UNICEF Annual Report 2016

Belize

Executive Summary

UNICEF Belize began the last year of the Country Programme (CP) (2013-2016) with the dual challenge of preparing simultaneously the next CP and the UNDAF 2017-2021.

For the first time, the United Nations agencies of all Dutch and English-speaking countries in the Caribbean and Latin America formulated joint priorities to tackle shared development challenges. The resulting multi-country sustainable development framework streamlines the actions to be taken by different agencies to address a series of issues in the areas of health, education, violence, climate change, employment and others. The framework will not only enable improved inter-agency coordination of activities, but will also enhance the UN’s capacity, accountability and effectiveness in supporting the participating countries to achieve progress in these areas.

In the same vein, UNICEF country offices from the region came together to identify shared challenges and formulate joint result frameworks that differ at the activity level, but aim to achieve equivalent outcomes and outputs. While adding to the complexity of planning, this process is expected to yield significant benefits in terms of monitoring and reporting on progress, information and knowledge sharing, opportunities for leveraging resources and achieving long-term results for children in the region.

Although significant efforts went into planning for the next country programme, UNICEF Belize continued to implement previously planned activities throughout the year. While successfully responding to a humanitarian crisis resulting from Hurricane Earl, UNICEF Belize completed the multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS5) data collection, analysis and key findings report, and saw the opening of the country’s first child-friendly Family Court (CFC) and the construction of a second one. UNICEF supported an evaluation of the country’s flagship conditional cash transfer programme (‘Building Opportunities for Our Social Transformation’, BOOST) and the subsequent piloting of a new wraparound service model for social services aimed at vulnerable families and children.

In 2016, UNICEF Belize also: supported the implementation of an inter-sectoral early childhood development (ECD) policy, which it had helped draft in 2015; partnered with the special envoy for women and children in Belize to co-host the launch of a regional partnership for children with disabilities, and helped complete the new national results framework for children and adolescents (NRFCA) 2017-2030.

Produced in partnership with the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB), the MICS5 ‘Key Findings Report’ showed significant progress in ECD attendance over the last five years, with 55 per cent of children attending ECD, compared to 32 per cent in 2011. Exclusive breastfeeding more than doubled, from 14.7 per cent to 33 per cent, while the percentage of children who are severely stunted halved, from 5.5 to 2.6. An intensive inter-sectoral analysis facilitated by UNICEF, with involvement of all line ministries and relevant civil society organizations, resulted in the identification of key determinants for much of the remaining progress and challenges highlighted by the MICS5. The agreed steps for moving forward will guide the development of joint work plans in the next CP.
In regard to child justice, and as a result of the partnership with the Supreme Court of Belize, since January 2016 Belize’s first Child-friendly Family Court in Punta Gorda (south of the country) dealt with 791 family cases. These cases included custody, domestic violence and juvenile justice. In 100 per cent of cases that involved a young person who came in conflict with the law, children received support from a specialized social worker, which helped to ensure that children’s rights were protected. The CFC is a model court that ensures child-friendly procedures and approaches during court proceedings. Data collection is paramount in the model: the court collects data on 17 indicators on a monthly basis; these indicators were developed by a multi-agency team including social workers, police, magistrates, attorneys and UNICEF experts.

Despite UNICEF Belize’s intensive efforts and advocacy, the country was unable to submit the regular report on implementation status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Government is committed to do so in 2017, and UNICEF will continue to advocate for and support this endeavour. Similarly, although UNICEF collected copious information on the situation of children in Belize and regularly monitored a variety of child rights indicators, the ‘Situation of Children and Women in Belize’ report was delayed to 2017.

### Humanitarian Assistance

Hurricane "Earl" (Category 1) hit Belize in August, causing floods and structural damage to the country, predominantly in Belize City. The UN’s initial assessment of damage caused by Earl in some of the most vulnerable communities located in Belize District reported that hundreds of families were forced to seek refuge with relatives, neighbours and in government shelters. Many families lost their houses and belongings to flash flooding and winds of up to 80mph.

The emergency response by UNICEF Belize and the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) strengthened inter-sectoral water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) coordination and assistance-targeting mechanisms. UNICEF also provided and assisted in the distribution of 450 hygiene and family kits to the Ministry of Human Development Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation (MHDSTPA) and other stakeholders. The kits contained materials and information on the proper methods for handwashing, sanitation and hygiene.

Under an informal agreement with SMART, a major telecommunication company, UNICEF produced a list of short message service (SMS) messages that were broadcast by the mobile phone company – with technical support from PAHO and approval by the Ministry of Health (MoH). UNICEF Belize disseminated key messages on sanitation and hygiene through SMS that reached approximately 120,000 people.

Meetings were regularly held with the UNICEF Regional Office (RO) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which gave technical guidance and support. A review and documentation of lessons learnt was undertaken with the UN coordination team, which will be used to improve emergency planning and response at the country level. The resident coordinator requested an emergency cash grant: US$49,000 was granted for clean-up efforts in the municipalities to support risk response plans, which addressed Zika virus prevention.

This was the first emergency event for which UNICEF Belize acted as the lead coordinating agency for the UN system. Several lessons were learned from this humanitarian experience; three situation reports (SitReps) were disseminated globally by UNICEF and three were developed by the United Nations Emergency Technical Team (UNETT), with OCHA support.
As the flooding also increased the risk of spreading the Zika virus, UNICEF coordinated with PAHO/WHO to examine existing plans in the country programme related to Zika and determine the most effective way to contain its spread and mitigate risks. UNICEF Belize used pre-hurricane municipal development plans, specifically the clean-up and information dissemination components, as measure to prevent the spread of the virus. Additional emergency funds were granted to the Government and were used for clean-up activities in the municipalities to reduce the threat of Zika and dengue.

The UNICEF Belize Representative, who also acts as chair of the UN Emergency Technical Team, appeared on a popular morning talk show in the aftermath of the hurricane to discuss the UN’s humanitarian response and work in the WASH and health sectors, as a part of the emergency response. This was one of several media appearances by UNICEF Belize staff speaking on the subject of Zika and hurricane preparedness.

**Emerging Areas of Importance**

**Climate change and children.** The 2009 Human Development Paper – “Belize and Climate Change: The Cost of Inaction” validates the fact that Belize’s geographical location leaves the country vulnerable to the effects of climate change: risk of rising sea levels and increasing frequency and intensity of tropical storms. Belize’s economic dependence on natural resources heightens its vulnerability to rising temperatures and the resulting impacts on agricultural productivity, fisheries ecosystems, and other economic sectors.” (Richardson, 2009).

In Belize, climate change is an equity issue that has a disproportionate impact on children, especially the most disadvantaged. As of 2009, the last year for which data is available, poverty levels stood at 41 per cent among adults, and 50 per cent among children.

Although lacking a specific output on climate change, UNICEF Belize supported the work of one NGO providing environmental education to 2,000 vulnerable children. With the threat of Zika in 2016, UNICEF Belize also supported nine municipalities to develop risk response plans that addressed environmental clean-up initiatives. UNICEF programme officers and general staff also engaged in learning and development initiatives, which helped to improve their understanding of climate change and the risks associated with it, as they planned for more interventions in this area, in the next country programme cycle.

