in the second half of 2014 and 2015. UNICEF is also participating in other regional coordinating bodies such as the Neonatal Alliance, as well as the regional working group for the reduction of maternal mortality (or GTR in its Spanish acronym).

In **HIV and AIDS**, in order to eliminate vertical transmission of HIV and Congenital Syphilis in the Americas by 2015, a four-pronged implementation framework was defined to guide the elimination of new infections among children by 2015 and keeping their mothers alive: (1) Prevention of HIV among women of reproductive age; (2) providing appropriate counselling and support as well as contraceptives to women living with HIV; (3) for pregnant women living with HIV, ensure HIV testing and counselling, access to ARV drugs for prevention of vertical transmission; and (4) HIV care, treatment and support for women and their children living with HIV. The regional office supported the implementation of these integrated strategies throughout the region. Technical assistance and quality assurance was provided to engage countries achieving these regional targets. To date, great progress has been made in the region in implementing the aforementioned strategies. Five countries have reported figures that meet the elimination targets for vertical transmission (VT) of HIV.

Further, under the support and continuing advocacy of the regional office, all countries in the region have developed policy and programmatic elements to support the elimination efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean. All countries have a National Strategic Plan for the elimination of vertical transmission, a national recommendation on infant feeding for HIV-exposed infants and a policy for the utilisation of the HIV rapid test. 31 countries have adopted Option B+ (WHO-recommended life-long ARVs for all HIV positive pregnant women). Following the IAS Global AIDS Conference in Melbourne, the LAC regional office has also strengthened advocacy efforts in the area of HIV and adolescents and initiated preparatory work for the launch of the All In! campaign.

In **nutrition**, the 'Mesoamerica without Hunger' initiative of the Mexican International Development Cooperation Agency (AMEXCID), proposes triangular collaboration with the United Nations System and Central American countries in order to put into practice actions and initiatives focused on addressing the multi-dimensional nature of food and nutritional security at local, national and regional levels. In 2014, AMEXCID invited the FAO, UN Women, PAHO, WFP, UNDP and UNICEF to develop a plan for converging individual agencies' efforts in 9 countries (Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Belize and Panama). UNICEF was asked to lead the nutrition component of the joint plan in a process that has strengthened alignment of priorities and convergence of efforts at national and regional levels among the agencies. The initiative is also advocating for AMEXCID own and external funding to support activities.

In **education**, support continued for the joint UNESCO-OEI-UNICEF Latin American Region initiative for an early childhood information system (SIPI); 11 countries in the region have developed a common methodology to measure investment in early childhood as part of this project. The education team actively participated in the revisions of the progress of key regional education agendas, including LAC Education for All, *Política Educativa centroamericana 2013-2021*, and the Metas 2021 of the Organisation of Ibero-American States. In collaboration with the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE), the regional office offers civil society, governments and students a platform to discuss secondary education challenges.

In **child protection**, the call to action to end the placement of children in residential care was introduced to CARICOM countries during the celebration of the 35th Heads of Government Conference in Antigua in June. The call to action was presented by the Prime Minister of Grenada and endorsed by all CARICOM Member States. Further, UNICEF contributed to an expert consultation on the issue of alternative care convened by the Global Movement for Children- LAC during the Pan-American Child and Adolescent Congress, triggering further interest to the implementation of the Call to Action.

Also, as part of efforts to support the realisation of adolescents' rights, the regional office carried out an **analysis of legal minimum ages** (for marriage, sexual consent, medical consent, admission to employment, end of compulsory education, and criminal responsibility), applicable in countries in the LAC region, highlighting the consistency – or lack thereof – of various minimum ages within one another in domestic legislation, and the impact it has on the fulfilment of rights. The document will be used to

support ongoing advocacy in a number of countries for legal minimum ages that guarantee adolescents' rights, in particular their protection against all forms of violence and their development to their full potential.

With regards to **social protection**, emphasis was placed on building social protection systems, anchored in strong institutions that are well-articulated among the different social sector departments and attentive to the life cycle. This has been advocated for in various forums (for example the Central American multi-country initiative, Foro SISCA, I Biental Latinoamericana de Infancias y Juventudes, social inclusion week in Peru).

The LAC region has been a pioneer in the development of a methodology to measure public investment in children and most of the countries in the region have institutionalised such measurements. Three countries (Peru, Honduras, and Mexico) have developed solid methodologies to measure investment in children. UNICEF has been a key instigator of this process. The wealth of good practices generated in the region has placed LAC as a main contributor in the formulation of a General Comment on Article 4.

Regarding **local governance**, LAC has developed a wealth of initiatives based on the use of disaggregated data to highlight existing territorial inequities (Colombia and Mexico), progress in the realisation of child rights (Municipal Seal in Brazil and Costa Rica), strengthen the capacity of civil servants to implement child-sensitive social sector interventions (Peru and the *Instituto Centroamericano de Administración Pública* in Central America) and enhance the focus on equity in the distribution of resources (Colombia, Bolivia and Mexico).

Regarding **emergencies**, the UNICEF-led CORELAC forum is a worldwide example of a voluntary coalition for children on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) as a regional advocacy initiative, which counts on the active participation of children and youth. A consortium of organisations with common interest and limited resources, its aim is to achieve high impact under the aspiration "with less do more". At the Guayaquil DRR regional platform in May, UNICEF and CORELAC actively supported the inclusion of children and youth inputs and perspectives into the final Guayaquil declaration. This will be considered as the regional input for the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) review conference, which will be held in Japan in March 2015.

On **gender**, the partnership with PAHO, the World Bank, UNFPA and IDB on adolescent pregnancy has been fruitful not only in raising awareness on the consequences of adolescent pregnancy in terms of human rights and economic and social development but in leading to sub-regional plans by CARICOM and SICA, with the involvement of government representatives. As a result, UNICEF is now considered an important actor in initiatives relating to adolescent pregnancy.

Facilitating learning across countries through knowledge exchange and horizontal cooperation

The LAC regional office continued to facilitate knowledge exchange and horizontal cooperation through a number of modalities: a) technical exchange between governments through South-South Cooperation/ Horizontal Cooperation (SSC/HC); b) UNICEF staff with specific expertise supporting country offices other than their own; c) UNICEF participation in regional events and conferences.

In terms of SSC/HC, the regional office continued to identify opportunities for engaging with governments and, together with country offices, to facilitate the identification of 'supply' and 'demand' within the LAC region and beyond. Moreover, the regional office started addressing SSC/HC from a more systematic perspective which eventually will help country offices and the regional office in strategic engagement with government partners, with an aim to position children's rights within the SSC/HC agenda and budgets.

