

## Comoros

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### Executive Summary

In 2015, the Union of the Comoros became the first African country to introduce the inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) with GAVI funds. The country was certified polio-free by the World Health Organization (WHO) the same year. Routine immunization data show that 82 per cent of children younger than 1 year of age received a measles dose, with corresponding figures at 81 per cent and 78 per cent for Penta 3 and IPV, respectively. Programme interventions supported by UNICEF focused on strengthening immunization services and community health using promotion of essential family practices in order to stimulate demand. On the supply side, a minimum stock of vaccine was maintained throughout the year, and a cold chain rehabilitation plan was adopted, resulting in the purchase of 16 solar refrigerators.

Access to primary education and its quality continued to improve thanks to the combined impact of UNICEF-supported activities. Between 2013 and 2015, enrolment rates in primary school increased from 80 per cent to 85 per cent, and completion rates from 70 per cent to 80 per cent. The capacity of the system to enrol more children has been increased thanks to school construction and rehabilitation through the Global Partnership for Education and Educate a Child grants. UNICEF continued to support the contextualized development of textbooks and teacher guides relevant to the Comoros' competency-based curriculum. While these were being produced, to ensure availability in the short term, 60,000 sets of Hachette French and Mathematics textbooks were procured in 2015 for all first and second year students in primary schools.

Significant progress was made on legislation on child rights. Two laws on child labour and on violence against women were promulgated. The Government updated its action plan to combat human trafficking and developed a strategy to modernize the country's justice system. In all of these areas, UNICEF provided technical and advocacy support.

Following the Office of Internet Audit and Investigations' report on the Comoros in May 2015, all 14 recommendations were closed within six months. A compliance plan was developed and approved by the Country Management Team (CMT), and is under implementation. The work environment of the Country Office (CO) was substantially improved through the prompt development and implementation of a response plan to the most recent Global Staff Survey, and through the training of all staff on conflict prevention with support from the Regional Office (RO).

Despite the implementation of the Reaching Every District approach with the support of key partners including UNICEF, WHO and GAVI, 7 out of 17 districts remained below the threshold of 80 per cent coverage for pentavalent vaccine. Although the CO made breakthroughs in successfully raising funds for the nutrition programme, the Comoros continued to remain a donor orphan country. Shortfalls in funding constrained UNICEF-supported programme interventions on early childhood development. The education sector as a whole is still plagued by a lack of access to adequate textbooks and qualified teachers, which negatively affects learning. Multi-sectorality is not well anchored in the practice of government ministries. This has

been a major hindrance to the operationalization of the multi-sectoral platform on nutrition, despite support from UNICEF to draft the related decree.

UNICEF's partnership with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency continued to help provide the Government of the Comoros with significant support related to maternal and newborn health. To ensure heightened programme attention to child nutrition, UNICEF signed an agreement with the Government to implement programmes with US\$1 million in funding from the World Bank from 2015 to 2019. In the area of immunization, UNICEF's partnership with GAVI and Agence de Médecine Préventive supported the Government's efforts to strengthen the national health system and work on a cold chain rehabilitation plan. UNICEF continued to lead the Local Education Group supporting the Government in starting the process leading to the development of the 2016–2018 Education Sector Transitional Plan. A public-private partnership, Hôtels Amis des Enfants (Child-Friendly Hotels) was developed by the Ministry of Tourism with UNICEF's support. This partnership aims to provide oversight on the respect of child rights within the hotel environment, using 10 criteria agreed by all stakeholders.

This past year was the first year of implementation of the new Country Programme (2015–2019). Major shifts from previous cycles were the heightened programme focus on nutrition, child protection and social inclusion. This required new skills and funding within the CO, as well as new partnerships at local and international levels. The year was also marked by four new major accompanying actions taken to strengthen programme results and efficiency, namely: training of the majority of UNICEF partners on Communication for Development (C4D); strengthening programme accountability through the establishment of an independent national entity in charge of the regular evaluation of public policies and legislations; bringing gender equality to the fore of the Country Programme by developing a Gender Action Plan; and training of all UNICEF staff on VISION.

## Humanitarian Assistance

The Comoros archipelago is regularly hit by multiple natural disasters such as cyclones, floods, volcanic eruptions and epidemics, and is also affected by rising ocean waters and earthquakes. During recent years, floods caused by heavy rains and cyclones affected several localities, destroying homes, health facilities, roads and telecommunications, and increasing the isolation of populations that suffer from limited access to health facilities. The phenomenon of climate change associated with environmental degradation accentuates the effect of disasters on populations already facing extreme poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, and limited access to care and hygiene and sanitation.

To strengthen health responses to emergencies, the Government of the Comoros, in collaboration with UNICEF, hosted a regional Health in Emergencies workshop (Moroni, 16–20 February 2015), which was attended by 55 participants from Burundi, the Comoros, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Technical and financial support was provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC, Atlanta), UNICEF headquarters in New York, and the West and Central Africa RO and Eastern and Southern Africa RO of UNICEF.

The workshop's objectives included: a) updating participants on health in emergencies – the epidemiology, programme strategies, available resources and challenges; b) clarifying UNICEF's roles and responsibilities for health in emergencies; and c) exchanging information and experiences.

The topics discussed during the workshop included: disasters and complex humanitarian emergencies; humanitarian reform; the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action; emergency procedures for Level 2 and 3 crises; rapid assessments in emergencies; vaccine-preventable diseases; common communicable diseases; nutrition in emergencies; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in emergencies; non-communicable diseases; vector-borne diseases; disease outbreaks, including Ebola and cholera; mental health; maternal, newborn and reproductive health in emergencies; and six practical case studies on disaster management, rapid assessments, disease surveillance, communications in emergencies, management of maternal, newborn and child health in emergencies, and the use of the UNICEF Cholera Toolkit. The sessions were interactive, with participants contributing to the discussions that followed. The opening and closing ceremonies of the workshop were attended by the Vice President of the Comoros, senior government officials and heads of United Nations agencies.

The workshop participants recommended that regional workshops on health in emergencies be institutionalized by working with designated centres of excellence hosted by African universities or other training institutions. These centres of excellence could become a repository of information on management of emergencies and further develop tailor-made courses for UNICEF, the United Nations and government participants. In addition to health in emergencies, which should become a regular annual training event, nutrition in emergencies and WASH in emergencies trainings should also be conducted on a regular basis. This will serve to build knowledge and a network of professionals who can interact with each other during emergencies and build capacity. The CDC should be involved in future training events.

### Mid-Term Review of the Strategic Plan

The first and second years of the Strategic Plan (2014–2017) coincided with the development of the Comoros' new Country Programme of Cooperation (2015–2019) and its first year of implementation, respectively. This was a unique opportunity to benefit from the programme clarity provided by the new Strategic Plan to bring in programmatic shifts that are in line with the country's development priorities, while drawing early lessons during the new programme cycle. Hence, for the first time, nutrition, child protection and social inclusion were included as separate components in the Country Programme. From the first year of implementation, lessons learned relate to national ownership, cross-sectorality, gender equality, capacity development, the Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES), and direct cash transfers to partners.

Ensuring national ownership is essential, although it can be time-consuming at the expense of programme implementation. In 2015, the development of two partnerships with government ministries and institutions took the whole year to complete, as UNICEF was committed to ensuring that the Government took the lead and owned such initiatives. This required extensive consultations and deliberations. Consequently, the roll-out of the related interventions started only the following year.

Operationalizing inter-sectorality requires that the Government decides at the highest level which ministry or institution will lead before embarking on such a process. This is not always feasible, as government ministries typically function in silos. Moreover, to succeed, inter-sectoral approaches should be initiated only after ensuring that there is good understanding of the cross-sectoral nature of the issue at stake. Also, having a champion at the highest level of Government, and dedicated staff in each Ministry, can facilitate the process. To wit, although a draft decree for the establishment of a multi-sectoral platform for nutrition was available in 2015, weak understanding of the field of nutrition within the Government, and the lack of a respected champion for the cause of nutrition, stalled the adoption of such a decree.

UNICEF Comoros' CMT approved the office's Gender Action Plan (GAP) in December 2015. The implementation of the plan, however, will require financial and technical resources that the CO does not have. The CO has a gender committee, but its members will require their capacity strengthened with support from the RO. Moreover, the planned budget for GAP implementation will require financial inputs from within and outside UNICEF. The main lesson that the office has drawn from developing its GAP is that gender equality should be integrated and resourced as part of the Country Programme development, rather than as an add-on initiative after the Programme is approved.