**Accelerate integrated early childhood development.** In 2011, MICS 4 data revealed that only 32 per cent of children between 36 and 59 months of age attended an early childhood education (ECE) programme, but this figure reached 55 per cent by 2015. The improved situation of children in this area of early childhood can partly be attributed to increased investment in ECD by the Government.

In 2016, UNICEF Belize continued to support the inter-sectoral coordination of Government ministries with responsibilities for health, education and human development to advance a national ECD policy and framework. This effort aimed to promote an inter-sectoral approach to ECD service provision and initiatives to ensure the right of all young children to a ‘good start in life’. The development of a strategic plan helped to shape the policy framework for ECD implementation within the three ministries.

The ECD operational plan being finalized in late 2106 outlines the roles and responsibilities of ECD service providers in a coordinated manner. Lessons learned from care for child development (CCD) trainings at the regional and national levels demonstrated a potential to prevent and protect young children from violence through this intervention. In 2016, joint trainings in CCD took place for staff in key social sector ministries (education, health and
human development). The insertion of CCD in social services and violence-prevention strategies was included in the strategic and implementation plans for 2017.

**Greater focus on the second decade of life.** Significant efforts were made to support effective and meaningful adolescent participation at the local level. In 2015-2016 UNICEF Belize supported the Ministry of Labour, Local Government and Rural Development (MLLGRD) and the Belize Mayors Association (BMA) to establish a Child Advisory Body (CAB) under the sustainable and child friendly municipalities’ initiative (SCFM) within each of nine selected municipalities. The objective was to create a platform for engaging children/adolescents on issues of concern to them in their local communities and to strengthen their capacity to hold Government and other duty-bearers to account.

A total of 135 children/adolescents are now members of child advisory bodies; however, the initiative impacts over 2,500 children as CAB membership includes members of established youth groups (from schools, churches, NGOs, Girl Guides, Scouts, and Cadets), out-of-school children and children with disabilities.

In 2016, UNICEF supported two initiatives that allowed children and adolescents to voice their concerns: the development of municipal strategic plans and their annual review. A major component in the development of these plans was a series of consultations with children and adolescents, where their views and perspectives on issues in the municipality were documented and used in the drafting of municipal strategic plans. During a UNICEF-supported annual review meeting held by the Belize’s Mayor Association, attended by all mayors and municipal councillors, children and adolescents shared their views, opinions and suggestions on issues such as safety, education, health, environment and nationality that pose barriers to their development.

**Summary Notes and Acronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMP</th>
<th>Annual management plan</th>
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<tr>
<td>BMA</td>
<td>Belize Mayor’s Association</td>
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<td>BOOST</td>
<td>Building Opportunities for Our Social Transformation (conditional cash transfer programme)</td>
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<td>CAB</td>
<td>Children’s Advisory Body</td>
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<td>CAI</td>
<td>Cantones Amigos de la Infancia</td>
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<td>CCD</td>
<td>Care for Child Development</td>
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<td>CCT</td>
<td>Conditional cash transfer</td>
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<td>CDF</td>
<td>Child Development Foundation</td>
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<td>CFC</td>
<td>Child-friendly courts</td>
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<td>CMT</td>
<td>Country management team</td>
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<td>CP</td>
<td>Country programme</td>
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<td>CPMP</td>
<td>Country programme management plan</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of Children</td>
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<td>DEC</td>
<td>District education centre</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early childhood development</td>
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<td>ECE</td>
<td>Early childhood education</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>GoB</td>
<td>Government of Belize</td>
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<td>GSS</td>
<td>Global staff survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>HACT</td>
<td>Harmonized approach to cash transfers</td>
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<td>HRBA</td>
<td>Human rights-based approach</td>
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<td>IPs</td>
<td>Implementing partners</td>
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<td>ISP</td>
<td>Internet service provider</td>
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<td>KFR</td>
<td>Key findings report</td>
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<td>LTA</td>
<td>Long-term arrangement</td>
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<td>MHDSTPA</td>
<td>Ministry of Human Development Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation</td>
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<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple indicator cluster survey</td>
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<td>MIS</td>
<td>Management information system</td>
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<td>MLLGRD</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour, Local Government and Rural Development</td>
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<td>MoEYS</td>
<td>Ministry of Education Youth and Sports</td>
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<td>MoH</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
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<td>NCFC</td>
<td>National Committee for Families and Children</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>NPA</td>
<td>National Plan of Action</td>
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<td>NRFCA</td>
<td>National results framework for children and adolescents</td>
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<td>OCHA</td>
<td>Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>OOSC</td>
<td>Out-of-school children</td>
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<td>PAHO</td>
<td>Pan American Health Organization</td>
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<td>PEP</td>
<td>Post-exposure prevention</td>
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<td>RC</td>
<td>Resident Coordinator</td>
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<td>RO</td>
<td>Regional Office</td>
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<td>S4D</td>
<td>Sports for Development</td>
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<td>SCFM</td>
<td>Sustainable and child-friendly municipalities</td>
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<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>SIB</td>
<td>Statistical Institute of Belize</td>
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<td>SIP</td>
<td>School improvement plans</td>
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<td>SMS</td>
<td>Short message service</td>
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<td>SPS</td>
<td>Social protection systems</td>
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<td>TIDE</td>
<td>Toledo Institute for Development and Environment</td>
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<td>TOR</td>
<td>Terms of reference</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNETT</td>
<td>United Nations emergency technical team</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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As a part of the Zika virus emergency preparedness and response, capacity building was provided to personnel in all nine municipalities for evidence-based vector control actions to prevent outbreaks of Zika, dengue and chikungunya. With this training, and thanks to support from the UNICEF Regional Office, eight municipalities completed communication risk engagement plans.

To support implementation of the national literacy and ECD policies, capacity building was provided to teachers and administrators in school improvement planning, curriculum planning and hygiene management. Five hundred teachers were trained by district education officers from the ECE unit on national screening and diagnostic testing for literacy interventions. Seventeen ‘roving care-givers’ from the MHDSTPA also received training in early literacy development, as part of the integrated implementation of the ECD policy.

One of the activities of Sports for Development (S4D) included the development and implementation of a management information system (MIS) tool, which ensures that partners track the beneficiaries of their projects, enabling better performance and impact monitoring. Today 15 agency staff from six implementing partners have the requisite competency to use and manage the S4D MIS. This process encouraged partners to support each other in different areas of expertise, such as child protection training, community mobilization and joint proposal submissions. Additional capacity building on evaluating social programmes was provided to MHDSTPA officials at a workshop in Brazil, resulting in the successful completion of the evaluation of Belize’s national conditional cash transfer programme.

To increase visibility, secure funding, start a public conversation on critical programmatic issues and give children a voice, UNICEF Belize developed a new storytelling workshop to train its partners. The workshop was delivered in December 2016 over two days to 12 representatives of partner agencies.

Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

The Belize MICS5 was carried out in 2015-2016 by the SIB, in collaboration with the Government of Belize and the Country Office. In September 2016, the key findings report (KFR) was launched, and in November a validation workshop was conducted with stakeholders from the Government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international agencies, the private sector and youths. The MICS5 is especially important in Belize as it is the only source of information on indicators for children at the national level disaggregated by district, urban/rural levels, and sex, age and wealth quintiles.

As part of the survey, 5,242 households were interviewed. A nationwide qualitative and quantitative study on out-of-school children (OOSC) was initiated and will be completed in 2017. In addition to data analysis, the study will identify strategies to overcome educational
exclusion. A bottleneck analysis of current birth registration coverage was commissioned and completed in 2016. Recommendations included capacity building for staff, implementation of nationwide bedside registration and mobile registration units in remote villages. From this analysis, a workplan will be developed in 2017 for implementing all recommendations.

UNICEF Belize supported the completion of a mapping of the social protection system (SPS), resulting in a set of recommendations to support the development of an integrated system. The recommendations were endorsed by the Government and are expected to be implemented in 2017. They include the adoption of a multidimensional poverty measurement, in line with the objectives of SGD 1.

An evaluation of BOOST, the conditional cash transfer programme, was also finalized, resulting in the adoption of measures to improve programme effectiveness, along with a model for BOOST + (See “Service Delivery” section) that began roll-out in late 2016.

**Partnerships**

UNICEF Belize continued its strong partnership with the Supreme Court and Family Court to achieve a comprehensive reform so that court facilities have child-friendly play and interview rooms, video link equipment and additional technology to protect children when they are required to testify. The work in 2017 will focused on fundraising for construction of another court, in San Ignacio.

Partnership with three line ministries (MoEYS, MHDSTPA, MoH) continued to drive work on an integrated strategic plan for the early childhood development policy. Partnership with the Statistical Institute of Belize resulted in data processing and preliminary data analysis for MICS5, the development and dissemination of the key findings report and a monitoring tool for sustainable and child-friendly municipalities (SCFM). The SCFM initiative was implemented through a partnership with MLLGRD, BMA, UNDP, SIB and the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC).

This partnership resulted in a successful South-South visit that led to the production of a workplan for the next two years and created spaces for adolescent participation in government and decision-making. The partnership with the National Committee resulted in the completion of the NRFCA 2017-2030, replacing the former National Plan of Action for Children 2004-2015. The NRFCA advances the child rights agenda and is aligned with all national strategic development plans and international commitments (including the SDGs), making it easier to implement, monitor and report on. UNICEF Belize will continue to support implementation of the 2017-2030 National Plan of Action for Children through its annual operational plans.

In partnership with UNDP, with considerable technical support from the World Bank and ILO, UNICEF Belize supported the completion of SPS mapping (see section on evidence generation) using an inter-agency mapping tool – core diagnostic instrument – becoming the third country in the world to apply this tool and resulting in valuable lessons learned.

**External Communication and Public Advocacy**

Following Belize’s first reported Zika case in April 2016, a communication campaign was developed to raise awareness of the Zika outbreak and promote the importance of public participation in vector-control efforts. The communication strategy involved the production of an animated video, an illustrated booklet, an infographic, a poster, a human interest story, several press releases and a social media campaign (still ongoing). The Zika video posted on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and was aired (at no cost) on national TV stations.
At the first-ever regional conference on ‘Partnership for Children with Disabilities’ held in Belize in October 2016, an integrated communication strategy was developed to put disability under the spotlight in public discourse at the national and international levels. Communication outputs included the inclusive signed video ‘Words Do Matter’, featuring children with a disability; a social media campaign that tied in with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December; media involvement with national press coverage; and the Representative’s participation in a popular morning talk show on national television. The video was chosen by UNICEF New York Headquarters, the UNICEF Regional Office and the US Fund for UNICEF to be promoted across their social media channels, and earned combined engagement nearing the thousands.

During 2016 UNICEF Belize’s Facebook page continued to grow thanks to a more dedicated focus on creating and promoting social media campaigns. Highlighted issues included S4D, ECD, disability, MICS5, Zika, WASH, violence against children (VAC) and birth registration. Followers increased from 3,105 ‘likes’ in 2015 to 4,265 ‘likes’ in 2016. In August 2016 Belize was hit by Hurricane Earl: UNICEF used its online channels, social media and SMS capabilities to share key messages and advice on child health and safety.

South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation

In October 2016, the Costa Rican Government hosted a South-South exchange entitled ‘Promote Child and Adolescent Protection through National and Local Policies: The Experience of the ‘Cantones Amigos de la Infancia’ project. Belize, Brazil, Colombia and Honduras participated in this horizontal exchange, with a view toward fostering multi-country programming, articulating best practices and generating sub-regional knowledge, as well as gaining better understanding of the lessons learned in the implementation of Costa Rica’s child-friendly cities initiative.

Belize’s delegation included the minister and director of Labour, Local Government and Rural Development (MLLGRD), mayors and deputy mayors, rapporteurs who serve as focal points for municipalities, as well as representatives from UNICEF Belize and the Statistical Institute of Brazil. During the five-day event, the delegation visited six municipalities that were certified as child-friendly. At the end of the exchange, participants concluded that certain components of Belize’s child-friendly municipalities’ programme (such as data, intersectoral advocacy among municipalities, and documentation of the SCFM process, adolescent participation and building stronger partnerships) needed to be strengthened. These components have been developed into the SCFM work plan for 2017. The Costa Rica team agreed to support the certification process of Belize’s SCFM, and several municipalities have agreed to continue to work together. The MLLGRD minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica agreed that during the next two years the Costa Rica delegation would visit Belize, so that Belize could demonstrate the advances made on the key components identified above.

Identification Promotion of Innovation

For the first time in Belize, a three-day technical sectoral meeting brought together ministries, departments, statutory bodies, international agencies, NGOs, young people and the private sector to review, validate and analyse the findings of MICS5, and to suggest solutions to identified problems. This level of analysis, fused with on-the-ground experience and real-life stories, produced a set of concrete reference points for strengthening national interventions. This novel opportunity allowed for discussion in many areas – such as health, education and protection – and came at an important time. The Government was in the process of national planning and budget preparation for 2017, and the policy and
programming recommendations generated from the MICS5 analysis were used as a vital component.

In the justice sector, Punta Gorda’s child-friendly court (CFC) is an example of innovation. Since the beginning of 2016 the court dealt with 791 family cases, including custody, domestic violence and juvenile justice. In all cases involving a young person who came in conflict with the law, children received support from a specialized social worker, who helped to ensure that children’s rights were protected. The CFC is a model court that ensures that child-friendly procedures and approaches are taken into account during court proceedings. Data collection is paramount in the child-friendly court (CFC): every month the court collects data on 17 indicators developed by a multi-agency team comprised of social workers, police, magistrates, attorneys and social policy experts.

In the area of S4D, one activity included the development and implementation of an MIS tool to ensure that partners track the beneficiaries of their projects, leading to better performance and impact monitoring. The MIS feeds into a national single registry of beneficiaries hosted by the Ministry of Human Development Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation, enabling timely information-sharing and improved service delivery.

