Executive summary

UNICEF Belize launched a new five-year country programme (CP) in 2017, informed by social indicators and factors including:

a) the country’s vulnerability to global and regional economic trends and climate change,

b) its vulnerability to regional political dynamics and population movements,

c) social data showing significant inequalities in Belize based on socio-cultural grouping, income status and geography, creating an urgency for UNICEF action to strengthen systems to better identify and inform intensified investment and improved targeting of social services to reach the most vulnerable children and secure their future.

d) admirable progress in education, both in early childhood education – 92 per cent of children under five years in urban areas and 85 per cent of under-fives in rural areas are engaged in learning and school readiness activities – and in secondary school enrolment, which reached 60 per cent in 2016. But clear signs of inequality are present in relation to access to these services for the poorest families, as well as completion and continuity of education, especially for adolescent boys.

e) Belize’s significant achievements in reducing under-five mortality. The country was recognized for having eliminated measles, rubella and polio – the result of years of investment in expanding the vaccination programme, public education and strengthening the health system to promote child survival. A major gap in programming and investment in adolescent health threatens the sustainability of gains made in young child health and survival.

f) the impact of violence on children of all ages at home, through violent discipline and domestic violence between caregivers, and exposure to armed violence, affecting children in their communities and schools. Protections are poorly enforced, entrenching and perpetuating a cycle of fear and violence against children and women, undermining confidence in community leaders and law enforcement.

Against this backdrop, UNICEF’s work, in partnership with the Government of Belize, focuses on three outcomes to be delivered through programmes grounded in equity and human rights:

1. Reducing poverty and enhancing monitoring of children’s rights – getting the right investments to the children in greatest need

2. Strengthening opportunities for lifelong learning, building on the foundation of learning in the family to ensure sustained learning, health and development through adolescence

3. Preventing violence, ensuring safety and access to justice – to ensure that every child is safe from harm and free to participate and thrive.

Key results achieved by UNICEF Belize in 2017 are summarized below:

Child rights monitoring and poverty reduction

1. MICS5 report finalized, launched, widely disseminated and used continuously by UNICEF and partners for advocacy and planning.

2. Children’s Advisory Boards (CABs) established to support the sustainable child-friendly municipality initiative (SCFM) as a critical mechanism for child and adolescent participation.
3. Finalization and launch of the national framework for action for children and adolescents (Children’s Agenda) 2017-2030.

4. Adoption of a multidimensional poverty measurement in Belize, in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Development, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the Organization of American States (OAS).

Lifelong learning
An interagency mechanism was established to lead implementation of the national ECD strategy; national ECD strategic plan and monitoring & evaluation (M&E) framework developed, outlining accountability roles for ministries of health, education and human development, which have the lead mandate for service delivery and monitoring for outcomes in early childhood.

Violence prevention and access to justice
1. A national diversion programme was developed and national diversion task force established to identify and provide family and community-based intervention services for at-risk children, to prevent them from coming into conflict with the law and entering the criminal justice system.
2. Capacity for delivery of free legal aid services strengthened, with a focus on family and children’s matters, targeting underserved communities in Belize.

Challenges
Across all three programme areas, common challenges included:
1) lack of quality data to guide programming at scale
2) national capacity to support scale-up and continuity of service delivery and access
3) coordination between sectors to ensure that vulnerable children and families do not fall through the cracks and that resources are optimized
4) financial sustainability of national programmes in Belize
5) social norms that hinder progress in child protection, gender and adolescent health
6) weak knowledge management.

Partnerships
UNICEF’s most critical partnerships in 2017 included inter-sectoral partnerships to deliver results for children in the areas of: ECD, adolescents, child protection, investment for children; partnerships with children and adolescents as advocates; civil society; and the media.

Humanitarian assistance
Although the 2017 rainy season was above expected levels and some localized floods were registered in various districts, no major weather-related emergency was faced by the country during 2017. The United Nations system was in close contact with the Government for possible humanitarian assistance, and UNICEF Belize collaborated with the UNICEF Regional Office (RO) to plan a multisectoral humanitarian training and emergency preparedness simulation. The training was postponed due to the devastating impact of Hurricane Irma in the Eastern Caribbean, but UNICEF Belize was able to support the Barbados Country Office and the Eastern Caribbean through deployment of three staff members to assist with emergency coordination, travel and logistics.

Much work was devoted in 2017 to building resiliency and emergency preparedness. In July the Ministry of Labour, Local Government and Rural Development (MLLGRD), National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) and UNICEF held an open house with major stakeholders to review the challenges to preparedness activities in Belize. Lessons were shared from the Hurricane Earl response in 2016, and part of the discussion focused on capacity building for
partners in the psychosocial recovery programme Return to Happiness (RTH).

With increased advocacy and capacity building around disaster risk reduction (DRR) and emergency preparedness, UNICEF Belize was able to support capacity building in the Return to Happiness programme during the final quarter of 2017. Seventy stakeholders were trained in this methodology to support children between 5 -12 years of age who have experienced traumatic events such as disasters, fires and death. The programme creates opportunities for engagement and interaction with children who have experienced a traumatic event to help them process their experiences.

The goal of emergency preparedness programmes worldwide is to achieve a satisfactory level of readiness to respond to any emergency by strengthening the technical and managerial capacity of governments, organizations and communities, and to prepare effective response plans, processes and procedures. UNICEF Belize looks forward to the launch of the new Emergency Preparedness Platform and the emergency preparedness and simulation workshop, re-scheduled for early 2018.

**Equity in practice**

UNICEF Belize used a multipronged approach to reduce equity gaps, addressing several deprivations across the child’s life course. Main strategies included: strengthening the enabling environment, building national capacities to demand and supplying quality service at scale. Main results included:

1. Supporting and advocating for child-sensitive policies and strategies

   UNICEF provided technical and financial support for development of the 2017-2021 National ECD Strategic Plan. In 2015, the strategic framework was validated at the first national ECD conference, which was followed by the 2014-2015 ECD programme mapping. Both exercises indicated weak coordination and collaboration among key partners for the delivery of integrated ECD services. As a result, an ECD technical working group (TWG) was established to advance operationalization of the programme. In 2016, Belize’s Cabinet endorsed the inclusive ECD Core Commitments for children 0-8 years of age, and in 2017 launched the inter-sectoral strategic plan. This integrated approach incorporates a component on violence in early childhood, and resulted in strengthening existing programmes and service delivery by the three line ministries (health, education and human development). The framework is viewed as a best practice in the region.

2. Monitoring results for equity systems (MoRES) analysis and report on out-of-school children

   A MoRES analysis was completed on the barriers to nutrition in the Toledo District. Data collection was carried out in 2016, and in 2017 the Ministry of Health (MoH), with UNICEF support, was able to complete the report. The focus groups provided the MoH with information on eating habits among infants and young children, assisting in the identification of perceptions and potential bottlenecks associated with the feeding of infants and young children.

   The Belize education sector strategy for 2011-2016 aimed to reduce barriers to school completion by increasing equitable access in terms of the number of schools and spaces in schools, improving accountability and improving education quality and relevance. The Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture (MoEYSC) commissioned a study on out-of-school children, involving quantitative and qualitative analysis of the profiles and barriers for these children and those at risk of dropping out. The report was to detail recommendations for
addressing the problem and using data to inform policies/interventions.

Data collection and analysis were conducted in 2017, and a final draft report of the study is now being reviewed by the technical steering committees. MoEYSC data were analysed to determine patterns by district and MICS (2011 and 2015), while MoEYSC and census data were analysed to present profiles of excluded children according to the OOSC methodology. Results from this study indicate that several factors are associated with the failure to complete school, including poverty, disability, late entry and/or inadequate preparation for primary and living in a rural area.

To address some of the barriers to school completion in 2017, UNICEF continued to support Government reforms of the secondary education financing system. Financing now occurs based on the number and type of students (academic and economic needs) at the educational institution. Over 3,000 students were impacted by the secondary school financing reform this year.

3. Improving data systems to track and inform planning
A multi-indicator cluster survey (MICS5) data collection exercise was completed in December 2015, and the MICS continues to be the only consistently implemented household data collection activity in Belize. MICS5 marked the third round of data collection completed by UNICEF Belize, enabling comparative analysis of the progress made for children by sex, geographic location, age, wealth quintile, and geographic location over the past 10 years across various domains. This information now guides development of the country’s multidimensional poverty index.

4. Expanding access to and improving quality of services
With UNICEF’s support, the MoH (through the baby-friendly initiative) launched a country-wide campaign to encourage pregnant women to deliver their babies at a health facility. The country’s Vital Statistics agency and the MoH signed a memorandum of understanding that established a vital statistics office at each certified baby-friendly hospital. The increased access to birth registration services, indirectly increased access to other services and reduced the risk of exploitation, especially for children living in the southern part of the country.

UNICEF also provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Labour, Local Government and Rural Development (MLLGRD) through the SCFM, providing child protection training to 123 members of the Children Advisory Boards in nine municipalities. Training focused on violence prevention and incorporated topics such as detecting child protection abuses and understanding the impact of abuse. It empowered children to better understand different types of abuse, how to report incidents and how to be peer educators and advocates for child protection issues in their municipalities.

Emerging areas of importance

Child-friendly municipalities. In collaboration with the MLLGRD, the Belize Mayors Association, National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF Belize is supporting nine local governments to create child-friendly municipalities. Through this initiative, local governments and children in the municipality have developed child-sensitive plans to address children’s major concerns (e.g., access to sanitation, school and health services; disaster risks and emergency preparedness;
exposure to violence; vulnerability to abuse, exploitation and neglect; increased pollution and vulnerability to road traffic incidents). The local governments are committed to making their municipality child-friendly, and have set aside financial resources and developed policies and plans to support achievement of this goal.

**Early childhood development (ECD).** With the launch of the national ECD Strategic Plan 2017-2021, UNICEF Belize was recognized in the region and globally for promoting a multisectoral approach involving three ministries (health, education and human development). Because of the work in ECD – with combined efforts by the maternal child health and roving caregiver programmes under the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation, and Poverty Alleviation (MHDSTPA)—UNICEF mobilized institutional support for capacity building and the rollout and implementation of Care for Child Development (CCD). Progress in CCD was also showcased at a global CCD meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. ECD is a priority for the new country programme: already there are opportunities for increased investment in advocacy, communication, capacity building and South-South cooperation during the first and second quarters of 2018. Most of the progress in accelerated integrated ECD in Belize is being documented in a case study being finalized by the Regional Office.