Capacity development efforts supported by UNICEF are often in the form of training workshops for implementing partners. Without follow-up actions at participants' workplace or in their communities, investments in such training events are not maximized. In 2015, UNICEF Comoros supported a subregional (nine African countries) training workshop on health in emergencies, as well as a large national C4D training event for implementing partners. A number of recommendations were made, including post-training action plans. However, follow-up actions to training workshops are also complex to implement, not just because of the technical and financial resources required, but also because of difficulties in tracking trainees and managing staff turnover.

The implementation of MoRES requires at least some basic monitoring and evaluation systems and technical capacity in government programmes. In the case of the Comoros Cash Transfers pilot, despite technical and financial support from the UNICEF RO, MoRES could not take off because such basic capacities and systems were lacking. These will be the focus in 2016 so as to ensure a solid basis for the institutionalization of MoRES in such a programme.

Absorption capacity is a major issue among implementing partners in the Comoros. It often causes delays in programme implementation and hence ageing of direct cash transfers (DCTs). This is exacerbated in the Comoros by the fact that all UNICEF partners, except two, are high risk. In general, delays in implementation are experienced on all islands and across programmes. However, poor monitoring at the UNICEF CO level and important delays in actions to be taken by programmes and operations to liquidate funds are equally important factors that account for DCT ageing. A weekly DCT monitoring tool developed by the office reduced such delays and kept DCT liquidation at less than three months most of the time.

## Summary Notes and Acronyms

ANCME – Annual National Conference of the Ministry of Education

C4D – Communication for Development

CDC – Centers for Disease Control

CMT – Country Management Team

CNDRS – Centre National de Documentation et de Recherche Scientifique (National Centre of Documentation and Scientific Research)

CO – Country Office

DCT – direct cash transfer

ECD – early childhood development

EFA – environmental footprint assessment

EPE – Ecoles Primaires d'Excellence (Primary Schools of Excellence)

EPI – Expanded Programme on Immunization

ERM – Enterprise Risk Management

FCC - Fefederation of the Comorian Cconsumers

GAP – Gender Action Plan

GAVI – Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunization  
 GPE – Global Partnership for Education  
 HACT – Harmonized Accounts for Cash Transfers  
 ICT – information and communication technology  
 IMEP – Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan  
 IMF – International Monetary Fund  
 IPV - inactivated polio vaccine  
 IT – information technology  
 ITN – insecticide-treated mosquito net  
 JICA – Japanese International Cooperation Agency  
 KAP – Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices  
 LTA – Long-Term Agreement  
 MOSS – Minimum Operational Security Standards  
 MoRES – Monitoring Results for Equity System  
 NCHRF – National Commission for Human Rights and Freedom  
 NDS – National Directorate of Solidarity  
 NGO – non-governmental organization  
 PER – Performance Evaluation Report  
 RCF – Regional Contingency Fund  
 RKE – Renovated Koranic Education  
 RKT - Renovated Koranic Teaching  
 RO – Regional Office  
 SCA2D – Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée et de Développement Durable (Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy)  
 SUN – Scaling Up Nutrition  
 UNDAF – United Nations Development Assistance Framework  
 UNDSS – United Nations Department for Safety and Security  
 UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund  
 WASH – water, sanitation and hygiene  
 WHO – World Health Organization

## Capacity Development

A national training workshop on Communication for Development (C4D), supported by UNICEF, drew the participation of the majority of UNICEF’s implementing partners in all sectors, empowering them with the knowledge and skills to promote and support behaviour change among local communities. One of the lessons learned from this workshop was that without follow-up actions to support participants in national training workshops at their workplace or in their communities, investments in such trainings are not optimal. However, follow-up actions to training workshop are also complex to implement, not just because of a lack of technical and financial resources, but also because of difficulties in tracking trainees and managing staff turnover.

Three main follow-up actions emerged from the workshop: First, it was recommended that a network or C4D Community of Practice be established, with membership drawn from the workshop participants. Second, a number of Comorian participants were designated to conduct cascade training on C4D once they are back on the island. Finally, it was highly recommended to conduct a new Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey, focusing on health, education and child protection issues. The data from such a survey would ultimately be used to update the Comoros’ inter-sectoral C4D strategy.

To strengthen health responses to emergencies, the Government of the Comoros, in collaboration with UNICEF, hosted a regional Health in Emergencies workshop (Moroni, 16–20 February 2015) for 55 participants from nine countries including the Comoros. That workshop aimed to update participants' capacities through exchange information and experiences on health in emergencies.

### Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

Chronic malnutrition in children is still highly prevalent (30 per cent) in the Comoros. An analytic study commissioned by the Ministry of Health, with support from UNICEF, used the 2012 Comoros Multiple Indicator Clustering Survey/Demographic and Health Survey data to identify individual and household factors associated with child malnutrition. The study concluded that the child's sex, the time since the previous birth, the mother's age and education, her economic activity, the size and wealth of the household and the gender of its head were all significant determinants of child malnutrition. This analytical work was an important resource during the development of the new World Bank-funded and UNICEF-supported nutrition programme of the Ministry of Health, which focuses on community education, in areas with high levels of poverty, to prevent child malnutrition.

The first academic year of the UNICEF-supported Ecoles Primaires d'Excellence (EPE), a contextualized version of the Child-Friendly Schools initiative piloted on Anjouan Island, was assessed by a team of education experts. Their report demonstrates that performance in the Comoros national end-primary school exam was superior among pupils in the EPE compared with that of pupils in other schools. The EPE was a major discussion topic at the 2015 Annual National Conference of the Ministry of Education (ANCME), which recommended scaling up the initiative on all islands.

A situation analysis of early childhood development (ECD) in the Comoros was conducted by UNICEF, with the support of an international expert. The report recommended an expansion of the number of classrooms devoted to Renovated Koranic Teaching (RKT) to ensure that the current enrolment rate (about 24 per cent) is increased further. As a result, the 2015 ANCME recommended that the Ministry of Education continues to support the scaling up of the RKT in the Comoros.

### Partnerships

UNICEF expanded its partnership with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to improve maternal and newborn health. Through UNICEF, JICA provides equipment on maternal and newborn health to the Government of the Comoros. To ensure heightened programme attention to child nutrition, UNICEF signed an agreement with the Government of the Comoros with US\$1 million in funding from the World Bank for the period 2015–2019. In the area of immunization, UNICEF continued its partnership with GAVI to support the Government's efforts to strengthen the national health system and cold chain rehabilitation plan. GAVI funds to the Government are being managed by UNICEF for the period 2015–2016, while capacity is being built in the national expanded programme for immunization so that UNICEF can fully take over the management of the grant starting in 2017.

UNICEF continued to lead the Local Education Group. Membership for the coordination mechanism is drawn from technical and financial partners supporting the Government of the Comoros with the education sector. In 2015, this team supported the Ministry of Education in drafting a road map for the development of the country's 2019–2030 Education Sector Plan, including a funding proposal to the Global Partnership for Education and an interim Education

Bridging Plan for 2016–2018.

A public-private partnership, Hôtels Amis des Enfants (Child-Friendly Hotels) was developed by the Ministry of Tourism with technical and financial support from UNICEF. Apart from the local hotels, this partnership also involves schools and civil-society organizations. The main aim of this initiative is to ensure that hotels in the Comoros are not only sources of growth for the economy but that their business principles and practices promote and respect child rights. To be designated Hôtels Amis des Enfants, local hotels must satisfy 10 criteria developed by the Minister of Tourism, with support from UNICEF, and validated by all national stakeholders.

### **External Communication and Public Advocacy**

The Day of the African Child was celebrated on Anjouan Island, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports. This was an opportunity to advocate for ending early child marriage through face-to-face communication with a large audience comprising government officials, other partners and local communities. A one-week mass communication campaign involving decision makers, the local media, theatre groups, children and parents was organized before the final celebrations. To maximize the impact of these efforts, a series of media communication channels (leaflets, conference debate, round table, press release, interview to the radio) were used.

A communication toolkit including print materials, television/radio scripts and human interest stories about the three components of the UNICEF-supported programme was developed and availed for use by national counterparts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the international development community. Collaboration with local media (national radio and TV stations, community radio stations and newspapers) were maintained to engage parents, decision makers, and religious and community leaders on issues related to child rights.

### **South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation**

UNICEF Comoros supported the participation of two government staff in the –face-to-face meeting of the Community of Practice on cash transfers for French-speaking African countries held in Niamey (the Niger) from 16 to 21 March 2015. Comoros team capacities were strengthened on several topics, such as targeting of beneficiaries approach, payment mechanisms and identification of accompanying measures.

The CO also sponsored the participation of government staff in the meetings of African experts on strengthening civil registration systems in Africa held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in April 2015 and Douala, Cameroon, in November 2015. Following these meetings, the Government of the Comoros has shown increased willingness to conduct an assessment of the civil registration system in the country.

