

## China

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### Part 1: Situation update in the country

#### Situation of women and children

All data is from 2017 and from official Government data sources, unless otherwise noted.

In 2018, China continued its commitment to investment in domestic social development, despite a decelerating economic growth. China's GDP (GDP) grew 6.6 per cent in 2018, a slightly lower rate than 6.9 per cent in 2017 and 6.7 per cent in 2016. Fiscal revenues registered slower growth at 6.2 per cent. However, expenditure in health, education and social security still accounted for a combined 8.4 percent of GDP in 2017, unchanged from 2016 levels.

In spite of the relative slowdown, GDP and revenue growth in China are still strong, and there is room for increasing investment in social development. While such investment grew enough to remain stable as a share of GDP, it grew significantly less than overall expenditure (8.7 per cent). Given the recent policy of tax cuts announced by the Government, which is expected to continue in 2019, there is a risk that growth in social development expenditure may slow down or even stagnate in the face of competing priorities as the pace of growth of the overall fiscal envelope weakens. Monitoring and advocating for the expansion of the fiscal space for children in China remains a priority.

China's commitment to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 is crucial for children both in China and across the globe. Given the size of China's population, including its huge cohort of children, the progress China makes in achieving the SDGs will impact the progress the world makes. Further, the country's expanding influence in other developing countries through the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as its focus on South-South and triangular cooperation and exchanges, mean that there is potential for China to lead by example and be a driving force in the achievement of the SDGs in other developing countries.

China is home to the world's second-largest child population under 17 years old, with an estimated 271 million children, including 147 million boys and 124 million girls (2015). While the status of children has improved over the past decades, progress in economic and social development indicators continue to go hand-in-hand with persistent disparities and inequities. Thirty million people are still living in poverty, eight million are children. Progress on key

indicators varies between urban and rural areas, and between eastern, central and western regions. The maternal mortality ratio, for example, ranges from less than 10 per 100,000 live births in some coastal provinces, to around 15 per 100,000 live births in central provinces and above 25 per 100,000 live births in some western provinces. Under-five mortality rates are twice as high in rural areas as in urban areas, and ranges from around three to six deaths per 1,000 live births in eastern provinces, to up to 26 in western areas (2016). Gender inequities and norms favouring boys persist, as illustrated by a skewed sex ratio at birth whereby there are 33 million fewer females than males in China. Other key challenges include the 85 million people living with disability, of which five million are children, and the public health impact of environmental factors like air pollution.

Internal migration impacts the daily life of tens of millions of children. Over 200 million migrants face constraints in accessing essential public services in education, employment, healthcare, pensions and affordable housing, due to the lack of permanent residence status (hukou) in their current place of residence. An estimated 103 million children are affected by migration, of whom 34 million are migrant children and 69 million are children left-behind by one or both migrating parents (2015). This means that three out of every ten children in rural areas were children left-behind, while two of ten children living in urban areas was a migrant child. Children left behind are often unable to obtain adequate care from their families, which has a negative impact on their physical and psychosocial development and well-being, while putting them at risk of abuse and neglect. Although children left behind in rural areas continue to be the focus of current policies, the number of urban children left behind has grown to 28 million in 2015, accounting for 41 per cent of the total number of children left behind. The needs of this increasingly large group will need to be addressed.

China accounted for most of the world's success in the Millennium Development Goals, but the SDGs are more challenging, requiring countries to eradicate extreme poverty and to halve poverty in all its dimensions. China has demonstrated high-level political commitment to lift 70 million out of extreme poverty by 2020 and is on track to achieve this national goal. SDG 1 recognizes that poverty is multidimensional and obliges countries to measure both monetary poverty and to halve non-monetary aspects of poverty for children, women and men. China currently measures monetary poverty only for rural areas and lacks official data on multi-dimensional poverty. Continued political commitment and investment will be needed to sustain progress under the current poverty alleviation campaign.

China's children face the double burden of malnutrition. With rapid socio-economic development and government interventions targeting under-nutrition, the prevalence of underweight (low weight-for-age) and wasting (low weight-for-height) dropped dramatically over the past decades. However, stunting (low height-for-age) remains a problem, especially in poor rural areas; and child overweight and obesity rates have continued to increase, particularly among boys. China's stunting prevalence of children under five ranks 119th in the world. Yet, given the huge number of children in China, in terms of absolute numbers of stunted children China ranks fifth, accounting for 4.1 per cent of the total number of stunted children worldwide. This poses a key challenge for achieving SDG 2.

Strides made in improving maternal and child health contribute to SDG 3. Rates in maternal mortality, under-five mortality and neonatal mortality dropped to 19.6 per 100,000 live births, 9.1 per thousand live births and 4.5 per thousand live births, respectively. Coverage of maternal and child health services has increased gradually: there are more than 3,000 maternal and child health institutions across the country and about 350,000 professionals engaged directly in maternal and child health services. The need now is to improve quality, address the financial and other barriers which prevent women and children in rural areas from accessing services, and improve the health status of women and children in the western region, rural areas and among migrant populations.

China has achieved universal access to primary education and has met the goal of eliminating gender differences at all levels of education. In 2017, the cohort survival rate of the national nine-year compulsory education reached 93.8 per cent. Yet disparities in access and quality persist that constrain progress against SDG 4. Twenty per cent of migrant children at the compulsory education stage only have the option to study in private school, particularly in poor-quality schools for migrant children. The quality of pre-primary education in kindergarten needs improvement as this is key to stimulating children's curiosity and interest in learning, developing their social skills and self-confidence, and laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning. Currently only 54.6 per cent of school-age children with disabilities are studying in mainstream schools (2016).

