

Executive Summary

Child Friendly Schools (CFS) initiative: Progress was made towards the promotion of an effective and participatory educational system in Oman through the implementation of the CFS initiative that was introduced in 2010 to enhance the quality of education and to increase school enrolment. Presently, national standards have been developed and validated for the following areas: child rights promotion, gender responsiveness, health, safety and protection, learning effectiveness, and stakeholder participation. A workshop was also conducted focusing on the CFS School Development Process and a Baseline Study Design to support the implementation and measurement of progress toward CFS standards in Oman.

Study on School Retention: Quality of education is a priority for the GoO (Government of Oman) and UNICEF, and mechanisms to support this agenda were identified in a qualitative study on school retention. The study sought to determine the factors that have led to the high rates of school dropouts in Oman, together with the development of appropriate mechanisms to reduce this phenomenon; increase school enrolment rates and improve the quality of education. In November 2012, the study results and outcomes were delivered to the MOE (Ministry of Education) and other officials and participants.

Observatory on Education, Vocational Training and Labour Market needs in Oman: UNICEF in collaboration with the MOE conducted a national workshop to review the results of a survey addressing one of the main concerns of Omani youth, namely, improving education to enhance opportunities for employability. The Observatory's primary purpose is to provide strategic information for policy makers, managers of education and training institutions, employers, guidance and counselling personnel, and individuals seeking orientation in education, training and employment including persons with disabilities, while increasing to support gender equality.

Shortfalls:

Implementation of the 2012 workplan was hindered by the vacant position of the Representative throughout in the second half of the year. In addition, 3 out of 4 seconded programme officers who joined the OCO in the first quarter of the year had limited opportunity for familiarization with UNICEF programme planning and management processes. The Country Office's inability to identify suitable consultants and delayed feedback on, and clearance by the MENARO (Middle East and North Africa Regional Office) of TORs (Terms of Reference) for consultancies further delayed implementation. Furthermore, change in the MOH (Ministry of Health) administration and establishment of the NCSI (National Center for Statistics and Information) following the dissolution of the Ministry of National Economy in 2011 contributed to poor implementation.

Collaborative Partnerships:

No new partnerships were established in 2012.

Country Situation as Affecting Children & Women

Oman is on track to reach all health-related MDGs. Further investments are required particularly for MDG 1 target on underweight prevalence of children under 5', and MDG 6 related to HIV/AIDS particularly for strengthening data collection and monitoring; developing evidence based policies; and ensuring a focus on the sub-national level.

A new Education Council was established in Oman. As per the Royal Directive emphasis is on the importance of partnerships to promote various development pillars, starting with education. The MOE launched a study undertaken with the World Bank, 'Education in Oman: the drive for quality', coinciding with His Majesty's directives emphasizing the need to make necessary revisions to the education system in Oman. The review of the study is expected to highlight the plan for improving education in the coming years. This study, along with the "Education for All" report published in 2000 with UNICEF's cooperation, reveal the achievements of the Sultanate including the availability, spending on and qualification of Omani teachers. It also reveals the gaps to achieving excellence in education. The MOE is currently engaged in a number of major reform initiatives across the system emphasizing changing teaching, learning and assessment methodologies; updating the curriculum; adding new resources; improving facilities; reducing class sizes; and, upgrading the

qualifications and skills of teachers.

The recently promulgated Royal Decree 113/2011 made key amendments to some provisions of Oman's Labour Law. In general, the aim of these amendments is to improve working conditions in the Sultanate and to enhance the legal protections afforded to workers. Regarding rights for women, special leave and working hours for female employees were addressed. Pursuant to the recent amendments, the Labour Law now entitles working women to a maternity leave of 50 days fully paid, to cover the pre- and post-maternity period. In addition, working hours for women have been amended to prohibit employers from requiring female employees to work between 9PM and 6AM.

New National Health Policy, Vision 2050: The Ministry of Health hosted the 'Quality-Care, Sustained-Health', International Scientific Conference on Health System 2050 in the Sultanate of Oman, as part of its efforts to develop a better, quality health care system in the Sultanate of Oman. The objective was to review the health system in the Sultanate of Oman and establish national health policy to meet the health needs and expectation of the community in cooperation with other sectors. A new National Health Policy to 2050 is being finalised.

The demographic and epidemiological transition under way in the country is leading to the emergence of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Obesity and substance abuse are on the rise among adolescents in Oman. There is also evidence that the number of women drug addicts is on the rise in Oman. Preventable injuries resulting from falls, accidental poisoning, and road accidents are now the major causes of mortality, morbidity and disability among children under 15 years of age. Plans are underway to include road safety as part of the school curriculum.

Special attention has been given to adolescents and youth, expanding on the initiative for developing basic life skills and further promoting healthy lifestyles. The focus of the Muscat Youth Summit in 2012 was on innovation and entrepreneurship with an aim to offer an opportunity for talented youth to come together, investigate, and debate various topics, as well as apply their skills in an environment that will nurture talent. The National Youth Committee established in 2011 began the process of exploring the needs and aspirations of Omani youth in fields like healthcare, education, culture, science and technology. The needs of the labour sector and economy, sporting and recreational needs, legal requirements, and civil rights and freedoms are also being taken into consideration.

Progress was noted in 2012 on building national consensus for a child protection agenda. A child protection system mapping exercise conducted in 2009 involving a consultation with national counterparts that identified gaps in the system and made recommendations for addressing them was used as the basis for an assessment of the gaps and training needs of the decentralized teams who investigate, monitor and rehabilitate cases of abuse, thereby promoting a protective environment for children in Oman.