UNICEF supported the participation in Seychelles of a member of the Comorian delegation to the 14th Conference on HIV and Hepatitis, organized annually by the member countries of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). The theme of the 2015 meeting was 'United to bridge the gaps and reach zero new infections, zero new deaths and zero discrimination'. The meeting helped to strengthen cooperation between the five countries of the IOC in the fight against the two diseases.

A joint team of UNICEF, the Ministry of Education, the European Union, FAWECOM and Maecha (a local NGO) participated in a meeting convened by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) in Madagascar in November 2015 to foster exchange of ideas and resources

between French-speaking countries receiving GPE funding. The meeting's focus was on education sector analysis and education sector planning.

### Identification and Promotion of Innovation

In order to boost the management and monitoring of the Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI) in the Comoros, UNICEF, with financial support from GAVI, supported the Ministry of Health in supplying regular electricity through solar energy to the EPI premises in Moroni. This has allowed EPI staff to improve their work environment and efficiency, as they are no longer affected by the frequent power cuts in the country.

UNICEF Comoros continued to support the pilot cash transfers implemented by the National Directorate of Solidarity (NDS). The focus in 2015 was to conduct preparatory work for the establishment of a real-time monitoring articulated around the Monitoring of Results for Equity System (MoRES). With support from UNICEF ESARO, the NDS developed the architecture for the flow of information required for the implementation of a real-time monitoring system for social protection activities in the Comoros. The system aims to use information and communication technology (ICT) for activity monitoring, data collection and information sharing. Feasibility was tested in the field with the use of a simple Short Message Service.

### Support to Integration and Cross-Sectoral Linkages

UNICEF Comoros developed cross-sectoral linkage through two initiatives. First, with the support of an inter-agency mission involving UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger (REACH), the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme, the governance of nutrition in the Comoros was reviewed, with the recommendation to establish a multi-sectoral platform for nutrition. UNICEF supported the Government in drafting a decree for the establishment of such a platform. However, the decree was not submitted to the Council of Ministers for consideration because of a lack of consensus between partners. This was compounded by varying understanding of the field of nutrition by some partners, the fact that nutrition focal points in most ministries were junior staff, and lack of clarity within the Government on who should lead the platform. One of the major lessons learned in the process was that operationalizing cross-sectorality requires that the Government decides at the highest level which ministry or institution will lead. Moreover, such an approach should be initiated only after ensuring that there is good understanding of the cross-sectoral nature of the issue at stake. Having a champion at the highest level of government, and dedicated staff, can facilitate the process.

The second area of work that involved cross-sectoral linkages was the development of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) for the Country Programme. What transpires clearly from such efforts is that gender equality should be resourced as part of the Country Programme development, and not be an add-on initiative after the Programme is approved. The UNICEF Comoros CMT approved the office's GAP, but its implementation will require financial and technical resources that are not yet available. As a small CO, there is a gender committee, but the members will require that there is capacity strengthened with support from the Regional Office (RO).

### Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation

UNICEF supported the Government of the Comoros in drafting its initial report on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child ratified by the Comoros on 18 March 2004. UNICEF facilitated, through financial and technical inputs, the participation of the National

Commission for Human Rights and Freedom (NCHRF) to the twenty-eighth annual meeting of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in March 2015 in Geneva. Computer and office equipment were procured by UNICEF for the NCHRF to further strengthen its capacity to promote the protection of human rights.

UNICEF continued to advocate for the harmonization of the laws of the country related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The laws on child labour, prevention and repression of violence against women adopted in 2014 were promulgated by the Head of State in 2015. UNICEF developed an Action Plan for 2014–2017 to promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women in the Comoros.

### **Gender Mainstreaming and Equality**

UNICEF Comoros does not have a gender specialist; however, a gender equality team was established in 2015. Members include the Child Protection Officer (M), one Education Officer (F), the Chief of Education (F), a programme assistant (F) and the Partnership officer (F). They all spend about 10 per cent of their time on committee tasks.

The main achievement in 2015 was the development of the UNICEF Comoros 2015–2017 GAP. This plan includes a monitoring matrix that specifies budget and indicators fully aligned with the Comoros programme documents (Country Programme Document (CPD)/ Country Programme Management Plan (CPMP), /Business Management Plan (BMP)) and with the UNICEF global 2014–2017 GAP. The purpose of the plan is to promote gender equality and the emancipation of girls and women in Comoros. Specific objectives are the end of child marriage, and the integration of gender in all components of the 2015–2019 UNICEF Comoros Country Programme.

The CO also aims to strengthen system capacity and investment in gender equality through capacity development at individual and organizational levels. All UNICEF programmes equally contribute to prevent and abolish child marriage in the Comoros. In 2015, activities related to this component included UNICEF participation in social mobilization events as part of the celebrations of the International Women’s Day and the Day of the African Child, which focused on fighting child marriage and other mobilization activities to promote the timely enrolment of girls and boys and to keep them in school. Major results include the enrolment of 1,046 out-of-school girls between the ages of 8 and 15 in primary-level accelerated courses. Seven staff were involved in the various activities from child protection, social mobilization, communication and education. The cost for all activities was US\$110,876.

In 2015, UNICEF continued to participate in the Comoros United Nations Gender and Human Rights Thematic Group through its two focal points. One member of the gender equality group also participated in the one-week gender training organized by the United Nations Coordination Office.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

The Union of the Comoros as a small island state faces a number of environmental challenges related to climate change. In 2015, UNICEF support focused on sanitation and hygiene promotion at the community level to increase grass-roots capacities to climate change adaptation. An extensive awareness campaign on best hygiene and sanitation practices geared towards environmental protection at the community level was carried out. In total, 8,550 households in 25 rural localities, including their primary schools, received key messages about

the use of improved latrines, the abandonment of open defecation in river streams, and the fight against disease vector breeding sites.

Solid waste management is very critical in the country and still affects much of the existing water resources and the environment broadly. In 2015, the targeted households and primary schools in the 25 localities of the UNICEF-supported water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programme were sensitized on the danger of current practices on solid waste management and the need to adopt the best hygiene practices to protect the environment. Primary school teachers and schools council members were trained on how to involve students in solid waste management as well as in the maintenance of WASH facilities.

Household water treatment and safe storage activities nationwide focused on rain water harvesting and effective utilization. UNICEF, through the WASH sector coordination mechanism, continued to advocate for the introduction of new technologies for the protection of groundwater resources to prevent the contamination of fresh water from salty oceans.

UNICEF Comoros completed its first environmental footprint assessment (EFA) in August 2015. This EFA was approved by UNICEF headquarters, thus allowing the CO to have baseline information on greenhouse gas emissions from facilities, vehicle fleets and air travel, as well as on the use of water and paper.

The EFA triggered further actions to reduce the environmental footprint already highlighted in the Business Management Plan BMP 2015–2016 as well. For example: printing on both sides of the paper; turning off lights and air conditioners when they are not needed, especially when nobody is in the office; switching off any computers, photocopies and printers at the end of the day.

## Effective Leadership

In May 2015, the Office of Internet Audit and Investigations issued the report of the Comoros audit. The CMT took all necessary dispositions and closed all 14 audit recommendations in December 2015. This exercise led to major improvements in the performance of programmes and operations. Results in the BMP were formulated in a well-targeted and specific manner, with measurable indicators that were regularly monitored through CMT meetings.

The CO's risk-management was strengthened through an all-office training on Enterprise Risk Management (ERM), the identification of risks, root causes, impact and mitigation actions, and the establishment of a well-functioning ERM committee to develop and monitor the implementation of the ERM action plan. The CMT strengthened oversight and quality assurance review to fully implement the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT). A HACT committee with an action plan was established. The committee met regularly and ensured that all spot checks and the audit of one large partner (the National Expanded Programme on Immunization) were conducted during the year. The CMT tackled the issue of the quality of donor reports by developing a donor report checklist from the global Public Partnerships Division template. This is now systematically applied to all reports before they are submitted to donors. This has improved the quality of donor reports from UNICEF Comoros.

On the operations side, the CMT provided oversight on the revision of the terms of school construction contracts to ensure that deliverables are linked to a clear timeline and to corresponding payments, thus departing from previous contracts in which deliverables were vaguely formulated as a percentage of the total work envisaged. Other important decisions

enforced with the CMT's regular oversight were the ban on single sourcing where possible, and the monitoring of vehicle fleet loans to partners to guard against old (more than five years) vehicles being counted as UNICEF assets.

## Financial Resources Management

Throughout 2015, the CO kept its commitment to strengthen the monitoring of management indicators. In line with this, during each of the six CMT meetings held in 2015, the situation of management indicators was presented and carefully reviewed, allowing CMT members to decide what actions to take to improve the situation.