Significant achievements in improving basic water supply and sanitation services have been achieved. Yet China still has approximately 57 million people without basic access to drinking water services, and 340 million people without access to basic sanitation services, including around 20 million people who practice open defecation. The Toilet Revolution, promoted by China's President to improve sanitation in rural areas, continued to drive efforts toward the targets of access to basic services (including basic drinking water, sanitation and hygiene) for all and 'end open defecation' set out in SDG 6.

China is prone to natural disasters, particularly floods and typhoons, but also drought, high winds, earthquakes, blizzards, frost, forest fires and geological disasters. According to the Ministry of Emergency Management, in 2018, natural disasters affected a total of 130 million people across the country, causing 589 deaths and 46 people missing, as well as the emergency resettlement of 5.2 million people and the collapse of 97,000 residential buildings. The impact of natural disasters in 2018 was lower than the previous five-year average, but natural disasters were concentrated in six provinces that together accounted for around half of the country's annual casualties or people missing and direct economic losses. China has developed a national capacity for emergency preparedness and response, with good systems for monitoring and timely dispatch of supplies to affected areas within hours. This has helped reduce the human impact of disasters, although there are differences in such capacities at the sub-national level.

These are just some of the challenges that underline why UNICEF China's programme of

cooperation with the Government of China continues to be relevant.

### **Key developments in programmes**

In 2018, institutional restructuring of the Government, endorsed by the First Session of the 13th National People's Congress in March, established 26 commissions and ministries under the State Council. Among the new entities and ministries relevant to UNICEF's work and mandate are the new Ministry of Emergency Management tasked with streamlining emergency preparedness and response; the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs now responsible for rural sanitation; the Ministry of Ecological Environment (previously the Ministry of Environmental Protection) with expanded jurisdiction covering environmental protection-related responsibilities previously held by six other ministries or agencies; and the formation of the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), formed by merging parts of the functions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce. CIDCA is responsible for formulating strategic guidelines, plans and policies for China's foreign aid and plays a vital role in coordination and advice on major foreign aid issues.

In 2018, the State Council set up a mechanism led by the Ministry of Civil Affairs to coordinate the protection of children left-behind and vulnerable children, an encouraging development in protecting the rights of China's children. Also, the ongoing mapping of the social service workforce will soon provide the first analysis focused on the child protection service-related workforce, to provide policy recommendations on human resource development and financing.

Following an announcement of the comprehensive reform of social assistance by Ministry of Civil Affairs to be submitted to the State Council for approval in 2019, UNICEF China was invited to provide technical assistance for national pilot projects that promote an inclusive, integrated and child-sensitive social assistance system. The Social Assistance Law is on the agenda of the National People's Congress, which is an opportunity in 2019-2020 for UNICEF to support the adoption of a child rights' based approach in China's revised social protection legislation.

The State Council released a guiding document that officially included early childhood development for those under three years old into the mandate of the National Health Commission, which could help create a national coordination mechanism for the design and scale-up of early childhood development services across China.

At the 2018 Beijing Summit of the 7th Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in September, the President reiterated China's commitment to support South-South and triangular cooperation and committed US\$ 60 billion of investment and aid to Africa for 2019-2021. The 2018 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Plan of Action reiterated China's support to women and children. In his keynote speech, the President proposed establishing a corporate social responsibility coalition of Chinese companies in Africa, which provides an opportunity for UNICEF and partners to support strengthening issues on children's rights and business principles.

## Part 2: Major Results including in humanitarian action and gender, against the results in the Country Programme Documents

UNICEF China and partners worked on the ground in 279 counties (including 119 'national poverty counties') and cities across 30 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities to pilot new and innovative approaches and draw lessons to promote child rights and well-being.

### **Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives**

Applying its 'pilots to policy to results at scale' business model, UNICEF China tested new approaches, gathered evidence and informed policy shifts and scale-up to promote child survival and development in 123 demonstration counties across 26 provinces.

UNICEF piloted approaches that strengthen early essential newborn care; eliminate mother-to-child transmission of three major infections (HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B); and improve early childhood development for children under three years old. It facilitated the sub-national adoption of a new preventive iron supplement strategy for women who are pregnant, the first time this public health strategy will be tested in Tibet, Xinjiang and Yunnan. UNICEF advocacy to scale-up of breast-feeding promotion, school sanitation, hygiene promotion, school-based nutrition programmes and child injury prevention continued.

The enabling environment was strengthened by improved policies and guidelines that promote internationally-recommended, high-impact interventions for women who are pregnant and for children. UNICEF supported the drafting and testing of the national guidelines for establishment and management of maternal and neonatal 'near miss' care centres, released by the National Health Commission; the guidelines for childhood obesity prevention, screening and management; and the national guidelines on early essential newborn care. To prevent iodine deficiency disorders, the guidelines on iodine supplementation were updated, encouraging food companies to use iodized salt.

To strengthen the equitable delivery and quality of services, UNICEF China piloted projects with the Government on early childhood development, elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and injury prevention. Consequently, 218,909 children aged zero to three years old and their caregivers in 781 villages and 61 townships in five provinces were reached with comprehensive early childhood development services through home visits and community outreach. A total of 2,201 rooms in 30 provinces were verified and certified as convenient breastfeeding spaces inside and outside the work environment, while campaigns on child injury prevention reached more than 5,000 schoolchildren and their teachers in 23 pilot counties.

The three project provinces, Yunnan, Zhejiang and Guangdong, accelerated efforts to eliminate mother-to-child transmission, with targets to achieve triple elimination of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B by 2020. This is guiding the development of the National Validation Framework for the national prevention of mother-to-child transmission programme which, if adopted by the Government, will lead to national triple validation to eliminate mother-to-child transmission – a

first worldwide.