Support to Integration and cross-sectoral linkages

In 2016 UNICEF Belize supported the development of the national results framework for children and adolescents (NRFCA 2017-2030), which responds to the identified priorities and findings from consultations that took place during the year. The development of the NRFCA was a collaborative and inclusive process that collected inputs from 500 children and adolescents and over 200 national stakeholders from the Government and NGOs. The plan is multi-sectoral and requires strategic interventions that support strengthened resilience of children and adolescents.

The establishment of a parenting task force, bringing together experts from key social sectors was commissioned by the MHDSTPA and supported by UNICEF to develop a strategic plan and coordinated approach to parenting support. In Belize, parenting programmes are provided by different entities with varying messages, but the parenting taskforce supported the harmonization of lessons and concepts, for a more coordinated delivery of parenting programmes and sessions. The work of the parenting taskforce in 2016 contributed to sector coordination in ECD, education, health and child protection.

UNICEF Belize also supported the mapping of a social protection system, implemented by an inter-sectoral working group encompassing all social sector ministries. The work increased stakeholder awareness of poverty as a multi-dimensional problem with extremely negative consequences for children, requiring multi-sectoral interventions. In December, a three-day technical meeting was held with line ministries and other key stakeholders, along with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer organizations, to review the findings of the MICS5 results. At this meeting, UNICEF Belize and national counterparts examined the data with a view toward better targeting national interventions by strengthening the inter-sectoral response in the areas of violence and child protection, health and ECD and multi-dimensional poverty alleviation.

Service Delivery

While UNICEF Belize did not directly provide service delivery to any specific group of beneficiaries, it provided both technical and financial support for the piloting of a social programme entitled ‘BOOST+’. This model was developed based on recommendations made in the evaluation of the original BOOST CCT programme, also supported by UNICEF Belize. BOOST+ targets around 400 families and children from the most impoverished South
Side Belize City area, providing intensive, holistic support to individuals with complex needs. Support is provided in a variety of areas, aiming to address multi-dimensional deprivations, such as lack of access to health, proper nutrition, education and training, home and shelter, and income and work. It is expected that following a two-year implementation period, the programme will be reviewed, improved and expanded beyond the current geographical area of intervention.

**Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation**

UNICEF Belize continued to be guided by the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and a human rights-based approach in its programming and strategies. Partnership with the national entity responsible for monitoring implementation of the CRC in Belize, the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC), continued – successfully producing the NRFCA 2017-2030 and the launch of the CRC Ambassadors programme. The latter seeks to train and empower young, enthusiastic activists and community leaders to act as advocates for child rights issues in their communities. The CRC Ambassadors were trained (by UNICEF Belize) and have implemented awareness-raising activities to support the work of the National Committee. In 2016 UNICEF Belize continued its advocacy for timely reporting on the state of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to the CRC Committee. Fully aware of its obligations, the country has repeatedly made commitments to finalize and submit the regular report, but precedence was given to more urgent issues. UNICEF Belize’s advocacy to submit the country report to the Committee, and its offer to support the country in the process, will be extended into 2017.

UNICEF Belize also continued to use social media to advocate and protect the rights of children, and to garner wider support for finding solutions to the problems that affect them. For example, in response to the curfew imposed on minors in South Side Belize City, UNICEF Belize used social media to raise awareness regarding the potential negative impact of imposing curfews for children, while simultaneously working with national partners to find alternative measures to protect children from violence and abuse.

**Gender Equality**

In 2016, UNICEF Belize made major strides toward strengthening gender mainstreaming in its programmes by applying a gender-focused approach to the reduction of disparities and inequalities. UNICEF continued to support the Government to implement its quality child-friendly school model by strengthening WASH facilities and programming in vulnerable schools in Belize, Stann Creek and Toledo districts.

According to the latest (2011) WASH assessment, 30 per cent of schools met the national standard of 25 girls per toilet, and 33 per cent of schools met the standard of 50 boys per toilet/urinal. UNICEF continued to implement a project for improving the quality of bathroom facilities for boys and girls at three primary schools, with the support of donations from the U.S. Fund for UNICEF. Work on this programme will continue in 2017.

Currently juvenile justice reform includes lobbying for amendments to all legislation related to children who come into conflict with the law. The reform has a strong gender component and is striving to be gender-responsive in relation to the interventions and services provided to boys and girls before, during and after court. The gender element to the reform stems from the observation that boys are more likely to be arrested and prosecuted, while girls are more likely to be detained for status offences; also, girls are more likely to be institutionalized for longer periods.

Administrative data confirms that girls who come into contact with courts were disproportionately victims of physical and sexual abuse, and it is believed that they are three
times more likely than boys to have been abused. Therefore, legal reform efforts focused on ensuring that all legislation related to children in conflict with the law are gender-responsive.

**Environmental Sustainability**

UNICEF Belize continued its partnership with the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE), which provides environmental education to children in the Toledo District (south of the country). Girls and boys are given the opportunity to play competitive football, but a prerequisite for participation in the tournament is the submission of an environmental project that benefits the community and raises awareness about climate change.

During UNICEF Belize’s staff retreat, the local staff association ensured that presentations around climate change and climate change mitigation were integrated into the retreat. Such sensitization sessions have already generated interest among staff and it is expected that programme planning for 2017 will include partnerships with OCEANA and the Belize Association of Planners.

UNICEF also completed its annual environmental footprint assessment report for 2015, noting significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (55 per cent) compared to 2014; emissions per staff member also declined, from 6.3 to 3.3 metric tons, while the use of printing paper declined by 50 per cent.

**Effective Leadership**

As 2016 was the last year of the current country programme (2013-2016), UNICEF Belize invested considerable time and resources in preparing for the next programme cycle. The new country programme document (CPD) 2017-2021 was prepared with contributions from all staff. Despite the added complexity - UNICEF Belize was part of a multi-country planning process resulting in joint outcomes and outputs for all countries in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean and Latin American countries - the country programme document was completed and approved by the Executive Board.

With the finalization of micro-assessments and implementation of the harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT) assurance plan, the Country Office successfully closed the final audit recommendation in January 2016. With full compliance with financial rules and regulations and regular programme and funds implementation monitoring, UNICEF Belize ranked among the top 5 per cent of UNICEF offices globally in terms of operational performance. The Office continued to apply the simplified business processes developed by the field results group, piloted in Belize in 2015.

Reducing the number of required steps to complete a transaction has resulted in efficiency gains that positively impact not only programme delivery, but also staff well-being, by reducing stress levels – a key area for improvement identified by the 2014 global staff survey. Monthly programme and quarterly management meetings continued to be used to review and update enterprise risk management, the Early Warning Early Action (EWEA) system and annual management plan. As a result, UNICEF Belize had one of the highest EWEA completion scores in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

**Financial Resources Management**

In 2016, UNICEF Belize continued to use a rolling funding forecast to meet programme and operational needs. The forecast is prepared at the beginning of each quarter and reviewed and updated during country management team (CMT) and programme group meetings. The rolling funding forecast improved timely payments to consultants, supply and procurement, operation, travel, and staff salaries. Overall this enhanced financial management planning
for both programme and operations teams, while also reducing the bank balance-to-
expenditure ratio. Additionally, steps were taken to improve the disbursement monitoring
system to implementing partners; for example, through mandatory programme meeting
reviews and verifications at CMT meetings.