Regarding **HIV and AIDS**, under the leadership of the regional office, a meeting was held in Dominica re-grouping 20 Caribbean countries to get updated information on management of the prevention of

vertical transmission and the evaluation process of the elimination of vertical transmission, as well as to get technical assistance in their planning in order to define the way forward. Separate profiles on adolescents and on HIV have been produced for each country in the region. Further, an atlas of relevant practices in the area of adolescents and HIV has been produced, with one intervention per country in the region. Once finalised, this tool will be used for cross learning among countries, for advocacy efforts, and to profile the work of the LAC region in this important area.

Work on strengthening **nutrition** in emergencies at the regional, sub-regional and national level is on track, with the dissemination of an interactive course translated into Spanish; the mapping of national focal points with responsibility for nutrition in emergencies; and the development of a matrix for the definition of national hazard and risk, vulnerability, and preparedness/response capacity. The regional office participated in interagency work through a regional meeting on nutrition in emergencies with ECHO in Nicaragua, and a global UNICEF nutrition meeting in New York. A web-based document depository and a social media forum on nutrition in emergency were also developed with the support of OCHA.

In **education**, with regional office support, activities were developed for establishing South-South Cooperation (SSC) agreements on ECD between Belize and Cuba and between Honduras, Cuba and Colombia. These initiatives catalysed technical support for the development of comprehensive strategies for ECD based on the experience of *Educa tu hijo* and *De cero a siempre*. Capacity development beyond the framework of SSC on education continued to take place in 2014. Among the actions directed to enhance the capacity of key counterparts in LAC are: 1) a regional seminar organised by the Guatemala country office with LAC regional office support on learning on pre-schooling and early years of primary, with authorities and experts from all Spanish speaking countries in LAC and, 2) an expert meeting on learning and ICT policies, co-organised with the Colombia and Argentina country offices, at which authorities and experts from these countries as well as from Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Mexico, Brazil and Peru were present.

In **child protection**, with the purpose of examining the performance of child protection systems and in the context of the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the CRC, the government of Cuba and UNICEF organised an international conference on child protection systems with representations from LAC and some African countries. The conference provided a rich opportunity for government representatives to exchange experiences, concerns and good practices and brought about opportunities for collaboration.

In the framework of MoRES, UNICEF convened an expert consultation on the issue of birth registration in the Plurinational State of Bolivia in August. Technical discussions around common bottlenecks across the region and potential corrective action enhanced learning and innovative thinking, while also triggering SSC. Many government representatives expressed their enthusiasm for this methodology, which generated honest discussions about challenges and barriers, and enabled commonalities to be identified while collectively analysing strategic approaches.

As a member of a multi-agency working group, the regional office has positioned LAC in the preparatory work leading to a General Comment of Article 4 of the CRC on investment in children and has also contributed to a draft scoping document sent to members of the CRC Committee in Geneva for validation. To this end, the LAC regional office presented the documentation of good practices in LAC for knowledge exchange at the II Second International Seminar on Investing in Children in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Commitment to Equity at 25 years of the CRC in Peru.

The regional office also continued to support the Caribbean country offices with the implementation of the Break the Silence initiative, where a community based model was developed to mobilise and combat sexual abuse, based on the experience in three pilot countries of Belize, Guyana and Suriname. With this model, a focus of the initiative will be placed on the engagement of local organisations, including churches

and schools. A toolkit for monitoring and evaluation and a variety of communication and advocacy material were also developed and provided to the country offices in order to scale up their interventions.

For almost two decades, UNICEF has been partnering with the University of Diego Portales (Chile) to offer an annual course “The Judicial Course on Children’s Rights” to professionals working in the justice system. The training course is part of a UNICEF regional strategy to mainstream child rights in the daily practices of professionals working in the judicial system. Since 2004, the course has added an academic accreditation granted by the School of Law of the University of Diego Portales. In the past 19 years, the international course were held in eight different countries in collaboration with governments and UNICEF offices in the region, where approximately 900 professionals (including judges, prosecutors and defence attorneys, social workers and psychologists) participated. Moreover, the course has reached indirectly thousands of professionals through seminars and training activities for operators of the judicial system, the police and law school students. The course has led to the development of local training capacity, exchange of experience and knowledge, and the dissemination of the jurisprudence and doctrine on children’s human rights. The course has also helped strengthen cooperation and alliances between UNICEF and centres of excellence and give visibility to UNICEF work at regional and country levels in the field of justice for children. At country level, the course has facilitated partnerships with the highest levels of the judiciary system, including the Ministry of Justice, Defence attorney’s offices, bar associations as well as well-known experts on justice issues.

A multi-country initiative to measure public investment in early childhood has been completed in nine countries (Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Paraguay and Peru), with IPE/UNESCO-Buenos Aires and the Instituto Centro Americano de Estudios Fiscales (ICEFI), as part of the *Sistema de Información sobre la Primera Infancia en América Latina (SIPI)*. This initiative has resulted in a methodology to measure investment in early childhood, which will make it easier for us to advocate for the universalization of ECD policies and programmes. Two more countries (Chile and Panama) have been added to this initiative and the final report will be produced in March 2015.

Regarding **emergencies**, the regional office supported the participation of the Brazil country office in the Regional Conference of Civil Defences in Cuba, to explore and identify key areas for potential multi-country programming and horizontal cooperation between the governments of Brazil and Cuba. The Ministry of Education in Cuba offered to host a study tour for several countries, including the Government of Brazil, to share its expertise in the area of DRR within the education system. The Government of Brazil is also providing technical support to Cuba in replicating the National Protocol for Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents in Disaster Situations of Brazil for the Cuban context. The regional office has provided technical support to the Peru country office and the Government of Peru in initiating a similar replication of the National Protocol.

Other multi-country programming

The bi-annual meeting of the Laços Sul-Sul (LSS) initiative took place in Cochabamba (the Plurinational State of Bolivia), with strong participation of young people. With support from the LAC regional office, the Brazil country office is documenting the last 10 years of this initiative.

As part of the Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) in 2014, a national report from Honduras and a sub-national report from the Chaco, Paraguay were concluded. A technical workshop was held in Saint Lucia for statisticians of the governments of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and other key stakeholders. As a result, an agreement was reached and work has begun on a sub-regional study involving the majority of OECS states and territories (Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). Costa Rica, Haiti and Paraguay began work on national studies, while Nicaragua is in the final stages of a sub-national study.