Skilled health professionals are integral to improve the quality and coverage of services. Through in-service trainings and workshops, UNICEF China and its partners strengthened the skills and capacities of health workers at county and township health facilities. For example, 180 national trainers and 2,000 health workers at provincial, prefectural, county, township and village levels were trained on maternal and newborn care; management of high-risk pregnancy; pre-term management, prevention and treatment of maternal anaemia; elimination of mother-to-child transmission; and early childhood development.

UNICEF's advocacy and partnerships contributed to cost efficiency and creating alliances to inform legislation. The revision of the National EPI Vaccine Procurement Policy, with vaccine procurement shifting from provincial to central level, helped reduce costs and the risk of stock-outs. Support from World Health Organization, UNICEF China and partners led to the recommendation by the national immunization technical advisory group to include a second dose of polio and a Hib vaccine, and replace the measles-rubella vaccine with measles, mumps and rubella vaccine in the National Immunization Programme. A national infant and young child feeding alliance was established, comprising a network of stakeholders and a platform for collaboration, research and joint advocacy to address the need for legislation on the marketing of breastmilk substitutes.

UNICEF China promoted data quality, data use and evidence-based decision-making. Development and pre-testing of the prototype 'healthy family app' continued in 2018, which aims to help end preventable maternal and newborn deaths by giving women who are pregnant and health professionals information to make timely decisions. Along with the health management information system, the app will provide families with better access to health information and services. Guidelines on coding for a unique ID that is registered at birth through the National Unique ID Coding Management System were developed. This will facilitate data exchange between central and provincial health departments and the health and public security system, and facilitate newborn registration within 10 days of birth, a prerequisite to benefitting from essential services. Together these initiatives are likely to change the way in which maternal child health services are accessed and used across China. The app is available for download in Henan, Jiangsu and Hunan and is likely to be expanded to another 12 provinces in 2019.

UNICEF-commissioned surveys and studies attracted high-level attention and advocated for the adoption and scale-up of successful early childhood development, adolescent health and to eliminate mother-to-child transmission approaches and policies. Seven abstracts on newborn care, child anaemia, early childhood development, children left-behind and adolescent health were published for the Lancet-CAMS Health Summit; five papers on experiences and lessons learned from maternal and child health were published in international peer-reviewed journals; and six papers were published in Chinese journals. UNICEF supported the development of national adolescent health surveillance indicators for inclusion in the sixth National Health Services survey, generating data to inform evidence-based policies for adolescents.

Adolescent health is now recognized by the Government as a priority. An adolescent mental health service package, consisting of six training modules for health and community workers and teachers, was rolled out in 14 pilot counties via an integrated platform combining school, health facilities and community centres, and linked to professional psychological institutes. This was complemented by a hotline, Weibo-based and WeChat-based platforms, and holiday camps to reach out to adolescents. Furthermore, based on six sets of studies previously conducted with UNICEF support, evidence on adolescent-mortality trends, health financing and service delivery status, and disease burden and surveillance indicators were used to inform the development of a National Adolescent Health Strategy.

An integrated nutrition/water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) project was launched in five counties of Qinghai to improve nutrition outcomes, caregiving, feeding, and hygiene practices in poor rural counties. To address the growing rates of overweight children, the nutrition school project continued to test ways that school environments and canteens can promote healthy diets and lifestyles in 16 pilot schools in eight provinces. An estimated 37,307 children aged six to 19 years (19,736 males, 17,571 females) were reached with services to prevent overweight and obesity.

## **Goal area 2: Every child learns**

UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Education, China Association for Science and Technology, All-China Women's Federation and technical partners to ensure that all children realise their right to a quality and stimulating education, from early learning opportunities that lay the groundwork for success in school, to secondary school and addressing the changing needs of in-school and out-of-school adolescents. Approaches included upstream work to inform and shape policies, guidelines and curriculum; and downstream work to build the skills of teachers and students, improve school and kindergarten environments, and demonstrate child-friendly teaching and learning.

To promote early stimulation and learning for the under three year old age group, UNICEF supported the delivery of early childhood development services through 170 community-based early childhood development centres in Hunan, Hubei, Hebei, Shaanxi, Guizhou, Xinjiang and Jiangxi. Through this, 43,551 children were reached with services while 20,731 home visits reached more than 10,000 families. Around 7,000 children and their caregivers were reached through 650 outreach sessions facilitated by volunteers, including play-based activities in communities that do not have early childhood development centres.

Hunan included the early childhood development 0-3 model into its provincial Five-Year Action Plan (2016-2020), evidence of local government ownership of the model. Provincial governments of Hunan, Hubei and Hebei committed to fully funding all early childhood development centres established through the All-China Women's Federation-UNICEF project, with the intention of extending this to all communities in the future.

Education for children aged three to six years old continued to improve, with gross enrolment ratio in pre-school education increasing from 50 to 79.5 per cent between 2010 and 2017. However, equitable access to quality early childhood development remains an issue, particularly in poor urban communities and remote rural areas. To cater to the needs of children three to six years old who live in rural areas, are ethnic minorities, migrants or urban poor; UNICEF China supported the child-friendly kindergarten pilot in 478 kindergartens in six provinces, directly benefiting around 85,000 children. Capacities of kindergarten teachers were enhanced, kindergarten environments improved, and local institutional capacities built. Ways to improve the WASH dimension of the child-friendly kindergarten model were tested in one county.