New methods of tackling juvenile crime were addressed in a workshop on juvenile crime and behaviour. The workshop aimed to find solutions to challenges facing the current system when addressing the rights and needs of juvenile offenders and discussed methods to support the behavioural issues often found in juvenile offenders.

The third Forum 'Omani Women - a Partner in Development' highlighted the role of women in development, in society, and recommended ways of strengthening and empowering women. The Forum focused on the role of women in education whether working in the formal labour market or at home, and the challenges faced in performing that role.

NGOs have highlighted the lack of rehabilitation centres for the disabled in the country and have called for better facilities. On a related note, the job market for persons with disabilities is beginning to grow. Some companies are also assisting them through CSR programmes.

Country Programme Analytical Overview

The implementation of the 2012 - 2015 Country Programme has started, but the CPAP (Country Programme Action Plan) was not yet signed with the Government. Biannual workplans were approved and signed on the basis of draft IRs (Intermediate Results) defined for the full programme cycle. The adjustments to the actual 2013 workplan will take in account the finalization of the CPAP that should take place during the first quarter of the year.

Country Programme implementation was hindered in 2012. The institutional partnership with the GoO for the Data and Knowledge Management programme component was adversely affected by the dissolution of the Ministry of National Economy in March 2011 and the establishment of the National Centre for Statistics and Information in May 2012. Programme Management in UNICEF was also affected by an extended leave of one of the Government project officers and the replacement of 3 out of 4 seconded project officers who did not have the opportunity for adequate orientation with UNICEF programme planning and management processes due to the departure of the Representative in July 2013. In the absence of a UNICEF Programme Specialist most of the technical input and some contracting procedures in 2012 had to rely on MENA regional office for clearance. The finalization of the CPAP and the 2013 workplans will be an opportunity to develop a better understanding of UNICEF programme planning processes in the office and among the main partners, with a clear shift from activity-based to result-based management of the country programme.

Further efforts to understand equity-related issues were undertaken in 2012 through the preparatory steps for the development of a Child Wellbeing Index. and Challenges related to laws regulating data sharing and the lack of inter-sectoral coordination among sectors were addressed in 2012 in order to set this process in motion. A first Census-based Index is expected by mid-year 2013 and modalities for refining it with administrative data from different sectors will be explored. MICS preparatory work should lead to data collection and analysis in 2013 after endorsement of the survey by the Cabinet.

Despite the evidence provided by a UNICEF and MOH supported qualitative study, the Government is reluctant to address the issue of FGM/C (female genital mutilation/cutting). An advocacy plan to address the concerns of the highest level of leadership in the country is required before a communication plan is designed for the general population.

The country has made considerable headway in improving enrolment rates, despite the fact that education is not compulsory. This progress is a clear reflection of the Government's commitment to providing general education in all regions of the country, coupled with the growing awareness of the importance of education by Omani families. However, this positive development will not negate the importance of enacting legislation that makes basic education compulsory and ensures equitable access to the education system.

Effective Advocacy

Partially met benchmarks

The Omani Child Law was approved by both the Shura Council and the State Council and it is now submitted to His Majesty for endorsement. With support from the MENA Regional Office, the UNICEF Oman Country Office participated in the review and finalization of the Child Law.

The launch of the child-friendly versions of the CRC (Convention on the Rights of the Child) booklets was a great step towards providing useful tools for advocating for child rights in the country.

Through the development of the Observatory on Child Rights, provision of strategic information for policy makers, managers of educational and training institutions, employers, counselling personnel, and individuals seeking orientation in education, training and employment is ensured. The Observatory will serve both the public and the private sectors. The observatory will support youth in selecting their career paths according to their interests and the needs of the labour market.

There is a need for an advocacy strategy to address the constraints faced in attempting to bring attention to the issue of FGM/C in Oman.

Capacity Development

Mostly met benchmarks

The implementation of the Country Programme included several training events conducted within the different IR of the workplans.

Efforts were made to enhance the capacity of the Government Project Officers. The most significant initiative was their enrolment in the Foundations of Monitoring and Evaluation courses in 2012-2013.

Following a RBM (Results-based Management) workshop conducted in 2011 for all UNICEF staff, the OCO conducted a training needs assessments among partners in 2012 and organized a RBM training for staff of the MOSD (Ministry of Social Development).

After proper training of OCO staff, the potential use of a Human Right based approach for programming to assess the capacity of rights holders and duty-bearers will be explored in 2013. That will assist in adopting a more relevant and effective approach to capacity development.

Communication for Development

Initiating action to meet benchmarks

A mission was undertaken by the Regional Chief of Communication in 2012. A workshop was organized for staff from partner Ministries as well as others to provide them with an opportunity apply effective C4D (Communication for Development) principles and methodology, and manage C4D within sectoral programmes, including measuring behavioural and social change outcomes that contribute to the achievement of planned results of the Country Programme.

The Programme Officer for Health & Nutrition participated in the regional communication workshop. The workshop used an interactive and practical approach to deal with the multiple communication challenges faced by UNICEF at this volatile time in the region -- both in terms of messaging content as well as the techniques and channels to employ. Contacts were established with communication and media specialists in MENA and NYHQ for further support.

The post of C4D officer remains vacant. Alternative solutions are being explored as C4D is critical for the achievement of the results of the Country Programme. It is expected that a technical expert will be recruited on a short term basis starting in 2013.

