Comoros

Executive summary

Attesting to its commitment to leading the child rights agenda in Comoros, the Government, with UNICEF’s support, made several policy headways. These included the development of the National Youth Policy, the validation of the country multi-year strategic plan for immunization, the national Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, the multi-sectoral Food and Nutrition Policy and the National Gender Equality and Equity Policy. The Scaling-Up Nutrition (SUN) multi-stakeholder platform was also established and operationalized.

UNICEF Comoros supported the Ministry of Health to strengthen routine immunization. A geo-energy study was conducted to generate evidence for a solar-powered cold chain. By the end of the year, 100 per cent of the cold chain was operational. This progress facilitated the immunization of 21,000 children. Only 10 out of 17 health districts had reached 80 per cent coverage. An immunization equity survey showed that inequities mainly depend on socio-geographical factors; as a result 10 districts were identified for the GAVI proposal with UNICEF as the principal recipient. To reduce preventable newborn deaths, an assessment of all maternity services was carried out, 8 out of the 22 existing structures were equipped and 80 providers were trained on newborn care.

UNICEF’s work increased equity in access of women and children to intervention package related to the promotion of infant and young child feeding in the hardest-to-reach places by training 105 community health workers. Some 8,947 children under five years old were regularly screened; out of those 2,420 cases of stunting and 571 of severe acute malnutrition were treated (50 per cent cured, 49 per cent default, 0.6 per cent death and 0.5 per cent with no treatment response).

Despite efforts to strengthen sector coordination, limited progress has been made in the implementation of the national water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) strategy. UNICEF focused on improving access to sustainable sanitation services by introducing affordable and improved toilet technologies and training 152 artisans. UNICEF supported the Government in developing a water information system, which highlighted that the water service does not provide consistent water quality.

UNICEF worked to improve the quality of preschool education and improve the pre-primary enrolment ratio, which dropped to 21 per cent from the 24.6 per cent baseline (2014). This could be linked to the lack of resources in the subsector to scale up preschool provision in response to increasing demand. UNICEF rehabilitated 103 classrooms in 32 schools. Advocacy was made for placing early childhood development at the forefront of the Government’s agenda through work done to finalize the parenting education guide. A total of 90 volunteer teachers (53 women and 37 men) were trained on multi-grade classroom management. The initiative benefited a total of 4,624 out-of-school children, of which 1,931 were girls and 2,693 boys. Of these 3,124 were integrated into the formal mainstream education system following an accelerated learning programme. Out-of-school children data were analysed, including for children with disabilities, to
design an accelerated-learning programme and inform an inclusive education strategy.

UNICEF Comoros worked with the Ministry of Finance to develop capacity to better assess and track expenditures against key priority sectors. Budget briefs were realized to inform decision makers on the political and financial commitments in health and education (4.7 per cent and 5.4 per cent, respectively). The Open Budget Survey showed low transparency of budgetary processes. A result dissemination plan was developed to engage national authorities on the improvement of public financing for children in 2018. UNICEF also conducted a situation analysis of children and women to inform and support policy dialogue. UNICEF invested to strengthen the cash transfer programme; 565 families are enrolled in seven districts (3,542 inhabitants of which 1,802 children). An assessment of the project was conducted to determine its contribution to the promotion of child rights in poor households.

Actions were taken to combat violence against children and early marriage. Training sessions were organized for child protection actors. Thirteen sensitization meetings were organized. Sixty religious leaders were sensitized on the family code and child marriage. Protection services recorded 560 cases of children victims of violence, 95 per cent being against women and girls (212 cases benefited from medical psycho-social and legal care, and 67 young mothers benefited from a school allowance).

UNICEF signed a partnership with Telma Foundation (mobile provider) and the national Human Rights Commission to combat violence against women and children. A second national helpline was created, expanding access to nearly 150,000 subscribers.

The Global Partnership for Education selected UNICEF as the grant agent to manage US$2.3 million mobilized for the 2017–2020 Education Sector Transitional Plan. A partnership was established with the national radio and television (Office de Radio et Television des Comores (Comoros’ Office of Radio and Television, or ORTC) to make child rights known and to contribute to behavioural changes in communities.

Humanitarian assistance

There was no major humanitarian crisis in Comoros in 2017. The country, a small island state, is vulnerable to natural hazards such as floods, experienced intense rainfall during the months of April, May and June. In 2017, these resulted in localized floods in the Hambou region, southwest of Ngazidja Island. Three sites were affected by floods: Bangoi (3,459 inhabitants), Mdjoiezi (3,453 inhabitants) and Mitsoudje (4,457 inhabitants). A total of 91 households were severely affected and required assistance. Under the coordination of the Government’s Civil Security Directorate, UNICEF took part in a multi-sectoral rapid assessment.

With UNICEF Comoros support, community health workers carried out door-to-door sensitization and group discussions, and distributed leaflets in the three villages (11,369 inhabitants) to spread key hygiene messages (i.e., boiling water, washing hands and sleeping under mosquito nets). In the affected areas, household water is usually supplied from rainwater harvesting through private or shared tanks. In support of the government-led response, UNICEF – in partnership with the national Red Crescent – organized the emptying and cleaning up of contaminated water tanks and their refilling with potable water in the affected villages within the 91 affected households.

Rivers are seasonal in Ngazidja, and riverbeds frequently become waste dumps during the dry season. To remedy this situation, which contributes to flooding, the Government invested in the
cleaning up and digging of river beds to prevent further flooding.

UNICEF Comoros WASH and communication for development actions contributed to controlling the spread of diarrhoeal diseases.

The country developed a national contingency plan articulated around different sectoral contingency plans. UNICEF Comoros benefited from support from the UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, humanitarian action, resilience and peace-building team for the contingency planning process. It helped the office with the planning process links related to the emergency preparedness platform and preparedness.