Ensuring the quality and capacity of kindergarten teachers, including the almost one million newly recruited in 2018, is key. The Government has invested in training kindergarten teachers, but it is yet to fully translate into improved quality. UNICEF China supported Ministry of Education to develop and test teacher training models and strategies for the national early childhood education teacher training programme, kindergarten teacher competency assessment tools, and pilot teacher support systems. In 2018, competency assessment tools that classify teachers based on their current capacity were tested with 2,000 teachers in eight sites. These are now being incorporated into the national guidelines on kindergarten teachers' training curriculum so that trainings can better address capacity gaps.

In strengthening the enabling environment, national-level technical workshops were supported to discuss kindergartens in newly established residential communities and the detrimental practice of rote teaching. Experiences in early childhood development governance in Brazil and countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development informed China's thinking. Findings and recommendations from these activities influenced government directives, published in the 'Opinions on Deepening Reform and Regulating Development of Pre-primary Education' released by the Central Party Committee and State Council in 2018. UNICEF China supported the development of national kindergarten supervision guidelines and quality monitoring tools; to date, 50,000 kindergartens in 20 provinces were inspected by the national education supervision office.

To increase access to child-friendly, equitable and quality basic education for children six to 16 years old, UNICEF China, Ministry of Education and technical partners continued to implement the child-friendly school model and principles. This promoted inclusive, safe, healthy and nurturing environments that support children's learning, expand their skills and expose them to sports, art, problem solving and creativity. In 2018, three elements of the child-friendly school model were piloted in over 602 rural primary schools across 19 counties of 12 provinces: (1) social and emotional learning; (2) teacher pedagogical skills in subject teaching and physical education; and, (3) disaster risk reduction. The pilot schools directly benefited 341,300 students, 22,160 teachers and 602 school principals. As part of the four-year longitudinal child-friendly schools impact study (2016-2019), data analysis from 106 schools in four project counties was completed. The preliminary report showed that the child-friendly school model helped create an enabling environment for teaching and learning, which improves student

learning.

School-level implementation of the social and emotional learning model in 525 rural primary schools in 16 counties of 11 provinces was completed this year. All pilot schools have integrated the social and emotional learning class into their course schedules, benefitting 291,300 students, 18,160 teachers and 525 school principals. An end-line assessment of the pilot concluded that children in project schools developed social and emotional competencies faster than their peers in non-project schools, including self-confidence, communication, interpersonal skills and the ability to cope with challenges. The project's experiences were disseminated at the national social and emotional learning conference, with Ministry of Education expressing its support to ensuring more schools integrate social and emotional learning.

In promoting life-skills education for in-school and out-of-school adolescents, modules were updated to meet the rapidly changing needs of this age group. In collaboration with China Association for Science and Technology, eight modules covering topics such as interpersonal skills and communication, financial education, environmental protection and climate change, were revised and piloted in junior high and vocational schools in 28 counties across 13 provinces. An estimated 12,768 in- and out-of-school adolescents (5,628 males, 7,140 females) participated in the trainings. Two new modules on interpersonal skills and social and emotional learning for senior secondary vocational school students were drafted. At Ministry of Education's request, these were adapted for post-secondary school vocational students (aged 18-19 years), together with two others prepared earlier on self-awareness and problem-solving. To date, a total of 6,660 students (3,391 males and 3,269 females) received training on self-awareness and problem-solving in five provinces.

To strengthen the generation and use of data for SDG monitoring, UNICEF partnered with Ministry of Education to align national education management information system (EMIS) indicators with SDG 4 targets. Notable results included China's progress on 16 indicators reported in the Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/8 published by UNESCO, and in a booklet documenting the integration of SDG 4 indicators in the national EMIS.

### **Goal area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation**

UNICEF China worked with the Government to create a safe and responsive environment that protects children from violence and exploitation. With four out of every ten children in China directly affected by migration, and 69 million children left-behind, there is a need to improve laws, services and systems to protect the children from vulnerabilities.

To improve the enabling environment, UNICEF was involved in the drafting and early consultation stage of the revision of the Law on Protection of Minors. UNICEF will provide technical support as the drafting process proceeds. UNICEF provided comments to the drafting of the Regulation on Online Protection of Minors, including through think tanks. With further deliberations and at the request of the regulatory body, UNICEF China continues to provide

technical support to this important legislation, with a focus on online child sexual abuse.

UNICEF China supported the Government to implement national policies that promote children's rights. As part of its assistance in implementing national policies for children left-behind and vulnerable children, UNICEF helped the Ministry of Civil Affairs establish and expand a national database of children left-behind by migrating parents, as well as vulnerable children. As of December 2018, all rural villages across the country had registered children left-behind, and all rural and urban communities registered vulnerable children. Based on this database, Ministry of Civil Affairs launched a national plan of action, 'Joint efforts to ensure guardianship and company for sound development', which required all village committees nationwide to register children left-behind and closely monitor guardianship arrangements, so that children were living under adult guardianship. In 2018, this resulted in: 76,000 registered children left-behind benefitting from improved parenting where one parent remained and placement with a family where both parents had migrated; the return to school of 160,000 children who had dropped out; and 180,000 children having their hukou (household registration) registered.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs expanded the database to add child directors (responsible for the initial assessment of vulnerable children, referring them/their caregivers to social welfare benefits, and reporting cases of children in need) at the community level; and child supervisors (responsible for consolidating data on vulnerable children and ensuring that children who are entitled have access to social welfare benefits and services) at the township level. This has enabled civil affairs bureaus at national, provincial and county levels to have an overview of the recruitment of these para-social workers.

To improve the quality and delivery of professional services at the community level, UNICEF supported a Ministry of Civil Affairs pilot on social work for children. Social workers were trained and technical guidance provided in five provinces to explore more approaches to social work support for marginalized children in rural areas, where social work professionals and resources are scarce. This includes the government purchasing services from local social work agencies and pairing the agencies with established social work organizations or social work departments at universities for mentoring and supervision. The pilot aims to incorporate a child safeguarding policy into the management of all organizations that work with and for children.