The above led to the following improvements:

The situation of outstanding direct cash transfers (DCTs) was given due attention. The CO developed and implemented a weekly DCT monitoring mechanism, which was effective in providing all programme and operations sections with timely information to allow them take action within the CO and among partners. To date, all outstanding DCTs are less than three months old and the CO is committed to keeping the DCT situation as such.

In addition, the CO also improved the performance of other key indicators, namely:

- Only two duty travel authorizations were open more than 15 days after completion of travel as of 31 December;
- All bank reconciliations were submitted to headquarters before the deadline;
- 100 per cent of the mid-year review of 2015 Performance Appraisal System/electronic Performance Appraisal System was completed before the deadline;
- The office Table of Authorities was reviewed and will be updated in 2016.

Available funds were used optimally. At year-end, the utilization rate was as follows: institutional budget: 100 per cent; regular resources: 93 per cent; other resources emergencies: 66 per cent; and other regular resources 50 per cent.

Efficiency gains were also made due to the better management of property and equipment. In compliance with the existing procedures, a number of items that became obsolete were sold with the approval of the Property Survey Board committee. The process is currently ongoing, but the estimate of the sales of this property and equipment is US\$2,519.

## Fund-Raising and Donor Relations

In 2015, UNICEF raised US\$1,000,000 from the World Bank to support the Government of the Comoros in the fight against child malnutrition over the period 2015–2019. To allow UNICEF to engage candidates during the 2016 election on their programmes for children if elected, the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund allocated US\$30,000 to UNICEF through the United Nations Development Programme.

Two concept notes on Education and Child Survival and Development were developed with UNICEF's Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division's support and shared with the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, which submitted them to the Saudi Fund for Development.

In terms of donor reporting, the CO maintained a focal person for coordination of donor reporting and timely submission. The nomination was communicated to the RO. Responsibilities of the donor report focal person include: a) monitoring 'Reports due in three months' via the Insight Manager's Dashboard Alerts; b) communicating early warning information to relevant

heads of sections and the representative; c) tracking progress in report drafting by relevant sections; d) coordinating finalization of documents, including final editing, monitoring and evaluation quality review, and the inclusion of any visual and narrative human interest sections; e) submission of reports to all relevant parties; and f) liaising with the RO and headquarters, and donor counterparts as appropriate. The reports due in 2015 were all submitted within schedule. A checklist to ensure the quality of the reports to donors was developed by the CO donor report focal point to all sections, and all staff were trained on it and are now using it.

## Evaluation

To support the Government in strengthening programme accountability within the framework of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goal agenda, UNICEF provided technical and financial assistance to the establishment of an independent national entity in charge of the regular evaluation of public policies and legislation in the Comoros. This Evaluation and Policy Analysis unit is housed in the National Centre for Documentation and Scientific Research and draws its members from the Centre, Comoros University and the General Planning Commission. It is expected that this will be the main entity that will oversee government programme evaluations and targeted analyses of public policies, laws and legislation.

UNICEF Comoros developed a bi-annual integrated monitoring and evaluation plan (2015–2016) in line with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) work plan for the same period. More than 80 per cent of the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) activities envisioned for 2015 were completed, including a study on the effectiveness of the management of vaccines (cold chain), which is a fundamental basis for EPI planning. To improve the quality of IMEP outputs, UNICEF Comoros established a research committee to provide quality assurance of terms of reference of related terms of reference and technical reports.

A survey of schoolchildren and a situation analysis of ECD in the Comoros provided critical information to the education sector in terms of key interventions. In addition, the national report on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was completed with UNICEF support and submitted by the Government of the Comoros to the African Union.

UNICEF confirmed its support to the Government regarding the conduct of an assessment of the child protection system in the Comoros. The terms of reference of this mapping and formative evaluation were finalized after a quality assurance review by the RO. Maestral International was hired to implement this important exercise, which will be completed in 2016.

## Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

As part of Operating as One, the CO maintained its contributions and overall commitment to the common premises and common services with other agencies. In 2015, the total contribution of UNICEF to common services was US\$89,948. As in previous years, contributions from all agencies were used to cover the costs for shared services such as security, running costs and salaries of the doctor and nurse at the United Nations dispensary, as well as for cleaning services and utilities. Cost sharing of common services in 2015 benefited from three new contributors (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund), thus reducing transactions costs for UNICEF. Despite these costs savings, the CO had to seek financial support from the RO to cover the budget deficit in fuel consumption for generators, which worsens every year due to a chronic electricity shortage. Fuel consumption and maintenance costs of these generators have therefore increased sharply. Thanks to a regional allocation of US\$11,430 from the regional

contingency fund, the CO was able to meet the additional contribution required by the Operations Management Team to cover rising fuel costs.

## Supply Management

Actual total value for essential goods procured in 2015 was US\$1,608,013.40. Supplies for programme off-shore procurement value represented 26 per cent (US\$424,574).

Thirty-two institutional contracts were issued for US\$1,791,305.16. Out of this amount, US\$852,099, or 48 per cent, were for 14 contracts on Educate a Child school construction work and GAVI rehabilitation of health centres. The main local expenditures were from the Education section, with the procurement of classroom furniture at US\$257,885. The section also procured Hachette school manuals through direct order at US\$516,900.

The main investment made by the CO was the enhancement of security at its premises through the installation of a video surveillance system valued at US\$27,497.

The CO also issued four local Long-Term Agreements (LTAs) for school furniture and seven LTAs for school construction work.

The orders for procurement services amounted to US\$150,627.

In terms of strategic sourcing, the opaqueness among the new suppliers entering in the market due to the poor local administrative registration environment has to be noted. UNICEF Comoros started a benchmarking study with the visits of a few local vendors in the areas of construction, furniture, printing and office supplies. As UNICEF Comoros does not maintain a warehouse, programme supplies are directly delivered to implementing partners. UNICEF Comoros is recognized by local partners as a key player in the timely delivery of goods to end users on all islands. However, there are still important logistics challenges to UNICEF Comoros, as the country suffers from poor infrastructure, weak local forwarders' capacity and expensive airfares and sea freight. To mitigate these risks, the CO conducted a capacity-building workshop for partners, including the Government, to train them on UNICEF procurement procedures and related logistics.

## Security for Staff and Premises

The CO improved security in and around the two buildings assigned to it within the United Nations premises. Additional security funds of US\$29,542 for 2015 were allocated by the RO to the CO to install surveillance camera for office buildings and purchase protection equipment (life jackets) for its staff.

The Minimum Operational Security Standards (MOSS) were updated on 20 October 2015. Most of the MOSS recommendations have been implemented, but the CO is still not fully compliant. One of the areas of greatest concern is the electricity shortage that poses a huge security threat to the CO. A request has been submitted to the RO to address this issue.

The common radio system managed by the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) continued to broadcast the weekly radio checks each Tuesday at 8 p.m. A communication tree is also in place. A building evacuation plan was established for all United Nations agencies in the compound and an evacuation exercise was conducted in 2015.

The CO also worked to address the security issues related to the action plan that was

developed after the Global Staff Survey. For example, the surveillance cameras for an office building project were installed.

Additional security considerations, such as traveling within the islands by air instead of by boat, are in place to enhance programme delivery.

The Minimum Operating Residential Security Standards aimed at enhancing the security of the staff and their families at home was also approved.

A contribution of US\$6,900 was received from the regional office in November 2015 via the regional contingency fund to support the CO's Business Contingency Plan.

## Human Resources

The new Country Programme Management Plan, for the period 2015–2019, came into effect in January 2015 with three vacancies, namely: Operations Manager (P3), Wash Officer (P3) and Nutrition Officer (NOB). With the support of the RO, the CO recruited suitable candidates by advertising widely in different forums to attract competent staff.

The post of Nutrition Officer remained vacant for most of the year due to a lack of funding, but was advertised at the end of the year. The WASH and operations posts were filled during the year.

The CO continued to closely monitor gender ratios and is fully committed to achieving gender parity. Currently, UNICEF Comoros gender statistics show that among its 25 staff members, 10 are female and 15 are male.

The learning committee provided guidance for the preparation and implementation of the 2015 staff learning plan. The committee met several times to validate and monitor the implementation plan. Most of the group trainings (e.g., VISION, ERM, Staff Well-being) were implemented. Time Management training has been postponed to 2016. Some 40 per cent of planned individual trainings courses were also completed.

The CO continued to strengthen monitoring of the completion of staff Performance Evaluation Reports (PERs). As a result, 100 per cent of the 2014 PERs and 100 per cent of individual work plans for 2015 were completed by March 2015 and updated within the mid-year review schedule. All staff PERs for the mid-year review 2015 were completed within the target date. The CO worked to develop annual leave plans that were monitored by the CMT to encourage work-life balance.

Most of the issues identified by the recent Global Staff Survey were implemented. For instance, staff well-being training was conducted and UNDSS mandatory security training was completed by all staff. To date, only one action (VHF radios in vehicles) is still pending due to lack of funds.

## Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

The information technology and telecommunication system in UNICEF Comoros meets UNICEF standards. Throughout the year, all computers were kept up to date, with the latest patches distributed by UNICEF headquarters. Also, Information Technology Solutions and Services projects were implemented on time as per guidelines from headquarters.

Cloud-based office automation tools greatly transformed the CO in terms of efficiency, reliability

and speed. Telecommunication costs were significantly reduced for both business and personal calls because staff were trained in and encouraged to use MS Lync, Skype and Skype for Business.

UNICEF headquarters in New York is working on creating a TeamSite with Sharepoint to allow better sharing of information.

The use of the OneNote tool is very much appreciated by all staff, as it has enabled meeting secretaries to cut the amount of time spent on finalizing the minutes of the various office meetings. The tool enables staff to simultaneously provide inputs on the same documents, thus easing consolidation of such inputs from different meeting participants.

To strengthen business continuity, the CO installed an extension of the UNICEF LAN network firewall in the home of essential staff members (Representative, Operations Manager, Child Survival and Development Chief, Chief Education and ICT Assistant). An extension of the solar power system to all offices in the UNICEF buildings was approved. Funds are being sought from the RO to implement this initiative.

The ICT Assistant in the CO has developed a software application for inventory management of information technology (IT) equipment. The application has been very useful in the local management of assets outside InSight. The CO has also developed an application for the management of incoming and outgoing couriers with partners. This application has had significant impact in reducing losses of correspondences and delays in responding to incoming couriers, while improving transparency, as the database from the application is available to all staff. Both applications are available to other UNICEF offices.

## Programme Components from Results Assessment Module

### ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

**OUTCOME 1:** Mothers, newborns and the most disadvantaged in particular have equitable access to high-impact quality interventions to ensure their survival and development, including in humanitarian situations.

#### **Analytical statement of progress:**

Programme interventions focused on strengthening immunization services and community health using promotion of essential family practices in order to stimulate demand, including the use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets (ITNs), antenatal care and breastfeeding. The action also included improvement in the quality of care for newborns and pregnant women through equipping 40 health facilities with newborn resuscitation kits and providing tests in order to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Thanks to the Vaccine Alliance, GAVI-RSS, seven health facilities were rehabilitated and eight health districts were equipped with motorcycles for outreach activities, hence improving people's access to health services.

An evaluation of the management of effective vaccines allowed for the development of an improvement plan for the current cold chain, including equipment renewal. The national cold room was equipped with a warning system to improve storage quality. In 2015, the Union of the Comoros introduced the inactivated polio vaccine (IPV), and the country was certified polio-free by WHO. Routine data show that 82.4 per cent of children younger than 1 year old received a measles dose, 81.1 per cent received Penta 3 and 78.1 per cent received IPV through routine immunization. The EPI routine data analysis coverage from January to October shows that

disparities persist between the districts and that the Reaching Every District approach has been implemented to reduce those gaps. Available data on the maternal health show that at the end of October, 56 per cent of expecting women had four consultations during pregnancy.

Epidemiological surveillance and health information systems remain weak. For example, it takes three months for data to be updated at the national level. Government technical staff turnover is high, which restricts continuity in programme implementation.

The Ministry of Health is working on a national human resource strategy in order to ensure that qualified and trained staff remain in their positions.

In 2016, UNICEF will support a measles vaccination campaign, which will be followed by a household survey in order to confirm immunization coverage.

**OUTPUT 1:** Women and children have equitable access to preventive and promotional interventions for the adoption of healthy behaviour in matters of health and sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, including humanitarian situations.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

Two major results were achieved in 2015. As described above, the Comoros introduced IPV in January and the country was certified polio-free by WHO. The CO has benefited from GAVI funds to strengthen the health system and immunization (GAVI-RSS). With this support, seven health facilities were rehabilitated and eight districts were equipped with motorcycles to conduct outreach activities. The capacities of EPI at the central and regional levels were strengthened.

Routine EPI data, from January to October 2015, show that 81.1 per cent of children younger than 1 year old received three doses of DTP-HepB Hib vaccines, 82.4 per cent received the measles vaccine and 78.1 per cent received IPV through routine immunization. Despite the implementation of the Reaching Every District approach with the support of key partners – UNICEF, WHO and GAVI – 7 districts out of 17 have not reached the threshold of 80 per cent of coverage for pentavalent vaccine. In addition, eight health districts received funds to support immunization outreach strategies. A minimum stock of vaccines was maintained throughout the year. An evaluation was conducted on vaccine management and an improvement plan was conceived as a recommendation. In addition, a cold chain rehabilitation plan was adopted, resulting in the purchase of 16 solar refrigerators type Solar Direct Drive . Storage was also improved by the installation of an alarm system for the monitoring of temperatures at the national storage facility. Capacity building on utilization and maintenance is under way. A measles surveillance system was set up and no cases of measles have been reported. The percentage of children 12–23 months old who received three doses of Penta, is not known because no study or immunization coverage survey has been performed.

**OUTPUT 2:** Improved and equitable use of community structures for the management of childhood illness, especially acute respiratory infections, diarrhoea and malaria, including in humanitarian situations.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

The national community health strategy developed by the Government of the Comoros in 2013, with the support of UNICEF, allows faster management of diarrhoea, pneumonia and uncomplicated malaria, directly at the community level by community health workers. The implementation of this strategy faces two major constraints: 1) lack of financial resources for

training of health workers and provision of essential drugs; and 2) resistance among some doctors who do not want community workers to handle drugs, particularly antibiotics.

Regarding the management of malaria cases, community workers were trained, with the support of the Global Fund, in the use of Rapid Diagnostic Tests to detect malaria. Given the progress made by the Government of the Comoros in the fight against malaria, malaria cases detected at the community level are treated at public health facilities according to WHO guidelines. Antibiotics and oral rehydration salts are not yet given at the community level, mainly due to a lack of funding.

The 2014 Malaria Indicator Survey shows that 66 per cent of children younger than 5 years old and 50.8 per cent of pregnant women use ITN. In the concept paper approved by the Global Fund, ITN distribution will be integrated into immunization services by 2016. Emphasis was placed on the promotion of essential family practices through production and broadcasting of educational messages related to hand washing, use of ITN, breastfeeding, knowledge of danger signs in children and pregnant women and pregnancy hygiene.

**OUTPUT 3:** National capacities are strengthened to offer equitable access to key maternal and child health high-impact interventions, including in humanitarian situations.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

In the area of maternal health, the CO supported the Government's efforts in equipping 40 health facilities with newborn resuscitation kits. These kits also contain drugs to prevent infection and bleeding in newborns. As part of the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, 15,000 HIV tests were provided to the Government for routine HIV screening in pregnant women during antenatal care. For the prevention of malaria in pregnancy, 60,000 doses of sulfadoxin-pyrimethamin were provided to the national programme against malaria, covering the country's needs at national level.

Negotiations are under way for the Training of Trainers on newborn care and for the development of an action plan for every newborn in early 2016.

Education messages about pregnancy hygiene and danger signs during pregnancy and for newborns are regularly broadcast.

**OUTPUT 4:** Political commitment and national capacities are strengthened to plan and budget for high-impact interventions related to matters of health and sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

UNICEF provided technical assistance with the alignment of the country's health policy for 2015–2024 and health development plan 2015–2019 to a Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée et de Développement Durable (Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy, or SCA2D), and for its validation. The health development plan mainly aims to: (1) ensure universal access to services and comprehensive promotional, preventive and curative health care; (2) strengthen governance, leadership and partnership; and (3) improve the management of health system resources. The plan is organized around eight strategic directions: (1) expanding and strengthening access to health and nutrition services; (2) strengthening prevention and health promotion systems; (3) leadership development and governance; (4) human resources development; (5) development of infrastructure, equipment and health products; (6) increased health financing; (7) development of the health information system; and

(8) promotion of research and knowledge management. During the development of this national plan, UNICEF ensured that the right of children was taken into account, with a focus on the most vulnerable.

The CO also provides long-term and constant advocacy. With the assistance of the UNICEF Regional Director, high-level advocacy was conducted regarding the national budget allocation for vaccination and nutrition.

HIV/AIDS support to the Government included: (1) organizing the meeting of the National Committee for the Fight against AIDS chaired by the head of state; (2) participation in the conference on HIV/AIDS in the Seychelles organized annually by the commission of the Indian Ocean within the framework of South-South cooperation; and (3) preparation of a concept note for the mobilization of funds from the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria for the fight against HIV/AIDS. A specific budget line for HIV/AIDS is allocated by the state, but the level of the allowance is still low.