Due to lack of resources, no contingency stock was available at the country level during the year. In December 2017, UNICEF Comoros received US$28,841 in funding from the UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office to build a national contingency stock in 2018, in line with the national contingency plan. The stock aims to cover the immediate needs of the affected population in the context of a rapid response to an emergency event, while mobilizing extra funding for a more comprehensive response.

**Equity in practice**

In 2017, UNICEF Comoros continued to fund the cash transfer social safety net programme to the benefit of vulnerable households. This is a pilot cash transfer project implemented by the Office of the General Commissioner for solidarity, social cohesion and gender promotion. UNICEF Comoros had supported the development and design of the programme, which was launched in 2014. As of the end of 2017, 565 families were enrolled in seven districts (3,542 inhabitants, out of which 1,802 are children). The project provided unconditional cash transfers to 559 vulnerable households in seven communities – two in Ngazidja, thee in Ndouani and two in Mwali.

The main objective of the unconditional cash transfer pilot was to contribute to improving the access of vulnerable children to adequate hygiene, health, nutrition, education and protection services.

The expected results of the intervention were as follows:
- The vulnerability of households is reduced;
- Children's access to schooling is increased;
- Children's access to health care and immunization services is increased;
- Children benefit from their right to a birth certificate; and
- Households are sensitized on improving the health and education of children.

The programme focused on vulnerable and poor families/households in rural communities, which were selected based on specific population vulnerability criteria. These included: (1) the general conditions of household dwellings; (2) the condition of public facilities (school, mosque, public square, etc.); and (3) the overall level of education of the population.

A small-scale household survey was conducted in these communities. Data collection focused on all households in the locality without exception. Data on the sociodemographic characteristics of the members of the household (sex, age, relationship with the head of the household, level of education, marital status, etc.), the household resources and access to basic social services, especially for children (school attendance, vaccination, hygiene facilities, etc.), were collected. In total, a sample of 194 households agreed to respond to the survey and to
participate in the project that would be proposed as an outcome of the survey. The actual outcome of the survey – i.e., the cash transfer intervention – was not communicated to the inhabitants of these villages at the beginning of the data collection process.

The analysis of the data collected resulted in the selection of the beneficiary households including families living in straw/land houses or corrugated steel houses; households with no more than two cultivated plots or with a maximum of three cattle; and households with at least one primary school-age child (6–11 years old). The validation of the beneficiaries’ lists was carried out in collaboration with the island directorates in charge of social protection and validated by the village advisory committees set up to monitor the project.

Cash transfer payments were carried out in public sessions and were always accompanied by awareness-raising discussions on child protection, school attendance, access to health services and immunization, birth registration and the fight against intergenerational poverty.

The cash transfers were unconditional; however, an evaluation of the process conducted in 2017 revealed that the beneficiary households followed the recommendations to devote the money received preferably on expenses to the benefit of the children:

- 66 per cent of households interviewed used some of the money received for education-related expenses, including the purchase of supplies and/or the payment of school fees; and
- 46 per cent of the households surveyed used a portion of the money received for health expenses. Among these, 73 percent had purchased prescribed drugs to treat sick children under the age of 5 in the previous three months.

Lessons learned from the 2017 evaluation on the impact of the intervention to reduce vulnerability suggest that while keeping spending on children a priority, it may be worthwhile to develop in parallel support measures for beneficiary families for income-generating activities. This could also have an impact on the high rate of stunting (30 per cent of children under 5 years old) in the Comoros.

This led UNICEF Comoros to reflect on how to strengthen the unconditional cash transfer approach, with the support of the beneficiaries, encouraging them to define the best modalities to be put in place in order to ensure strong appropriation while accompanying them as they organize themselves to maximize the impact of their individual investments. Another lesson learned was on the importance of communication to increase awareness of the benefits of judicious investments of the funds for the well-being of children.

**Emerging areas of Importance**

**Climate change and children.** UNICEF Comoros conducted a geo-energy study to generate evidence towards the standardization of a sustainable solar-powered coldchain for immunization. This alternative source of energy offers better performance in a context where electrical power supply is inconsistent. It contributes to decreasing carbon dioxide emissions. It also extends and ensures the shelf life of vaccines by preventing reliance on fuel power generation, for which supply may be unavailable or too costly to procure, with a more reliable supply of energy. All power-driven refrigerators relying on generators were replaced by 21 solar devices located in 1 national, 3 regional and 17 district stocking sites. In 2017, the technology facilitated the immunization of 21,000 children nationally.

To further reduce its environmental footprint, UNICEF Comoros continued its transition towards
exclusive solar power back-up. All servers in the office were operated on solar power in 2017, and solar air conditioning devices were also procured. Steps were taken to increase the number of solar panels to operate all lighting and office electrical and electronic devices through solar energy in 2018. The air conditioning system replacement reduced the office carbon dioxide emission by 76 per cent as well as overall energy-related costs, thus generating extra resources to be invested in programme implementation for the direct benefit of children.

Early childhood development. UNICEF Comoros provided financial and technical support to the Ministry of Education towards the finalization of the parenting education guide with the integration of intersectoral issues such as newborn health, immunization and nutrition; basic physical, nutritional and environmental hygiene practices; and the different stages of children’s linguistic, psychosocial and cognitive development. The use of the parenting education guide will help to conduct communication for development activities in the community for better care of children and increase some indicators, such as ‘more children going to school’, ‘increased breastfeeding rate’ and ‘improved hygiene and infant feeding practices’.

The second decade of life. UNICEF Comoros contributed to the development of the 2017–2021 National Youth Policy as a collectively set United Nations Country Team priority for 2017. Collaborative United Nations Country Teammember agencies were the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) under the aegis of the National Youth Directorate. The policy addresses the legal and political environment; youth and social cohesion, training and leadership; infrastructure and youth associations; and the educational, economic, and cultural integration of youth. The process that led to the policy contributed to highlighting issues affecting youth in Comoros in terms of their living conditions (disparities, discrimination, inequalities in power relations and decision-making, in employment, leisure, etc.) and the capacity of the Government of Comoros and society at large to address youth needs and interests in the various development sectors. The major challenges to youth participation in the development of the country were identified through the analysis of the inequalities affecting young people. Following the technical validation of the policy, a submission is being prepared to be presented to the Government for political validation and the definition of an implementation action plan.