UNICEF China's support to the 'barefoot social worker' model continued to assist vulnerable children and their families to access child welfare services. 'Barefoot social workers' bridge children, their families, county civil affairs bureaus with various agencies providing services to children, including assisting with hukou registration, access to social assistance (dibao, medical and educational subsidies) and vocational training opportunities. The model was scaled up in 750 villages by other international and national organizations, and informed a national roll-out of child directors inspired by barefoot social workers in over 500,000 villages and 30,000 townships with UNICEF China technical and advocacy support. The child directors serve as the frontline of the Chinese child welfare and protection service supervision system, and scale-up stands to benefit around 250 million children.

UNICEF China worked with the All-China Women's Federation to model an integrated multi-sector approach to child protection in 65 communities in three provinces with a high percentage of children left-behind by migrant parents. The approach consists of three levels of intervention (village, township and county), covering three levels of services: primary, comprising prevention services for all children and public-awareness campaigning; secondary, including identification and early detection of vulnerable children and families; and tertiary, including intensive family support services and referral to intervention services. This enabled women's cadres at village level to pilot community-based mechanisms to deliver child protection services that prevent harm, including factors such as: poverty, being left-behind by migrating parents, parental substance abuse, a lack of support for young, single-parent families, mental health issues, and family violence.

In 2018, TV and social media campaigns on safe family, anti-family violence and anti-violence against children reached 65 project communities, with a potential coverage of 2.7 million people. In addition, life-skills safety education was provided to 6,550 children; 1,513 officials from various sectors were trained on child protection issues, including teachers, health workers, civil affairs officers, community leaders, police officers, women's cadres, hotline case workers, and parents and children; and 8,484 children (4,530 boys, 3,954 girls) in 65 villages were assessed and registered as 'vulnerable' by village committees.

To improve the systems and capacities that deliver quality services, UNICEF China and the National Working Committee on Children and Women supported operations of four provincial technical support hubs in Chongqing, Guangxi, Hunan and Shaanxi, each supporting 30 child-friendly spaces. The hubs are comprised of multi-disciplinary experts who ensure quality service delivery in 120 child-friendly spaces through monitoring and capacity development. Each child-friendly school provides a space for children to play, learn, develop and be protected. The National Plan of Action for Children has a goal to establish 'children's places' – which mimic child-friendly spaces – in 90 per cent of all urban and rural communities by 2020.

The technical support hubs, as part of UNICEF's strategic support to child-friendly spaces to improve the quality and coverage of services during scale-up, started to demonstrate positive effects and have the potential for replication. There is more government ownership at local level. Authorities in at least four non-pilot sites started to adopt the model, and the local government at one pilot site made 'children's places' a key public service, with matching government funding.

Multi-level technical support (national, provincial, county/district) is crucial for the nationwide scale-up of children's places. The four technical support hubs are in western and central provinces that have a high rate of children who are left-behind, children from ethnic minorities, and children living in poverty and facing income inequality. The child-friendly spaces focus on the most disadvantaged children and their families, including outreach activities and home visits to identify those at high-risk and build a community-based child protection mechanism to serve them. The child-friendly spaces are open to all boys and girls under 18 years old who live

in the community, regardless of the location of their hukou.

A fifth hub in Sichuan, that supports four child-friendly spaces that focus on child-centred disaster risk reduction, improved the resilience of children, parents and community members in four sites. UNICEF China contributed to a more child-centred, multi-sectoral disaster risk reduction approach in local policy development that puts the rights of vulnerable children and families first. Recognized by National Working Committee on Children and Women, the model will be introduced to other disaster-prone areas.

Using evidence and field experience from child-friendly schools' work, an updated Working Manual for Children's Places was finalized in 2018 with UNICEF support. The manual includes better guidance and tools to operate and manage children's places, and disaster risk reduction content to build children's resilience. It is a key document to ensure the quality of service provision in children's places.

#### **Goal area 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment**

To promote a safe and clean environment, UNICEF China used its 15 demonstration counties across 11 provinces to test innovative latrine designs and hand-washing stations, use new approaches (e.g. menstrual hygiene management) and advance the scale-up of successful approaches such as community approaches to total sanitation and WASH in Schools.

UNICEF promoted WASH in 308 schools across 13 counties, benefiting 153,309 students. Hygiene promotion and construction of sex-disaggregated and safe sanitation facilities in 18 schools in six counties increased access to improved WASH facilities, hygiene practices and enhanced skills of education authorities to manage these facilities, benefiting 14,489 students (6,762 girls, 7,727 boys).

Government ownership and scale-up gained momentum. Two project provinces (Guizhou and Guangxi) incorporated the WASH-in-schools model into their provincial 'school toilet revolution' strategies and three-year action plans (2018–2020). This includes interventions on behaviour change, school latrine design and construction, and WASH management and maintenance; it targets schoolchildren, their parents and education authorities. The US\$190,000 invested in Zhijin County, Guizhou, demonstrated safe-school latrine designs and construction in 10 schools and directly benefited 11,180 children (5,974 boys, 5,206 girls). The local government then scaled-up the models to an additional 196 primary schools, benefiting over 150,000 schoolchildren with US\$1.5 million additional Government funding. The three-star 'beautiful school' model, successfully piloted in Sanjiang in Guangxi, was scaled up to 111 additional counties.

UNICEF's advocacy and technical assistance contributed to several policy guidelines and standards adopted by the Government in 2018 to increase access to better WASH services, including the standards on service capacity of primary healthcare facilities; healthy village standards; and healthy township standards. These will provide WASH benchmarks and

indicators that will help standardize monitoring, verification and reporting.