Strategic Partnerships

Partially met benchmarks

Beyond the established partnership with Government departments, ad hoc partnership with civil society has prevailed in the implementation of the country programme.

The Oman Country Office has continued its innovative partnership with Omantel on Corporate Social Responsibility.

WHO, UNFPA and FAO are the only UN agencies based in Oman. There is no UNDAF, and any framework for coordination and partnership is still to be defined.

A mapping of partnerships will be initiated in 2013.

Knowledge Management

Partially met benchmarks

One of the main areas of support from UNICEF to the GoO is in the area of 'Policy, Advocacy and Partnerships'. With UNICEF's support, the NCSI began implementation of an initiative to utilize the census data to produce a number of policy briefs to support evidence-based advocacy for policy makers. The policy briefs are of priority areas including women, youth, and children.

The focus of the current Country Programme is on collecting and analysing disaggregated data for evidence-based planning and strengthening the information base on the most vulnerable children. Discussions were on-going in 2012 with stakeholders to establish a database for a cohort study on cardio-metabolic risk factors to monitor the trends of non-communicable diseases of children and youth in Oman. This will be a valuable source of data for health planning. Consequently, a technical team is preparing and developing a policy document on obesity to address causes, prevention and management of obesity in children and youth.

Human Rights Based Approach to Cooperation

Fully met benchmarks

The Oman 2012-2015 refers several times to the three conventions: CRC, CEDAW and the Convention on Persons with Disability.

A training workshop on CRC reporting was planned in 2012 but had to be delayed and is rescheduled for 2013.

The 2012-2013 workplan includes the undertaking of a Situation Analysis. Preparatory work should have started in 2012 but because of the postponement of MICS (multiple indicator cluster survey) it will be initiated in 2013. That will give the office an opportunity to train or retrain OCO staff on HRBAP and (re)introduce the approach to the national partners.

Gender Equality

Partially met benchmarks

The 'Enhancement of School Retention in Oman' study was carried out with the Ministry of Education, as well as other ministries including health, social development and manpower to determine the factors that have led to the school drop out rates in the Sultanate, together with the development of appropriate mechanisms to reduce this phenomenon by increasing school enrolment rates and improve the quality of education. Gender equality was examined in this study, particularly as it affects school retention.

A life skills manuals for the age group 16-18 was developed focusing on the following subject matters: legal education; health & safety; the family; dialogue of cultures; community service through volunteer work; and, personal skills. It promotes and strengthens the issue of gender equality towards developing qualitative and quantitative behavioural indicators.

Environmental Sustainability

Partially met benchmarks

The Ministry of Education, the Environment Society of Oman, and Shell Oman worked on preparing the Environment Education Document in the Omani Curriculum. The objective of this initiative is to help educate school children and their families by incorporating environment related topics into the current curriculum used in public and private schools to improve awareness of environmental issues and encourage students and their families to become actively involved in conservation. It involves partnerships with different organizations to foster cooperation between the government, NGOs and the private sector to promote conservation of Oman's natural environment.

Narrative Analysis by Programme Component Results and Intermediate Results

Oman - 6350

PC 1 - Early childhood development and health

 On-track

PCR 6350/A0/05/801 By 2015, 50 per cent of children between 3.5 to 5.5 years of age from families benefiting from social grant scheme are able to access quality early childhood education.

Progress: Most notable progress has been in the development and validation of a set of national standards for the child friendly schools (CFS) initiative and the evaluation of the first phase of the Plan of Action (POA) for Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF).

Progress towards achievement of this PCR was limited due to change in senior management of the Oman Country Office (OCO) in early July and the vacant post of the Representative in the second half of the year. In addition, 3 out of 4 government seconded project officers joined the MCO in the first quarter of the year with one taking leave for more than 6 months. The new project officers hence had limited opportunity for familiarization with UNICEF working methods and procedures. The absence of the Representative, not replaced by a UNICEF staff in charge of programme coordination and supervision of Government project officers during the second half of the year imposed that for instance all terms of reference (TORs) for consultancies had to be cleared by the relevant MENA Regional Office advisors. This requirement, together with the delays in getting the regional feedback resulted in the postponement of activities related to the investment study on early childhood care and education (ECCE) and the development of the early childhood development (ECD) strategy.

 On-track

IR 6350/A0/05/801/001 IR 1.1.1 By 2015 a policy on early childhood development with a monitoring plan of action is implemented.

Progress:

Development of an ECD strategy is a priority for the Ministry of Education informed by an investment study on early childhood care and education (ECCE). Implementation has lagged behind due to the vacancy of the UNICEF Representative post in the second half of the year and delayed feedback to the OCO on the TORs for both the ECCE study and the ECD strategy development from the MENA Regional Office.

Awareness-raising in the community on the importance of preschool education was identified as a key area of need in the 'Pre and PostStudy of the Preschool in Oman' completed in 2012. In response, preparatory measures have been initiated for the development of a national campaign on preschool education, with the participation of civil society including the media, to be carried out in 2013.

In infant and young child feeding, an evaluation of Stage 1 of the POA for IYCF..

Review of clinical guidelines for Down Syndrome were conducted and a training package and training of health personnel will be conducted in 2013.

 On-track

IR 6350/A0/05/801/002 IR1.1.2 By 2015, CBOs and 40 per cent of first cycle schools in three remote areas are providing awareness-raising on better parenting including information about the development needs of children in the early years of life, including for children with disabilities.