Support movements to accelerate results for children. UNICEF Comoros, in collaboration with local civil society organizations, mobilized the Government, international partners, the private sector and individuals from across Ngazidja Island during the week leading to the 20 November celebrations. On 20 November, ‘Children took over in Comoros’ and made their voices heard on how to best promote and protect children’s rights. Children from 15 schools voiced their concerns and hopes and made an appeal for institutional and individual duty bearers to honour their responsibilities towards children. More than 5,000 individuals including ministers, ambassadors and community leaders attended the official ceremony held under the patronage of the President of Comoros and represented by the First Lady. The Government’s open commitment to proactively promote child rights and to ensure the development of children’s potential was obtained in the form of a message addressed by the President to all Comorian children. UNICEF Comoros will followup to facilitate the implementation of the actions proposed by the President. This topic will be addressed during the semestral meetings between the President and UNICEF Representative.

To celebrate United Nations week in October 2017, UNICEF Comoros supported the coordination of a sensitization campaign on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Minister of Foreign Affairs was directly involved in the campaign. The SDGs were further
integrated into the revised National Development Strategy (Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée et de Développement Durable, or Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (SCA2D) 2015–2019), which was extended by the Government to 2021 (SCA2D 2015–2021). The amended version of the strategy was validated in December 2017.

Summary notes and acronyms

CHWs  community health workers  
CMT  country management team  
FAO  Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
NGO  non-governmental organization  
SCA2D  Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée et de Développement Durable (Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy)  
SDG  Sustainable Development Goal.  
SIEC  Système d’Information de l’Eau aux Comores (water information system in Comoros)  
SUN  Scaling-Up Nutrition  
UNDP  United Nations Development Programme  
UNFPA  United Nations Population Fund  
WASH  water, sanitation and hygiene  
WHO  World Health Organization

Capacity development

The capacities of 105 community health workers (CHWs) were strengthened to deliver a package of interventions related to the promotion of infant and young child feeding. Focus was placed on monitoring the growth of children aged 0–23 months and 24–59 months. In this regard, a community-level data collection and analysis system was set up to track the anthropometric measurements and the identification of cases of severe malnutrition and their referrals monthly. Data showed that 8,947 children under 5 years old were regularly measured, leading to the diagnosis of 2,420 stunting cases and 571 of severe acute malnutrition that were treated in the 17 nutrition centres (50 per cent cured, 49 per cent default, 0.6 per cent death and 0.5 per cent with no treatment response).

Because of the poor quality of maternal and newborn care and in line with the implementation of the 2017–2021 Every Newborn Action Plan, 80 out of the existing 150 care providers were trained on newborn care, including neonatal emergencies. As a result of the training, the quality of care is expected to improve and it is hoped that it will be translated into a reduction in neonatal deaths.

In terms of WASH, capacity development activities were undertaken to grant equitable access to adequate sanitation and hygiene services for the whole population. Thus, the technical capacities of 152 Comorian artisans was developed on improved toilet construction. The training enabled the beneficiaries to strengthen their capacities to implement easy, cost-effective, innovative and environmentally friendly toilet construction techniques.
In the education sector, 90 volunteer teachers (53 women and 37 men) were trained on multi-grade classroom management. The initiative benefited a total of 4,624 out-of-school children, of which 1,931 were girls and 2,693 boys. Of these 3,124 transitioned to mainstream (1,354 girls and 1,770 boys) transitioned to mainstream education following an accelerated learning programme taught by the trained teachers.

**Evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy**

A household toilet prototype was designed and policy dialogue and advocacy at national, island and community levels were strengthened. These actions were informed by the results of 2016 WASH survey results.

Advocacy and policy dialogue were conducted in collaboration with WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to push forth the SUN agenda in the country, including the setting up of a national steering committee for nutrition.

An equity assessment was conducted to identify disadvantaged areas and develop district-level micro-plans for immunization. A desk review identified risk areas and facilitated the targeting of key actions aimed at improving community health interventions and reducing maternal and neonatal mortality.

Out-of-school children data were collected and analysed, including on children with disabilities, to design an accelerated learning programme and inform an inclusive education strategy. These data helped to mobilize US$2.3 million in funding from the Global Partnership for Education to improve the governance and quality of the system and use it as an advocacy tool to mobilize more resources for the education sector. A medium-term expenditure framework was set up to inform decisionmakers and partners in education on the political and financial commitments in the sector.

An assessment of the cash transfer pilot project was conducted to determine the contribution of this initiative to the promotion of child rights in poor households. The results of the Open Budget Survey showed the low transparency of budgetary processes. This finding led UNICEF Comoros to develop a result dissemination plan to engage national authorities on the improvement of public financing for children in 2018. Three budget briefs revealed that budget allocation for the education and health sectors are, respectively, 4.7 per cent and 5.4 per cent. UNICEF Comoros will pursue advocating with the Ministry of Finance to improve the public finance for children framework. UNICEF Comoros also conducted a situation Analysis of children and women to inform and support policy dialogue.

**Partnerships**

A SUN multi-stakeholder platform chaired by the Ministry of Health was operationalized to scale up nutrition efforts. It includes representatives from the Ministries of Production, Education, Economy and Trade. The platform increased capacity to engage with authorities. As a first result, stakeholders conceptualized the 2017–2021 multi-sectoral food and nutrition policy integrating gender equality.

UNICEF partnered with Telma Foundation (mobile phone company) and the national Human Rights Commission to combat violence against women and children to create a second national helpline which expanded access to nearly 150,000 subscribers in addition to the 468,295 already using the existing, UNICEF-supported Comores Telecom helpline. The new helpline
was functional starting from 8 December 2017. It is hoped that it will help to identify more cases of violence against children and, consequently, that more appropriated support is given.