**OUTCOME 2:** Pregnant women, nursing mothers and children under 5 have access and use equitable public and community facilities for the prevention and treatment of malnutrition, including in humanitarian situations.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

After the country's accession to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement, UNICEF, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies, continues to provide support to establish an environment of good governance in nutrition. An inter-agency mission involving UNICEF, WHO, REACH, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme was organized. The mission provided an opportunity to review key elements of governance in nutrition, recommending to the Government the establishment of a multi-sectoral platform for nutrition and highlighting the necessity to update nutrition and food-related policies. The mission also recommended that additional resource mobilization is required to support the Government in its fight against stunting. Terms of reference and draft decrees for the multi-sectoral platform have been submitted for adoption by the Government.

The country has undertaken a desk review of the budget allocated by each sector for nutrition as part of preparations for the SUN meeting. The results of this desk review show that the Government does not allocate a budget for specific nutrition interventions. However, the country allocates budgets to the health, education, agriculture and even justice sectors for interventions related to nutrition. The CO has undertaken high-level advocacy for a specific nutrition allocation in the state budget. In addition, the country has participated in the review of the SUN movement strategy organized in Milan. The National Assembly was sensitized on nutrition after the return of the mission from Italy.

UNICEF supported the Government in opening Intensive Nutritional Recovery Centers and Ambulatory Nutrition Recovery Centers, with nutritional and therapeutic inputs, in 12 out of 17 health districts.

The water and sanitation sector remain underfunded by the Government, and there is little progress in the reform of the sector. In line with its new Country Programme, UNICEF strengthened its support towards sustainable water and sanitation services, focusing during this first year on promoting household water treatment and improved sanitation at the community level.

**OUTPUT 1:** Strengthened support to children, families and communities to promote nutritional practices and improve care, including in humanitarian situations.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

Advocacy continued for the promotion of breastfeeding through a partnership with the Federation of the Comorian Consumers (FCC). The MUFTORA (the highest religious authority in the country), community leaders and political authorities have been involved in advocacy. Contracts have been established between the Regional Director of Health and 12 local radio stations divided between three islands to disseminate educational messages related to the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding. At the local level, health facilities and community health workers continue to use the nutrition and infant feeding module and communication kit developed in previous years.

The UNICEF Representative conducted high-level advocacy for the implementation of the recent law (2014) on sales and marketing of breast-milk substitutes. Implementation is weak and continued efforts are required in order for the law to be applied.

A national consultant was recruited to support the programme in expanding CRENI and CRENA to other districts to ensure efficient care linked with acute malnutrition. These CRENI and CRENA are open in collaboration with JICA, which provided important logistical support, including management tools, kitchen equipment, drugs and nutrition products. The administration of 12 CRENIs is unsatisfactory, mainly due to irregular supply and lack of resources to support mothers of hospitalized children. In 2015, 54.44 per cent of children aged 6–59 months received vitamin A supplements and 71.8 per cent of children aged 12–59 months received deworming treatment during a mass screening campaign.

**OUTPUT 2:** Strengthened national capacity to provide equitable access to nutrition interventions, including in humanitarian situations.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

Equitable access to quality nutrition services is a programme priority. Two partnerships were established with Caritas and the FCC (Comorian consumer federation). With Caritas, 40 health workers and 30 community health workers were trained on the management of malnutrition. Outreach activities for screening and management of malnutrition, integrated with immunization and antenatal care packages, were regularly undertaken in order to improve access and coverage. Children affected by severe acute malnutrition with complications are referred to the Caritas CRENI located in Moroni. Children affected by acute malnutrition without complications received therapeutic food (Plumpy'Nut®) under the supervision of community health workers. Children with moderate acute malnutrition do not leave their villages. Community health workers must travel every day to the villages when children are taking drugs and therapeutic food. During treatment, community health workers ensure that mothers receive adequate information and education regarding nutrition.

With the FCC, 15 journalists, 20 midwives and 30 religious leaders were trained on breastfeeding good practices. Thanks to the collaboration established with JICA, all 17 health districts have been equipped with anthropometric equipment, kitchen equipment, drugs and therapeutic food. Seven new CRENI were opened in 2015 in order to improve the access of malnourished children. A vitamin A and deworming campaign was organized, reaching 56 per cent of children for vitamin A and 70 per cent for deworming.

**OUTPUT 3:** Strengthened national capacities for political commitments to planning, budgeting and coordination for the scaling up of interventions.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

UNICEF provided technical guidance in the drafting of a decree for the establishment of a nutrition multi-sectoral platform. Objectives of the platform include: (1) support all initiatives to improve nutrition and food security in the Comoros; (2) approve policies, strategies and sectoral plans for food security and nutrition; (3) approve budget and implementation, monitoring and evaluation plans for food security and nutrition policies in all relevant sectors; (4) validate the work of all services of the nutrition and food security platform; (5) support the mobilization of resources; and (6) ensure the inclusion of a budget line for food security and nutrition in the budget of each sector concerned. The platform will consist of several government sectors – including health, education, agriculture and justice – as well as bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies. The UNICEF Representative engaged in high-level advocacy in order to drive the promulgation of the decree (expected in 2016).

**OUTPUT 4:** Improved monitoring and evaluation of the nutritional status of the most vulnerable children.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

According to national guidelines on the management of malnutrition, passive screening should be conducted in any child who contacts the health services in outreach or fixed strategies. Similarly, community health workers should provide passive detection during their daily activities. Unfortunately, this approach is not conducted systematically in all health facilities. In 2015, 4,551 children 6–59 months old were screened, including 4,101 in public structures and 450 by community health workers. The malnourished children should be oriented to the CRENI and CRENA. This low rate of reporting reflects the failure of the health information system in which nutrition information is included. Indeed, nutrition data collected in the periphery are not synthesized centrally due to a lack of adequate support.

The country is also committed to undertake a screening campaign two times a year, targeting all children 6–59 month old within an interval of six months. The campaign integrates vitamin A supplementation and deworming by Albendazole with the support of government partners, particularly UNICEF and JICA. Unfortunately, funds mobilized by UNICEF were received in the last quarter of the year. Hence, only one campaign was conducted in December, targeting 113,000 children. This campaign helped to screen 72.4 per cent of targeted children, of which 71.8 per cent were dewormed and 54.44 per cent received vitamin A supplementation. Results show that the lowest malnutrition rates were registered in Ngazidja Island (Grande Comores).

**OUTPUT 5:** Strengthened support for children and families for the sustainable use of drinking water and the adoption of good practices in sanitation and hygiene, including in humanitarian situations.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

During this first year of the new Country Programme, activities focused on developing and piloting materials promoting household water treatment and improved sanitation in rural areas. This pilot engages with 25 communities across the three islands, representing about 8,550 households. It is implemented through a partnership with the national NGO Maeеча, which has extensive experience in education and sensitization.

Several meetings and discussions took place at the local level, including with community health workers and authorities in order to develop tools and promotion materials, such as posters and television advertisement. This initial work and a desk analysis show that, except for the richest quintile of the population, the proportion of households using unimproved sanitation is not influenced by wealth. This opens up an opportunity for piloting sanitation marketing, which has been integrated in the 2016 government plan under the Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy.

**OUTPUT 6:** Strengthening national capacity to provide sustainable access to drinking water and adequate sanitation.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

Complementary to activities promoting demand (Output 2.5), household water treatment options were inventoried and documented in a training package. The inventory of sanitation options is in progress as part of developing a sanitation marketing strategy, but presents challenges due to the geographical and soil specificity of each island. Tremendous efforts remain in order to ensure sustainable service delivery, potentially through private-sector mobilization. Unfortunately, sector reforms remain slow, with little or no progress since a proposed sector strategy and a new Water Law developed in 2014 with financial support from an African Development Bank-funded programme. Throughout 2015, UNICEF advocated for sector reform, and, in 2016, will maintain its advocacy for the enactment of the new Water Law, while strengthening government capacity.

**OUTCOME 3:** Young children aged 0–5 years old, especially the most vulnerable, receive integral development care and are prepared for primary school.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

In 2015, no parenting education was conducted. During the year, UNICEF identified and secured technical assistance for the finalization of an existing parenting education manual and to update the existing Renovated Koranic Education (RKE) preschool curriculum. The focus is on childcare within households and in schools to equip parents, caregivers and key stakeholders with the necessary knowledge to provide the best health, protection, and emotional, physical and cognitive development and learning opportunities to their young children. This is based on the assumption that childcare education needs to be integrated and informed by the basic principles of relevant inter-sectoral practice.