The regional office with the Eastern Caribbean country office rolled out Care for Child Development, an initiative aimed at responding to the need to build capacity in the Caribbean region on this issue. More specifically, to scale up and ensure quality early learning opportunities are offered to children up to three years, and to strengthen parenting/caregiving skills. This was the first training workshop of its kind in the sub-region and brought together a diverse array of partners and professionals from eight different countries (Belize, Guyana, Suriname, Grenada, Montserrat, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) who familiarised themselves with the approach and explored possibilities for implementation in their respective countries.

Specific funding to implement the UNICEF #ENDviolence against children campaign provided an opportunity to enhance programming and increase results for children throughout the LAC region. The regional office provided technical support to the country offices to ensure effective monitoring of progress and results.

As also mentioned in a previous section, efforts continued in the implementation of the Break the Silence initiative, a **community based model** to mobilize and combat sexual abuse. This model, developed on the basis of the experience of piloting countries (Belize, Guyana and Suriname), will focus on engagement of local organisations, including churches and schools. Together with a toolkit for monitoring and evaluation, and a variety of communication and advocacy material from the “Break the Silence” initiative in the Caribbean, country offices are now in a strong position to scale up their interventions.

3.2 Normative principles

Human rights based approach to cooperation

As part of support to country offices in the design of the country programmes as well as implementation of mid-term reviews and preparation of situation analysis documents, the LAC regional office continued to provide technical assistance in the application of the human rights based approach to cooperation through the implementation of specific webinars and in-country technical assistance in all areas.

UNICEF work in the area of HIV and adolescents is progressively focusing on the most vulnerable adolescents (including LGBT, victims of sexual exploitation, adolescents living with HIV and adolescents in detention) and is doing so by engaging them in the identification and implementation of interventions. One example is the work that the Brazil country office, with support from the regional office, is implementing in Fortaleza. Using a mobile unit (bus) managed by a team of professionals and supported by HIV positive young volunteers, vulnerable adolescents and young people are being encouraged to get tested for HIV. The support that the regional office continued to provide to the regional network of young people living with HIV and for the constitution of more national networks (such as Ecuador) puts adolescents and young people at the center of the fight for their rights.

Focusing on the most excluded and marginalised groups is one of the principles of the human rights-based approach. The regional office organised its second RMT in Leticia, Amazon and dedicated two days to field missions to visit communities, authorities, schools and health centers in the Brazilian, Peruvian and Colombian Amazon as well as to hear experts, NGOs and indigenous peoples’ representatives about the situation of children living in the Amazon. The LAC regional office has recently conducted a secondary analysis of the latest censuses and demographic surveys in the eight countries in the Amazon basin where UNICEF works to reassess the situation of the population living in those areas. This analysis provides compelling quantitative evidence of the existent disparities between the Amazon areas and the respective national averages, with the indigenous peoples systematically suffering the greatest degree of deprivation and exclusion. The LAC regional office will elaborate a sub-regional strategy on the Amazon in order to design common vision, strategies and initiatives.

The LAC regional office also facilitated participation of civil society organisations as well as other non-state actors in (sub-) regional discussions on child rights advocacy. On the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the LAC regional office and ECLAC published *América Latina a 25 años de la aprobación de la Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño*, reviewing progress on the situation of children's human rights in the region.

Gender Equity

The LAC regional office applies a gender equality principle in all of its work. In 2014, the office produced evidence on the situation of girls, including a recent publication on social and cultural causes leading to the high rates of adolescent pregnancy in the region, which included field research in six countries and a tool on how to apply CEDAW in the region. The latter included a situation analysis on girls that was launched on the International Day of the Girl Child, with wide media attention. This has also allowed the regional office to continue assisting country offices to improve their work on gender through gender reviews, assistance to the elaboration of programming documents (CPDs, CPAPs, and MTRs), and capacity building. For instance, the LAC regional office organised extensive orientation to country offices finalising their CPAPs in 2014 to ensure that relevant priorities of the Gender Action Plan were included. This resulted in either specific outputs within the CPAP results frameworks or in including specific Gender Action Plan indicators. A similar effort was made for those offices developing new country programmes (Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Panama and Uruguay), which will be presented to the Executive Board in September 2015 or February 2016.

The regional office continued emphasizing gender across the specific sections; child protection produced a study on the different legal ages using a gender perspective; health is focusing part of its work on adolescent health issues and is supporting the gender section on an initiative led by the Argentina country office on adolescent health; and social inclusion funded a study on violence against afro-descendants *Violencia y Abuso Sexual hacia niños, niñas y adolescentes afrodescendientes* from the Red de Mujeres Afrolatinoamericanas, Afrocaribeñas y de la Diáspora (ARMAAD), which highlights the situation in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

The HIV section applies and supports a gender perspective in all UNICEF HIV interventions in the region, contributing not only to understanding how HIV affects boys and girls differently and therefore how certain interventions need to differ, but also to bringing the issue of gender identity and sexual orientation to the gender discussion in the region. The stigma, discrimination, bullying, rejection and violence that LGBT children and adolescents suffer in many countries of the LAC region is a manifestation of widespread machismo, as LGBT people challenge many social, moral and religious norms that put male power at the centre. The HIV programme has widely shared the newly launched UNICEF position paper on this issue and is contributing to putting the violation of LGBT children and adolescents' rights in the agenda.

Moreover, the LAC regional office also continued in advocating with country offices in ensuring the availability of disaggregated statistics, including on gender aspects, through the implementation of MICS or similar surveys and by reporting on such statistics in situation analyses. Likewise, country offices conducting situation analyses also received orientation in incorporating gender analysis as part of these efforts.

Environmental sustainability

All actions carried out by the LAC regional office in the framework of the regional coordination with partners (REDLAC) and in support given to country offices in emergency preparedness and response – particularly in the WASH sector – have been developed ensuring principles of environmental sustainability.

The LAC regional office organised extensive orientation to four country offices finalising their CPAPs in 2014 on ensuring that resilience building and addressing environmental sustainability were included. A similar effort was made for those offices developing new country programmes (Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Panama and Uruguay).