A partnership was established with the national radio and television (ORTC) to make child rights known and to contribute to behavioural changes in communities covered by ORTC media. Ten spots were broadcast on exclusive breastfeeding, birth registration, child abuse, immunization, schooling of children – including with disabilities – as well as school and community WASH.

The collaboration with the non-governmental organization (NGO) Maeeccha increased the effectiveness of UNICEF-supported improved sanitation interventions. A total of 152 artisans were trained, and 56,563 people (41.6 per cent under 15 years old) were sensitized on the use of the improved sanitation facilities. Fifty families constructed improved sanitation facilities in their dwellings. Maeeccha worked with four main vulnerability criteria (household status, habitat security, number of children and household-owned property) to identify 491 most vulnerable households that will benefit from subsidized improved sanitation equipment.

The Global Partnership for Education, through the local education partners, selected UNICEF as the Comoros Global Partnership for Education grant agent to manage US$2.3 million mobilized for the 2017–2020 Education Sector Transitional Plan. This confirmed UNICEF as the lead partner in the sector.

**External communication and public advocacy**

UNICEF’s external communication strategy in 2017 focused on increasing visibility of children’s issues. Partnerships with national and local media were maintained to disseminate information on UNICEF-supported interventions and to sensitize parents, decision makers and religious and community leaders on children’s rights.

World Children’s Day was celebrated under the high patronage of the President of the Republic.

Thirty-six child delegates representing schools in Moroni visited the National Assembly, the Supreme Court, the United Nations agencies and the presidential palace, where they were hosted by the President of Comoros and were given guided tours of the premises of institutions receiving them. On this occasion, the President addressed a message to all Comorian children to confirm the Government’s commitment and engagement to promote their rights and the development of their potentials. The celebration of World Children’s Day was marked by a massive communication campaign promoted by UNICEF Comoros and involving decision makers, children and parents. Numerous events, including a concert for social mobilization, press conference and debate, and the production and dissemination of press releases, leaflets and interviews were organized to inform different audiences about the status of the rights of children in the country. This was also an opportunity for the children involved to publicly share their thoughts and hopes for their future. Most of these messages were made available on UNICEF Comoros’ Facebook page launched in April 2017.

UNICEF Comoros also participated in various awareness-raising and promotion activities on the SDGs conducted during the celebration of United Nations Day with other United Nations resident agencies. A SDG sensitization campaign was conducted, led by the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the Comoros Minister of Foreign Affairs under the form of a caravan. The event reached various audiences, including university students, parliamentarians and selected communities.

**South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation**
In 2017 UNICEF Comoros supported the realization of an exchange mission on early childhood development to Morocco. The purpose of the mission was to appreciate how a more developed country succeeds in reconciling modern preschool learning with cultural and traditional teachings based on the Koran for children aged 3–5 years. This same preschool model is being implemented in Comoros through Renovated Koranic Education classes.

The delegation included 10 people – two Ministry of Education representatives, three government staffs from the decentralized island level, the President’s advisor in charge of Islamic affairs, two preschool teachers, the director of Islamic affairs and one UNICEF Comoros education staff member. The mission allowed the Comorian delegation to exchange with the various political, technical and operational actors of the Moroccan education system through interviews and visits to their preschool sites.

Learnings from the mission include the need to develop new and better strategies for early childhood education in Comoros, as well as to set up a coordination structure for early childhood education for which a reflection had already started. The importance of increased parental involvement as well as training and advocacy with Imams was also highlighted. Comoros chose to join the Rabat Declaration on Early Childhood Development, aimed at setting in motion a process of exchange and collaboration between countries on investments in early childhood development. The two countries are also considering the establishment of a system of mutual collaboration on inclusive education and the development of a curriculum for the training of paramedical teams. However, following the mission, no concrete action was taken by the Ministry of Education to advance the early childhood development agenda. UNICEF advocacy will continue throughout 2018 to implement interventions based on the learnings of the South-South cooperation.

**Identification and promotion of innovation**

UNICEF worked with the National Water and Sanitation Directorate (Direction Générale de l’Energie, des Mines et de l’Eau (Directorate-General for Energy, Mines and Water, or DGEME) to establish a water service inventory and monitoring system, called SIEC (Système d’Information de l’Eau aux Comores). The system relies on mobile phone technology to collect data and store them online. This was a major achievement, as in the water sector, routine data collection and monitoring had traditionally been of poor quality. Previously, information and data had been available only through printed reports. No existing database had been made accessible to third parties. The use of a new technology motivated partners that are more regular in data sharing. The availability of this information will help the Government to develop strategies for sustainable quality water management. One major challenge remained the sustainability of the information system in an environment where DGEME has a very limited budget for operational costs. To mitigate the risks and reduce operational costs to a minimum, UNICEF supported the use of KoboToolbox, an open-source, free tool.

Based on the experience gained through implementing the water information system (SIEC), in November 2017 UNICEF Comoros launched a nationwide WASH survey to assess services in primary and secondary public schools. The analysis of the data was not yet available in December 2017. However, the use of mobile technology allowed 443 schools to be surveyed in two weeks, following which data were immediately available online for review.

Through a sanitation marketing pilot led by UNICEF Comoros, the UNICEF WASH team developed affordable toilets through SanPlat. The concept, which was new to Comoros, captured the immediate interest of stakeholders. However, one disadvantage was the need to
add a ventilation pipe to the existing prototype. To control additional costs, the Country Office piloted the insertion of a small pipe into the lead of the SanPlat, which grants constant ventilation while being reasonably priced.