Progress:

The Ministry of Education had plans to implement a series of training workshops for capacity building of teachers and educators working with children in the age group 6-10, including children with disabilities. Similarly, the MOE is planning to develop National Standards for ECD. TORs for both activities were developed and will be implemented in 2013.

The Ministry of Social Development manages 109 nurseries. To strengthen the knowledge and understanding of nursery supervisors on the nursery curriculum, a joint MOSD-UNICEF training of trainers was prepared and will be implemented in 2013.

The update of the standard operating procedures (developed in 1995) on developmental assessment of children during the first 5 years of life, at specific contact points at the level of PHC (primary health care), was not carried out. The MOH is planning to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the health services on childhood services and specifically those offered to children with disabilities for early identification and intervention in 2013. Following this assessment, the SOPs on developmental assessment of children under the age of five to screen for and detect delays in developmental milestones will be updated. This will be done with a view to ensuring that the screening programme is integrated in the primary health care system and can be sustained over time. The existing constraints such as the overload of the PHC system and staff, shortages of nurses and staff specialized in childhood disabilities will be taken into account. Progress towards achievement of this IR has been limited in 2012 mainly due to human resource constraints.

PCR 6350/A0/05/804 PCR 1.2 By 2015 the Government of Oman is better able to provide quality child health and nutrition services in all regions.

 On-track

IR 6350/A0/05/804/001 IR 1.1.3 By 2015, 25 per cent of health centres have a referral system on early screening and diagnosis of childhood disability.

Progress:

IR 6350/A0/05/804/002 IR 1.2.1 By 2015, a monitoring Plan of Action on non-communicable diseases affecting children and young people is in place.

IR 6350/A0/05/804/003 IR 1.2.3 Improved surveillance and monitoring of pregnant women to ensure adequate service delivery and support during pregnancy and after delivery in Oman by 2015.

PC 2 - Child protection

 On-track

PCR 6350/A0/05/802 By 2015 the Government of Oman is better able to develop, implement, and enforce evidence based policies geared towards the protection of children and adolescents from violence, exploitation, and abuse.

Progress:

Monitoring of child abuse centred on preparation for two capacity building activities which will take place in 2013.

The process for preparation of an Action Plan for Children was initiated in 2012 and will be completed in 2013. The experience gained from the preparation of this Plan will inform and guide the drafting of Action Plans for Women and Children with disability. Four capacity building activities were planned of which only one relating to training of trainers on the CRC was completed.

The Child Friendly School Initiative has been introduced and a set of standards on six topics has been developed and validated. The six topics include: child rights promotion; gender responsiveness; health, safety and protection; learning effectiveness; and, stakeholder participation-

In light of reservations of the MoH and MoSD to engage on FGM/C, no progress was made in 2012. Government buy-in and participation is critical as is UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO advocacy and dialogue with all actors concerned.

In the area of HIV/AIDS, focus was on the review and revision of a household level survey on people living with HIV and translation of some IEC materials into Arabic. Development of a plan of action for teachers.

parents and school staff on stigma and discrimination against children living with HIV could not be pursued by the Ministry of Health given the lack of interest by the MoE. At the Annual Review Meeting in December it was agreed that the MoH will engage school nurses (each school to have one nurse from 2013 onwards) for implementation of this activity and UNICEF will also explore with the MoE the possible integration under the Child Friendly School Initiative.

Participation of children and young people in decisions and activities affecting their lives and raising awareness on the child's rights were promoted through the launch of a child friendly version of the CRC and development of six life skills manuals for the age group 16-18 by the MoE.

 On-track

IR 6350/A0/05/802/001 IR 2.1.1 By 2015, 100 per cent of professionals across sectors working in the Regional Task forces to monitor cases of child abuse trained.

Progress: Capacity building efforts centred on preparatory steps for training of the MoH staff at health facilities to address child abuse and the Ministry of Social Development Regional Teams, which monitor cases of reported abuse and neglect. The training workshops will be held in the first quarter 2013 due to the inability to identify a suitable consultant to have the knowledge of the cultural and legislative context.

 On-track

IR 6350/A0/05/802/002 IR 2.1.2 By 2015, improved national capacity to identify, implement and monitor programs geared to children with disabilities to provide community- and home-based services.

Progress:

Development of three Plans of Action had been planned for completion in 2012 in the joint Biannual Workplan of the MOSD and UNICEF including An Action Plan for Children, An Action Plan for Women, and An Action People for People with Disabilities. Work has only begun on the Action Plan for Children, whose goal is to upgrade the services, programmes and activities for children as well as developmental services that are provided in different sectors such as education. A conceptual framework and a workplan were prepared. At the Annual Review Meeting it was agreed that the scope of the Action Plan for People with Disabilities needs to be scaled down to one focusing on children in light of UNICEF's mandate. Preparation of this Action Plan and the one for women will draw on the experience gained in preparing the Action Plan for Children.

A number of capacity building activities were planned for the year with the MoSD. A regional Training of Trainers on the CRC Articles took place in December 2012. The regional TOT Workshops on The Convention For Persons With Disability for MOSD staff was postponed to 2013. The updating of seven Home Care Manuals for Families of Children with Disabilities was not completed as originally planned.

In the area of norms and standards, development of technical guidelines on school environment and occupational hazard for school nurses could not be implemented but will be reconsidered in the context of child friendly schools.