3.3 Lessons learned

South-South and Triangular Cooperation are gaining increased attention by governments in the LAC region. UNICEF is trying to facilitate such cooperation, although a global strategy for systematic engagement in such initiatives is not yet available. Therefore, it has so far been difficult to measure the results from supported South-South Cooperation (SSC) initiatives in the region. One of the reasons is that SSC is approached very differently across the country offices in the region, ranging from organising, funding and facilitating (ad-hoc) study tours to engaging with responsible government agencies for SSC in including themes related to children within the SSC agenda. The LAC regional office will need to work with those country offices that have advanced in brokering SSC by governments and identify a way forward for a more systematic engagement in SSC across the region and in defining indicators for measuring the results.

In a world that is increasingly connected, partnerships with CSOs and private sector also continue to gain importance. Over the course of 2014, it became evident that there is a need for learning more about meaningful engagement with the private sector in terms of delivering results for children. Work with the extractive industries, food and beverage producers, among others, will need to be taken particularly seriously and the LAC regional office will need to guide the region in taking a well-thought approach towards engaging with these industries.

Moreover, as also described in section 2.2, increased engagement with Centres of Excellence will require continued attention. Such centres could be instrumental in documenting 'relevant practices' of UNICEF programming that could be used for either South-South Cooperation and/or for informing UNICEF programming in the region and beyond. The LAC regional office fulfills a critical role in supporting the documentation of relevant practices across the region for such purposes. An additional international post was therefore created in the Regional Office for such purpose.

Some specific lessons learned throughout the course of 2014 are highlighted below:

On **health and nutrition**, the regional health and nutrition focal point meeting held in September allowed for a more detailed situation analysis of the region; a discussion on the causes and consequences of under- and over-nutrition; and proposals for how UNICEF may work with national and sub-national governments, communities and other key stakeholders to equitably accelerate progress in health and nutrition programming. In particular, the meeting proposed some minimum actions that all country offices should be able to carry out – with adequate support – and some broader modalities on how UNICEF can maximise the resources available at national, regional and global levels to increase programmatic efficacy, effectiveness and relevance in a rapidly changing regional context.

Regarding **education**, several regional education agendas are being revised or launched in the LAC region. Among them are those from the UN (MDG/SDG), UNESCO (Education for All), the Organization of American States, the Organization of Ibero-American States, as well as sub-regional bodies in Central America, Caribbean, Andean Region, South Cone, among others. Two important lessons have been learned: (1) There is a lot of overlap among these agendas, therefore the region may want to develop a

core of common follow-up indicators, which UNICEF should be part of; and (2) it is important to strongly advocate for the inclusion of ECD as a priority given the risk of diluting it in broader education plans.

A lesson learned in the area of **child protection** is the importance of mainstreaming MoRES into programming. This approach is showing results; technical discussions, including with government partners on issues such as birth registration or violence against children, are increasingly focusing on possible ways to address barriers and monitor the effectiveness of interventions. Moreover, the regional push for the de-institutionalisation of children has brought new awareness of the issue, with a steadily increasing number of country offices and governments joining the initiative. At the same time, it is evident that much work still needs to be done to change social norms, challenging the charity model that continues sustaining the institutional model of care. Finally, the RR set aside funds to support the implementation of the global #ENDviolence against children campaign have enabled country offices to engage in more rigorous monitoring of violence prevention programming.

Regarding **social inclusion**, it is important to position LAC strategically on the various topics of the social policy agenda so as to show good practices in combatting poverty across the region and elsewhere, as well as to study the factors that keep LAC among the most unequal regions in the world and propose alternative measures of development that go beyond GNI per capita (the World Bank Atlas method). The efforts will continue in 2015.

In **emergency** and DRR, the limited visibility of the humanitarian situation in the LAC region due to its lower scale requires a different modality of support and communication strategy. In particular, intra-regional horizontal cooperation needs to be an important component. Further, improved collaboration between development and humanitarian agendas is essential in mitigating the impact of scarce resources and in promoting resilience. Lastly, the resilience agenda provides an opportunity to link social policies and services to humanitarian action, as seen in Central America's emergencies.

3.4 Additional GRP related reporting: Global evaluation and research database

Evaluations, research reports, reviews, studies and surveys completed in 2014 can be found on the UNICEF Global evaluation and research database. A short summary of each has been provided here:

| Title | Sequence number | Themes |
|--|-----------------|--|
| Education | | |
| <i>Perspectivas para lograr mejores oportunidades de aprendizaje para niños, niñas y jóvenes en América Latina y el Caribe</i> | LACRO-2014-001 | New learning paradigm, Latin America and Caribbean countries, innovative experiences on learning, improving learning |
| System wide approaches to out of school children in Latin America and the Caribbean | LACRO-2014-002 | Out-of-school children, Latin America and Caribbean countries, Bottlenecks and barriers, policy responses. |
| <i>Las políticas TIC en los sistemas educativos en América Latina: Caso México, Colombia, Costa Rica y Brasil</i> | LACRO-2014-003 | ICT policies on education, Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, Brazil |
| Child protection | | |
| <i>Justicia Penal Juvenil. Situación y perspectivas en América Latina y el Caribe.</i> | LACRO-2014-016 | Juvenile justice |
| Legal minimum ages and the realization of adolescents' rights. A review of the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean | LACRO-2014-017 | Minimum-age legislation, adolescents |

| | | |
|--|----------------|--|
| The situation of children and adolescents in residential care institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean | LACRO-2014-018 | Children in residential care |
| Study on the follow-up in the implementation of the UN Study on Violence against Children for the Caribbean | LACRO-2014-019 | Prevention, monitoring and response mechanisms to violence against children in the Caribbean |
| Social inclusion | | |
| <i>América Latina a 25 años de la aprobación de la Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño</i> | LACRO-2014-006 | All sectors |
| <i>Inversión pública en la infancia en América Latina y el Caribe. Sistematización de experiencias destacadas.</i> | LACRO-2014-007 | Investment in children |
| The Laboratory of Development. The Impact of Social Policies on Children in Latin America and the Caribbean | LACRO-2014-008 | All sectors |
| <i>Promoción y protección social de la infancia y adolescencia en Haití</i> | LACRO-2014-009 | Social protection |
| <i>Protección social para la infancia en El Salvador, Guatemala y Honduras: avances y desafíos</i> | LACRO-2014-010 | Social protection |
| <i>Programas de transferencias, condicionalidades y derechos de la infancia: apuntes a partir del caso del Uruguay</i> | LACRO-2014-011 | Social protection |
| <i>Infancia y (des)protección social: un análisis comparado en cinco países latinoamericanos</i> | LACRO-2014-012 | Social protection |
| <i>La evolución de las estructuras familiares en América Latina, 1990-2010: los retos de la pobreza, la vulnerabilidad y el cuidado</i> | LACRO-2014-013 | Social protection |
| <i>Los derechos de la infancia de la era de internet, América Latina y las nuevas tecnologías</i> | LACRO-2014-014 | Social inclusion, innovations |
| <i>Panorama de la situación de la niñez y adolescencia indígena en América Latina</i> | LACRO-2014-015 | Social inclusion, disparities, equity analysis |
| Humanitarian | | |
| LACRO Regional Preparedness Overview and Analysis – August 2014. | LACRO-2014-004 | LAC country offices preparedness analysis |
| Gender | | |
| Experiences and accounts of pregnancy amongst adolescents. An approximation towards the cultural, social and emotional factors influencing teenage pregnancy, through a study in six countries in the region | LACRO-2014-005 | Gender, adolescent pregnancy, health |