### Support to integration and cross-sectoral linkages

UNICEF Comoros continued to implement integration of delivery of basic social services with the prevention of malnutrition. The project aimed to strengthen social safety network dynamics to complement a World Bank-funded, conditional ‘money-for-work’ cash transfer programme. The most vulnerable households among the 3,542 benefiting from the cash transfer were sensitized on the long-lasting benefits of using the funds to access health and malnutrition prevention services. Complementary services provided included information for awareness raising, infant anthropomorphic checks and referral to appropriate services for the treatment of the consequences of chronic and severe malnutrition and ponderal loss. The experience highlighted the importance of involving communities in the definition of their needs and of the rights of their newborns. It is hoped that demand for health and malnutrition prevention services will increase because of a better understanding of prevention through regular monitoring, early detection of malnutrition and the use of the cash transfer for immediate remedial action.

In 2018, collaboration with UNFPA and FAO will allow capitalization of intersectoral approaches against malnutrition. To maximize impact, parenting education tools developed with the support of the education programme will be integrated. The tools include issues around pregnancy and the needs of a pregnant woman, basic behaviours necessary to welcome a newborn in a protective environment, nutrition, including the importance of basic breastfeeding practices, health and hygiene practices for a safe and hygienic environment, and tips on the use of natural Phytotherapeutics traditionally used in the local context and whose benefits are scientifically proven.

The 2017 gender review highlighted the importance of appropriate water and sanitation facilities in schools to prevent girls’ drop-out. Thus, UNICEF supported a WASH in Schools survey. For 2018, one of the priorities is to mobilize funding to improve WASH in Schools, based on the survey findings.

### Service delivery

Despite weakness in the information system, UNICEF analysed existing data and conducted surveys for evidence-based programming. An equity assessment in immunization realized in 2017 helped identify regions and children left behind. In 2018, the reach every child approach will be implemented to reach the most vulnerable children. A geo-energetic study was conducted to establish a sustainable solar cold chain for immunization. A total of 27 solar refrigerators were repaired, as well as the central cold room. Nine new refrigerators were installed to ensure a functional cold chain for health facilities offering vaccination.

An assessment of all maternity services was carried out and 8 out of the 22 identified structures were equipped. UNICEF conducted the rehabilitation of Idjikoundzi health facilities and the construction/rehabilitation of 103 classrooms in 32 schools, including the introduction of new and more affordable sanitation equipment options.

To generate demand for health/immunization services, UNICEF Comoros developed operational social mobilization plans based on epidemiological and socio-cultural analysis. The office also supported community empowerment by promoting improved toilets through local
communication and training of local masons.

Community nutrition services were supported by providing equipment for cooking demonstrations, infant and young child feeding communication tools, and growth promotion and monitoring materials. A total of 69 community sites and 17 nutrition centres were equipped.

UNICEF consistently worked in support of national authorities and in close collaboration with national and international stakeholders for results-based management and monitoring/evaluation, to draw lessons and bridge gaps, as well as to strengthen national capacities.

All the strategies implemented were documented and shared for knowledge transfer and eventually for modelling and scaling up.

**Human rights-based approach to cooperation**

UNICEF Comoros carried out several activities to promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly during the celebrations on 20 November 2017 for World Children’s Day. Hundreds of children were given the opportunity to make their voices heard to the national community and claim the fulfilment of their rights to quality education for all, affordable health services and a robust child protection framework against all forms of violence.

On the same day, the President of Comoros received a group of children at Beit-Salam presidential palace. In a letter, which he read to the children and which was later disseminated through the media, he pledged to do ‘all that is in his power, to create the right social and economic conditions for the rights of all Comorian children to be achieved’. He also committed to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Thirty staff members from the military corps were trained on the content of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its protective relevance to military duties and the status of its implementation in Comoros. The three-day training workshop was co-organized by the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms and UNICEF, which provided technical and financial support with the aim of contributing to an environment conducive to the realization of human rights in the best interest of children.

The 2008 National Gender Equality and Equity Policy was updated in November 2017 with the support of UNICEF and UNFPA. The policy aims to reduce gender inequalities and to sustain the strengthening of gender mainstreaming in Comoros’ institutions. It also focuses on gender and violence.

The national youth policy was developed by the Government with the support of United Nations agencies, and with the financial lead of UNICEF. The policy contributed to the acknowledgement of Comoros youth as key roleplayers and beneficiaries of national development. The policy marked the Government’s commitment to placing youth at the heart of public policies and to extending their effective participation in the social, economic, cultural and political development of the country.

**Gender equality**

UNICEF Comoros played a key role in the United Nations Gender Thematic Group. This Group supported the Government to update the national policy for equity and gender equality, which dated back to 2008. UNICEF successfully advocated for the integration of a pillar on gender-
based violence against women and girls. UNICEF also participated in the development of an intersectoral joint project on gender in the context of United Nations Development Assistance Framework implementation. The project will be presented to the UN Women Regional Director during a visit in early 2018 on resource mobilization.

UNICEF Comoros joined a new multi-stakeholder group established to promote women’s participation and representation in politics and in decision making during the reporting period and to monitor activities led by the ‘Commissariat au genre’.

The Country Office conducted a programmatic gender review as part of the 2017 Strategic Moments of Reflection and as part of the situation analysis of children and women. It confirmed the appropriateness of the gender priorities identified by the Country Office, including gender mainstreaming and the abolition of child marriage.

Staff capacity in gender mainstreaming was enhanced through training led by the UNICEF Gender Regional Advisor for Eastern and Southern Africa. In line with the gender review recommendations, UNICEF Comoros aims to integrate the revision of the gender plan into 2018 activities.

A workshop on the family code was held for a group of 60 legal professionals and faith leaders (all men) responsible for preaching in the friday mosques and for celebrating wedding ceremonies. This was to raise faith leaders’ awareness on the minimum age for marriage in the family code, which is 18. The religious representatives involved committed not to preach in favour of child marriage and to refrain from celebrating marriages involving children. UNICEF will continue to work with the juvenile and family court judges to mobilize their intervention where necessary.

The office partnered with a civil society organization proactively supporting children exposed to violence and sexual abuse to hold a peaceful demonstration against all forms of gender-based violence and violence against children. Participants included government and community representatives, schools and other institutional entities, as well as members of the public.