In 2016, and throughout the country programme, donor grants were monitored regularly to
prevent loss of funds due to non-utilization or expiration. Additional financial management
strategies included quarterly outstanding funds expenditure reports by partners, submission
of cash monitoring sheets, spot-checks and quarterly ad hoc programmatic monitoring.
The implementation rate for the 2016 fiscal year was: 98 per cent for regular resources, 98
per cent for other resources, and 99 per cent for institutional budget allocated to the Office.

Efficiency gains in 2016 continued at the same level as 2015, thanks to improved monitoring
of telephone usage, office supplies and local travel. In addition, the Office continues to work
towards greater efficiency gains in a 'greener work place' by working to reduce printing, fuel
and electricity costs. As one of the smaller country offices in the region, UNICEF Belize
continues to benefit from operations and HR managerial support through the multi-country
support facility and the Global Staff Service Centre, which performed specific related actions
for operations/finance (bank reconciliations) and human resources.

**Fundraising and Donor Relations**

As in the past, UNICEF Belize completed all donor reports in a timely manner, ensuring that
the quality of reporting improves each year, in sync with the standards and good practices
of the organization on a global level. To enhance the visibility of our programmatic efforts,
and to demonstrate the impact of our work on children, partners were trained on how to write
compelling human interest stories – many of which now accompany UNICEF Belize
reports.

The Country Office faced administrative challenges in receiving funding (US$120,000) from
the European Union, approved in 2015. The funding was only made available in November
2016, hence the activities to be funded, protecting children from violence and abuse, will
take place in 2017. Additional funding was secured through thematic funds for
ECD/education (US$140,000), and social inclusion (US$45,000). In response to Hurricane
Earl, emergency preparedness funds amounting to (US$55,000) were also made available.
The Office was also able to leverage US$250,000, with support from UNICEF Spain and the
PROBITAS Foundation, which will be invested in strengthening the capacities of the medical
laboratories and staff in Belize.

Efforts to establish private sector partnerships for fundraising intensified during 2016. With
support from the RO, UNICEF Belize mapped private sector entities in the country and staff
responsible for private sector fundraising received training on engaging with the private
sector. Initial contacts were established with five companies, but follow-through was delayed
due to Hurricane Earl. However, UNICEF Belize was successful in securing a partnership
with one partner (SMART, a national telecommunications company) to help disseminate key
messages via SMS to all its users, informing them about how to protect themselves and their
families in the aftermath of the hurricane.

**Evaluation and Research**

The 2016 integrated monitoring and evaluation plan (IMEP) reflected a continuation of data
collection activities. With the launch of the online evaluation and studies database PRIME,
the progress of each activity was updated and reviewed at monthly programme meetings.
The evaluation of the BOOST programme was completed at the end of 2016, generating
recommendations to sharpen the programme’s equity focus and maximize the use of
available resources. The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframe, and within
the planned budget, by an international team of consultants, ensuring impartiality and objectivity of assessment. The technical committee implementing the evaluation consisted of experts from all relevant ministries, as well as UN agencies, to ensure the quality and timeliness of deliverables.

Conducted in partnership with UNDP and the Ministry of Human Development Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation (MHDSTPA), the evaluation brought together a variety of stakeholders; as preliminary results became available, the BOOST programme began undergoing changes that benefited from those early findings, resulting in the development of the BOOST+ pilot programme. This programme focuses on nearly 400 most vulnerable families and children in the impoverished areas of Belize City (South Side), and provides them with a set of social services (called wraparound services) in different areas such as education, health, employment, nutrition and others. The management response was agreed on immediately following the completion of the evaluation. The response guided the formulation of actions for UNICEF Belize’s next country programme; based on these actions a new work plan between UNICEF and the MHDSTPA will be prepared in early 2017.

**Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings**

In 2015 the country management team made recommendations to further simplify business processes; since then, the Office has experienced savings and a more efficient use of staff hours in the following tasks: country programme planning; participation in management committees; adjustments in cash transfers to partners (HACT and partnership agreements with increased ceilings); and adjustments in purchasing and procurement practices, archiving and documentation.

Additionally, a management decision to amend the commuting distance to include Orange Walk and Belmopan (both one hour by road from UNICEF’s office) greatly reduced travel costs. The programme team also ensured that, whenever possible, field visits were consolidated, while the operations team continued to prioritize early procurement of international airfares. However, in 2016 the number of trips increased, which resulted in an overall increase in travel costs by over 50 per cent compared to 2015.

The Office continued to register operational costs savings; however, they were minimal for the procurement of supplies, telephone, electricity and fuel. Savings can be attributed to programmatic materials being properly costed, trip consolidation, use of money-saving communication tools (Microsoft Office 365/Skype, installed teleconference and video conference links) across the organization. Internet service rates continue to be among the highest in the region.

UNICEF Belize continues to function as a “Light” office, with the regional ICT team providing remote technical support through an ICT focal point in the office. (See section “Information and Communications Technology” for more). Long-term agreements (LTAs) established in 2014 between UN agencies and external service providers (for services such as procuring airfares, toner, ink and paper) expired in 2016. The UN Country Team approved a roadmap for implementing the Business Operation Strategy, expected to result in efficiency gains and savings across UN agencies in 2017.

**Supply Management**

The Office supply plan continued to be small for consumables, emergency and construction, with a more significant share spent on programme services (individual/institutional consultants). Implementing partners are trained in UNICEF procurement guidelines and UNICEF staff members participate in selection panels for goods and services.
In response to Hurricane Earl, UNICEF Belize utilized its existing emergency LTA with a local supplier. This agreement enabled the rapid procurement of 440 family hygiene kits, which were delivered as follows: 380 to the MHDSTPA, 50 to the Child Development Foundation and 10 to Restore Belize.

At present the Office has no warehoused programme supplies. Given the small economy of its host country, UNICEF Belize continues to face some challenges to procurement, including: limited pool of suppliers and high import taxes and shipping and freight costs, which contribute to price increases for some supplies.

**2016 SUPPLIES – TOTAL USD $428,690**

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**Security for Staff and Premises**

The United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) local security associate continued to address the main responsibilities of implementing, mitigating and addressing issues related to security for UN personnel in Belize. Safety, security and mitigation measures were regularly monitored by the UNICEF Representative/Officer-in-charge, with support from the associate and the UNDSS based in Guatemala. All staff members attended quarterly ‘safety and security’ briefings by the local security associate. Guidance was shared on mitigation and reporting of potential threats or negative experiences that might affect staff safety or the programme delivery. Sessions were also facilitated to address domestic violence, stress management and work-life balance.

Consequently, the use of a national security clearance system began in 2015: since then it has been mandatory for UNICEF staff to obtain clearance to operate in/visit certain areas of Belize. Once security clearance is given, the local associate shares with travelling colleagues relevant safety and security information, as it relates to the proposed travel route.