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**Strategic Plan 2018-2021**

The programme team reviewed the five goal areas and related result areas and strategies defined in UNICEF’s Strategic Plan 2018–2021 (SP) against the outcomes and commitments of the Belize CPD 2017–2021, identifying relevant result areas for Belize related to each goal and highlighting relevant indicators and their baselines, to be used for monitoring and reporting on the Plan.

Programme actions were identified in every goal area of the Strategic Plan, enabling UNICEF Belize to monitor at least one programme component in relation to each goal. Since discussions around development of the SP coincided with the development of the new country programme, there is significant alignment between SP goals and CPD priorities. Thus UNICEF has the resources, partnerships and programme review mechanisms in place to support a seamless transition to the new SP period and to facilitate implementation and reporting, building on the ongoing programme. Examples of key programme areas to be implemented and monitored in each goal areas in Belize are as follows:

**Goal 1: Every child survives and thrives:**
- Adolescent health
- Children with a disability - responding to Zika
- Improved national diagnostic capacity

**Goal 2: Every child learns:**
- ECD
- School retention
- Improved literacy in basic education

**Goal 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation:**
- Prevention of armed violence
- Family- and community-based protection and diversion for at-risk children

**Goal 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment:**
- WASH in schools
Menstrual hygiene management (MHM)

Goal 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life:
- Child participation in governance through the SCFM initiative
- Child-sensitive budgeting and reduction of multi-dimensional poverty
- Strengthening of national social protection programme (BOOST+)

Implementation challenges relate to weak systems for coordination, data for planning and targeting, sustainable financing, national capacities, knowledge management and social norms.

Summary notes and acronyms

AA HA! - Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents
BCVI – Belize Council for the Visually Impaired
BOOST – Building opportunities for our social transformation
BTL - Belize Telemedia Limited
BVR- Belize voluntary reporting
C4D- communication for development
CAB- Children’s Advisory Body
CBO- community-based organization
CCD - Care for Child Development
CFC- child-friendly courts
CFS – child-friendly schools
CHW- community health workers
CMT – country management team
CPMP - country programme management plan
CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities
DEC - District education centre
DRR -disaster risk reduction
ECD - EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
ERM - enterprise risk management
ERMP - enterprise risk management plan
EU - European Union
EWEC/EA - Every woman, every child, every adolescent strategy
FRG- Field results group
IB- Institutional budget
ISP - Internet service provider
GOB – Government of Belize
GSSD- Growth and sustainable development strategy
GSS - Global staff survey
GSSC - Global Shared Services Centre
HAET- harmonized approach to cash transfers
HR – Human resources
LTA – long-term agreement
M&E - monitoring and evaluation
MCSF- Multi-country support facility
MHDSTPA – Ministry of Human Development Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation
MHM – menstrual hygiene management
MICS - Multiple indicator cluster survey
Capacity building focused on strengthening front-line providers. Capacity building CCD was offered to ECD providers, including midwives, roving caregivers, health educators and preschool teachers. It benefitted to 1,248 children, 1,193 caregivers, 69 pregnant women and 30 per cent of obstetricians. In addition, 70 per cent of general practitioners were trained in obstetric ultrasound for early detection.

In support of hurricane preparedness the Ministry of Local Government, UNICEF Belize and international partners worked through the SCFM and NEMO to hold national training-of-trainers workshops on Return to Happiness, the programme designed to build resilience and facilitate recovery for children who have experienced traumatic events. Belize now has 52 trainers nationwide.

Training workshops in each of the nine municipalities were implemented by the Child Development Foundation to train CAB members under the SCFM initiative. Some 123 children aged 10-to-17 years were trained in child protection, equipping them to plan and implement actions to end violence in their municipalities and advocate for the protection of their peers from
violence.

Training in administration of the data collection tool developed by UNICEF and MHDSTPA was provided to staff of child-friendly courts, followed by monthly monitoring and informal training sessions.

As a part of the WASH response to outbreaks of conjunctivitis and gastroenteritis, five community health workers (CHWs) were trained in hand-washing techniques. The workers then trained families and schools in 14 communities of Stan Creek District.

Capacity building was provided to the media for interpreting and using MICS5 data.

**Evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy**

The completion of MICS5 made available three rounds of data on the situation of children. This information has been integral to achievements by several initiatives during 2017.

ECD: Adoption of a national ECD policy, development of the ECD strategy and establishment of a multi-agency coordination mechanism demonstrate government commitment to strengthening ECD services.

Stunting: UNICEF supported the MOH to conduct a qualitative assessment on nutrition practices in communities in Toledo, where MICS5 data indicate high stunting and obesity rates.

Adolescents: MICS5 showed significant gaps affecting adolescents: protection, access to services, knowledge, empowerment and gender equity. As a result, in coordination with Government, private sector and media partners, UNICEF embarked on a communication initiative to drive demand and social change (TV, radio, digital, mobile and print).

Ending violence: Several initiatives, including a public campaign and programmes implemented by civil society and government with UNICEF support, have aimed to change social norms that accept violence as an appropriate discipline method.

Committee on the Rights of the Child Report: Efforts are ongoing to finalize Belize’s report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in collaboration with the MHDSTPA.

Voluntary reporting on SDGs: UNICEF Belize provided technical support for completion of the report and produced 10 SDG information briefs.

Out-of-school children: UNICEF and the Ministry of Education (MoE) are conducting a study to pinpoint characteristics of these children, to inform the new Education Strategic Plan 2018-2022.

Social protection: Key policy recommendations were provided to the Government for strengthening the social protection system through evidence generation (UNICEF-UNDP support for comprehensive review the social protection system, and impact evaluation of cash transfer programme).

**Partnerships**

As a result of the Zika response, the partnership with MoEYSC, MHDSTPA and MoH to address ECD was expanded to the University of Belize and three non-governmental organizations
(NGOs) providing services for children with disabilities and their parents (Inspiration Centre, Belize Council for the Visually Impaired and World Paediatric Project). National monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and operational plans were developed to ensure achievement of the ECD strategic plan. UNICEF partnered with the MoH to implement national training in CCD for health personnel. This multi-agency approach has been recognized as a best practice.

New partnerships were established with telecommunications companies (Belize Telemedia Limited (BTL) and Speednet Wireless (SMART) to address adolescent issues. BTL will support a communication initiative to drive demand and social change via multiple media (TV, radio, digital, mobile, print and mobile apps) on adolescent health and U-Report. SMART will partner in public advocacy on ECD, ending violence, gender equality and emergency and disaster preparedness. A partnership was established with Illhiasoft for the deployment of RapidPro, to support the roll out of U-Report, which will mobilize adolescents to actively participate in sharing data on their experiences, disseminating information on relevant supports and amplifying their voices.

As a result of its strong partnership with the Supreme Court, UNICEF Belize is currently supporting the establishment of two additional child-friendly family courts (in Belize City and San Ignacio Town). The Court also partnered with UNICEF and MHDSTPA in 2017 to develop the country’s first ever diversion programme.

Partnership with the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) resulted in successful completion of the MICS-5 report. The report has been a key source of data for decision making to address ECD, out-of-school children, adolescent health and development and the End Violence campaign, as well as providing a baseline for measuring progress toward the Children’s Agenda 2030.

**External communication and public advocacy**

In 2017 UNICEF Belize employed a full-time national communications officer and finalized a comprehensive Communications and Public Advocacy Strategy fully aligned to the Global Communication and Public Advocacy Strategy and the Cause Framework. The strategy includes an annual work plan organized by quarter and month, which allows for harmonizing public advocacy with global strategy, public advocacy and the Cause Framework and programme work. Quantum growth in the office’s social media audience, reach and engagement was realized on Facebook and Twitter. UNICEF Belize utilized global assets and related them to the national context, alongside messages and assets developed to support its programme work. Facebook reach grew from a mere 18,000 in April 2017 to 3.2 million by December 2017, and engagement from under 5,000 to 330,000 during the same period. Twitter is not nationally popular, but appears to be growing.

UNICEF Belize identified strategies to attract greater visibility for and engagement with its work in Belize. These approaches improved the effectiveness of its social media presence for public advocacy and forged stronger relationships with mainstream media. UNICEF’s work was featured almost monthly on media talk shows and news. Quarterly meetings brought the media closer, sharing on a more targeted basis the programme work that demonstrates UNICEF’s impact for children. This initiative led to sharing with a wider audience, including Government and civil society, the breadth of UNICEF’s work and its impact on children.

Milestones in social media reach and engagement extended to media engagement that spotlighted the office’s work in WASH, ECD, gender and adolescents, ending violence and juvenile justice programming. As a result of consultations with national and civil society partners,
identified communications initiatives for adolescents will be implemented in 2018. See:

South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation

UNICEF Argentina facilitated a presentation in Buenos Aires to a delegation from the Belize Government of Argentina's experience on results-based financing for universal and effective health coverage – with an emphasis on adolescent health (MoH Plan Nacer and Programa Sumar) – and its national comprehensive social and tax identification system (SINTyS).

As a result, lessons learned from SINTyS are being incorporated in the design of Belize’s new comprehensive single citizen registry, which will combine information from registries and databases on social security, elections and migration. The Belize delegation to Argentina included the CEO of the Office of the Prime Minister and the MHDSTPA’s social planning official. The in-country mission was followed by a teleconference with SINTyS and direct participation by Belize’s special adviser to the prime minister on planning and performance monitoring, who is leading the establishment of this comprehensive national information system.

In May 2017 UNICEF Belize hosted a regional CCD training and a parent intervention programme for ECD trainers from three different ministries: health, education and human development. Due to collaboration with the UNICEF Regional Office and UNICEF Headquarters, UNICEF Belize was able to host two participants from WHO/PAHO representing Brazil and Suriname. This training supported the rollout of CCD in Belize, which created more access to ECD services for vulnerable families. Two modules were introduced at the training, on violence prevention and support for families affected by the Zika virus and other disabilities. Belize was also able to attend a global CCD meeting in Dar es Salaam to showcase its successful work on CCD. Requests have already been made for further South-South cooperation in 2018; Government representatives from the Eastern Caribbean Area will visit Belize to learn from the CCD work.