**Environmental sustainability**

As a small island developing state, Comoros is particularly vulnerable to changes in its environment. The country, among the least developed countries, is densely populated, with an estimated 443 inhabitants per squared kilometre, which places it as the most densely, least developed, small island developing State. Competing demands from population growth and economic development are threatening the environment and further exacerbating the country’s – and future generations’ – vulnerability due to environmental degradation.

Fully aware of the importance of environmental sustainability in islands like Comoros, UNICEF Comoros strived to minimize its programme and operational footprint in 2017.

On the programme side, UNICEF pursued efforts for the transition towards a solar-based cold chain for immunization. UNICEF continued to ensure that the use of beach and river sand is banned in all UNICEF-supported construction works, as these are protected natural resources and are particularly essential to preventing erosion. In addition, the sanitation marketing project piloted the use of natural pozzolan as a substitute for cement and sand. Natural pozzolan is locally available at a lower cost and it has a lower environmental footprint than imported Portland cement and crushed sand.
At the national level, UNICEF actively engaged with the Government in looking for long-term solutions for solid waste management, particularly medical waste. This is a complex issue, which does not attract sufficient visibility, while representing a real threat to the environment and the population.

On the operational side, UNICEF Comoros continued its transition to becoming a ‘green office’. Following the energy audit conducted in 2016, the Country Office invested in solar air conditioners. Indeed, air conditioning represented 76 per cent of the office energy consumption, which would normally be generated from burning fossil fuel. This investment, partially funded by the headquarters Greening and Accessibility Fund, significantly reduced the Country Office’s environmental footprint, while reducing operational costs. Finally, the office started the installation of solar panels and batteries for the entire office to run on renewable energy by 2018. To reduce its carbon footprint, the office ordered a new generator through the Regional Contingency Fund to replace the 21-year-old one.

Effective leadership

In 2017, the country management team (CMT) boldly took on its monitoring and decision-making role with regard to programme implementation and operations management to improve office performance and to foster a culture of results. Hence, the InSight dashboard indicators as well as self-defined indicators were monitored as standing items of the country management team meeting agenda, with action points assigned to staff and section chiefs to improve management performance. The sustainability of the latest office audit report recommendations was systematically monitored until it was agreed by all that the risk mitigation measures put in place were fully and routinely applied by programme and operations. Equally, the Regional Management Team action points as well as progress on the compact and integrated monitoring and evaluation plan were monitored systematically by the country management team.

Another area of work of the country management team in 2017 was emergency preparedness, both within UNICEF and the United Nations Country Team. Hence, with support from the UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, the Country Office undertook an emergency preparedness and response training, which led to the update of the office preparedness and response and to constitute a small contingency stock at year’s end in preparation for the cyclone season the country is exposed to. The UNICEF team also led the inter-agency emergency task force and actively participated in the flood emergency simulation exercise with the Government and other United Nations entities.

Action was also sustained in the greening the office initiative, with substantial efficiency gains.

The implementation of the actions related to preparedness, including the upgrade of staff security and safety measures, and to greening the office led UNICEF Comoros to become an inspiring agency for the whole United Nations system in Comoros. The Country Office was quoted by United Nations Division of Safety and Security as the leading agency in Comoros in terms of security.

Financial resources management

Throughout 2017, the Country Office kept its commitment to strengthen management indicators for monitoring actions. As in previous years, during each country management team meeting, the management indicators were presented, and actions were agreed to improve follow-up when necessary.
Outstanding direct cash transfers were given due attention. Therefore, those outstanding more than nine months were down to 0 per cent, direct cash transfers between six and nine months were 0.9 per cent and those between three and six months were down to 20.4 per cent. The Country Office only had one direct cash transfer between six and nine months at the end of the year, which could not be closed. This pertained to a transfer to the National Human Rights Commission, whose management committee had been dismantled, and therefore liquidation had to wait for the new signatories to be nominated, which was underway at year’s end. During the country management team meeting held on 7 December 2017, the Country Office agreed on the necessary measures to find a lasting solution to this issue and to ensure that all direct cash transfers are kept within the agreed office standard (less than three months).

The Country Office also improved the performance on other key indicators, namely:

- No duty travel authorization more than 15 days after completion of travel was open as of 31 December 2017;
- All bank reconciliations were submitted to headquarters and to the Global Shared Services Centre before the deadlines;
- No reconciling items more than a month were outstanding in December 2017; and
- The Country Office table of authorities was updated.

Available funds were used optimally to advance the cause of children in Comoros. At the end of the year, the funds utilization rates were 100 per cent for regular resources and the institutional budget, and 95 per cent for other resources regular.

### Fundraising and donor relations

UNICEF Comoros was successful in mobilizing large amounts of funds for education and child survival and development.

The Country Office raised US$2 million from Dubai Cares to improve both preschool and primary education provision and primary retention rates through a programme lasting from 2018 to 2021. An additional US$2,484,000 were mobilized from the Global Partnership for Education to support the Education Sector Transitional Plan between 2018 and 2020. The Plan aims to improve governance, primary school quality provision, and learning and retention through the development of capacity of school management committees, the procurement of French and math textbooks for all Grade 3 to Grade 6 pupils, as well as the production of school statistics for one year.

UNICEF Comoros obtained the endorsement of the country to manage the two first years of the GAVI Health System Strengthening 2 project, receiving US$1,766,980 to strengthen the health system and increase vaccination coverage to 90 per cent. In addition, US$386,640 was agreed with GAVI for targeted country assistance in 2018.

Through the office advocacy efforts, the Japan International Cooperation Agency pledged US$750,000 for nutrition for the period between mid-2018 to mid-2020, in line with the vision to improve maternal and child nutrition.
Advocacy also continued with the private sector and the World Bank to mobilize additional resources for nutrition and universal health coverage. The joint nutrition project with WHO and UNFPA was submitted to the Resident Coordinator’s office and the United Nations resource mobilization task force for follow-up.