When Hurricane Earl hit Belize in August 2016, the UN emergency and evacuation plan was activated in the country. The warden system worked well, with all staff and dependents accounted for until the “all clear” was issued by the National Emergency Management organization. In 2016, two significant incident reports were made regarding staff members: one road traffic accident and one theft of items from a private vehicle. In both cases, there were no long-term consequences for staff safety. Mandatory security operational tools were updated in 2016: minimum operating security standards (MOSS), minimum operating residential security standards and the UN Belize Security Plan. In November 2016 UNICEF Guatemala generously donated 20 refurbished radios to the Office, bridging an equipment gap identified in the previous MOSS compliance report.
Human Resources

UNICEF Belize’s small and capable workforce (11 staff members and one communication consultant) ensured full and effective implementation of all programmatic and operational activities. The online performance planning and assessment system (ACHIEVE) was used in performance management, using SMART outputs, results tied to the CP and learning plans that aligned with areas identified in the 2014 global staff survey.

Staff learning and development remained a top priority, with all staff completing individual development plans, along with a collective Office development plan. The programme assistant successfully completed a stretch assignment at the UNICEF Chile office, benefitting both UNICEF Belize and UNICEF Chile, as well as the staff member. The staff retreat was used to improve staff understanding of the operating environment in the country, as well as to become more familiar with the causes and consequences of climate change, its impact on children and UNICEF programming.

In preparation for the new CP (2017-2021), the Office successfully requested the establishment of a communications officer post, a function currently performed by contracted consultants. This is expected to further enhance UNICEF’s capacity to effectively communicate its activities, raise awareness and advocate on behalf of children. The Office used a relatively small portion of RR (44 per cent) and OR (8 per cent) for post costs, allowing for a significant share of resources to be used for programmes.

One challenge faced in 2016 was the departure of the Representative in October, after which the social policy specialist took over the role of officer-in- charge, which he will continue to perform until the arrival of the new Representative, expected in 2017. All staff were trained in UN Cares minimum standards, either face-to-face or online through the Agora learning portal.

Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

The Country Office experience with the “Light” project remained positive: UNICEF Belize has been a server-less field office for the past three years. With a reliable and dedicated Internet connection, this technology has facilitated efficiency in the office. Staff now can benefit from upgraded equipment and additional technologies such as: Office 365, Outlook, Skype, OneDrive and SharePoint. The regional ICT team continues to provide remote technical support through an ICT focal point in the office.

From an IT infrastructure point of view, UNICEF Belize is a lightweight and agile office: its IT footprint is very low, hence the term “Light Office”. The idea of a server-less office is to enhance effectiveness and efficiency by significantly reducing a field office’s ICT infrastructure, while still offering its staff a substantial portion of the IT service catalogue through a service centre, and the ability to work from anywhere. “Light” also enables rapid (re)deployment of office staff in any situation, especially in emergencies. Use of the Cloud enables office staff to work remotely and enhances the security of files and shared documents. UNICEF Belize is present on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. The UNICEF Belize Facebook page continued its growth during 2016, with an increase in overall following of around 37 per cent.

Programme Components from RAM

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 By the end of 2016, most excluded boys and girls in Toledo, Stann Creek, and Belize South Side are reached by policies and programmes with a gender perspective that
increases protection, early childhood development, culturally-appropriate and child-friendly education and learning opportunities, across the lifecycle 0-18 including during periods of emergency

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
UNICEF was successful in strengthening policies and legislation to realize the rights of children, ensuring that children have access to the justice, HIV, birth registration, ECD and education services. The partnership with the Supreme Court and Family Court allowed for oversight and implementation of the child-friendly family court in Toledo. As of December 2016, the court had dealt with 791 cases. Data collection is paramount at the CFC; the court collects data monthly on 17 indicators developed by a multi-agency team including social workers, police, magistrates, attorneys and UNICEF experts.

Continued partnership with the Government of Belize enabled the finalization of a strategic framework for the implementation of a national inter-sectoral ECD policy. Increased investment and support for ECD throughout the CP provided important gains for the country. The MICS 2015 key findings report, produced in partnership with the SIB, showed significant progress in ECD attendance over the last five years, with 55 per cent of children attending ECD, compared to 32 per cent in 2011. In addition, exclusive breastfeeding more than doubled, from 14.7 to 33 per cent, while the percentage of severely stunted children declined by half, from 5.5 to 2.6 per cent.

Capacity building in the areas of justice reform, use of child-friendly justice spaces and monitoring for equity were measures undertaken to ensure that the professionals delivering justice for children are equipped to respond to children in vulnerable situations. To support implementation of the ECD strategic plan, ‘Rovers’, who teach early stimulation and parenting practices to families in vulnerable communities, received CCD training. The training was intended to support national efforts to increase access to quality ECD services for vulnerable children aged zero-to-three. To further strengthen the quality of teaching and learning, education officers, school personnel and school committees were trained in developing school improvement plans and school curriculum planning to enable safe, clean and healthy schools.

This programme component is built on the recognition that a strong human rights-based child protection system will facilitate development across the lifecycle. Institutional capacity was strengthened to support the implementation of programmes to address child labour and birth registration. Bed-side registration was piloted in Stann Creek District. At the community level, UNICEF supported actions to address violence-prevention strategies that target young adolescents, including children with disabilities, with positive alternatives to violence through S4D. Together, these initiatives contributed to the protection of children across the life-cycle.

Systemic bottlenecks were addressed related to chronic malnutrition, where data collection took place in communities with the highest rates of stunting. The bottleneck analysis of stunting reduction will be completed in the next year, with support from the UNICEF Regional Office. The monitoring results for equity analysis for malnutrition continued to strengthen partnerships with key agencies such as PAHO/WHO and the Institute of Nutrition for Central America and Panama, which also collaborated with UNICEF and the MoH to highlight information and activities during World Breastfeeding Week.

During the period of humanitarian crisis in August, the most disadvantaged families in urban and rural settings received support for water and sanitation. UNICEF rapidly provided over 400 families with hygiene/family kits through the MHDSTPA, which is mandated by law to run emergency shelters. Immediate action for this emergency response was possible based on an LTA with a local supplier.
OUTPUT 1 By 2016, social services promoting social well-being of children by addressing identified deprivations and by improving supply, quality demand and enabling environment in Stann Creek, Belize and Toledo Districts

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF continued to work with key counterparts – the ministries of health, human development and education – to establish an inter-sectoral mechanism to plan and implement ECD policy. In 2016, the technical working group (TWG), monitored by three high-ranking managers at line ministries, focused on finalizing the ECD strategic plan and associated indicator framework in line with the country's growth and sustainable development strategy, for improved relevance and effectiveness. This work by the ECD TWG ensured the alignment of the strategic plan to the NRFCA 2017-2030. UNICEF will continue to support the technical coordination of ECD, which will be strengthened by social planning, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in the broader framework of the NRFCA.