Identification and promotion of innovation

The communications strategy allowed the office to work more strategically to ensure tighter collaboration, and that communications benefit work for children. In relation to innovation, UNICEF Belize instituted a media engagement group and media encounter, intended to be a deliberate quarterly engagement with the media at the UNICEF office. The session allows the programme team to feature a particular thematic area, with a view to informing the media on UNICEF’s work for and impact on children. The first media engagement group encounter focused on the results of the MICS5, permitting the data to be presented in a media-friendly format and allowing participants to question more deeply the impact of having such data available and its usefulness to development work for children.

In partnership with the Legal Aid Services Centre, UNICEF offered free legal aid clinics for underserved communities of Belize. Seven communities were visited in 2017 and more than 80 participants accessed legal services for matters such as child maintenance, custody and other issues affecting children. At least 10 additional clinics are planned for 2018. It is anticipated that the attention of lawyers, judges, and government officials will be drawn to the urgent need for expanding legal assistance programmes for children and organizations that advocate on their behalf.

Support to integration and cross-sectoral linkages
UNICEF Belize, in collaboration with NCFC, launched the National Children’s Agenda 2017-2030 in June 2017. This document represents Government’s effort to improve outcomes for children and adolescents and recognizes the shared responsibility for achieving these results.

In line with the Children’s Agenda, UNICEF supported the:

- Establishment of coordination mechanisms for serving as an advisory body to the NCFC on matters pertaining to effective M&E and policy decision related to the Children’s Agenda

- ECD inter-sectoral mechanism and drafting of the ECD strategic plan and M&E framework. To ensure vertical linkages, the ECD M&E framework is being monitored by the NCFC M&E subcommittee

- Drafting of a roadmap for interagency collaboration to accelerate action for adolescent health, and develop a joint mobilization strategy and communication tools for families, communities, and adolescents

- Parenting task force and development and roll-out of a Parenting Manual. The multisectoral taskforce supported harmonization of lessons and concepts for coordinated delivery of parenting programmes

- Development of a national diversion programme and establishment of the National Diversion Task Force, mandated to: identify and provide intervention services for children with social adjustment problems, to prevent them from coming in conflict with the law by diverting them from police processing and detention; advocate for the protection of the rights of children in conflict with the law; facilitate the diversion of children from the court system

- WASH technical working group and ongoing roll-out of WASH in Schools, including infrastructure, capacity building and public awareness.

Service delivery

For the sustainable achievement of the ECD plan, the ministries of health, education and human development, with UNICEF support, collaborated to achieve a comprehensive, systems-based approach to the organization of ECD services for young children and their families. The CCD parenting intervention is inclusive and involves counselling for caregivers of children aged 0-5 years, with information on play and communication. CCD activities also include violence prevention strategies and information for children with disabilities, including during emergencies.

The CO supported the piloting of the “BOOST+” cash transfer scheme, both technically and financially. This model was developed based on recommendations included in the impact evaluation of the original BOOST programme, also supported by UNICEF. BOOST+ supported around 170 families and children from the most impoverished area in Belize City, providing intensive, holistic social work support to individuals with complex needs. Support was provided in a variety of areas in an effort to address multidimensional deprivations such as lack of access to health, proper nutrition, education and training, home and shelter, income and work. The programme is currently being reviewed, to improve it and scale-up its reach to new areas.

UNICEF Belize and the Legal Aid Services Centre held free legal aid clinics in seven underserved communities, where over 80 participants accessed free legal services related to matters affecting families and children. Ten additional clinics are planned for 2018 and it is
anticipated that the attention of lawyers, judges, and government officials will be drawn to the urgent need to expand legal assistance programmes for children.

**Human rights-based approach to cooperation**

The human rights-based approach continues to form an integral part of the agreements signed between UNICEF Belize and national partners. Rolling work plans incorporate national as well as regional frameworks that integrate human rights principles and global priorities, such as the SDGs and the United Nations Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework (UNMSDF). Planned activities and indicators in all programme areas are aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

In programmatic areas, UNICEF Belize continued to support the Government to mainstream human rights-based approaches. Technical and financial support was provided to the SCFM to conduct violence-prevention training with Children’s Advisory Boards in nine municipalities. UNICEF was responsible for diversifying the Boards to include children who have dropped out of school, are differently abled or belong to vulnerable groups. UNICEF and UNDP also jointly supported the Government to design the national diversion programme targeting at-risk youth who come in conflict with the law, allowing them to have access to quality secondary and tertiary prevention programmes and diversion. The programme is expected to be piloted in the first quarter of 2018.

In 2017 the Country Office initiated a study of menstrual hygiene management, the first research of its kind to be executed in the country. The study marks an important step in the design and planning of programmatic interventions utilizing gender-sensitive, equity-focused data generation and analysis. The study intends to support the country with implementation of the CRC and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, particularly by serving as a catalyst for ensuring that acts of discrimination against women and girls by persons and/or institutions are brought to the fore and that the appropriate measures are undertaken to enable women and girls to enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Additionally, steps to submit Belize’s reports on implementation of the CRC and the Optional Protocols are underway, with UNICEF support. To this end, funds were disbursed to the MHDSTPA to begin the process, which has been delayed since 2007. UNICEF will continue to work closely with the Ministry to provide support in this area.

**Gender equality**

UNICEF Belize supports ongoing efforts to address the challenge of gender equality and its influence on attitudes and norms, relationships and the experience of girls and boys as they transition from early childhood through adolescence. The office invested US$200,000 for:

- Strengthening evidence/data for advocacy:
  - In collaboration with the WASH TWG and John Hopkins University, the office is conducting an MHM study, to provide baseline information for the gender action plan 2018-2021, and strengthen gender programming by increasing understanding of the range of challenges faced by school girls during menstruation and the determinants of those challenges.
  - MICS 5 data show significant disparities in multiple indicators, between geographic regions, age groups and sexes. The report shows significant gaps
affecting children in the second decade of childhood, providing evidence for an increased Government's focus on adolescent health.

- UNICEF and the MOEYSC are conducting an out-of-school study highlighting the factors associated with lack of school completion among adolescents and providing key decision makers with recommendations to reduce barriers to school completion. Support was also provided for Belize’s Voluntary Reporting on the SDGs by producing nine information briefs, including one on gender equity.

- Strengthening adolescent participation and engagement:
  - Consultations were held with members of the CAB in nine municipalities on health and development, ending violence, anti-bullying campaigns organized and led by adolescents and annual meetings of CAB presidents, which provided mechanisms to elevate and amplify their voices.

- Strengthening capacity and knowledge management
  - Stakeholders meetings and consultations were held with adolescents to review data and determine priorities representing the core threats to optimal health, learning, protection, economic empowerment and inclusion, leading to the development of a C4D strategy.
  - Capacity-building sessions were conducted with key government and civil society stakeholders, members of the CAB and UNFPA’s Youth Advisory Group on U-Report.
  - The office hosted a series of consultative meetings with key stakeholders to draft the road map the Global Guidance to Support Country Implementation of the Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents.

Environmental sustainability

As a low-lying coastal country, Belize is particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. While Belize’s contribution to global warming and climate change is negligible, the country is impacted by this phenomenon. Annual heavy rains and nationwide flooding underscored the need to further heighten awareness about vulnerabilities and highlight children’s right to clean water, proper sanitation and hygiene education. UNICEF Belize supported the MoH and other key stakeholders to train community health workers in WASH protocols for disease prevention, given the occurrence of conjunctivitis and gastroenteritis outbreaks during 2017.

As a part of the WASH programme in schools, school improvement plans focus on safe, clean healthy environments as a major pillar of child-friendly schools. UNICEF also supported the development of a WASH tool kit. Technical assistance was given to the MoE and MoH to develop a communication for development (C4D) campaign designed to improve knowledge, attitudes and practices of all stakeholders, creating safe, healthy and clean environments where children grow, learn and thrive.

To promote healthy living in the UNICEF Belize office, 14 stand-up desks were ordered for staff. The goal is to incorporate standing, pacing and other forms of activity into the normal day, to reduce risks of obesity, type-2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Management and the Local Staff Association continued to collaborate on creating an energy efficient office and environment. This translated into a reduction of carbon emissions and conserving resources not only benefitting the environment, but also in financial costs savings. In 2017, energy was
reduced by 25 per cent of working hours due to turning off office lights and air conditioning at certain periods during the day.

**Effective leadership**

UNICEF Brazil had no audit recommendations to respond to in 2017. Operations and programme management focused on maintaining good practice and careful performance monitoring. The country management team (CMT) met twice in 2017, in March (with a focus on reviewing the status of planning and preparedness), and in October, in preparation for end-year reviews. Each CMT looked at programme management indicators, harmonized approach to cash transactions (HACT), risk assessment, early warning/early action and field reports to identify and review measures to address risks, bottlenecks affecting programme implementation, resource utilization and operational efficiency.

The business continuity plan was reviewed by the programme team at the beginning of the year, before the hurricane season, to ensure preparedness for implementing continuity measures, and updated at the end of the hurricane season.

The programme group met quarterly to: hold participatory reviews of performance, identify programme risks and challenges and related operations needs and opportunities, and to inform timely intervention for effective delivery of programme results.

Under the leadership of the multi-country service facility (MCSF), the Country Office began developing standard operating procedures for procurement, travel and some other financial tasks, which will not only address risk mitigation and responsibilities but result in efficiency gains for staff time.

Savings in operational costs were maintained, with an overall yearly total of US$500. This is a direct result of proactively pursuing cost reductions locally, for procuring office supplies, telephone rates, Internet, electricity and fuel. This is anticipated to continue with the development by the UN operations management team of a business operations strategy in early 2018. Additional resources were saved as a direct result of utilizing long-term agreements (LTAs) as the first option for programmatic and operations procurement.

The overall implementation rate of 99 per cent was achieved through immense team effort and special attention to planning, monitoring and timely technical support and guidance to implementing partners.