Adaptation of Cognitive tests and related strategies for children with disabilities is an area of interest for the MOE and will be followed by the development of an educational package in 2013. The MOE had also planned to evaluate services provided for blind children. While the preparatory steps were completed it was jointly agreed with UNICEF to postpone this evaluation to 2013 due to the current workload.

The CFS initiative introduced in 2012 aims to enhance the quality of education and increase school enrolment. Among its objectives are also the promotion of an effective and participatory education system; creation of awareness of the CRC among children, parents and communities; integration of the CRC in the national school curriculum and educational policies; inclusion of children with disabilities within the school system; and, strengthening of partnerships among all targeted groups in the community. National standards have been developed and validated for the following areas: child rights promotion; gender responsiveness; health, safety and protection; learning effectiveness; and, stakeholder participation.

In response to the concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on CEDAW, for the Government to further investigate the prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) and

to advocate to policy and decision makers to stop this harmful practice to the girl child, the new country programme 2012-15 has prioritized FGM for concerted action. A qualitative study conducted in 2009 by the MOH and UNICEF, but not yet released by the MOH, suggests that female genital cutting (FGC) is widely accepted and perpetuated by senior female members of the extended family. Given the sensitivity of the subject and the fact that the MOSD was not involved in conducting the qualitative study, no progress was made on two awareness raising programmes on FGC planned for 2012.

Based on discussions at the Annual Review Meetings in December, both Ministries will not only consider this important issue but they did identify measures that can be taken to address FGC. It was agreed that the terms harmful traditional practices will be used to describe joint work on FGC rather than 'awareness raising programme on women'.

To promote healthy lifestyles and decision making among young people in the age group 16-18, UNICEF developed six life skills manuals on 1) legal education; 2) health and safety; 3) the family; 4) dialogue of cultures; 5) community service through volunteer work; and 6) personal skills. The MoE national team is finalizing the content before printing and distribution in 2013.

To raise awareness on, and promote child rights, a child friendly version of the CRC was produced and launched in October 2012 as a joint effort between the MoE and UNICEF.

The MOSD finalized the Omani Law on Child Rights in conformity with the CRC. This Law has been under Government review and once it is adopted its dissemination among children will be supported.

Interventions towards the achievement of this IR was limited to reviewing and rewriting a household level survey previously conducted on people living with HIV, and the translation of some IEC materials into Arabic at the request of MOH.

Development of a Plan of Action for teachers, parents and school staff on stigma and discrimination of children living with HIV by the Ministry of Health and in collaboration with the MOE could not be carried out due to MOH plan to appoint school nurses who will be HIV focal points in each school. By the end of 2015, the MOH will have a school nurse in each school and is planning to pursue this activity through school nurses. At the annual review meeting, it was also suggested that the CFS initiative would provide an excellent channel for pursuit of awareness-raising on stigma and discrimination. OCO will pursue these discussions with the MOE and MOH in this regard.

PC 3 - Data and knowledge management

 On-track

PCR 6350/A0/05/803 PCR 3.1 By 2015, the GoO is better able to collect, analyse, and disseminate gender- and age-disaggregated data on the situation of women and children

Progress: The most significant developments included: training of MOSD staff in results based management, qualitative research methodology in data collection and analysis on school retention through a study with MOE; desk review of secondary data on obesity among children and youth with Ministry of Health; a survey on Education, Vocational Training & Employment followed by a national workshop with the MOE to strengthen linkages between learning outcomes and the labour market; and, the development of an information system. Preparatory steps were also taken to conduct a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and develop a Child Well Being Index.

Delays in programme implementation were mainly due to the following vacant UNICEF Representative post in the second half of the year; the establishment of the National Center for Statistics and Information in May 2012 as the main counterpart for the Data and Knowledge Management Programme following the dissolution of the Ministry of National Economy in March 2012; the joining of three new Government seconded staff to UNICEF in first quarter of 2012; and UNICEF's inability to identify suitable consultants.

 On-track

IR 6350/A0/05/803/002 IR 3.1.1 By 2015, national capacity in management information systems, and monitoring and evaluation systems at national and sub-national levels in child-related organizations is strengthened (governmental and CSOs).

Progress:

Development of national capacity in management information systems as well as in monitoring and evaluation was a priority.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) on MICS reached the Ministry of Legal Affairs for final clearance before approval by the Cabinet. The issue of UNICEF's access to raw data has been resolved in accordance with Omani law. Data collection and analysis are planned in 2013.

A survey was conducted to identify the main components of the Observatory on Education, Vocational Training and Labour Market Needs following a workshop to present international standards and experiences. The purpose of the Observatory is to provide strategic information for policy makers, managers of educational and training institutions, employers, counselling personnel, and individuals seeking orientation in education, training and employment.

Training on technical report writing on child-related Conventions for Ministry staff could not take place as planned but will be implemented in the first quarter of 2013. Strengthening of MOSD database by reduction of number of indicators and addition of results based indicators was taken over by the MOSD due to UNICEF's inability to field a suitable consultant.

Implementation of some other activities were postponed or cancelled due to UNICEF's inability to find suitable consultants, or delays related to the need for clearance by MENA Regional Advisers of consultant TORs, such as the review of the MOSD database, training of MOSD staff in international report writing, and the Observatory on Children with Disabilities.

An Omani Child Well-being Index is being developed with technical expertise from Oxford University. A first phase was completed with an agreement on the measures necessary to obtain a composite index. It will be measured at the lowest administrative/geographic level of the country, mainly based on census data but also exploring opportunities to refine it by integrating relevant administrative data from the MOH, MOE and MoSD.