To improve the quality of services, UNICEF and partners strengthened the skills and capacities of community, health and education officials. Government officials benefited from training on waste management, disaster risk reduction, environmental management, WASH facilities design, construction and maintenance, canteen management and hygiene promotion. For example, 260 local healthcare centre directors, including 130 directors from health departments in the 'SanquSanzhou' poverty regions, were trained on WASH and its linkages with child and maternal mortality, faecal-oral diseases, child nutrition and poverty.

At separate training events, 183 housing and urban–rural development sector officials from all 137 counties of Shandong gained understanding of national WASH policy, standards, guidelines, sanitation technologies, SDGs and community approaches to total sanitation. Each county was then requested to prepare its own strategies, actions and implementation plan as part of the 'toilet revolution' initiative, and three counties have finalized their plans. In Guangxi and Guizhou, 130 officials from 23 prefectures and 84 county-level authorities were trained on WASH management in schools through national trainings that were cascaded down to more than 200 counties reaching more than 10,000 local education officials, school headmasters and teachers.

The generation and use of data were strengthened through a UNICEF-supported national survey on WASH conducted in 3,628 health care facilities from all 31 provinces. Through UNICEF's advocacy, the survey incorporated core SDG WASH indicators, which provided national data on the WASH status of health care facilities in China that can be used to monitor SDGs and joint monitoring programmes. The survey informed the development of 'standards on the service capacity of primary healthcare facilities', which incorporates WASH components, as well as the national guidelines for WASH in primary health care facilities.

Learning and knowledge exchange was promoted through international events on sanitation technologies and WASH products. For example, UNICEF China supported an international expo which brought together 15 private sector companies that exhibited their WASH products and technologies to the Government, non-government organizations and the media, and fostered information exchange on new and emerging WASH innovations and products.

To strengthen disaster risk reduction, a standardized training package to guide county- and provincial-level health officials in the response to and management of WASH in disaster situations was developed. The package consists of 22 modules and covers components on disaster management, child-centred disaster risk reduction, risk assessment for disasters, WASH and health in disasters, health emergency management, and emergency preparedness and response.

UNICEF supported initiatives that raise awareness on latrine construction and use, handwashing with soap and other key hygiene practices in homes, schools, health care facilities and other public places. Campaigns held in schools reached more than 250,000

schoolchildren in six project counties.

### **Goal area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life**

UNICEF China's engagement and advocacy with the Government at national and subnational levels contributed to increased government recognition, commitment and capacities to improve equitable programmes and policies for children.

With the goal of eradicating extreme poverty by 2020 at the top of the Government's agenda, UNICEF China promoted the inclusion of child rights in China's evolving national approach to poverty beyond 2020. Specific focus remained on expanding awareness of and building capacity for child poverty measurement and translating child poverty analysis into policy, budgets and programmes.

The Government is increasingly recognizing the potential of multidimensional poverty measurement, social work support, and cash assistance to households to improve the reach and impact of social assistance. UNICEF China worked with Ministry of Civil Affairs and social work organizations in Lanzhou and Beijing to assess and enhance the capacity of social work organizations that implement China's social protection programme by identifying children and families living in multidimensional poverty in urban areas and linking them to cash benefits and other welfare assistance. Feedback and consultations from the trainings were used to assess barriers and bottlenecks to social work organization capacity and will inform recommendations to improve government procurement of social welfare services.

UNICEF's partnership with the International Poverty Reduction Centre in China, a think tank affiliated to the State Council's Leading Group Office of Poverty Reduction and Development, helped enhance capacities of national and local government officials to recognize child poverty and commit to measure and respond to it. A proposed conceptual framework to inform the post-2020 National Child Poverty Agenda was agreed upon and a comparative study summarized experiences and lessons from relevant national child poverty actions in nine countries, including China. The International Poverty Reduction Centre in China is preparing a policy note with recommendations for the design of China's new national poverty alleviation programme.

Advocacy on multidimensional child poverty progressed through the preparation of poverty training materials to improve understanding among policymakers and practitioners. UNICEF and International Poverty Reduction Centre in China jointly developed the training curriculum. The International Poverty Reduction Centre in China will submit it to the Leading Group Office of Poverty Reduction and Development to advocate for child-poverty training in its national training system. It includes three core modules on child poverty and why it matters, child poverty measurement, and child poverty reduction action, and two complementary modules on the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the intersectionality of gender and poverty.

UNICEF China engaged with Ministry of Civil Affairs on the inclusion of elements of an

integrated social protection system into the design of the ministry's Comprehensive Reform for Social Assistance pilot project, and in an integrated management information system. UNICEF and the Ministry of Civil Affairs supported a study to summarize global experiences and provide recommendations that will help the Government develop an integrated management information system, incorporating multidimensional poverty assessment tools and information on services to identify recipients of social assistance and link them with services.

UNICEF's continued support to the integrated maternal and child health and conditional cash transfer project resulted in more incentives and support for 25,000 women who were pregnant and mothers of children under one year old to take up maternal and child health services, enrolled to date in 15 poor counties in Yunnan, Gansu and Sichuan.

UNICEF supported empirical evidence on public finance requirements for policy scenarios (ranging from narrow-targeting to universal). This increased awareness of the early childhood development (under-three years old) 'early moments matter' framework for National Development and Reform Commission policymakers, and the need for early childhood development services in rural China. UNICEF China, at the request of the National Development and Reform Commission, submitted a policy note on child-friendly, centre-based, cross-sector early childhood development services in rural China, as inputs to a brief to the state council on whether and how to invest in public infrastructure to promote care for the youngest. Consequently, the need to strengthen public infrastructure in rural areas was highlighted in the state council 'guidance on maintaining infrastructure investment to support the areas where the development is weak'.