**Financial resources management**

To address high month-end bank balances, the Country Office, with guidance and support from UNICEF’s multi-country service facility (MCSF) operations team, implemented a monthly funding forecast to meet programme and operational needs. The average correlation was 80 per cent between the forecast and actual disbursements. To further address the bank balance to expenditure ratio, UNICEF Belize will continue all efforts in financial management planning, monitoring and evaluation for both programme and operations teams.

Programmatically, additional financial management strategies included: quarterly outstanding funds expenditure reports by implementing partners, submission of itemized cost estimates and Itemized cost estimates vs. actual costs, spot checks, Skype meetings and phone calls. These actions addressed the risk that partners would not fully utilize disbursed funding.
Payments are processed in a timely manner for both programme and operations expenditures, resulting in less than 1 per cent of returned cases from the Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC).

Donor grants were monitored regularly to prevent loss of funds due to non-utilization and expiration. The 2017 implementation rate was: 81 per cent regular resources, 57 per cent other resources (OR), 75 per cent other resources- emergency and 100 per cent for the institutional budget.

Operational cost savings was maintained with an overall yearly total of US$500, mainly from the reduced costs for procurement of office supplies; telephone, Internet and electricity connections; and fuel. Whenever possible, small purchases (e.g., under US$250) were paid through petty cash to further reduce transactional cost at both the Country Office and the GSSC. Procurement of goods and services relied on LTAs as the first option.

Professional MCSF support in operations, finance and HR was very beneficial to UNICEF Belize during 2017, as was GSSC performance of specific actions related to operations/finance (bank reconciliations) and human resources.

**Fundraising and donor relations**

As in previous years, UNICEF Belize continued to complete donor reports in a timely manner, ensuring that the quality of reporting was in alignment with organizational standards. To increase the effectiveness of reporting, donor reports were accompanied by human-interest stories and other communication pieces, such as photos and links to related videos or documentaries.

Funding was secured through: LACRO Regional Funds (US$180,000); Swiss Agency for Development (US$27,777); Regional Thematic Funds (US$200,000) for child protection and for social inclusion (US$46,165); PROBITAS Foundation (US$148,227.20) for strengthening the capacities of Belize’s medical laboratories and staff; and the Swedish International Development Agency, for activities geared to preventing armed violence (US$150,000). The office continued to receive funding from the U.S. Fund for UNICEF for proposals on WASH in primary schools. In 2017 another US$50,000 was pledged for advocacy and technical assistance to a multi-sectoral WASH taskforce chaired by the MoH.

Private sector partnerships for fundraising intensified during 2017 and, based on potential private sector entities identified in 2016, the Country Office made presentations to and developed proposals with major corporations in the telecommunication sector BTL and SMART. It is expected that partnerships with these companies will be finalized in 2018 and a local media content package (text, audio, visual) will be developed for dissemination on mobile phones, specifically targeting adolescents.

**Evaluation and research**

In the first quarter of 2017 evaluation activities were logged in PRIME. Throughout the year, this platform was constantly updated and also used to monitor the progress of each activity, particularly in relation to the utilization of funds reserved. PRIME is reviewed semi-annually.

The management response to the impact evaluation of the 2016 BOOST Cash Transfer Programme was completed. Of the 27 recommended activities, more than 50 per cent (16) were accepted and are currently being implemented. One activity was partially accepted and only three (11 per cent) of the recommendations were rejected. Seven recommended activities are
currently pending perusal and discussion, prior to acceptance by the Ministry.

The Roving Caregivers Programme (RCP) was to be evaluated during the period being reviewed. However, the timeline for the execution of this activity had been modified as a result of the various consultation exercises which were conducted with MHDSTPA to -among others- identify the scope of the evaluation, review similar evaluations of this nature in the region, and leverage support for the evaluation. It was then decided that the evaluation should provide recommendations on how to scale up, making the programme more efficient and effective, and not only determine whether or not the RCP should be continued. The programme was considered essential to the scaling up of service delivery of ECD/CCD, and the ministry is currently drafting the TOR for the procurement of the Consultant in 2018.

Several technical meetings have been conducted with RESTORE Belize to define the scope of the evaluation of the RESTORE Programme. The aim is to share the TOR for Expressions of Interest by first quarter 2018.

### Efficiency gains and cost savings

Local travel for programme monitoring did not increase, as the team ensured that whenever possible field visits were consolidated or used other means such as in-house or Skype meetings or phone calls. Reduced travel also led to savings in staff time.

UNICEF Belize continues as a “Light” office, which is contingent on reliable and stable internet connections. The office saw a nominal reduction in Internet service rates, with an overall cost savings of just under US$100. While reduced Internet rates in Belize continue to lag behind the rest of the region, the Country Office has experienced a 40 per cent reduction over the past four years.

Savings on operational costs was maintained, with an overall yearly total of US$500. This was mainly due to reduced costs for procurement of office supplies, telephone rates, Internet, electricity and fuel. Whenever possible, small purchases (under US$250) were paid through petty cash to further reduce transaction costs at the Country Office and the GSSC. Procurement efforts utilized LTAs as the first option.

### Supply management

The CO supplies plan continues to be minimal for procurement of consumables, emergency and construction. The procurement services (individual consultants/institutional contracts) is at 62 per cent for outsourcing technical expertise to support the programme implementation. International outsourcing of these services is due to the limited pool of qualified national expertise.

Implementing partners are made aware of UNICEF’s procurement guidelines during the face to face HACT training. Thus, UNICEF staff members participate in the recruitment process for procurement of goods and services.

LTAs are in place for local procurement of emergency supplies. A requirement under this new Country Programme (CP), is that the rolling work plans and small-scale funding agreements signed with implementing partners included specific actions and agreements for emergency preparedness and response and for disaster risk-reduction. This measure was taken to ensure a quick response time in the event of a natural disaster.
At present the CO holds no warehouse for programme supplies. Procurement of programme supplies are ordered as direct delivery to the implementing partner to encourage accountability, transparency and ownership of projects.

The three types of cash transfer modalities are used as per agreement with the implementing partner. Under this new CP, construction project is under the 2 different types of cash transfer modality.

Given the small economy of its host country, UNICEF Belize continues to face some challenges with procurement, including: limited pool of suppliers; high import taxes, as well as shipping & freight costs – which continue to contribute to price increases for supplies.

2017 Supplies - Total US$329,911.98

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPLIES</th>
<th>VALUE (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme services - individual contractor/consultant</td>
<td>$125,198.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme services - corporate</td>
<td>$80,372.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme supplies</td>
<td>$3,578.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme emergency supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operations services</td>
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<td>Operations office supplies</td>
<td>$7,340.77</td>
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<td>Operations office equipment</td>
<td>$6,530.00</td>
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</table>

2017 Construction - Total US$97,840.09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome 3 - Life-long learning</th>
<th>VALUE (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality child-friendly schools, WASH construction, Direct Cash Transfer modality</td>
<td>$71,052.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory expansion construction - direct payment modality</td>
<td>$26,788.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Security for staff and premises**

The local security associate (LSA) of the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) continued to implement, mitigate and address issues related to security for UN personnel in Belize. Measures taken were regularly monitored by the Representative/Officer in charge, with support from the LSA and UNDSS. All staff members attended quarterly ‘safety and security’ briefings given by the LSA. Guidance was shared on prevention, mitigation and reporting of potential threats or negative experiences that might affect staff safety or programme delivery. Sessions were also held on personal safety and security. To facilitate programme delivery in the field, staff must request local security clearances, which are monitored and coordinated with local law enforcement agencies.
In August 2017, given the threats of Hurricane Franklin and Tropical Storm Harvey, 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 NEMO.

During 2017 two staff members reported significant Incidents: one road traffic accident and one physical attack. The RTA case is currently ongoing in the local Magistrate’s court and the case for ‘harm’ has been dismissed. Due to threats of crime and violence against UNICEF staff members and the current security situation in country, actions were taken to address office access and a security briefing on personal safety was held. Since UNICEF rents its office space support was provided to the landlords for controlling access and making building improvements.

UNICEF Belize maintains high compliance with mandatory security operational tools: minimum operating security standards, residential security measures and UN Belize Security Plan are all updated.

**Human resources**

Adequate programme delivery was ensured in 2017, despite the small, 13-member workforce. The office structure now includes a communication officer, who arrived in February 2017.

The organizational priority of strengthening the Operations section resulted in the creation of an operations officer post and an HR assistant post (both under recruitment), as well as a finance assistant.

The arrival of the new Representative in end-February provided the team leadership required to advance the 2017 priorities; recruitment of a new social policy specialist in August completed the current team.

Performance planning and assessment using ACHIEVE was successful; all staff completed both planning and mid-year review before the deadlines. Performance discussions are ongoing, with positive results.

The 2017 Global Staff Survey for Belize highlighted the following areas with lowest scores: personal empowerment, work/life balance, career and professional development and office efficiency and effectiveness. Management worked with the local staff association to develop an action plan, with input from all staff. Some activities will be incorporated in the learning and development plan, which consolidates individual staff learning plans. A 2017 staff retreat focused on teambuilding, effective leadership and empathy.

UNCEF Belize released three staff members to support the response in UNICEF country offices in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Project and administrative assistants worked in the Barbados Office and the ECD Officer was stationed in Anguilla for a combined period of 21 weeks. An all-staff emergency preparedness training is scheduled for Q1/2018.

The Office maintained a good record by using a relatively small portion of RR (44 per cent) and OR (11 per cent) for post costs, allowing for a significant share of those resources to be used for programmes.

All staff were trained in UNCares minimum standards.

**Effective use of information and communication technology**
The acquisition in 2017 of seven new Lenovo Yoga 260 laptops and subsequent equipment transfers, have all staff now working with a laptop and able to do so anywhere with an Internet connection. The installation of Windows 10 is complete, and the Office’s use of Outlook, OneDrive, SharePoint and Skype for Business coupled with the reliability of the installed primary and secondary Internet connections has allowed work to progress with minimal interruptions. Although reductions in rates for Internet use in Belize continued to lag behind the rest of the region, rates have declined by 40 per cent over the past four years. Colleagues utilized all equipment for communication and were well-positioned for potential requests for support (laptops, radios and cell phones) during threats of hurricanes and tropical storms in August 2017.