 On-track

IR 6350/A0/05/803/003 IR 3.1.2 By 2015, more equity and vulnerability analysis conducted to identify the causes of underlying trends and disparities, including gender-based analysis are disseminated

Progress: The objectives of having an updated situation analysis of children and a situation analysis of youth based on new data and information could not be fulfilled given that MICS was not carried out.

UNICEF supported a study on school retention and the findings were presented to the MOE in December. The study revealed the issues related to school drop-out of children and challenges for retentions such as:- the family socio economic status ; health issues of the children; and some of the structural barriers related to the education systems.

Childhood obesity is a growing trend and a matter of concern for the MOH. As a first step towards development of a policy document on child and adolescent obesity: causes, prevention and management, UNICEF supported a desk review of draft and published studies, reports and documents to identify the social, behavioural and environmental determinants of child and adolescent obesity in Oman.

Based on 2012 census data, 11 briefs were planned for policy makers on topics such as demographics, employment, living standards, family composition, disability, the quality of the education system, and traffic accidents. Only the first two briefs were prepared but had to be revised to meet quality standards. Other

briefs will be prepared and finalized in 2013.

PCR 6350/A0/05/805 PCR 3.2 By 2015, an integrated Social Policy addressing the rights of women and children is developed with adequate resources allocated.

 On-track

IR 6350/A0/05/805/003 IR 3.2.1 Improved national capacity to assess and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of programmes and national resources particularly those targeting the most vulnerable population including children by 2015.

PC 800 - Cross-sectoral costs

PCR 6350/A0/05/800 Programme Support

 On-track

IR 6350/A0/05/800/001 Governance and Systems

Progress:

Throughout the year the OCO advisory and review committees were active and functioned well. In 2012 the Office maintained the same committees as in previous years, namely: the Country Management Team (CMT); Contract Review Committee (CRC); Joint Consultative Committee (JCC); and, Local Property Survey Board (LPSB). It is a regular practice in the office that major office objectives and priorities are discussed at the CMT meetings. The CMT minutes are placed on the shared drive and each staff in the office has access to the minutes for their review and follow up actions. The CMT continued regular monitoring of Office Management Indicators in order to stay on track.

The BCP (Business Continuity Plan) was updated in 2012 by the Operations Manager following general discussion with the Office staff.

Office priorities are on track.

- Staff better understand roles and responsibilities through proper orientation in role and responsibilities, financial rules, etc.
- Financial authorities delegated through ZRole/Zvisa
- Staff better acquainted with office decisions through circulation of minutes such as CMT/Programme Management/learning events/JCC.
- Office wide risk level adjusted through review of ERM.
- Office management committees established and well-functioning.

 On-track

IR 6350/A0/05/800/002 Financial Resources and Stewardship

Progress:

OCO rolled out the VISION/ SAP platform on 1 January 2012. Despite initial system challenges on bank reconciliation process and transactions, the Office managed to complete this exercise every month within the deadline. All reconciling items were addressed with appropriate action.

The Office Role mapping was done very accurately to fully meet office needs in effective work processes and keeping conflict of roles to a minimum. Nevertheless, keeping the Segregation of Duties (SOD) standards presents a serious problem for the small office.

 On-track

IR 6350/A0/05/800/003 Human Capacity

Progress:

The office continued to complete PER/ePAS to manage staff performance and identify learning needs. While Oman is at security level one, the office successfully carried out a simulation of BCP. The MOSS recommendation is implemented in cooperation with UNDSS (United Nations Department of Safety and Security).

Staff development activities in 2012 were packaged for optimal performance of staff in line with the new country programme priorities other significant staff development events that were held including the Programme Planning Process (PPP) training, and Team Building exercise where all staff members participated. The percentage of the learning training in 2012 was 78 per cent.

IR 6350/A0/05/800/888 HR

 On-track

IR 6350/A0/05/800/889 Cross-sectoral

Progress:

Cross-sectoral funds cover salaries of programme assistant and support staff on institutional contracts and operating expenses, security, office rent, and communication costs.

PCR 6350/A0/05/806 Effective and Efficient programme management and operations support.

 On-track

IR 6350/A0/05/806/001 Programme management and operations support.

Progress:

Cross-sectoral funds cover salaries of programme assistant and support staff on institutional contracts and operating expenses, security, office rent, and communication costs.

Effective Governance Structure

The office maintained a steady level of operations and programme management performance throughout 2012. OCO held a total of 4 CMT meetings in 2012. The Annual Management Review was also held for 2012. The Annual Management Plan 2012 covered key management priorities, programme, management, human resources development, partnership, staff learning and monitoring.

In view of the small size of the office, all staff members are included in the CMT.