Comprehensive and nationally-representative data and evidence on financial barriers to early childhood education was generated through UNICEF's partnership with the China Institute for Education Finance Research. An analysis of the cost to access kindergartens and enrolment distribution by socio-economic group found that financial barriers exist for poor families to enrol their children, and that families with lower socioeconomic status are enrolled in kindergartens that provide lower-quality services. These findings will be used to advise the Ministries of Education and Finance to improve investments in kindergarten education.

A child-sensitive and equity-enhancing framework was used to measure the appropriateness of public resource allocation for compulsory education across rural counties. Using the indicator framework that emanated from a UNICEF-supported study, the Ministry of Education publicized for the first time the counties that achieved cross-county education resource balance in 2017. This provides incentive for local government equitable allocation and lays the foundation for addressing disparities. It was the culmination of earlier UNICEF work on performance management in compulsory education, where UNICEF supported Ministries of Education and Finance to develop a national uniform indicator framework to measure educational resource allocation to schools, to reveal disparities.

Enhanced government awareness on the importance of cross-sectoral coordination and alignment with national policies and budgets for successful child poverty reduction policies was

facilitated through international learning and exchange. With the Scottish Government, UNICEF China supported National Development and Reform Commission to organize a multi-agency delegation, comprised of Ministry of Civil Affairs sectoral ministries and National Health Commission to visit the European Union and the United Kingdom to study innovations in basic public service delivery. The delegation witnessed how national development plans link to SDGs, and reviewed policy and budget alignment for government purchase of basic public service such as child care and protection from civil society organizations. The study tour reviewed performance management, including from independent third parties, for service delivery – and resulted in a policy note to the state council.

Political commitment to geographic equity in public service quality and coverage was facilitated through UNICEF’s support to National Development and Reform Commission’s national campaign to standardize delivery of basic public service. UNICEF supported research that: (1) assessed the progress and challenges of adhering to national standards in various basic public service areas; (2) highlighted the need to close gaps with national standards in weak basic public service areas; (3) underscored the need to include citizen satisfaction as performance indicators; and (4) outlined a roadmap to achieve basic public service standardization nationally. The paper had a high-level policy impact as the official document on “guiding opinions to establish and implement basic public service standards nationwide”, promulgated by the CPC central committee meeting chaired by the President.

UNICEF’s partnership with the Centre for International Knowledge on Development contributed to child poverty and early childhood development being more prominent in China’s international exchange through South-South cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiative, and positioned the Centre for International Knowledge on Development as a vocal advocate for children.

## **Cross-cutting areas**

### **Early childhood development**

Key policy- and advocacy-related, cross-sectoral initiatives to promote early childhood development gained traction. UNICEF’s partnership and technical assistance to National Development and Reform Commission increased government commitment to develop a national early childhood development policy framework. UNICEF helped relevant ministries prepare for discussions on early childhood development at the G20 meeting.

A UNICEF-commissioned analysis of early childhood development in China, focusing on policy, financing, interventions, service delivery and challenges, was used to advocate for the development of a universal minimum package of early childhood development services. Civil society, academic and private sector agencies were brought together to build a national early childhood development network and strengthen cross-sectoral action and advocacy for universal access.

Advocacy efforts are underway to influence China’s investments in early childhood development across the Mekong delta as well as in selected African countries.

### **South-South and triangular cooperation**

South-South cooperation on maternal, newborn and child health was enhanced at a high-level meeting on China - Africa health cooperation. UNICEF, the National Health Commission and the African Union co-organized a maternal, newborn and child health thematic session where African countries and the Chinese Government reached consensus. Senior officials from China and over 10 African countries; academics; and international organizations discussed the challenges in maternal, newborn and child health in Africa and evidence-based, cost-effective ways to overcome them through South-South cooperation. As a result, maternal, newborn and child health was highlighted as a priority for cooperation in the Forum on China - Africa Cooperation outcome document. This informed the 2018 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Plan of Action which reiterates China's support to women and children's health.

China-Africa cooperation on early childhood development was facilitated through a field visit by officials from Ethiopia and Uganda who came to learn from China's experience in community-based early childhood development programmes.

Two high-level exchanges---between the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) Chairman and UNICEF's Executive Director; and the CIDCA Vice Chairman and UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director---paved the way for partnership. UNICEF China explored a holistic approach with CIDCA how to support other developing countries to address child poverty and wellbeing through joint implementation of at-scale, evidence-based programmes inspired by China's best practices.

UNICEF obtained approval from CIDCA for the eight China - Africa maternal, newborn and child health proposals (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Zimbabwe), resulting in a signed funding agreement for US\$8 million between CIDCA's Vice Chairman and UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director.

At the Government's China International Import Expo, UNICEF hosted an event on the role business can play in delivering innovative solutions for children, such as solar-powered vaccine storage solutions in rural areas.

### **Public advocacy and partnerships**

Child-related issues were promoted and their voices amplified through a series of advocacy and communication efforts, events and partnerships.

Integrated communication and advocacy campaigns strengthened public engagement. Digital campaigns on 'every child alive', early childhood development, 'end violence against children', Generation Unlimited and World Children's Day were rolled out on social media platforms with support from digital partners like Weibo and Youku. UNICEF China's digital engagement in China grew with over four million followers across nine social media channels.

Key events were leveraged to advocate for child rights which, combined with the use of

mainstream and social media, helped highlight children's issues in China and beyond. On World Children's Day, UNICEF joined global efforts to promote a petition for world leaders to prioritize child rights. Iconic buildings in six cities were lit up in blue light, including the Water Cube in Beijing.