4. Analysis of organisational effectiveness and efficiency results

4.1 Evaluation

The quality of UNICEF evaluation reports continued to improve in the LAC region. According to the 2014 Global Evaluation Quality Assurance System (GEROS), the LAC region is one of the highest achieving in terms of producing high quality evaluations that meet UNICEF standards. In 2014, for the first time the LAC region did not produce any evaluations that were considered of unsatisfactory quality. Of the 15 evaluations conducted in LAC that were assessed, two were considered outstanding or best practices, five highly satisfactory and eight mostly satisfactory. Reasons for these improvements in quality may be found in the continued strengthening of the M&E function promoted in the region over the last few years to ensure relevant and adequate M&E expertise in each country office. They may also be found in the implementation of internal technical assistance and quality assurance mechanisms at regional level, which include the review of all evaluation-related Terms of References, draft reports and the monitoring of the development of management responses to evaluations.

The LAC regional office further strengthened the internal evaluation capacity by supporting learning opportunities for monitoring and evaluation staff in the region. For instance, one national monitoring and evaluation specialist from Ecuador completed the International Programme for Development Evaluation training course with funding provided by HQ, and two other national staff (Paraguay and Costa Rica) joined the global Monitoring and Evaluation network meeting to increase their exposure to global discussions on evaluation in development. The regional office also hosted a national M&E officer from Peru as part of a three-month staff exchange, who supported the follow-up of the regional evaluation agenda.

The development of a management response to evaluations has been mainstreamed across the region. All evaluations (15 out of 15) concluded in 2013 have been given an operative management response. Nevertheless, tracking of evaluation recommendations is uneven across offices and overall there remains room for improvement. For instance, 86 per cent of the management responses included in the tracking system have never been updated more than once. This indicates that there are still offices not updating the progress made to comply with the agreed recommendations even if those actions have been completed, as they are expected to. From the 76 actions committed from the evaluations in 2013-14, there are still 30 per cent that have not been started according to the system.

Despite the aforementioned progress on quality, evaluation coverage in LAC offices is still far from optimal. In the period 2012-2014, only 13 out of 24 offices conducted at least one formal evaluation. This means that 12 offices have not concluded a single evaluation in the last three years. Further, less than a quarter (four out of 18) of the evaluations in the IMEPs planned for 2014 were completed by the end of the year. In 2015, the LAC regional office will need to have a more proactive approach to promoting evaluation across country offices in 2015, considering 15 countries will be submitting their new CPDs in 2015 and 2016. Continuous support on evaluation issues will continue to be provided in 2015. This includes the provision of quality assurance and technical assistance in the finalisation of the country office IMEPs and discussions on evaluation during the missions by the regional office and MTR and CP discussions.

4.2 Management and operations

Key results achieved

The LAC regional office undertook 35 missions to provide oversight and technical assistance to country offices in operations and ICT. Support was provided to the 10 offices (Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile,

Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay) audited in 2014, including with the preparations for the audit, development of their Audit Action Plan and any technical support to implement the audit recommendations.

Following the Executive Director's decision in November 2013 to start the process for the establishment of the Global Shared Service Centre (GSSC), the regional office provided technical guidance to all offices in the preparation of their submissions to the 2014 integrated budget review in relation to planning their transition to the GSSC by 2016. Given the region's experience in shared services, the LAC regional office is providing substantial inputs to HQ in planning and designing the GSSC project, including the development of work processes, location analysis, service level agreements (SLAs), key performance indicators and structures.

Jointly with UNICEF Brazil, the LAC regional office participated in the inter-agency meeting on preparation of the Business Operations Strategy (BOS) and the Joint Operations Facility (JOF) in Brazil. Here, strategic and technical discussions took place to streamline key operational areas by consolidating support services into one facility at the country level as part of the 2013 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR). The UNICEF participation in the JOF and BOS is pending a final decision.

All corporate ICT projects were successfully rolled out in the region. Based on the positive experience in Belize in piloting the LIGHT project, ITSS adopted it as one of the main flagship projects for effectiveness and efficiency. Five countries were identified and selected to implement the LIGHT project in 2014.

Risk mitigation practices

The regional office updated its own risk profile in 2014 and regularly reminded the country offices to do the same. When required, country offices were supported to develop their action plans, to address the identified risks in any particular area. Also, the consultant who facilitated the risk assessment exercise of the regional office was made available as a possible resource person to the country offices in supporting the assessment process.

In the 2014 internal audit of the regional office, the auditors noted that risk management of the country offices was monitored by the regional office with the key performance indicators. At the same time, they recommended the regional office to provide relevant assistance to country offices in order to help address the weaknesses identified during audits.

Office management systems and practices

During 2014, the LAC regional office and four country offices (Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras and Nicaragua) joined the Panama Hub in a phased manner, increasing the total to eight members. The Panama Hub was established in 2013 to increase efficiency and effectiveness, and address the challenges relating to the limited staffing structures in some offices, including proper segregation of duties. The Hub continues to provide member-offices with services related to some common operations and human resources processes. A transition plan was developed and implemented jointly with each new office that joined. Onsite missions to the country offices provided the country offices with orientation and briefing to all staff on the upcoming changes, SLA, revised work processes, mapping of roles, responsibilities of the country office and the Hub, and other preparatory procedures prior to their respective 'go live' dates. Training was also provided to country offices to strengthen their technical knowledge on policies and procedures as well as VISION skills. Taking into consideration the lessons learned from previous implementation and additional information on the GSSC, the work processes of the hub were reviewed and enhanced to ensure compatibility with those of the GSSC. Support was also provided in the recruitment of new staff in country offices as a result of joining the Hub. The status of

key performance indicators related to the Hub and the country offices was reported on a monthly basis. The Hub also supported member-countries that were audited in 2014. The Hub provided significant inputs in developing the proposal to establish a Multi-Country Capacity Services (MCCS) in the LAC regional office by 2016 as part of the regional strategy to continue supporting small and medium-sized offices with limited access to professional operations capacity, for issues not covered by the GSSC.