Increased investment and advocacy on ECD during the CP ending in 2016 culminated in a successful ECD multi-media mission in the third quarter of 2016. The mission involved UNICEF officers and four consultants from New York, along with the TWG, who worked over a period of three weeks to gather photos and video footage of eight families, to promote early childhood stimulation and development. The mission produced a multi-media toolkit for the global ECD communication strategy, which was launched on 10 January 2017.

UNICEF supported the development of a nationwide system of screening and diagnostic testing and literacy interventions for children aged zero-to-eight. After an evaluation that included both a questionnaire and focus group interviews with teachers in two districts, the assessment instruments were revised during the first quarter of 2016. Support to the MoEYS enabled the development of a literacy toolkit containing a variety of interactive instructional activities. Over 600 teachers were trained in early literacy development and 89 teachers were trained as master trainers in literacy and school improvement planning during the second and third quarters of 2016.

To strengthen quality learning, UNICEF Belize continued its support for capacity building of district-level education officers, school administrators, school committees and teachers in school improvement planning, hygiene management and in ECD standards and assessment.

As a part of the WASH programme in quality schools, a social media campaign on handwashing was design and implemented. Technical support was provided to the Government to develop a communication for development campaign on WASH; remodelling and construction of bathrooms was initiated in three more schools in highly vulnerable communities. Humanitarian assistance was also given to the Government for WASH during Hurricane Earl. The MoEYS received UNICEF support for an out-of-school children study, which will be completed in 2017. Along with data analysis, the study will contain strategies to overcome educational exclusion.

OUTPUT 2 By 2016 required and existing legislation are being enacted and applied to protect girls and boys in Southside Belize City, Stann Creek and Toledo from violence and abuse, including sexual abuse; Justice officials, social workers and police officers are trained on procedures and services for children in contact with the law; and children and families in Belize, Stann Creek and Toledo are accessing targeted birth registration services

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Ending violence against children. Recognizing that increasing awareness around ending violence against children requires behaviour change, UNICEF Belize continued to implement
the strategy entitled ‘Time Out’, which includes videos aired on national TV and radio. The media continued to be a strong partner in the Time Out strategy, enabling wide outreach of the messages. Additionally, sports for development (S4D) strategies were embedded in violence prevention work at the community level. This work is geared towards providing awareness and education on all forms of violence against children and how to report incidents, as well as providing support services to children and parents who are victims of violence. In addition to awareness-raising, other methodologies (such as art, culture, and sports) were used as tools for engaging children and teaching them prevention and non-violent approaches; 6,716 children were reached through these strategies.

**Birth registration.** A bottleneck analysis of current birth registration coverage was commissioned and completed in 2016. Recommendations included: capacity building for staff, implementation of nationwide bedside registration and the use of mobile registration units in remote villages.

**Justice for children.** UNICEF Belize continued to support the Supreme Court and Family Court, as they attempt to promote children’s access to justice. Thus far, one child-friendly court has been built and one is being designed. The new building was designed to be suitable for children, as it includes child-friendly play rooms as well as interview rooms with video link equipment. With the use of this technology, those working in the court can now ensure that children are protected from being exposed to their alleged attackers, making it less traumatizing for children to testify. Children stay in a separate room while questioned, and are supported by a social worker who helps them respond to questions posed by the magistrate, defense lawyer and prosecutor.

Additionally, this year a diversion taskforce was instituted to begin progress towards implementing a national diversion programme. The taskforce is chaired by the NCFC, with representation from the Community Rehabilitation Department, UNICEF, RESTORE Belize, the Youth Department and Supreme Court. The programme will have two tracks: alternatives to initial formal processing of youth in the juvenile delinquency system and opportunities to redirect youthful offenders from the justice system through programming, supervision and psychosocial support.

Child justice reform also includes legislative changes, such as the protection of witnesses and children act, amendments to juvenile justice legislation and free legal aid for children. Since January 2016, the UNICEF-supported Punta Gorda’s child-friendly family court has dealt with 791 family cases, including cases involving custody, domestic violence and juvenile justice. In all cases involving a young person who came into conflict with the law, children received support from a specialized social worker, which helped to ensure that their rights were protected.

**OUTCOME 2** By the end of 2016, a well-constructed monitoring and evaluation system is being used to direct CRC reporting, social budgets, national plans and legislation, examining delays and bottlenecks impeding child rights policy implementation.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
Progress toward achieving this outcome continued in 2016. UNICEF’s actions were focused on the removal of several bottlenecks impeding child rights monitoring, by supporting institutional and human capacity building, with a view to ensuring systematic management, dissemination and utilization of data and knowledge.

In view of the new key findings from the MICS5 survey report – completed in 2015 and launched in September 2016 – the Government demonstrated keen interest in the progress achieved for the situation of children in Belize. This contributed strongly to the analysis of the determinants of the MICS findings, and commitment to use MICS data for policy planning,
implementation and reporting. This commitment was evident in the end of year speech by the Prime Minister, who used MICS5 data to inform the public about Belize’s progress on issues related to children.

UNICEF Belize supported the country to use evidence-based methods to formulate policies and develop programmes. As a result of the evaluation of the CCT programme (completed July 2016) and the numerous recommendations from that process, the MHHDSTA designed and piloted an enhanced programme entitled BOOST+. The programme targets around 400 families and children from the most impoverished South Side Belize City area, providing intensive, holistic support to individuals with complex needs. Support is provided in a variety of areas, aiming to address multidimensional deprivations, such as lack of access to health, proper nutrition, education and training, home and shelter, or income and work. It is the expected that following a two-year implementation period, the programme will be reviewed, improved and expanded beyond the current geographical areas.

In a similar process, evidence and data were used to finalize the new NRFCA 2017-2030, which replaced the previous national action plan for children. UNICEF Belize supported the impact evaluation of the national plan of action (NPA 2004-2015), the findings of which fed into the process of preparing the NRFCA. Similarly, MICS5 data provides, for many NRFCA indicators, a baseline from which ambitious, yet realistic, indicators were developed in line with national and international development goals. The actions and targets of the NRFCA are well aligned with those in the national growth and sustainable development strategy (2016-2019), as well as the national HORIZON 2030 development agenda, regional development goals that Belize subscribes to (CARICOM), and the global SDGs.

The country has made visible and significant progress in relation to local-level child rights monitoring and policy formulation. The SCFM initiative supported by UNICEF has resulted in all municipalities agreeing to work towards becoming certified SCFM, and receiving acknowledgment for their successful work thus far. Two results of this work are the creation of child advisory bodies (composed of children and youth who participate in the work of the municipalities, municipal action plans and resources committed to children), and a commitment to monitor an agreed set of indicators to gauge progress on the situation of children at the municipal level.

One area where progress was slow was the area of child budgeting. UNICEF supported the MoF to conduct a child-focused public expenditure review, which should have been followed by intensive child-focused programme budget training and a budget tagging exercise for monitoring expenditures on children.

As reported earlier, this work was constrained for several reasons, but mainly due to shifting Government priorities resulting from external fiscal pressures. These pressures came about following the verdict by the Caribbean Court of Justice awarding significant financial compensation to the former proprietor of the now nationalised telecommunications company, BTL. The country was already struggling with significant public debt. As this issue became a priority, project implementation was stalled, and only a draft was completed. UNICEF Belize will renew its efforts to complete and expand support to the MoF in the next CP.