Preschool enrolment rates increased from 14 per cent in 2013 to 24.6 per cent (25.4 per cent females and 23.9 per cent males) in 2014. The percentage of 6-year-old children enrolled in Grade 1 who attended a preschool education programme increased from 49 per cent in 2013 to 77.7 per cent (80 per cent females and 76 per cent males) in 2014. The Government plans to scale up preschool coverage to all primary schools to further increase enrolment and transition rates. However, no contributions in this sense were made from UNICEF in 2015 due to a lack of resources, which constrains this outcome. Besides, no inter-sectoral strategy is being implemented in the country through integrated actions with contribution from all sectors. Moreover, in the education sector there is no specific expertise in the country on early childhood and parenting education. As the current planning cycle (2013–2015) is ending for the education sector, the CO will advocate for more coordinated work in this area and for increased resource contribution and coordination.

**OUTPUT 1:** Parents of young children in target areas benefit from integrated parenting education.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

In 2015, a major result was the unblocking of the stalled situation on the development of a parenting education programme for which tools were drafted in 2012 and never finalized or adopted. Through sustained negotiation with the Government, a plan was defined to include the finalization of the parenting education guide and its alignment with the preschool curriculum within the ongoing activities that support pre-primary and primary curriculum reform. This is a first step towards the design and adoption of an early childhood education expansion plan, which will see the improvement of childcare and education services for 0–5-year-old children within households and classrooms. Parenting education is not implemented as yet in the country. In 2015, UNICEF supported the study on the ‘Analysis of the Situation on the Development of Early Childhood in the Comoros’. Findings will inform sector planning to ensure that early learning and school readiness components are maintained in the 2016–2018 transitional education sector plan.

In 2015, UNICEF also secured technical assistance to finalize a parenting education guide. The finalization of this tool, due in 2016, will contribute greatly to the launch of a parenting education programme in 2017. Main constraints at this level remain the lack of resources and expertise and the difficulty in creating an environment conducive to complementary inter-sectoral interventions.

**OUTPUT 2:** Young children, including those with disabilities, benefit from RKE readiness programmes.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

In 2015, UNICEF secured technical assistance for the revision of the existing preschool curriculum currently adopted in the 335 RKE preschool classes offered in 175 government schools across the country. This intervention will be carried out in 2016 and will result in the restructuring of RKE, with a focus on 4–5-year-old children. This will include the provision of adequate pedagogical tools that integrate a learning-through-play perspective in the preschool programme. The aim is to provide children with the necessary competencies to access primary school. Following the revision, a major challenge will still remain in ensuring that RKE capacities are strengthened to deliver the new curriculum.

RKE is an innovative approach that contextualizes school readiness and early learning through a culturally relevant curriculum for 3–5-year-old children. The establishment of RKE classes within existing primary schools has greatly contributed to increased access for the most vulnerable children over the years. In general, demand is high for preschool in the country, as shown by the fact that only 6 per cent of schools with RKE classes have a pupil-teacher ratio less than 90 per cent of the national norm (30:1) at preschool level. However, the sustained lack of resources in this sub-sector, including for UNICEF, is preventing the system from scaling up this very successful approach at the expected pace. Besides, much needs to be done to improve the service to ensure that its design becomes more age-relevant and inclusive.

**OUTPUT 3:** School communities are sensitized on their role to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of RKE.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

In 2015, UNICEF provided 159 ECD kits to reach all schools providing RKE classes. Trainings on the use of the kits were conducted for 28 teacher trainers, who in turn trained 204 teachers across the country. The aim was to ensure that RKE teachers have the necessary orientation to

use the kits appropriately by implementing a learning-through-play approach. Information on usage of the kits within the classroom will be collected in 2016.

The establishment of RKE classes within existing primary schools has facilitated the extension of mainstream monitoring systems applied in the primary cycle to preschool. This includes the involvement of the school community in the management and monitoring of the service through school management committees. However, the weak capacity of the committees limits their full involvement in RKE management, and the monitoring system is not fully integrated. In addition, data on the pre-primary cycle are still not available to the same extent as for primary school.

**OUTCOME 4:** All school-age children receive and complete an inclusive quality primary education, with a focus on equity and learning achievements, including in humanitarian situations.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

Progress has been made in the sector, which is highlighted by completion rates that have increased from 70 per cent to 80 per cent. Net enrolment has increased from 80 per cent to 84.7 per cent (83.2 per cent females and 86.1 per cent males) and transition rates from 79 per cent to 96 per cent.

In 2015, UNICEF's major interventions to improve quality and increase access at the primary level have included support to the contextualized development of one of the three primary core subject textbooks for all primary school levels; the piloting of a child-friendly contextualized model called 'ecole d'excellence' in 24 schools in Ndzuwani, followed by the extension of the pilot to a few schools on the other two islands; the construction of 93 classrooms, of which 58 in 9 school sites are completed and 35 in an additional 14 schools are ongoing; the establishment of a recruitment protocol and training of 147 teachers tasked with teaching accelerated classes for over-age out-of-school children; and the identification and enrolment of 10,239 (4,264 females and 5,975 males) out-of-school children, including 6-year-old children at risk of not being enrolled and over-age out-of-school children. For the over-age children, accelerated classes were established in 2015. The system is constrained by quality-related issues that prevent this outcome to be fully attained, as revealed by repetition rates, which have also slightly increased since 2013, from 23 per cent to 24 per cent. This is a symptom of the quality of teaching and learning, which is still poor, with children not having access to textbooks, teachers not being adequately trained to deliver the new competency-based curriculum, and no expertise or specific services to cater for children with disabilities.

**OUTPUT 1:** The quality of teaching/learning and retention are improved in basic education and grant the availability of textbooks and teaching and learning materials.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

Currently no updated data are available on progress made towards targets for schools with less than a 90 per cent pupil-teacher ratio and on the per cent of qualified and trained teachers. This information will be available once 2014–2015 census reports are finalized. In 2015, UNICEF supported the context-relevant production of one of the three primary core subjects ('Eveil') textbooks for all primary school levels. The textbook printing process is currently on course, and the textbooks will be available at the beginning of the next school year.

In addition, UNICEF procured French and Mathematics textbooks and relevant teachers' guides from an internationally reputed publisher who caters to the Francophone African market. These materials, which were shipped to the Comoros in December 2015, will be made available on

loan to the 60,000 children and 1,300 teachers in the first and second years of primary schools all over the country. A protocol for the management and distribution of the textbooks on loan has also been established.

Major challenges remain in ensuring the effectiveness of textbook management at all levels of the supply chain, and particularly in the classroom. Another challenge consists in ensuring that teachers are trained to deliver the curriculum through the newly adopted textbooks

**OUTPUT 2:** Equitable access to schooling for all children, including those with disabilities, is improved, and continuity is granted, including in humanitarian situations.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

In 2015, UNICEF supported the national school census. However, so far the statistical data reports have still to be published; therefore, net intake rates for 2015 cannot be updated. Targets for the same indicator will be defined in the 2016–2018 Education Sector Plan. To increase system capacity for access in 2015, UNICEF supported the construction of 93 classrooms, of which 58 in 9 school sites are completed and 35 in an additional 14 schools are ongoing. A recruitment protocol was established for teachers tasked with teaching accelerated classes for over-age out-of-school children, and 146 teachers (88 females and 58 males) were trained. In addition, 10,239 (4,264 females and 5,975 males) out-of-school children and over-aged 6-year-olds at risk of not being enrolled were identified and integrated in year 1 (6-year-olds) and in accelerated classes (over-age children). The accelerated courses are due to last for six months and prepare each cohort to be integrated into mainstream classes, following a test that will define their level of competency.

The involvement of the Comoros in a regional study on education for children with disabilities led by the UNICEF RO in 2015 is a step towards supporting the Government in developing a policy on inclusive education and relevant implementation strategies and plans. The system is not yet in a position to cater for children with disabilities and does not have a specific inclusive education policy. The Interim Sector Plan 2013–2015 and the National Education Policy prescribe that all children, regardless of their physical or learning abilities, are to be granted access to education.

**OUTPUT 3:** The mastery of basic skills to be acquired by pupils is improved.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

No updates are currently available on the three indicators due to the delays in the publication of 2014–2015 statistical data reports. With regard to the exams, besides end-of-cycle examinations, no recent evaluations have been done to assess learning achievement. A national examination steering committee has been established and tasked with overseeing the assessment of learning achievements at the end of the primary cycle. This work is of major importance, as it will support the analysis of system performance and help shape new policies for next 2016–2018 planning cycle.

As for the indicators on the percentage of second- and fifth-year children with textbooks in three disciplines, in 2015 UNICEF supported the provision of French, Mathematics and 'Eveil' textbooks for 60,000 children and teachers' guides for 1,300 teachers in the first and second years of all primary schools all over the country. To ensure efficient management of this process, a protocol for the management and distribution of the textbooks on loan has been established. This involves the registration of the textbooks received as part of the school roll register. In parallel to this intervention, UNICEF supported the planning of a centralized pupil's

Personal Identity Number system to ensure better tracking of children's movements within the system and of all materials made available to them on loan. Establishment of the PIN number will be completed in 2016.