UNICEF Belize was able to capitalize on global social media campaigns (Facebook and Twitter) utilizing the developed global assets and relating it to the country context, alongside messages and assets developed to support programme work in Belize. The Office’s reach and engagement experienced quantum increases: Facebook reach grew from a mere 18,000 (in April 2017) to 1.1 million (end-October 2017) and engagement rose from 4,800 (in April 2017) to 83,000 by end-October. Although Twitter is not a popular social media platform in Belize, Twitter impressions continued to see marked growth. UNICEF’s coordinated approach and assertive tagging of partner agencies have strengthened outreach and leveraged increased audience share, along with aggressive boosting of our key messages, making UNICEF’s social media presence more effective for public advocacy, while forging a stronger relationship with Belize’s mainstream media.

Programme Components from RAM

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 Management Outcome

Analytical statement of progress
During this first year of CP implementation attention was focused on advocacy and awareness-raising around: CP priorities (child rights monitoring and elimination of child poverty, lifelong learning, access to justice and violence prevention); discussions on alignment between the SDGs and the national development plan (Belize Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy); and implementation support in each CP outcome area. Country office staff in programmes and operations were allocated distinct and complementary roles in support of core partnerships and management of financial transactions administered through rolling workplans (RWP) with: the Ministries of Education, Health and Human Development; local governments, the NCFC and the Supreme Court of Belize. Quarterly programme meetings involving the entire team (including operations) have enabled the team to oversee progress and opportunities for improved collaboration and efficiency. Support for civil society partnerships, for both regular programming and emergency response, are integrated in the RWP and ECD work, which is planned, implemented and monitored jointly by multiple sectors and managed through an interagency RWP, facilitating efficiency and enhanced results for children.

Planned reviews were conducted on programme and financial implementation using the HACT, building on partner reporting and field verification by staff. In 2017 UNICEF Belize conducted four training events on HACT compliance for new focal points in each partner ministry, institution and civil society organization. As a result, by end-year, 81.5 per cent of the programme funds planned for disbursement in 2017 had been disbursed. Close monitoring by the programme team each quarter enabled the Office to detect areas of slow implementation by
partners, resulting in early recall of funds to minimize risk. Discussions were held with partners to review programming bottlenecks, identify changes in programming assumptions, context and needs to (re)confirm the implementation plan. The senior management team also reviewed performance scorecard Indicators regularly to ensure timeliness and completeness of reporting in programmes and HACT.

The governance bodies and management committees established through the annual management plan included: the CMT, staff association, programme group, joint consultative committee and the annual programme review committee, all of which operate on a periodic basis. The current version of the management plan was approved in December 2016. UNICEF Belize has a business continuity plan that is reviewed before the hurricane season in mid-year and again at the beginning of the year. The CMT met twice in 2017, staff association committee met regularly and worked with management to convene a staff retreat in June 2017, featuring a management consultant, focused on personal development and team excellence. Staff feedback on improvements to address areas of concern found in the staff survey will be reviewed by the joint consultative committee in early January 2018.

An annual programme review was co-convened with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a special briefing was held with the Chief Executive Officers’ Caucus in December 2017 to update government ministries on UNICEF’s priorities, 2017 progress and 2018 plans and opportunities to accelerate results for children. Belize is one of the countries implementing the UN Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework (UN MSDF), a successor to the UNDAFs with programmes defined around four common pillars (inclusion, health, justice and resilience), reflecting priorities across the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. To ensure effective advocacy and mobilization of interagency technical, financial and administrative support for results for children, the UNICEF Belize programme team participated in review and guidance of the implementation of the UNMSDF through regular virtual programme network meetings involving staff from across the Caribbean. Programme and policy progress in Belize was reviewed with the steering committee, comprised of senior government representatives and the UN Country Team.

All staff positions were filled in 2017, ensuring that the office was operating at full capacity for most of 2017 and thus able to successfully support the delivery of results for children. The posts of Representative and communications officer were filled in February 2017 while the post of social policy specialist was vacated in April and filled in August 2017. Since July 2017 one person has been on a temporary fixed term contract, to fill in for a staff on maternity leave; all other staff are on fixed term posts. The Country Office participated in a programme and budget review process in 2017 aimed at strengthening operations capacity. The result was the abolishment of one GS post (administrative assistant, G4), one change of title (operations assistant to finance assistant, G6) and creation of two new posts (human resource assistant, G6 and operations officer NOA). The new structure is to take effect in 2018; recruitment is ongoing.

UNICEF Belize provided support to emergency response to hurricane-affected territories of the Eastern Caribbean through three short-term assignments of staff members (one national - ECD specialist and two general service staff - programme assistant and administrative assistant who provided travel support to the Eastern Caribbean). These deployments were staggered across the period September to November 2017 and served as an important professional development opportunity for the staff as well as an opportunity for the office to strengthen its internal capacity for emergency response, a critical area given Belize’s vulnerability to natural disasters.
OUTPUT 1 Governance and Systems

Analytical statement of progress
Governance bodies and management committees established in the office through the AMP included the CMT, staff association, programme group, joint consultative committee and annual programme review, which operate regularly. The current version of the AMP was approved in December 2016 and will be updated in early 2018. The Belize Country Office has a current Business Continuity Plan reviewed annually before the hurricane season in mid-year and again at the beginning of the year.

The CMT met twice in 2017 (March and October) and the local staff association committee met regularly and worked with office management to convene a staff retreat in June 2017, working alongside a management consultant to focus on personal development and team excellence. The joint consultative committee did not meet in 2017 but held a meeting to consult with all staff and identify key areas for improvement based on Country Office staff survey results. Staff feedback is being gathered as proposals for review by the JCC in a formal meeting in early January 2018.

An Annual Programme Review was co-convened with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a special briefing was held with the Chief Executive Officers’ Caucus in December 2017 to update Government Ministries on the priorities, 2017 progress and 2018 plans and opportunities for accelerated results for children. Belize is one of the countries implementing the UN MSDF, a successor to the UNDAF, with programmes defined around four common pillars (Inclusion, health, justice and resilience), reflecting priorities across the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. To ensure effective advocacy and mobilization of interagency technical, financial and administrative support for results for children, the UNICEF Belize programme team participated in review and guidance of implementation of the UNMSDF country implementation plan through regular virtual programme network meetings involving staff from across the Caribbean. Programme and policy progress in Belize was reviewed with the steering committee, comprised of senior Government representatives and the UN Country Team.

OUTPUT 2 Financial Resources and Stewardship

Analytical statement of progress
To address high month-end bank balances, the Country Office, with guidance and support from UNICEF’s multi-country service facility (MCSF) operations team, implemented a monthly funding forecast to meet programme and operational needs. The average correlation was 80 per cent between the forecast and actual disbursements. To further address the bank balance to expenditure ratio, UNICEF Belize will continue all efforts in financial management planning, monitoring and evaluation for both programme and operations teams.

Programmatically, additional financial management strategies included: quarterly outstanding funds expenditure reports by implementing partners, submission of itemized cost estimates and Itemized cost estimates vs. actual costs, spot checks, Skype meetings and phone calls. These actions addressed the risk that partners would not fully utilize disbursed funding and has resulted in no/6 months.

Payments are processed in a timely manner for both programme and operations expenditures, resulting in less than 1 per cent of returned cases from the GSSC.
Donor grants were monitored regularly to prevent loss of funds due to non-utilization and expiration. The 2017 implementation rate was: 81 per cent regular resources, 57 per cent other resources (OR), 75 per cent other resources-emergency and 100 per cent for the institutional budget.

Operational cost savings was maintained with an overall yearly total of US$500, mainly from the reduced costs for procurement of office supplies; telephone, Internet and electricity connections; and fuel. Whenever possible, small purchases (e.g., under US$250) were paid through petty cash to further reduce transactional cost at both the Country Office and the GSSC. Procurement of goods and services relied on LTAs as the first option.

Professional MCSF support in operations, finance and HR was very beneficial to UNICEF Belize during 2017, as was GSSC performance of specific actions related to operations/finance (bank reconciliations) and human resources.

OUTPUT 3 Human Resources Management

Analytical statement of progress
All staff positions were filled in 2017, ensuring that the office was operating at full capacity for most of 2017 and thus able to successfully support the delivery of results for children. The posts of Representative and communications officer were filled in February 2017 while the post of social policy specialist was vacated in April and filled in August 2017. Since July 2017 one person has been on a temporary fixed term contract, to fill in for a staff on maternity leave; all other staff are on fixed term posts. The Country Office participated in a programme and budget review process in 2017 aimed at strengthening operations capacity. The result was the abolishment of one GS post (administrative assistant, G4), one change of title (operations assistant to finance assistant, G6) and creation of two new posts (human resource assistant, G6 and operations officer NOA). The new structure is to take effect in 2018; recruitment is ongoing.

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The Office maintained a good record by using a relatively small portion of RR (44 per cent) and OR (11 per cent) for post costs, allowing for a significant share of those resources to be used for programmes.

Emergency training was included as a training priority, since Belize’s geographic location exposes the country to emergency threats in the form of tropical storms, earthquake tremors from regional seismic events and associated dangers.

All staff completed the following mandatory training: basic and advanced security in the field; protection against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse; prevention of harassment, sexual
harassment and abuse of authority and exploitation; ethics and integrity; and UN Cares minimum standards.

OUTCOME 2 Programme effectiveness

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF Belize contributed to implementation of the UN MSDF, in coordination with United Nations agencies in all Dutch- and English-speaking countries in the Caribbean and Latin America, enhancing the UN’s capacity, accountability and effectiveness to support participating countries to achieve progress in the areas of health, education, violence, social inclusion and resilience (including climate change).

In this context, and in the framework of the CPD, the programme effectiveness component supports all activities related to programme implementation and management, including technical and strategic assistance. It covers the costs of programme coordination and cross-cutting issues such as: programme performance monitoring, fundraising, advocacy and communication, gender mainstreaming and disaster risk reduction and resilience.