Despite efforts to write to several UNICEF National Committees, UNICEF Comoros was not able to secure any field visits.

UNICEF Comoros was close to reaching the Other Resources Regular ceiling, with only 18 per cent budget unfunded for the current programme cycle. The office obtained approval for a ceiling increase in Other Resources Regular. Although the office could mobilize more than planned, some sectors remain underfunded, such as protection, social protection, social inclusion and WASH.

**Evaluation and research**

UNICEF Comoros aims to produce at least one evaluation every two years. In 2017, UNICEF carried out a formative evaluation of the child protection system. A consultancy firm – Maestral International – was recruited for the evaluation to ensure the scientific rigour, objectivity and impartiality of the analysis. A system mapping was carried out as part of the same exercise. This allowed the development of the first child protection policy and a three-year action plan (2017 to 2019) for Comoros.

The evaluation generated five important recommendations for which a management response was filed on the evaluation management response site, and for which 75 per cent of the response activities were ongoing by the end of 2017. The integrated monitoring and evaluation plan was developed at the beginning of the year, as an annex of the office annual management plan approved by the country management team. Plan monitoring remained a standing item of the team meetings to inform the country management team on progress towards full implementation of the activities.

In 2017, 90.2 per cent of the Plan was completed, including key achievements such as the Strategic Moment of Reflection of the Country Programme, the Situation Analysis of Children and Women and the Country Programme Gender Review. Considering the size of the Comoros Country Office and the limited number of staff responsible for planning, monitoring and evaluation (i.e., one staff member), in 2017 the discussion continued around setting up a research committee to strengthen the evaluation function. The office aimed to formalize and strengthen the committee in 2018 to make it operational. An evaluation of the Renovated Koranic Education preschool approach is planned for 2018.

**Efficiency gains and cost savings**

As part of Operating as One, the office maintained its contributions and overall commitment to the Common Premises and Common Services with other United Nations agencies. In 2017, UNICEF total contribution to common services amounted to US$89,816.15. This represents 24.6 per cent of all annual contributions to Comoros common services, which made UNICEF the second-largest contributor.

Following the improvement in power supply in the country in 2017, US$9,500 in financial gains were generated by the office in fuel consumption and maintenance costs for generators.
The Country Office’s commitment to reducing its environmental footprint through greenhouse gas emission reductions led to the procurement of solar air conditioners and solar panels for the two UNICEF Country Office buildings. A US$49,925 contribution was received from the Greening and Accessibility Fund towards this process, as well as guidance from the UNICEF Regional Office and technical support from the Division of Financial and Administrative Management greening specialist. The Country Office established a green committee to promote greening within the office, to identify opportunities and sustain achievements.

As part of the United Nations Country Team, UNICEF continued its efforts for the implementation of the business operations strategy by supporting the trainings of trainers and the establishment of joint working groups in supply, finance, information and communication technology (ICT) and human resources. In 2017, the office also made some savings by sharing costs with other agencies, such as UNFPA, through two United Nations-supported activities, including a US$17,664.84 contribution to the national youth policy, representing half of the total United Nations contributions to the policy.

Direct cash transfers to implementing partners were also made for a total of US$23,350 to support the co-funding of the General Housing and Population Census. Finally, the Country Office set up a staff attendance monitoring system that aimed to follow up on staff presence on tasks during working hours.

### Supply management

The tables show that actual total value for essential goods procured for children in 2017 amounted to US$743,476.51. The total supply spending by UNICEF Comoros, including construction and services, reached US$993,216.09.

A total of 67 institutional contracts were issued for US$793,759.49. Out of this amount, 22 per cent was for five construction contracts. A total of 21 contracts were signed with international suppliers for cabling, audit, translations, solar materials and WASH constructions materials, which led to time savings and a higher quality of supplies.

The office also signed six new local long-term agreements, three for printing services and three for stationery supplies.

As no warehouse is available to UNICEF Comoros, programme supplies were delivered directly to implementing partners. However, this process was characterized by several key logistical challenges, such as the low capacity of the local clearing agent and expensive airfares and sea freight between the islands, as well as poor warehouse infrastructure at the beneficiary level. To tackle this challenge, the office launched a bid for long-term agreements for goods clearing agents that would ensure quality at all stages of the supply chain. End-user monitoring was not carried out; however, planning was made to conduct one in 2018, particularly for education supplies.

Throughout 2017, the Country Office kept its commitment to building contract-related partner capacity through coaching and technical support when needed. The office also managed the whole contracting process related to the rehabilitation of the Ministry of Education premises and the Idjinkoudzi health facility.
Supply being strategic towards achieving environmental sustainability, in line with the global effort to greening the organization, UNICEF Comoros undertook a gradual process of greening its premises with the aim to transfer this greening vision to other partners.

### Total value of supplies and services received (i.e., irrespective of procurement location)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic supplies, including procurement services-funded</td>
<td>US$283,320.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channelled via regular procurement services</td>
<td>US$40,689.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channelled via GAVI</td>
<td>US$30,987.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channelled via programme</td>
<td>US$211,643.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational supplies</td>
<td>US$96,118.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>US$563,494.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International freight</td>
<td>US$50,282.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL supplies and services received</strong></td>
<td><strong>US$993,216.09</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total value of procurement performed by the office, including on behalf of the other country offices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procurement for own office</td>
<td>US$743,476.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic supplies, including procurement services-funded</td>
<td>US$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Programmatic supplies channelled via programme</em></td>
<td>US$83,864.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational supplies</td>
<td>US$96,118.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>US$563,494.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total value of construction projects, split by programme, which Country Office is delivering via a partnership</td>
<td>US$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities performed locally, or support given to the Government on strengthening its supply chain</td>
<td>US$0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Security for staff and premises

With the unfailing support of the UNICEF Regional Office in 2017, UNICEF Comoros worked to enhance the safety and security of staff and premises.