**OUTCOME 5:** Vulnerable children and child victims of exploitation, trafficking, violence and harmful practices are identified and protected by holistic, equitable policy interventions that are responsive to their individual needs, including in humanitarian situations.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

To contribute to the development of a national policy and action plan for the protection of children in the Comoros, the Government of the Comoros, with the support of UNICEF, has launched a mapping and evaluation of the country's child protection system. This exercise will cover all laws, policies, regulations and services in all social sectors, especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice. It will also help to identify the prevention and actions to be taken against existing risks. Maestral International was selected through a competitive bid to carry out this mapping/evaluation.

Awareness campaigns were carried out to strengthen the role of family welfare and community-based mechanisms in child protection. On the occasion of the celebration of the International Day of the African Child, celebrated in the Comoros on 16 June 2015, the focus was on advocacy to fight child labour and early marriage. Following the municipal elections of February 2015, the newly established municipalities were sensitized on the importance of setting up adequate structures in charge of child protection.

Following the visits to the Minister of Justice, courts and prisons, the Government and officials of the judiciary were sensitized by UNICEF on the importance of building the capacity of judges regarding children, making juvenile courts effective and improving the conditions of the detention of minors.

The building of Njazidja Island's child protection unit was rehabilitated and inaugurated on 18 November 2015. The repairs works of Mwali Island's child protection unit are under way. New premises were allocated to Ndzuwani Island's child protection unit within Hambo hospital. These premises were rehabilitated and equipped by UNICEF. A social worker was assigned to this service, which now has three staff, all government officials. These improvements in the quality of staffing and premises will enable the child protection units of all islands to better protect children from violence and abuse.

**OUTPUT 1:** Protection policy framework is improved and support to the coordination mechanism is strengthened.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

With UNICEF support, the Government of the Comoros launched an ambitious mapping and evaluation of the country's child protection system. This work aims to contribute to the development of a national policy and action plan for child protection in the Comoros. It will provide national stakeholders a descriptive profile of the protection systems in place and identify essential elements for the development of national child protection systems. This important undertaking will identify priority interventions for child protection prevailing in the country and evaluate the current protection system. Through a competitive bid, Maestral International was selected to provide technical assistance for six months to the Government.

To comply with the Comorian legislation certain provisions of the Convention on the Rights of

the Child, the Head of State promulgated the law on the fight against child labour and the law on the prevention and punishment of violence against women.

UNICEF supported the Government in updating its action plan on the fight against human trafficking and actively participated in the development by the Government of a strategy to modernize its justice system.

**OUTPUT 2:** The protection role of the family and the basic community-based approaches are strengthened.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

UNICEF supported the regional directorates of child protection on all islands in their community outreach activities regarding laws that protect children. Awareness-raising campaigns on the need to fight against early marriages were held on the occasion of the celebration of the International Day of the African Child. Following these activities, a national strategy to combat violence against women and minors and early marriage was developed by the National Directorate of Gender Promotion.

Committees of vulnerable children were reactivated to help them work with councils to facilitate the establishment of local structures responsible for child protection. Communication training was organized in Moheli for members of the committees of vulnerable children.

**OUTPUT 3:** Access to age and culturally relevant, quality holistic services is improved.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

Comoros child protection units were strengthened using funds provided by the organization Riyali and UNICEF. The building of Njazidja Island's child protection unit was rehabilitated and inaugurated on 18 November 2015. The repairs work of Mwali Island's child protection unit is under way. New premises were allocated to Ndzuwani Island's child protection unit within Hambo hospital. A social worker was assigned to this service, which now has three staff, all on government payroll. These improvements in the quality of staffing and premises will enable the child protection units of all islands to better protect children from violence and abuse.

In 2015, 460 cases of acts of abuse and mistreatment of children were recorded by the three child protection units nationwide. Ngazidja Island's unit registered 165 cases of acts of abuse and mistreatment of children. Among these, 96 were cases of sexual assault, 11 were cases of physical abuse, and 57 were cases of child support application, and 1 case was of an abandoned child. In Ndzuwani, the unit registered 244 cases of abused children who received medical and legal assistance, including 28 cases of physical assault, 26 cases of sexual assault and 190 cases of minors affected by family abandonment.

**OUTPUT 4:** Institutional capacities and participation of relevant stakeholders of child protection are increased.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

UNICEF supported the NCHRF in participating in the 28th annual meeting of the International Committee on the Coordination of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights held in March 2015 in Switzerland. Computer and office equipment were provided by UNICEF to the NCHRF to facilitate work on human rights.

NCHRF officials in charge of child protection were trained on C4D. Following this training, an action plan for communication actions to be implemented to fight early marriage was developed.

The capacities of Ngazidja's and Anjouan's child protection units were strengthened by the appointment of new staff, following advocacy done by the UNICEF Representative with the governors of these islands.

**OUTCOME 6:** Child victims of exclusion benefit from policies and programmes based on evidence.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

The national social protection policy is still yet to be validated by the Government of the Comoros. UNICEF carried out high-level advocacy, including with the President of the Republic, for the adoption of this policy by the Counsel of Ministers. This would facilitate the establishment of a national solidarity fund that could mobilize domestic resources for the most disadvantaged children.

Social protection interventions are still sporadic and uncoordinated, mainly due to the absence of a formal management framework. Some NGOs that carry out social protection activities do not systematically share their data with the Government's departments in charge of child protection either at the central or islands level. Consequently, the authorities recorded only 1,425 children under 18 years benefiting from social protection interventions including cash transfers.

**OUTPUT 1:** Populations are informed on the situation of children's rights, especially the most disadvantaged, and basic social services.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

Follow the success of the first year (2014) of the UNICEF-supported pilot of cash transfers, the Government of the Comoros, through the National Directorate of Solidarity, extended the pilot to three additional communities. UNICEF successfully advocated for the restructuring of the Regional Directorate in charge of population and social protection on Anjouan Island, and for the appointment of a Governorate Councilor in charge of social protection on Moheli Island.

The capacity of these directorates and departments in charge of social protection were strengthened in the area of monitoring the implementation of activities, and were supplied with computer and communication equipment. Staff were also trained on basic data collection and data entry. Six staff, including four from Anjouan Island, one from Mohel Island and one from Grande Comore Island, were trained on household survey methodology and quality control and computer processing of related data. The results of the household survey conducted in the communities covered by the cash transfers pilot were used to raise the awareness of the local population on unfulfilled child rights.

**OUTPUT 2:** A social policy programme is put in place.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

To strengthen the implementation and monitoring of the national social protection programme, UNICEF Comoros, with the support of the RO, supported the National Directorate of Solidarity bottleneck analysis and the development of an advocacy document for the scale-up of cash transfers. Also, a diagram of the flow of information between potential actors, including

communities, was developed. The National Directorate of Solidarity established a list of 30 volunteer villages to serve as nodes for programme information and thus facilitate community mobilization around the social protection interventions.

The Government continued the activities of the unconditional cash transfers pilot for disadvantaged populations, extending it to three new localities in 2015. A total of 475 households with 432 beneficiaries were covered. The payment was made in two tranches, amounting to 27.495 million Comorian francs, or US\$ 64.782 approximately.

**OUTPUT 3:** The public finance framework for social services is improved.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

UNICEF Comoros initiated dialogue with the Directorate regarding the budget at the central level to encourage sharing of financial information with all stakeholders supporting the social sectors. It is expected that this would improve transparency of the public finance processes, thus providing clarity on areas to invest to reach the most disadvantaged children.

It is worth mentioning that the Government of the Comoros, through Article 17 of the Loi des Finances 2016 just promulgated by the President of the Comoros, decided to allocate some importation tax returns to finance the health sector. This is the result of high-level advocacy undertaken by UNICEF and reinforced by the RO Director during her visit to the Comoros in November 2015. The Article mentioned that a part of the tobacco income tax will be used to finance the Universal Health Insurance Fund that will be managed by both the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Health.

UNICEF supported the Government of the Comoros to identify a consultant to conduct a budget analysis of the education sector. This analysis will be completed in 2016. The CO has also been advocating with the Government to participate in the global Budget Open Survey initiative by the international budget partnership.

**Document Centre**

**Evaluation and Research**

Title	Sequence number	Type of report
Rapport Final Malnutrition Comores	2015/004	Study
Rapport Ecole d'Excellence	2015/003	Review
Rapport GEV Comoros	2015/002	Study
Analyse de situation sur le DPE	2015/001	Study

**Other Publications**

Title
Initiative Hôtels Amis des Enfants
Habari za Unicef Comores