Having implemented two regional hubs (in Argentina since 2001 and in Panama since 2013), it is expected that the process of transitioning to the GSSC in 2016 will be smooth for many offices in the LAC region. The regional Field Implementation Group (FIG) has identified four offices in LAC, including the regional office, as pilot offices for the implementation of the GSSC. This would provide another opportunity for the region to position itself globally to offer valuable inputs in the design and implementation of this important global initiative.

Regarding the management and stewardship of financial resources; the status of the regional office's key performance indicators was regularly monitored and reported on at the LAC regional office management team (LMT) meetings. The management of the regional office budget was strengthened through the provision of regular monitoring reports to budget owners and senior management. Advisory committees continued to function as per their terms of reference, including those established to cover multi-countries that are members of the Panama Hub. Some work processes were streamlined and the LAC regional office continued to use the corporate credit card, which helps avoid the processing of low-value transactions to different vendors since the charges are consolidated (one payment is made at month-end to the credit card company and not to different vendors). Budgets and operating costs were regularly monitored and opportunities for cost-savings were explored and implemented.

Supply management systems and practices

In 2014, the LAC regional office procured about US\$ 82,000 worth of ICT and administrative supplies. In addition, pre-positioned emergency supplies totalling US\$ 43,000 remained in the UNHRD warehouse in Panama, after dispatching US\$ 100,000 worth of items to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. The Panama Hub also supports some country offices with limited staffing structures for processing supply transactions.

4.3 Oversight function and oversight-related accountabilities

Methods and indicators used for monitoring and assessing country office performance

The status of key performance indicators from the inSight Dashboards for each country office was monitored on a monthly basis and any follow-up action required was agreed with the country offices. The individual mid-year videoconference between the Regional Director, country office Representative and regional office operations and HR staff was implemented in July/August to further discuss the status and required actions to address the key performance indicators and any other management issues. Individual meetings with each office were held to address any emerging operations issues. In addition to the indicators from the Dashboards, the regional office also monitored the status of the implementation of audit recommendations. Oversight support was supplemented by on-site missions to selected countries where actions taken to address the risks were validated and confirmed. Issues identified were followed-up on a regular basis. Such measures also enabled the regional office to address performance issues where necessary, and make recommendations to enhance compliance with governing policy as well as to improve efficiency and effectiveness among country offices.

A key milestone for oversight and monitoring country office performance was through the review of the Country Office Annual Reports in February 2014 in which all sections of the LAC regional office participated. In this meeting country office performance is reviewed based on the reports, but also on

other available information, including from VISION dashboards and interactions with the country offices (either virtual or in-country) and programme and operational gaps identified for supporting actions to be undertaken by the regional office in the remaining year. The results and recommendations from this holistic analysis are transformed into a Country Office Annual Letter, signed by the Regional Director. These recommendations are followed-up by the Regional Director in the bi-annual formal discussions with representatives, and by regional advisors in their provision of technical support and guidance to the country offices to help address the gaps.

The regional office continued to monitor the status of small-value transactions in country offices and advocated to reduce or eliminate them. In close coordination with the Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM), the use of electronic payments continued to be recommended in offices as part of the preparations for transitioning to the GSSC. Regional office support was provided to offices in opening new accounts with banks that have electronic payment systems.

In terms of HR, a number of indicators are used to monitor and assess performance of the HR functions across country offices in the LAC region. These include the percentage of recruitment actions completed, the number of webinars to HR and operations staff in country offices and regional hubs, of oversight and support missions, of staff enrolling on and completing training programmes, of staff exchange requests fulfilled and staff satisfaction.

Programme and operations management gaps in the region and actions taken

The LAC regional office monitors country office fundraising efforts and identifies the countries that are not receiving adequate levels of other resources. These 'donor orphan countries' are prioritised for allocation of the Regional Thematic Fund, the Global Thematic Fund and RR Set-Aside Funds, as relevant. It should be noted that the LAC region – with many country programmes that have little success in obtaining funding from traditional donors – is receiving a relatively small amount from the Global Thematic Fund and Set-Aside Funds, in which traditional donors are providing more assistance. HQ could consider increasing the region's allocation of these resources temporarily while the LAC region gradually increases its income through private sector fundraising, in order to be able to fund most of the programmes in the 'donor orphan' countries with funding from the Regional Thematic Fund.

During 2014, 10 country offices (Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay) have been audited and the LAC regional office has supported the preparation process and participated in all audit exit meetings, either by joining through video-link or by visiting in person. The regional office provided feedback on the draft audit reports and closely monitored progress on the implementation of the agreed audit actions plans. Where required, technical assistance was provided to the country offices for addressing recommendations. In addition, on the programme and planning side, the recommendations of the various audits were reviewed, and feedback from generic observations (such as planning, IMEP and results based management) was systematically addressed in advice regarding programme design and implementation, particularly to those countries developing new country programme documents.

Regarding HR, oversight is provided through visits to country offices and interactions with staff associations, in addition to close monitoring and assessment of HR indicators (such as the KPI on time to recruit and the e-PAS completion rate). HR identified 'talent acquisition' and 'learning and development' as two major focus areas to address as part of the ROMP 2014-2017.

The regional office made efforts to identify staff who could assume leadership positions in the future, and encouraged eligible staff to participate in leadership training.

The regional office continued to promote the full implementation of regional learning plans, including in relation to UN Cares, competency-based interviews, orientation for new staff, ethics, work life balance,

managing people for results and work place security. Other professional development opportunities come in the form of staff exchanges, job shadowing and swapping, stretch assignments, temporary backfills and web-based learning. In addition, the regional office identified the induction process for new staff as an area to be strengthened, and will focus on developing a comprehensive induction programme to be adopted in the entire region in 2015.

Initiatives taken to obtain feedback on the performance of the regional office

The regional office sent out a survey to each of the 24 country offices in 2014 to obtain feedback on the quality and timeliness of support provided in the different areas. The results will feed into the development of the 2015 work plans of the different sections, as well as provide inputs on the specific support needed by the country offices from the LAC regional office. The regional office actively participated in the global initiative for improving technical assistance, quality assurance and oversight of HQ, regional offices and country offices, including the development of Technical Assistance Management System (TAMS) led by the field results group.