Another area where progress was not achieved under this outcome was commitment to submit the CRC country report to the Child Rights Committee in Geneva. Belize was due to submit its regular report in 2012, and UNICEF Belize provided support for preparation of the draft report in 2013 and 2014. The Office also committed to provide the country with additional support, and has advocated with national stakeholders on the need for the report to be submitted. But despite Government commitments and acknowledgement of the importance of submitting the CRC report, this issue remains on the agenda for 2017. UNICEF Belize will continue its efforts and offer the required support to ensure submission
of the report in 2017. UNICEF Belize will use the data from the MICS 2015 to produce a modular/sectoral situation report on children and women in Belize that will provide the necessary information to facilitate preparation of the CRC report.

**OUTPUT 1** Key outcomes and impact for children and women being measured at national and subnational levels and the situation children and women (across the life-cycle) is regularly and comprehensively analysed.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

**MICS:** The Belize MICS5 was carried out in 2015-2016 by the SIB, in collaboration with the Government of Belize and UNICEF. In September 2016, the “Key Findings Report” was launched, and in November a validation workshop was conducted with stakeholders from the Government, NGOs, international agencies, private sector and youths. The MICS5 is especially important in Belize, as it is the only source of information on indicators for children at the national level that is disaggregated by district, urban/rural levels, and sex, age and wealth quintiles. The MICS5 interviewed 5,242 households across the country.

**Disabilities:** UNICEF Belize supported participation by the Belize Association for Persons with Disabilities in a workshop on measurement of child disability in November 2016. The aim was to ensure that Belize fulfils its commitment under the CRPD, with a view to strengthening the country’s capacity to collect, analyse, understand, use and disseminate data on children with disabilities.

**NPA:** UNICEF supported completion of the NRFCA, which in replacing the NPA, aims to advance the child rights agenda and is aligned with all national strategic development plans and international commitments (including the SDGs). UNICEF Belize will continue to support NRFCA implementation.

**OUTPUT 2** The national budgets for social sectors are being analysed in terms of child poverty/disparities and specified policy interventions and targets and forum for public dialogue on budget-related bottlenecks at all levels that affect children are operational.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The programme continues to build on efforts begun in 2015, particularly in the areas of social protection and budgeting for children. Three specific deliverables were finalized under this output:

1. UNICEF Belize supported mapping of the SPS, a study that generated concrete recommendations around development of a national social protection strategy, legislative and administrative reform and a monitoring system for social protection programmes, among other points. The management response was excellent, and the country has committed to work with UNICEF in the next CP cycle to implement these recommendations.

2. UNICEF supported the evaluation of the CCT programme BOOST, which primarily targets vulnerable children, women and the elderly. The evaluation was completed in 2016 and immediately generated interest and a Government response. Even as the preliminary results of the evaluation became available, the country used them to develop a pilot for BOOST+, an upgraded version of the BOOST CCT providing wraparound services to about 400 families and children in the most deprived area of the country - Southside Belize City. If successful, the Government will look to expand the programme, with UNICEF support, in the next CP.
3. UNICEF also supported the MoF to conduct a child-focused public expenditure review, which should have been followed by an intensive child-focused programme on budget training and a budget tagging exercise for monitoring expenditures on children. As reported previously, this work was constrained, mainly due to shifting Government priorities due to external fiscal pressures. These pressures arose following the verdict by the Caribbean Court of Justice awarding significant financial compensation to the former proprietor of the now nationalised telecommunications company, BTL. The country was already struggling with significant public debt. As this issue became a priority, project implementation was stalled, and only a draft public expenditure review was completed in 2016. UNICEF Belize will renew its efforts to complete and expand support to the MoF in the next CP.

Last under this output, UNICEF also provided support to the NCFC for two projects: evaluation of the NPA and drafting the NRFC 2017-2030. The NPA evaluation was completed and is under review by the Government. The NRFC was also drafted and endorsed by Belize's Cabinet. It is currently being reviewed, with a view toward drafting the annual operational plans through which it will be implemented. The NRFC is fully aligned with national development targets set in the HORIZON 2030 framework and the growth and sustainable development strategy 2017-2019. It is also aligned with the SDGs, which will help the country to monitor and report on progress toward SGD achievement.

**OUTPUT 3** At least three municipalities are measuring the performance of actions/ interventions toward improvements in quality of life and gender equality and social inequity

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

*Sustainable and child-friendly municipalities:* Collaborative efforts by UNICEF, UNDP, the BMA and the MLLGRD to operationalize the SCFM Initiative achieved significant progress in 2016.

**Institutionalization:** The SCFM initiative was incorporated into the new NRFAC under Outcome 10: “Live in Child- and Youth-Friendly, Sustainable Communities”.

**Implementation:** All nine of Belize’s municipalities received acknowledgement for their progress during the first year of implementation and all are working toward full certification. Acknowledgement for each municipality was based on the fulfilment of several criteria: (i) having a CAB with participation from established youth groups; (ii) completed action plans that are budgeted, completed, vetted and approved; (iii) having a technical steering committee – including stakeholders in education, health, protection, justice – and rapporteurs that serve as a liaison between the town council and the steering committee, council and CAB. Certification of the municipalities will take place in 2017, and will be based on actual impact on children.

**South-South cooperation:** Cooperation was established between the GoB and the Government of Costa Rica. In October 2016 UNICEF Belize and UNICEF Costa Rica collaborated and supported a five-day knowledge exchange between local government authorities from the two countries. The experience gained from the visit will guide actions at the national and local levels aimed at improving the SCFM initiative. A two-year road map was developed to operationalize the eight focus areas identified during the visit: data and evidence, documentation, strong partnerships, capacity building, children/adolescent participation, consultation, investment and inter-sectoral advocacy.

**Expanded partnership:** In 2016, UNICEF Belize and the MLLGRD collaborated to address the emergency response to the Zika virus and Hurricane Earl. This collaboration resulted in work planning to expand the partnership for disaster risk reduction.
OUTPUT 4 University of Belize Policy Observatory is directing partnerships with national policy actors through enhanced facilities and modalities of policy dialogue and debate around research findings and policy advice in the areas child protection and education.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Partnership with the University of Belize continued to pose a challenge. Over the past two years the university faced various administrative challenges, which impeded partnership. Other partnerships have highlighted the importance of having a relationship with the university; other approaches will be considered in 2017, including the option to partner with other (private and public) academic institutions. The regional child rights observatory could also provide a venue for engagement and revitalization of national child rights monitoring efforts, especially in the context of the multi-country UNICEF programme of cooperation (2017-2021).

Document Centre

Evaluation and research

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<td>Impact Evaluation of Belize's Cash Transfer Programme</td>
<td>2016/001</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
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Other publications

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<tr>
<td>Protecting families and children from the ZIKA Virus</td>
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<td>Words Do Matter</td>
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<td>Multiple Incicator Cluster Survey 2015; Key Findings Report</td>
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Lessons learned

Programme documents

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