Major 2017 progress toward enhanced programme effectiveness included:

a) the launch of MICS5 in June 2017 and preparations for developing a situation analysis in 2018, providing data and evidence to better inform advocacy, target-setting and monitoring of child-rights priorities throughout the country

b) leadership in reporting on children and the SDGs, based on MICS data and rapid programme reviews to develop a compendium on Children and the SDGs to inform Belize’s submission of a voluntary national report on the SDGs at the UN High Level Forum on the SDGs

c) participation in the annual Joint Steering Committee for the UN MSDF in Belize, in which UNICEF led reporting on two of the four strategic areas (safety, cohesion & justice and quality education & learning)

d) a programme-focused annual end-year review meeting with the participation of Government institutions, civil society organizations and UN/international cooperation agencies, which provided specific recommendations for programme efficiency and effectiveness that will be integrated into 2018 programming;

e) meeting with the Chief Executive Officer Caucus of the Government of Belize (December 2017, and will continue in the future) to foster closer inter-sectoral collaboration on the country’s child rights and development proposed priorities.

f) systematic integration of communication activities to amplify programme themes and strategic milestones throughout the year through: media appearances by UNICEF and implementing partners, partnership with child advocates (CABs serving across the country as advisors to municipal governments), social media reports and dissemination of a variety of targeted media assets.

The Belize country office communications strategy and calendar were developed to guide programme communications, fostering UNICEF participation in and shaping of national dialogue, perspectives and reporting on children through multiple communication platforms, linked to the regional and global calendars to optimize the impact of the communication on attitudes and commitment to results for children.

OUTPUT 1 Programme Coordination
Analytical statement of progress

UNICEF Belize conducted an annual end-year programme review meeting, co-chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with participation by government institutions, civil society organizations and UN/international cooperation agencies, which provided specific recommendations for programme efficiency and effectiveness, such as:

a) Address communication and implementation bottlenecks that limit the effective and timely use and reporting of the resources available to support UNICEF programmes

b) Improve knowledge management and data-sharing on children between sectors and implementing partners to improve efficiency and coordination

c) Ensure more rapid integration of information and communication technology solutions to support innovative outreach; child, adolescent and community engagement; data sharing; and reporting

d) Meet regularly with stakeholders to achieve better coordination and greater impact.

To further enhance programme coordination, the results of the end-year review were shared with the CEO Caucus to foster closer intersectoral collaboration on identified priorities: ECD, violence prevention and access to justice, adolescent health, sustainable child-friendly municipalities, and social protection and public financing for children. As agreed during this first meeting between UNICEF and the CEO Caucus, the high-level dialogue will continue in 2018 on a periodic basis, to track how joint support through knowledge sharing and advocacy around the proposed areas is affecting technical collaboration and overall results.

Internally, programme group meetings involve the entire team (including operations) to maintain oversight of progress and opportunities for improved collaboration and efficiency. Programme results, findings from field monitoring visits and input from implementing partners are reviewed at the meetings to inform early action for risk mitigation in relation to implementation, periodic reporting, and adjustments in light of emerging knowledge, as well as to improve coordination across programmes.

OUTPUT 2 External Relations

Analytical statement of progress

A comprehensive communications strategy, complete with an annual workplan, provided a framework and guided UNICEF's actions on communications. The organization's visibility was achieved via a well-coordinated social media online plan, as well as by maintaining a presence in all forms of media across all programme priorities. Proactive consultation, outreach and collaboration between programme officers, UNICEF regional and HQ teams as well as national partners ensured the quantum increase in UNICEF Belize's social media audience, reach and engagement. UNICEF Belize was able to anticipate strategic communication opportunities and engage effectively to highlight UNICEF programmes and opportunities for children. Significantly increased media visibility laid a foundation for partnership with the media in Belize for stronger and better quality advocacy for children. Media is a critical influencing actor in shaping social development priorities and norms in Belize, and thus is a central partner for UNICEF's work. UNICEF will seek to play a stronger role in improving quality of media reporting on children.

OUTCOME 3 By 2021, national systems and policies are effectively addressing multiple deprivations affecting the most vulnerable boys and girls across the lifecycle, and building their
resilience, through adequately funded social investments and rights-based quality social policies based on adequately disaggregated data on children

Analytical statement of progress

- Developing a social protection strategy and strengthening systems; advancing the implementation of national social protection programmes
  
  - Contributing to the achievement of SDG 1, key policy advocacy recommendations were provided to the government on social protection strategy development and system strengthening. As a result, the country has included in the Children’s Agenda 2017-2030 a specific goal on protecting children and adolescents from poverty and social exclusion.

  - UNICEF contributed to increased national capacity for the continuous provision of cash transfers to more than 3,000 poor households (about 8,000 people), supporting child vaccinations, children’s and women’s health and school attendance. Additionally, 170 poor households benefitted from holistic social work support throughout 2017.

- Launch of National Children’s Agenda, alignment of subnational strategic plans and strengthening of children’s advisory boards
  
  - In collaboration with the NCFC and the office of the Special Envoy on Women and Children, UNICEF launched the National Children’s Agenda 2017-2030, supported the related alignment of the nine municipal strategic plans and supported the introduction of children’s advisory boards as a platform for child and adolescent participation— in partnership with the MLLGRD and NCFC, and in the framework of the SCFM initiative.

- MICS5 launch and Belize Voluntary Report on the SDGs
  
  - MICS5 data constitutes a major contribution to critical assessment of progress made in national priority areas and identifying disparities and assisting in evidence-based policymaking to address social exclusion of the most vulnerable children. It also provides a key baseline for monitoring progress toward achievement of the SDGs, and was used to guide Belize’s first national voluntary report.

- Child multidimensional poverty measurement
  
  - With UNICEF support and in coordination with Government partners (MHDSTPA and SIB), international cooperation partners (UNDP and OAS) and the OPHI, Belize in 2017 developed a proposal and roadmap for the adoption of a multidimensional poverty index, with a focus on child poverty.

- Advocacy strategy to strengthen high level governmental support to public finance for children:
  
  - In the framework of CRC article 4 and CRC Committee General Comment number 19, public financing for children is being advocated for at high levels, with the aim of increasing the volume, efficiency and impact of invested resources for vulnerable children and adolescents.

- CRC Reporting
UNICEF agreed with the MHDSTPA on a timeline for completion of Belize’s outstanding CRC report. UNICEF supported the contracting of a consultant to facilitate development of the state report through a participatory process to begin in early 2018.

OUTPUT 1 Strengthened national and subnational human and institutional capacities to develop and deliver inclusive and equitable social-protection systems to strengthen the resilience of and protect boys and girls from all forms of poverty and social exclusion.

Analytical statement of progress

Social Protection strategy development and system strengthening: Key policy advocacy recommendations were provided to the Government for a developing a social protection strategy and system strengthening, through the final version of the Comprehensive Review of Belize’s Social Protection System with Policy Recommendations for System Strengthening – a joint MHDSTPA/UNICEF/UNDP initiative. Among the main recommendations, was to develop a social protection strategy. As a result, the Government is considering development of a national social protection strategy and has already included in the Children’s Agenda 2017-2030 the specific goal of protecting children and adolescents from poverty and social exclusion.

Support for implementation of national social protection programmes: This advocacy initiative also contributed to increasing national capacity for the continuous provision of cash transfers to more than 3,000 poor households (about 8,000 people), supporting child vaccination, children’s and women’s health and school attendance. As an additional specific result – and in parallel with the Government management response to a major evidence generation initiative (UNICEF-supported Impact Evaluation of Belize’s Conditional Cash Transfer Programme –BOOST) – at the end of 2016 the country developed the BOOST+ Co-responsibility Cash Transfer Programme, a pilot extension of the BOOST programme with a “wraparound services approach”. Through contributions by UNICEF and the OAS, 170 poor households benefitted from holistic social work support throughout 2017.

Launch of National Children’s Agenda: UNICEF, in collaboration with the NCF and Office of the Special Envoy on Women and Children, launched the National Children’s Agenda 2017-2030 in June 2017, a major national effort to improve outcomes for children and adolescents, that recognizes the shared responsibility for achieving these results.

Alignment of sub-national strategic plans and the national Children’s Agenda 2030: UNICEF Belize supported the alignment of nine municipal strategic plans with the Children’s Agenda 2030 (approved by the Cabinet in May 2017), which provides a systematic framework of action for children and adolescents, focusing on municipal-level: health, learning, protection, economic empowerment and social inclusion.

Strengthening CABs as a platform for child and adolescent participation: In partnership with the MLLGRD and NCF, and in the framework of the SCF initiative, UNICEF facilitated the annual meeting of CAB presidents as an established platform for children and adolescents that provides a modality for them to voice their concerns and hold national officials accountable. CAB members: i) participated in consultations to review and identify adolescent health and development priorities and collectively define priorities, including underlying gender norms that exacerbate risk and vulnerability for adolescents; ii) were trained as peer advocates to strengthen children’s resilience and respond to violence against children in their respective
municipalities; iii) trained in trauma recovery methodology in order to build resilience and be able to provide peer-to-peer assistance following a disaster, emergency or traumatic experience; iv) participated in empowerment sessions on gender, specific needs of girls during emergencies, and the SDGs, including sharing their knowledge on SDGs at home and in school, church and communities.

OUTPUT 2 Improved national and sub-national capacities to systematically collect, analyse and use desegregated data and other forms of information to monitor, inform policy decisions, and report on the situation of children and child poverty in all of its dimensions, using an equity-based approach

Analytical statement of progress

MICS5 Launch: In close partnership with the Government (particularly the SIB and NCFC) and the UN System, UNICEF Belize launched the results of the MICS5 in June. The data represent a major contribution to critical assessment of the progress made in national priority areas, identification of disparities and evidence-based policymaking to address social exclusion of the most vulnerable children. MICS5 indicators also provide a key baseline to monitor progress toward achievement of the SDGs https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXEO0BqcCvA&t=6s.