Efficiency gains and cost savings

In 2014, HR and operations efficiency was gained and cost was saved mainly through the full implementation of the sub-regional Panama Hub, which has been further evolved in view of the transition to the GSSC. By centralising some HR and operations transactions, country offices were able to focus on more strategic areas of work. Further, by providing the full spectrum of HR services through the Hub, offices were better served and needs in HR matters were able to be timely addressed.

With the corporate decision to launch the GSSC in 2015-2016 and in one location, the region had to revisit its operations and HR structures, factoring in the associated risks of transitioning to a global shared services model. The previous office structures for operations in the region were revised during the July 2014 PBR, and the possibility to increase its staff was granted. Strong HR technical assistance and quality assurance was provided to country offices to support change management, including their submissions to the TRT/PBR. This assistance, incorporating the guidance received from the LAC regional office and HQ, focused on: 1) organisational design and job classification from a human capital perspective, to guide the country offices' decision making on prioritising programmatic areas and leveraging resources; 2) ensuring the right personnel as required in the CPMP guideline; and 3) working ahead in identifying talents in key programmatic areas in LAC, with special attention to the new trends from CPD/MTR as well as countries in emergency and crisis. More importantly, during the change processes, a dedicated HR team will provide technical advice to managers and employees; ensure each and every staff member affected is provided with tailored support; and is treated with equity and dignity. This will mitigate the litigation risks, and minimise the impact on staff.

Based on the experiences accumulated since the inception of the Regional Hub model, both the HR regional capacity (including the two sub-regional Hubs) and the country offices' operations and HR structures were revised, leading to the approval of the Multi-Country Capacity (MCC), due to start in 2015. The LAC region is moving towards greater use of shared services to ensure that maximum resources are put towards achieving results for children rather than on back office functions. To this end, the MCCs had been designed to ensure that every country office in the LAC region – particularly those small and mid-size offices with reduced HR functions in view of the transition into GSSC – is provided with HR support from a regionalised multi-country capacity, which will mainly focus on the strategic HR functions that are not being performed by the GSSC.

4.4 HACT

Challenges in HACT management were identified in almost all audit reports in 2013 and 2014 – not only in the LAC region but globally. This prompted the LAC regional office to conduct a survey during 2014 to obtain information on the status of HACT implementation in all country offices, including their bottlenecks, challenges and constraints. The survey revealed the need for supporting offices to strengthen their capacity for managing HACT and ensure their eventual compliance with the revised HACT Framework. Consequently, a regional HACT action plan was developed with funding provided by HQ. In addition, financial support was obtained from HQ for country offices to supplement their resources for undertaking HACT-related activities. Through the services of a company contracted by the LAC regional office, 11 country offices were trained to strengthen their HACT knowledge and improve their HACT compliance. A further eight offices will be trained in 2015. The training involves UNICEF staff, other UN agencies and implementing partners. The HACT training materials as well as the HACT Policy and HACT Procedure were translated into Spanish, and in coordination with WCARO, the French version was provided to Haiti.

Following completion of HACT training, each office was required to provide the regional office with a HACT implementation report, specifying the actual number of assessments, audits and assurance activities conducted in 2014 together with a HACT action plan that reports on the estimated number of related-activities planned for 2015. In addition, country offices were requested to specify any HACT capacity constraints and/or funding shortfall, which would prevent them from implementing their action plan.

4.5 Inter-agency collaboration

UNICEF continued to play an active role in promoting inter-agency collaboration at both management and technical level. The Regional Director contributed to discussions at undg-lac meetings (together with regional directors of all UN organisations) and also provided strategic programming support in their capacity as mentor for the UNCT of Uruguay (together with another regional director). At the technical levels, UNICEF participated in a wide range of UN-interagency thematic working groups (such as health, HIV/AIDS, nutrition, emergency, gender and M&E) as well as specific task forces (such as on the UN-relationship with CARICOM). For all these thematic working groups and task forces, continuous careful consideration of the value added and progression towards tangible results is required. UNICEF also participated actively as a member of the CCA/UNDAF Peer Support Group and in capacity building to UNCTs regarding the implementation of Delivering as One and the rollout of the Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs). Discussions with the Government of Panama on the construction of a possible joint UN-regional office resumed in late 2014.

In **health**, the LAC regional office has been working on the development and initial implementation of a joint work plan with PAHO. The plan, pending the final sign-off, includes collaborative activities in relation to the 10 key areas of common interest, including healthy information systems, advocacy and communication to highlight inequities; maternal and perinatal health; ECD; adolescent health; nutrition (triple burden of stunting, anaemia and child overweight/obesity), prevention of NCDs, HIV/AIDS, violence prevention (in particular violence against children), EPI, and emergency preparedness and resilience.

In **HIV and AIDS**, the regional office has maintained excellent relationships and coordination with other UN agencies, especially with PAHO/WHO and UNAIDS in order to assist countries with their planning around the elimination of vertical transmission (VT) and to assess the progress made in eliminating VT and CS in the region. As a concrete result, a joint PAHO/UNICEF report on the EI was produced. Besides coordination, joint plans of action were developed and funds put together to facilitate the realization of a number of activities (including a meeting with the OECS) and to accelerate the validation process in the region. The LAC regional office have met with representatives of strategic partners such as USAID/PEPFAR, GFTAM, PANCAP to ensure that interventions are being coordinated, that correct

investment is being made, and that the political commitment is maintained in order to achieve EI targets in the region. Further, the regional office continued to closely work with UNAIDS and its co-sponsors in the response to HIV and adolescents/young people, especially with the RST (UNAIDS Regional Support Team), UNFPA and UNDP. This collaboration was especially evident in the work with young people living with HIV.

In **nutrition**, a detailed joint work plan between PAHO and UNICEF is being developed to formalise the ongoing successful collaboration on several fronts for the reduction of maternal, infant and child under nutrition and its determinants, focusing on micronutrient fortification, supplementation and infant and young child feeding. There has been particular success regarding the development of clinical and community based protocols for addressing child and adolescent overweight and obesity within the context of the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI).

A UNICEF-led sectoral group on nutrition in emergencies was formalised at regional level. This group, besides developing assessment and capacity development tools, worked closely with OCHA REDLAC to support inter-sectoral collaboration to improve disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness and response capacity. Such collaboration proved particularly critical in ensuring adequate response to the drought in Central America.