Initiatives were taken by the CMT during 2012 to improve operations and programme management performance. These included the following:

- OCO updated the ERM Risk Profile and Risk Control Library for 2012, identifying the opportunities and challenges that may have implications on the achievement of programme results. Consequently all office processes are guided by the ERM policy; CPD, CPMP, CPAP, annual planning and reporting processes are risk informed. This framework is particularly important for OCO as it operates with some unique features including programme funding that is primarily provided by the GoO as well as government seconded project officers. In order to ensure systematic and timely monitoring of the ERM risk library, an assessment will be conducted in the first quarter of 2013 to take stock of action points/recommendations.
- Annual Management Plan (AMP) 2012 was finalized through a review by the CMT. AMP priorities for 2012 were guided by the ERM policy and framework and staff training needs.
- AMP 2012 highlighted both programme and management priorities. Some of the management priorities include: OCO to adhere to new modalities for operations and programming as outlined in VISION; ensure maintaining at least minimum level of readiness for crisis and emergency response; ensure systematic and timely monitoring of ERM risk library through assessing the presence and function of its components and evaluating them; ensure adherence to audit implementation and action plan; monitor KPIs on a quarterly basis; monitor the office learning plan on quarterly basis; ensure WRM, CMT and programme meetings are conducted regularly, and minutes are recorded and shared as appropriate; ensure adherence of the internal rules and procedures for office improvement.
- CMTs and other staff meetings serves opportunities to update staff share information, and to identify what is required of the office.
- Given the organization's focus on innovations, the office designated a focal point for innovation who is the government seconded PO for Education. Following the innovation retreat held in 2011, and meetings with counterparts, a draft MOU was developed with the Information Technology Authority Oman to implement a project on innovation for Omani youth. The programme team was encouraged to include in the consultancy TORs a focus on creative/ innovative mechanisms for implementing the activities and deliverables
- Reviews are held with partners in implementation of the country programme, identifying constraints, and discussing solutions. The Office Improvement Plan was developed based on the performance and experience of the CO in 2012. The OIP covers staff learning and development; performance management and feedback; staff well-being; and, programme effectiveness. The Business Continuity Plan is updated as required.

Strategic Risk Management

Emergency preparedness is ensured through the EWEA (Early Warning, Early Action) system. OCO in cooperation with the 3 agencies in Oman (WHO, UNFPA and FAO) relies on strengthening the emergency preparedness system through interagency collaboration and maintaining close relations with Government agencies such as the Disaster Management Committee (DMC) and Oman Charitable Organization (OCO) in providing required humanitarian assistance. There were no emergency situations in Oman affecting programme implementation in 2012.

Core Commitments for Children are disseminated to counterparts. A strong partnership is also maintained with Civil Defence, the Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A review of the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) was conducted in 2012 and accordingly updated to include

OCO's readiness to maintain continuity of highly critical functions during and following a disaster and/or crisis event.

The Security Risk Assessment (SRA) is updated periodically. It fully reflects mechanisms in the event of a sudden need for humanitarian intervention to ensure that possible potential risks are appropriately calculated.

Oman is currently security level one. The country continues to be one of the safest and stable countries in the MENA region.

The audit observations are closed. The audit implementation and action plan is being monitored to ensure that internal risk control measures are adhered to in day-to-day work.

Evaluation

OCO has ensured that the process for monitoring the implementation of planned activities is in place. Outcome and recommendations of major studies/evaluations are formally presented to the Government. There were no evaluations conducted in 2012.

The OCO has made efforts to strengthen the capacities of the Government Project Officers in the area of monitoring and evaluation by offering them additional, external M&E training. Two RBM workshops were organized in 2012 for staff and partners to build their capacity in this important area.

The Office has an up-to-date IMEP which guides the planning, implementation and monitoring of activities and evaluations in key programmes.

Though OCO does not have in-house capacity to conduct evaluations, support is provided by MENARO as required.

Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

ICT priorities were largely focussed on VISION related needs. Two missions were conducted by Regional Office colleagues to provide support. Procedures necessary for migration to VISION were undertaken by the OCO in a timely manner. VISION role mapping has been developed, and roles and responsibilities of staff members have been identified. Staff accountability in the area of VISION access and utility was defined in order to maintain absolute confidentiality and integrity of UNICEF's data and systems.

OCO is supported by the ICT HUB in MENARO, the core business applications, mainly VISION and Lotus Notes are accessed remotely using various IT tools such as CITRIX, VPN client and Win Term. In addition, the regional ICT HUB is also managing the overall ICT functions for OCO and on-site IT support is provided by a local service provider in Oman.

The office also has a BGAN Satellite terminal equipment which can be utilized for voice and data connectivity in the case of an emergency.

HQ rollouts were applied on time; all servers/services have been migrated to the Windows 2008R2 HyperV Virtual servers environment which provides more effective ICT management, and lowers the cost of additional server hardware. The computer hardware being used in the office is as per UNICEF's standards. It meets the current requirements/specifications and is configured following UNICEF standards.

It was noted that all requests for ICT related assistance are duly responded to by the Regional ICT Manager. Additionally, the office has a contract for on-site ICT support with a local company and support is being provided by the company once a week for 4 hours.

Fund-raising and Donor Relations

The Government of Oman continues to be the primary source of programme funds for UNICEF in Oman. UNICEF recognizes that new partnerships are critical to deliver results for children, including the achievement of the MDGs, thus efforts have been made towards establishing new partnerships. However, no new partnerships were formalized in 2012.

As part of the strategic partnership with the largest telecommunication establishment in Oman (Omantel) initiated in 2011 to support the work of UNICEF in promoting the rights of children and towards increasing corporate social responsibility (CSR) culture in Oman, a CSR workshop scheduled for 2012 had to be postponed to early 2013. The CSR workshop conducted in January 2013 was attended by staff of Omantel and a few other corporate sectors. Future contributions from Omantel are pending decision by their new management.

The CSR culture is evolving in Oman although currently few corporate sectors have established their CSR units. Strategic involvement and participation of potential partners and donors in Oman with UNICEF will need to be addressed.