Belize voluntary report on the SDGs: MICS5 data were a key contribution to guiding Belize’s first national voluntary reporting on the SDGs. UNICEF supported the Government to draft several data briefs on children and the SDGs, on: poverty, health, nutrition, education, gender equality, oceans, clean water, climate change and good jobs and economic growth. https://www.unicef.org/belize/BZE_CRM_ReportingOnChildrenandtheSDGsLR.pdf

Measuring multidimensional poverty among children: UNICEF Brazil contributed, through policy advocacy, to the adoption of a multidimensional poverty measure. Concretely, the Comprehensive Review of Belize’s Social Protection System with Policy Recommendations for System Strengthening includes a proposal for a Belize multidimensional poverty measurement, and the country has already developed a preliminary roadmap for the adoption of a multidimensional poverty index with a focus on child poverty, as a result of a joint MHDSTPA/UNICEF/OAS workshop on this topic, in partnership with the UNICEF HQ child poverty unit and the OPHI.

Support for the development of social sector information systems: During a visit to Buenos Aires, UNICEF Belize facilitated a presentation to a Belizean Government delegation of Argentina’s experience on (i) results-based financing for universal and effective health coverage, with an emphasis on adolescent health (Plan Nacer and Programa Sumar of the Ministry of Health) and (ii) Argentina’s national comprehensive social and tax identification system (SINTyS). As a result of this south-south collaboration, the main lessons learned in SINTyS are being incorporated in the design of Belize’s new comprehensive Single Citizen Registry, which will combine information from social security, voters, and migrations registries and databases. The Belize delegation to Argentina included the CEO of the Office of the Prime Minister and the social planner of the MHDSTPA. The in-country mission was followed by a teleconference with SINTyS and direct participation by Belize’s special adviser to the Prime Minister on planning and performance monitoring, who is leading the establishment of this comprehensive national information system, with an emphasis on social sector data.

Menstrual hygiene management: In collaboration with the WASH TWG and John Hopkins University, UNICEF is currently conducting an MHM study in Belize. The objective of this
formative assessment is not only to provide baseline information for the 2018-2021 gender action plan, but also to strengthen gender programming and planning by increasing understanding of the range of challenges faced by school girls during menstruation and the determinants of those challenges across a range of settings and cultural contexts, i.e. rural/urban. The final report is expected to be completed in 2018.

 OUTPUT 3 Enhanced national systems that govern the volume, efficiency and impact of invested resources towards building resilience of the most vulnerable boys, girls and adolescents

Analytical statement of progress

Child-focused social public expenditure review and analysis: To generate evidence for advocacy efforts on increasing the volume and efficiency of investments in children. UNICEF supported the final stages of drafting a child-focused social public expenditure review and analysis. The review provides a preliminary overview on investments in children in Belize. However, additional work is needed to make public information on child budgeting available in Belize, including: the generation of periodic data on social sector and investments in childhood, and public policy recommendations for continued increases in the quantity, quality and impact of the financial resources allocated and spent to build the resilience of the most vulnerable children and adolescents.

Advocacy strategy to strengthen high-level Government support to public finance for children: As part of its advocacy strategy UNICEF Belize facilitated high-level participation (including the CEO of the Office of the Prime Minister and the MHDSTPA social planning officer) to the UNICEF-organized 5th International Seminar on Social Investment: "In Search of Advocacy to Protect and Improve the Allocation of Resources for Children”, held in Argentina in October. As a result, a draft roadmap was developed to renew and expand UNICEF partnerships on investments in children with the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Finance, MHDSTPA and Ministry of Economic Development, beginning in 2018. Another major policy advocacy and coordination effort involved a meeting in December with the CEO Caucus of the Government of Belize, with the overall objectives of discussing priority programme areas, helping foster closer intersectoral collaboration and enabling conditions for success for child development in Belize, including a priority focus on increasing the volume and efficiency of investments in children and adolescents.

 OUTPUT 4 Project Cost (Salaries for Social Policy Specialist (P-3) and Programme Assistant (GS6))

Analytical statement of progress

Staff costs for technical support to programme and operations.

OUTCOME 4 By 2021, National legislation is implemented to prevent, mitigate and address violence and other childhood abuses and the justice, education, public health, security and other sectors observe children's rights to this protection

Analytical statement of progress
Significant progress was made in supporting national capacity, political commitment, advocacy and capacity for positive practices in 2017. To achieve outcomes and maximize synergies, UNICEF’s investment complemented and leveraged work being carried out through programmes of the MHDSTPA, Ministry of Education and Attorney General’s Office, the Supreme Court, and the national child protection taskforce. Additionally, through this work, UNICEF continued to support efforts by the Belize Supreme Court and Family Court, the Ministry of National Security, Department of Legal Aid, relevant NGOs and CBOs to identify and address inequities and strengthen capacities and knowledge for the full implementation of child justice and violence-prevention programmes.

**OUTPUT 1** Increased country capacity to promote and ensure justice and systems that enable the prevention and treatment of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect

**Analytical statement of progress**

*Child Friendly Family Court initiative:* UNICEF continued supporting the Child-Friendly Courts Subcommittee to achieve this output, including through collaboration with implementing partners (Supreme Court, Family Court and Legal Aid). In 2017 UNICEF supported the refurbishment of the Belize City Family Court, to incorporate child-friendly settings in the infrastructure, including: a child-friendly room to facilitate interviews with children, designated safe waiting areas to ensure the child’s right to privacy and equipment, such as one-way screens that allow children to participate in the justice process without being intimidated or traumatized. The refurbishment will make it the second court in the country to have designated child-friendly spaces. Work commenced in late 2017; it is expected that the refurbishment will support efforts and investments targeted at strengthening child protection within the justice system. In addition, video link equipment enabling children to participate in the justice process without having to sit in the court room with perpetrators of acts violating their rights, was acquired this year and should be installed at the Punta Gorda Family Court by end-2017. Funds for capacity building of family court staff were also secured this year. Module development and training are expected to begin in early 2018; training targets all family court staff and complements the investment currently being made in child-friendly court facilities.

*Provision of free legal aid services to vulnerable children and families:* UNICEF also partnered with Legal Aid in 2017 and supported the implementation of free legal aid clinics for children and families in underserved communities in Belize. By end-2017, seven clinics had taken place across the country and over 80 people benefitted from the service. The schedule for clinics in 2018 has been confirmed and a minimum of nine clinics will take place in the first quarter. It is expected that the free legal aid clinics will provide the means and opportunity to explain the legal process and accompany children and their families to court, as well as help to identify and coordinate other services. It is anticipated that these clinics will inspire children and people of limited means alike to seek legal assistance when their rights have been violated. Equally, it is anticipated that the attention of lawyers, judges and government officials will be drawn to the urgent need to expand legal assistance programmes for children and organizations that advocate on their behalf.

**OUTPUT 2** Strengthened political commitment to legislate and budget for strengthening interventions that prevent and respond to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect

**Analytical statement of progress**

*National diversion initiative:* In 2017 UNICEF supported the Government of Belize to promote children’s access to justice by addressing current legislation and policies that are not in
children’s best interests. Specifically, UNICEF supported capacity building for stakeholders in the implementation of a national diversion programme. A consultant was contracted to work along with the national diversion sub-committee to develop and design a national diversion programme for Belize. Country-wide consultations were held in each jurisdiction with key agencies that would be involved in implementing the Programme, including the Chief Justice of Belize, CEOs in the ministries of human development, home affairs and youth, as well as department heads from Belize’s Police Department, Community Rehabilitation Department and Department of Youth Services. Implementation of the diversion programme is expected to be piloted in the first quarter of 2018 in three jurisdictions: Dangriga, San Ignacio/Santa Elena and Belmopan. It is expected to fill an important gap in children’s access to justice by ensuring that youth who come in conflict with the law have access to quality secondary and tertiary prevention programmes and diversion options.

**Commitments to strengthen child protection systems:** In 2017, the Parliament’s Policy & Legal Reform Sub-committee, with UNICEF support, developed a prioritized framework for 2017-2018 that identifies areas requiring strengthening in national child protection systems. The framework incorporates national outcomes, transformational goals, child protection and ECD.

**OUTPUT 3** Increased capacity of right-holders and duty bearers to foster positive practices and norms to protect children from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect

**Analytical statement of progress**

*Increased capacity of right-holders to strengthen their resiliency and foster positive practices:* During 2017, UNICEF Belize supported two of the country’s violence-prevention programmes. RESTORE Belize’s ‘Metamorphosis’ programme seeks to strengthen the resiliency of young males in Southside Belize City through positive programmes (counselling, social worker visits, weekend life skills retreats, literacy programmes, conflict mediation, family dialogues, parenting sessions and tutoring) and the Steel Pan’s ‘Beat a Pan NOT a Man’ programme. The steel band slogan embodies the programme objective of embedding positive alternatives to violence through integrated community-based programmes that reach children through music.

UNICEF also supported violence-prevention interventions by community-based NGO’s (Child Development Foundation, Youth Enhancement Services and the Productive Organization of Women in Action), including psychosocial support for children who have experienced violence and abuse, legal support to children in need and awareness-raising sessions on violence and abuse with parents, children and teachers. Over 4,000 children, 1,398 parents, 142 teachers and 40 health care workers benefited from these initiatives during 2017.

UNICEF also provided technical and financial support to the MLLG, through the SCFM, by providing child protection training to 123 CAB members in nine municipalities. The training, which focused on violence-prevention, incorporated topics such as detecting child protection abuses and understanding the impact of abuse. It empowered children to better understand types of abuse, how to make reports, and how to be peer educators and advocates on child protection issues in their municipalities.

*Increased capacity of duty bearers to protect children from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect:* UNICEF supported RESTORE Belize’s early warning system, which relies on risk indicators such as: academic risk factors, social risk factors, and home risk factors as warning signs of disengagement and anti-social behaviour in the school environment to curb anti-social.
behaviours and prevent drop-out rates. In addition, the Country Office provided technical and financial support to RESTORE Belize to improve the capacities to reduce and prevent violence duty bearers among duty-bearers such as teachers, social workers, and police. Roundtable discussions took place in 2017 with relevant stakeholders, including CEO’s of various ministries, and led to advocacy by the CEOs for an increase in technical capacity and resources.

Given the importance of ensuring safe environments for young children, in light of MICS5 findings and building on recommendations from UNICEF’s regional framework on violence in early childhood, UNICEF Belize decided to focus on this topic as part of its work on the CCD model, to support families and promote young child development. The Office developed technical sessions on violence to be included in CCD programming. CCD trainings were conducted with roving caregivers, teachers and health professionals to develop a sustainable training package that could reach 95 per cent of ECD providers.