Key collaborations in the area of nutrition were also fostered with a number of external organisations; REDLAC for the regional inter-sectoral coordination of emergencies, PAHO for the development of clinical and community based modules for IMCI; and AMEXCID for supporting lateral and inter-sectoral collaboration in Central America on nutrition and food security with FAO, WFP, UNDP and UNIFEM.

In **education**, the LAC regional office collaborated with UNESCO in the development of TERCE (student standardised test), out of school children statistics and studies, and learning sciences. The office also participated in the development and revision of regional education goals and agendas conducted by UNESCO, the Organization of Ibero-American States, CECC-SICA, and other sub-regional bodies. Further, the LAC regional office is co-chair of the Sectoral Regional Group of Education in Emergencies, contributing to strengthening regional and national capacity in this area.

Regarding **child protection**, UNICEF actively participated in the Interagency Regional Group on Protection in Emergency (Grupo de Protección/REDLAC), to ensure a focus on children and their specific needs – particularly in the context of the increased deportation of migrating children in Central America. On this issue, substantial inputs were also provided to an inter-agency action plan to respond to the migration crisis.

In **social inclusion**, the regional office entered into exchanges with UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA, UNODC, FAO and WHO to comment on a draft note – and agree collectively on each organisation’s inputs – on Financing for Development, which will be discussed by UNDG LAC, in order to come up with a position in preparation for the Addis Ababa conference in July. Further, the office participated in an experts’ workshop on investment in youth organised by UNFPA to share UNICEF experience.

Under the cooperation agreement with the **Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)** on “Child Poverty, Inequality and Citizenship Initiative”, the following progress was made in 2014: (a) the regional office was present at the **ECLAC** biennial meetings of the Caribbean Development Forum in Jamaica to discuss social and economic progress in the region and at the 35th session period of ECLAC in Peru to take stock of the Commission’s activities and present the next two year strategy to member states. (b) The regional office also represented the region at the UN Regional Coordination Meeting in October to discuss with the Joint Inspection Unit the effectiveness of regional interface mechanisms for governance: **coordination and collaboration among UN Regional Commissions**. (c) The preparation of **child poverty country fact sheets** progressed with the latest

data available (to be completed in mid-2015). The regional office facilitated a technical workshop in Haiti on multidimensional child poverty for national counterparts to develop a national measurement of child poverty for the country. An online interactive Guide to Estimating Child Poverty was also updated in English and Spanish. (c) The study "América Latina a 25 años de la aprobación de la Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño", (Latin America at 25 years after the ratification of the CRC)", prepared with ECLAC, was widely disseminated on the occasion of the CRC@25 celebrations in November at all levels of HQ, regional office and country offices in the region.

On **emergencies**, Application of common agreed standards for areas such as needs assessment and SOPs within the interagency framework have enhanced the quality of the work. Sharing lessons and experiences through regional meetings and UNICEF contribution in areas such as innovation and South-South Cooperation has also contributed.

The regional office continued to ensure the coordination of the four UNICEF-led sectoral working groups (Education, WASH, Child Protection and Nutrition in emergency), functioning as a link between global clusters and the groups at regional and national level; sectorial trainings and workshops have been organised at regional and sub-regional level with the participation of country offices, UN and NGO partners and government institutions, to enhance national sectorial coordination capacity, share experiences and disseminate global sectorial tools and standards at national level.

4.6 Lessons learned

The most significant lesson learned by the LAC regional office in implementing regional shared services was to ensure that countries joining the Hub should do so in a phased manner and not simultaneously. The specific timing should be agreed between the regional office and country office, and the critical months of November through to February should be avoided. Offices should also ensure that there is sufficient staff overlap to allow for training and testing of new work processes. Involvement and buy-in by both management and staff are critical in ensuring the success of the Hub. Arrangements with the bank to implement electronic payments are crucial and thus avoid manual payment processes. The combination of offsite and onsite support to offices also ensures that staff have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities, which is critical under the new operating model.

2014 was the first year when the Panama Hub was up and running in its full capacity. Improvements were proposed – and approved by the 2014 Global PBR – based on the experiences gained since the Hub first started in 2013, the feedback received from clients, and a realistic analysis of workflow process and available resources. As a result, the LAC regional office HR section will be restructured, in view of the expansion of the Panama Hub client base, and transition into the MCCS model. The office is strengthening the multi-country services capacity by creating more HR roles and replacing some existing posts with more senior positions. In terms of the workflow process, the HR team has reviewed the current process, and proposed some changes in order to further clarify roles and responsibilities between the Panama Hub and the client offices.

In order for the Panama hub (and subsequently MCCS) to deliver at its full potential, it is imperative that adequate IT platforms are provided. Currently, three new HR IT systems are being developed in HQ: a Talent Management Suit (e-Recruitment and Performance Management), Case Management system, and Records Management. These new IT platforms will facilitate the linkage between various HR components (such as recruitment, learning and performance management), ensure automation of HR services and data transmission, and enable monitoring and reporting. The following will be globally addressed in 2015 and beyond: the timely deployment of these IT platforms; their customization at regional and country level; and to provide the necessary training to field colleagues.

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- ²⁸ See discussion in UNHCR, *Children on the Run: Unaccompanied Children Leaving Central America and Mexico and the Need for International Protection* (2014) at p.47.
- ²⁹ Heckman, J., Moon, S., Pinto, R., Savelyev, P and Yavitz, A. 2009. *A New Cost-Benefit and Rate of Return: Analysis for the Perry Preschool Program: A Summary*. (Policy Paper N° 17). Germany: IZA Policy Paper Series.
- ³⁰ The GAP 4 priorities are promoting gender-responsive adolescent health, advancing girl’s secondary education, ending child marriage and addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in emergencies. See *UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2014-17* at p.7.
- ³¹ UNFPA/ISDR/UN HABITAT for a better urban future, *Linkages between population dynamics, urbanization processes and disaster risks: A regional vision of Latin America*, at p.3, online: http://www.unisdr.org/files/31104_linkagesbetweenpopulationdynamicsur.pdf
- ³² See US Customs and Border Protection, *Southwest border unaccompanied alien children*, online: <http://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children>
- ³³ PAHO/WHO, *Number of Reported Cases of Chikungunya fever in the Americas, by Country or Territory 2013-2014: Epidemiological Week 38 (updated 19 September, 2014)*, online: www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&task=
- ³⁴ UNICEF, *UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children: Latin America and the Caribbean* (2015) at p.1, online: http://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/Final_2015_HAC_LACRO.pdf