The reach of UNICEF's campaign was broadened through collaboration with UNICEF Ambassadors Chen Kun, Ma Yili and Roy Wang and media partnerships with Xinhua News Agency, CCTV Children and China Women's News.

Other key partnerships included high-level discussions with the newly-established Ministry of Emergency Management; and the establishment of an advisory multi-sectoral group on corporate social responsibility and child rights and business with Rongzhi CSR Research Institute to engage partners on setting children's rights into the private sector's agenda.

### **Emergency response and disaster risk reduction**

At the request of Government, UNICEF China responded to four humanitarian situations caused by floods in western China. Supplies such as school stationery, furniture (beds and desks), medical equipment and first aid materials were provided to affected schools, kindergartens and medical facilities. Over US\$450,000 worth of supplies were distributed in eight affected counties in Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan.

The three-year long disaster risk reduction model-building pilot programme was completed in 2018. Through this, UNICEF contributed to increased national and local capacities of government partners and built knowledge on disaster risk reduction and resilience to prevent loss of life and minimize the negative impacts on vulnerable children and communities. Advocacy and communication materials, hundreds of thematic activities and trained local government officials and service providers benefited hundreds of thousands of children, parents and community members in project areas.

## **Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints**

China is a world power and a global economy with massive international influence. It is predicted that by 2030, China will be the biggest global economy by a large margin. China's economic growth and concentration on poverty alleviation has resulted in an unparalleled change for most Chinese families. However, this has not yet translated into high per capita income for all families. UNICEF must therefore continually adapt its work to ensure equitable development for all children in China, and at the Government's request – continue to operate a regular country programme.

In 2018, UNICEF China focused efforts to influence China's international development investments for children, led by the Executive Director, and developed a new 'China in the World' strategy. UNICEF and China will be partners for children across five strategic pillars: public financing; supply/innovation; China-related multilateral banks and funds; private sector;

and communication.

In 2018, UNICEF China undertook an action-oriented mid-term review informed by the context of the SDGs, Government of China priorities and commitments, UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021, the East Asia Regional Headlines and a rapidly evolving context in China. The mid-term review reflected on the lessons and constraints faced in delivering results for children in China and on necessary adjustments. It focused on five cross-sector programme areas, with the predominant criteria to focus on areas that impact more than one sectoral programme, including: adolescent programming; expanded, equity-focused programming in western China; a renewed focus on children in urban settings given the unparalleled rate of urbanization in China; leveraging digital space to promote child rights in programme delivery and advocacy; and how children with disabilities' needs are integrated into programmes and what can be done to strengthen this.

During the mid-term review, UNICEF China and the Government agreed on the following: to expand collaboration on adolescent development and participation; use the 'child-friendly city' initiative as an entry point to programming in urban areas; leverage digital platforms and technologies to deliver programme outcomes and expand reach; promote better gender equity and inclusion in all programmes; enhance equity focus, including an expanded reach in western provinces; and improve the access and use of data and evidence to support knowledge sharing in China and beyond. Investment and engagement in programming areas were reviewed to adjust to stay relevant, and 'make space' to include new strategic areas.

The mid-term review was an opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the UNICEF China business model, 'pilots to policy to results at scale', and on the extent that gender is integrated into programmes. It was observed that the 'pilots to policy to results at scale' model is relevant and effective, but further effort will better document successes and lessons learnt to drive change in government policy and programmes. On gender, concerted efforts are needed to better implement the UNICEF global Gender Action Plan by strengthening how gender is integrated in the planning, monitoring and reporting stages of each programme. Adolescent education and WASH were identified as two priority areas for gender integration in 2019-2020. And new efforts are needed to build capacities both within and outside UNICEF China to collect sex-disaggregated data and commission research and publications with a gender lens.

Pilot approaches are crucial to programming in middle-income countries. They provide insight into innovative solutions for complex development challenges and point to opportunities that improve public investments for children. Yet UNICEF in China has encountered difficulties in phasing out of pilots, as an external review of a major pilot programme revealed in 2018. Some pilots struggle to plan with a baseline survey, an intervention and non-intervention arm, and an agreed timeframe for showing results prior to exiting. While it is recognized that Government will not necessarily commit to finance until results are demonstrated, an agreement for sustainable financing in the long term, if and when results are shown, is a key to ensuring sustainability. A lesson learned in 2018 was to make sure these steps are taken in the future

set up of pilots.

Strengthened capacity and overall coordination is required in cross-sectoral programming. Without office-wide buy-in, clear leadership and cross-sectoral budgets, the effectiveness of cross-sectoral work was diminished. Cross-sectoral priorities were redefined in 2018 in four new clusters: adolescents, the child-friendly city initiative, early childhood development and gender. They were anchored in specific programme sections, with a designated focal point, workplan and budget for 2019.

UNICEF redefined its engagement with China in 2018 for the benefit of children globally. The Government of China's South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund, the Belt and Road Initiative and institutions like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the newly established China International Development Cooperation Agency are unrivalled opportunities to secure partnerships for the betterment of children. UNICEF China needs to harness the reach, technology and resources of the private sector in China, expand its presence in the digital space, and identify innovations and accelerators that can be taken to scale benefiting children globally.

Looking forward, as UNICEF China continues to be one of the largest United Nations' country programmes in China, with a presence in almost all provinces, it will maintain its technical assistance, operations and action-orientated approaches appreciated by the Government.

In 2019, UNICEF China will start developing its next country programme 2021-2025. Key considerations that will inform this process are how we will continue to meet the needs of underserved children and women in China, while strengthening our engagement with China to advance the SDGs for children in other developing countries.

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