**OUTPUT 4** Project cost (salaries for CP Officer (NOB) and Office Assistant (GS3))

**Analytical statement of progress**

Staff costs for technical support to programme and operations.

**OUTCOME 5** By 2021, the most disadvantaged boys, girls and adolescents improved their education and developmental outcomes and access equitable and inclusive learning environments across the life cycle, including in emergencies.

**Analytical statement of progress**

*Policy support and enhancement of national capacities contribute to progress in developmental outcomes and increased access to equitable and inclusive learning environments:* Success was achieved in strengthening policies and legislation to realize the rights of children, ensuring that children have access to justice, birth registration, ECD and education services. Continued partnerships with the Government of Belize enabled the finalization of a strategic framework for the implementation of the national strategic plan. Increased investment and support for ECD throughout the CP led to some gains in this area for the country. The 2015 MICS5 key findings report was produced in partnership with the SIB, and 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 per cent to 33 per cent), while the percentage of children who are severely stunted was halved (from 5.5 to 2.6).

To support implementation of the ECD strategic plan, national training of ECD providers took place to strengthen the delivery of early stimulation and parenting practices to families in vulnerable communities. Within this framework specific content, focusing on developmental disabilities, monitoring, child care and family support was incorporated into existing ECD and health materials, particularly in CCD.

UNICEF also supported the MoEYSC and other key stakeholders to strengthen organizational capacity to deliver equitable, inclusive and relevant education services with emphasis on (a) child friendly school principles; (b) improved connectedness to schools (parental engagement, stakeholder buy-in) and, (c) national standards for quality learning through to secondary. With
concentrations on the reduction of disparities and elimination of inequities, the national child friendly schools framework and standards were strengthened for effective implementation of inclusive child and adolescent development strategies, with improved planning, monitoring and appropriate DRR programming.

OUTPUT 1 Strengthened national frameworks, policies, plans and standards to increase access to high-quality, equitable, inclusive, and holistic early childhood development, learning and care environments for girls and boys (ages 0-8) and their families by 2021, including in emergencies.

Analytical statement of progress

Policy advocacy and inter-sectoral coordination for the launch and implementation of the national ECD strategic plan: The ministries of health, human development and education were UNICEF’s key counterparts for establishing an inter-sectoral mechanism for planning and implementing the ECD policy. The TWG, monitored by senior management, focused on finalizing the ECD strategic plan and associated indicator framework, in alignment with the Children’s Agenda 2017-2030.

In May, the national strategic plan was launched at an ECD conference with over 200 ECD stakeholders in attendance. The highlight of the conference was updated evidence on the effectiveness of a strong ECD programme in allowing Belizean children to achieve their full potential, along with strategies for developing programmes in Belize. The conference provided an opportunity to present the Lancet series (October 2016), while break-out sessions provided information on parenting interventions and care and support services for families, including those of children with a disability.

Capacity building to strengthen national standards for increased access to high-quality, equitable, inclusive, and holistic early childhood development, learning and care environments for girls and boys, including with disabilities: Joint capacity building in CCD was one of the successful efforts of the ECD TWG, which coordinated joint planning and initiatives across the three line ministries. This cross-sectoral coordination also supported the harmonization of actions related to poverty alleviation and violence prevention. With UNICEF’s support, and as a cross-cutting strategy embedded within the ‘Time Out’ campaign, C4D was used to promote behaviour change in homes and communities, and to increase awareness about the importance of ECD investment, violence prevention and quality education.

In addition to the focus on training of health, education and social sector personnel to support families, priority was also placed on strengthening communities. Despite increased awareness of the threat posed by the Zika virus in Belize, funding for services and systematic family support initiatives for children with disabilities is limited. CCD capacity building activities included testing a new module on disability, which helped to address this barrier and increase demand and awareness of the rights of children with disabilities and their families.

Increased investment and advocacy in ECD led to several important achievements:

- Capacity building in CCD with ECD providers, including midwives, roving caregivers, health educators and preschool teachers (69 ECD providers trained; 1,248 children benefit from CCD; 1,193 caregivers counselled; four master trainers and 12 national trainers trained)
- Case study on ECD in Belize by UNICEF Regional Office
• Development and use of ECD communication assets (training videos, documentation, pictures and presentations) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skQGtxmbsds&t=7s; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsWBij3fQus&t=5s)
• Cross-sectoral parenting task force implementing parenting strategy workplan
• Development of a national parenting manual
• Updated guidelines/protocols on Zika and other neonatal conditions
• Training in ultrasound for Zika detection (69 pregnant women screened; 30 per cent of obstetricians and 70 per cent of general practitioners trained in obstetric ultrasound for early detection of changes suggestive of foetal problems caused by maternal Zika infection).

OUTPUT 2 Enhanced capacity of national and subnational entities in education planning, collection and use of data, system monitoring and budgeting, to provide equitable, inclusive and relevant education for all children and adolescents by 2021.

Analytical statement of progress
Evidence generation for policy advocacy to provide equitable, inclusive and relevant education for all children and adolescents, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable:

Out-of-school children
The Belize education sector strategy for 2011-2016 aimed to reduce barriers to school completion by increasing equitable access through the number of schools and spaces in schools, improving accountability and improving education quality and relevance. The MoEYSC and UNICEF conducted a study of out-of-school children involving quantitative and qualitative analysis of the profiles and barriers for out-of-school children and those at risk of dropping out, and produced a national report detailing recommendations for addressing the problem and the use of data to inform policies/interventions.

The data collection and analysis were conducted in 2017, and a final draft report is being reviewed by the technical steering committees. MOEYSC data were analysed to determine patterns by district and MICS (2011 and 2015), MOEYSC and census data were analysed to present profiles of excluded children according to the methodology of the out-of-school children initiative.

Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders – including principals, teachers, school counsellors, PTA members, parents, students and children – and with adolescents who had dropped out or who were at risk of dropping out, as well as with clients of youth services agencies.

The study results indicate several factors associated with lack of school completion, including poverty, disability, late entry, inadequate preparation for primary, living in a rural area. Repetition rates stand at 8.4 per cent for boys and 6 per cent for girls; thus 20 per cent of students take an extra two years to complete primary school. The transition rate from primary school to secondary school was reported to be 89 per cent, but the difference in enrolment between the first year and fourth year stood at 43 per cent, indicating a major challenge with high school drop-out, retention, and/or transfer.

MoRES analysis
A MoRES analysis was completed on barriers to nutrition in Toledo District, after data collection was completed in 2016. In 2017 the MOH, with support from UNICEF was able to complete the
report. Through focus groups, the MOH gathered information on eating habits among infants and young children. The information gathered assisted with identifying perceptions and possible bottlenecks associated with the feeding of infants and young children.

Results and recommendations from the two reports will be integral to the development of the new national education strategy. The evidence generated for advocacy and C4D will be included in 2018 workplans.

**Enhanced capacity for budgeting:** To address some of the barriers to school completion, in 2017 UNICEF continued to support the Government with reform of the secondary education financing system; as a result, financing is now linked to the number and type (academic needs, economic needs) of students at the educational institution. Over 3,000 students benefitted from secondary school financing reform this year.

**OUTPUT 3** Strengthened organizational capacity of key stakeholders to design and deliver equitable, inclusive and relevant education services, transitioning strategies and protective learning environments, including in emergencies, for all children and adolescents within rights based educational frameworks and principles by 2021.

**Analytical statement of progress**

*Strengthening capacities of key stakeholders to implement the national framework of child-friendly schools, with an emphasis on WASH in schools for quality learning environments:*

Improved access to quality, basic education in a child-friendly environment is necessary for the achievement of SDG 4: quality, equitable and inclusive education for all. The MoEYSC continues to implement the child-friendly schools framework as a national plan, and main results from this output are linked to the national development strategy.

A key bottleneck for school attendance, particularly for girls, is the availability of quality WASH facilities at schools. As part of the child-friendly school model, UNICEF stresses the importance of access to safe water and sanitation as critical to creating a good learning environment. Poor sanitation, water scarcity, inferior water quality and inappropriate hygiene behaviour are detrimental to the health of school-aged children, who spend long hours in the classroom. In Belize, especially in regions prone to hurricanes and flooding, families are often forced to live in close quarters with compromised sanitation conditions. Thus the physical environment and cleanliness of a school facility can significantly affect children’s health and well-being.

In 2017, three primary schools were constructed and remodelled in Stann Creek District. UNICEF developed a WASH toolkit and gave technical assistance to the MoE and MoH for developing a C4D campaign. The goal of the campaign is to improve knowledge, attitudes and practices of all stakeholders, creating safe, healthy and clean environments where children can grow, learn and thrive. The remodelling of bathrooms is taking place in schools to bring WASH facilities up to UNICEF’s standards, while at the same time the project is helping to create positive attitudes and behaviours regarding sanitation and hygiene. Through the health and family life education curriculum, education officers, community health educators and CHWs from the MoH are providing technical assistance for the development of resource and communication materials to implement an awareness campaign toolkit. [https://www.unicef.org/belize/media_36871.html](https://www.unicef.org/belize/media_36871.html)

Advocacy and capacity building in DRR and emergency preparedness: UNICEF held an open house with major stakeholders to review challenges to Belize’s preparedness activities.
were shared from the Hurricane Earl response in 2016, and part of the discussion focused on building the capacity of partners in the RTH psychosocial recovery programme. During the last quarter of 2017, 65 stakeholders were trained in this methodology to support children between the ages of 5-12 who have experienced traumatic events, creating opportunities for engagement and interaction with these children and helping them process their experiences.

Hurricane Irma, which devastated the Caribbean in September 2017, caused the postponement of a multi-sectoral humanitarian training in Belize. The training, re-scheduled for Q1 2018, will contribute to strengthening the capacity of UNICEF staff and implementing partners to respond to disasters.

**OUTPUT 4** Project Cost (Salaries for ECD/Education Officer (NOB) and Project Assistant (GS4)

**Analytical statement of progress** This output is associated with project costs linked to salaries for programme and support staff. By the end of 2017, 97 per cent of budgeted project costs had been utilized.

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