Management of Financial and Other Assets

OCO had a total of 3 Grants in 2012. Donor reports have been submitted on time. Assessment of the quality of donor reports is included as an indicator in the KPIs. Additionally a checklist for review and clearance of donor reports is used as a tool while finalizing the reports. Quality assurance mechanisms are applied to the extent possible. Quality standards have been met using the checklists. The CMT reviews the donor report status on a quarterly basis and through the Office Management Reports.

In recognition of the need to strengthen follow-up and monitoring of programme implementation, a progress report on programme implementation, financial status and results achieved is prepared by the POs on a quarterly basis and submitted to respective Ministries.

There is no outstanding DCT transaction as of end 2012. The OCO receives no RR funds.

The Programme expenditure rate reached 51 per cent and 100 per cent expenditure for BMA Institutional Budget at the end of 2012.

Resources have been efficiently committed to programme activities.

Supply Management

The OCO did not have offshore supplies in 2012. No difficulties have been encountered in local procurement as local vendors have a solid and reliable marketing and procurement policy. The Country Office has not used in-kind supply assistance since the CP does not include service delivery. There is no collaboration with other UN agencies on supply and logistics. Oman is a high income country and the counterparts have adequate resources and supplies to deal with health needs and emergencies.

Supply related services from Supply Division were not required in the year 2012 except for the purchase of cold chain equipment and Vitamin A capsules for the MOH on a reimbursable procurement basis.

Human Resources

Based on the assessment of the critical staff competency needs, the OCO developed individual training plans for each staff member aligned with their job requirements in the context of a small office where staff would benefit from orientation on a number of areas as they have to discharge multiple tasks.

Regulation of roles and responsibilities of the Government secondees is important to enhance the programme

of collaboration and this framework was signed and endorsed by the Government in 2012. It is included as an annex in the CPAP 2012-2015.

An Office Improvement Plan (OIP) is in place. The key areas identified included: business process efficiency to provide learning/refresher courses in a few areas; strengthened coordination and cooperation in area of programming; empowerment of the Staff Association; and, work-life balance. OIP monitoring and review mechanisms are in place. The OIP plays an important role in further building on areas of strength and making staff aware of their roles and responsibilities in the workplace. Regular programme and CMT meetings are held where roles and responsibilities are discussed.

About 78% completion rate was achieved in the Office Learning Plan. As per the organizational requirement, focus was on VISION training and preparedness. VISION training was provided to all staff and participation was mandatory. Given the limited staff members in OCO, the roll out of VISION remains a challenge in terms of segregation of duties. Staff was adequately trained in VISION, with support mission from the Regional Office. Staff is also encouraged to enhance their skills through continuous learning. Emphasis was also placed on courses on equity. OCO continued to support developing the skills of the staff and secondees in RBM, M&E and other online training related to programme.

The office currently has no stress management committee but has a peer support focal point. The office also has a focal point for sexual exploitation and abuse.

Despite two attempts at advertising for the post of NOC for C4D and obtaining a large number of applications, no suitable candidate was found. The post therefore remains vacant.

Following the results of the Global Staff Survey, a workplan has been developed to address staff issues and it is being implemented. A team building exercise was held in 2012 as part of the workplan.

Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

As has been a standard practice of good management of funds, certain efficiency gains in resource use, costs savings and reductions were achieved and reallocated to operating costs. Staggered working hours introduced for drivers continues to result in a cut back in overtime costs. Utilization of office vehicles and drivers during weekends and holidays is kept to an absolute minimum. As a result there has been an overall reduction in operating costs.

Additionally, following negotiations with the Landlord, rent of the premises currently occupied by UNICEF and UNFPA is reduced considerably effective January 2013, resulting in a saving for the office of 27% per month.

Changes in AMP & CPMP

The AMP was developed through a participatory process, guided by the lessons learned in 2011 and priorities of the CPMP. Key performance indicators were further strengthened to ensure continuous efficiency.

The focus of the AMP was on equity and innovations, with initiatives to improve and introduce innovative changes to work that bring value-added contributions to the stakeholders and also bring improvement to business processes with clear deliverables.

With an increased focus on equity, and in the context of on-going projects such as the study on School Retention and assessment of Child Friendly Schools, UNICEF's interventions are being directed towards all Governorates including those which are more vulnerable.

Bi-Annual Work Plans for 2012-2013 are based on prioritized interventions that are focused and bring value-added, based on the agreed-upon priorities identified in the CPD.

The implementation of the CP 2012-2015 is guided by the CPMP, the IB, and the Annual Management Plan.

Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AMR	Annual Management Review
ARM	Annual Review Meeting
AWP	Annual Work Plan
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CP	Country Programme
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability
CSG	Community Support Group
CSGV	Community Support Group Volunteers
FFL	Facts for Life
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
GoO	Government of Oman
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HHIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
IEC	Information/Education/Communication
KABP	Knowledge, Attitude, Behaviour and Practices
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practices
MCH	Mother and Child Health
MD	Millennium Declaration
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MENARO	MENA Regional office
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOH	Ministry of Health
MoLA	Ministry of Legal Affairs
MoM	Ministry of Manpower
MoSA	Ministry of Sports Affairs
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
NCSI	National Center For Statistics and Information
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCO	Oman Country Office
OR	Other Resources
PEM	Protein Energy Malnutrition
PLWHA	People Living with HIV/AIDS
RBP/RBM	Results Based Planning/Management
ROP	Royal Oman Police
RR	Regular Resources
SQU	Sultan Qaboos University
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WHO	World Health Organization