Primarily, a support of US$51,350 via the Central Investment Fund in support of security upgrades for staff and premises helped to: 1) install a centralized smoke detector system in the two UNICEF buildings; 2) increase the number of fire extinguishers to cover recommended places and replace defective ones; and 3) improve the walkway corridor between the two buildings that form the office premises.

Then, through the Regional Contingency Fund, US$68,890 was allocated to improve compliance with Security Risk Management Measures. Thirty VHF radios were purchased for all staff, as well as a new generator to replace the 21-year-old one, to reduce the office’s carbon footprint.

The implementation of the above projects led UNICEF Comoros to become an inspiring agency for the whole United Nations system in Comoros. The Country Office was quoted by the United
Nations Division of Safety and Security as the leading agency in Comoros in terms of security.

Finally, a peer review of the ICT function that covered ICT Governance, Planning and Infrastructure Services and Innovation was conducted by the ICT Regional Chief in July 2017. The ICT Disaster Recovery Plan was reviewed during this mission, following which the office started to work towards the implementation of the related recommendations.

The country Security Plan and the Minimum Operating Security Standards (currently known as Security Risk Management Measures) were approved by the Security Management Team and were subsequently endorsed by the United Nations Division of Safety and Security (headquarters) in June 2017.

Fire safety, including a fire drill training, was provided to all United Nations staff as part of the country security training plan. The undertaking of mandatory security trainings (advanced and basic) was monitored by the country management team.

**Human resources**

The Country Office continued to implement the human resources reform process started in 2016 for improved recruitment, strategic partnership and effective performance management.

The Country Office was selected by the UNICEF Regional Office as a pilot for a one-day performance management workshop that aimed to improve staff performance feedback. The office developed an action plan for a change management culture approved by the country management team. This will be implemented starting in January 2018. The action plan encourages all staff to give honest feedback and to hold conversations with their supervisors without fear of victimization. The Country Office strongly believes in the potential of this process to empower staff while giving them evidence that their work is recognized.

A two-day interpersonal communication training strengthened staff capacity to use communication for results. Tools and best practice for an environment in which parties can comfortably express their ideas, concerns and priorities were shared.

The interpersonal communication training and the performance management workshop were both key to encouraging regular and honest conversations regarding performance evaluation reviews in 2017.

The findings of the global staff survey highlighted two main areas of special focus for the Country Office: staff empowerment and work-life balance. Led by the local staff association, an action plan to address the shortcomings identified in the survey was developed for implementation under the supervision of a task force, including both local staff association and management representatives.

Keeping the gender balance ratio in good standing and improving gender parity remained an area of focus throughout 2017. The office staff consisted of 46 per cent females and 54 per cent males.

In 2017, all staff benefited from an emergency preparedness and response training, which led to the update of the office preparedness and response capacity through the constitution of a small contingency stock in preparation for the natural hazards the country is regularly exposed to during the cyclone season.
Effective use of information and communication technology


The ICT Regional Chief conducted a peer review of the ICT functions in the Country Office that covered ICT Governance, Planning and Infrastructure Services and Innovation. The review also provided guidance on immediate ICT issues and challenges and in updating the 2017 Country Office workplan to align it with regional and global priorities.

During the year, the Country Office started to implement the key recommendations of the peer review to ensure the availability of ICT services, access to UNICEF applications and potential technology for development tools for programme effectiveness.

With the support of the Regional Office (Regional Contingency Fund 2016), the electrical, telephone and LAN wiring was refurbished and made fully operational in 2017. The completion of this project improved speed in connectivity, which resulted in pacing up transaction processing timing.

ICT functions benefited from the commitment to greening the office, as the solar power supply system was installed in the office to run the servers and to ensure consistent access to the Internet. In addition, almost all computers were migrated to Windows 10 to ensure compliance with the global initiative.

Despite budget constraints, the Country Office management committed to meeting the organizational minimum ICT standards. Hence, the universal Wi-Fi project was launched in 2017, to be completed during the first quarter of 2018.

In terms of security, the business continuity plan and ICT Disaster Recovery Plan were updated. A test of the business continuity plan was planned in 2017, but could not be conducted with the support of the Regional Office because of regional priorities impeded the travel of the Regional Security Advisor. Plans were made to seek the support of the Senior Regional Security Advisor and to equip the business continuity plan site with the essential testing equipment by the second term of 2018.

Programme components from RAM

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

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

Analytical statement of progress
In 2017, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to design the new community health policy to strengthen community-based health systems through enhanced community engagement. UNICEF advocated and took the lead in establishing a steering committee that was put in place and became operational in 2017. It included all health sector partners at central and decentralized levels, donors and government technical partners.

In 2017, the country did not experience diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis or measles vaccines stock-out. UNICEF support to forecast needs and develop a distribution plan for the vaccines contributed to this achievement. UNICEF also procured all vaccines for routine immunization, as
no government public funds were allocated for this. To ensure continuity, UNICEF advocated with the Government for a greater financial contribution. As a result, the Government committed to funding all traditional vaccines starting from 2019.

UNICEF Comoros conducted a geo-energy study to generate evidence towards the standardization of a sustainable solar-powered coldchain for immunization. All nine power-driven refrigerators relying on generators were replaced by new solar refrigerators. 27 existing ones were repaired and one cold rook was rehabilitated. This led to 100 per cent operational cold chain with all structures providing immunization services fully equipped. This technology facilitated the immunization of 21,000 children nationally.

With regard to immunization coverage, by November 2017 only 10 out of 17 health districts had reached 80 per cent coverage. During the year 75 per cent of children aged 12–23 months old had received the required three doses of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis containing vaccines. The country is far from the 85 per cent target set for 2019, but these are routine immunization data which still need to be finalized and which may hide consistency issues with the denominators used to follow progress on indicators. UNICEF has co-funded the census to have a better idea of the denominator, the results of which will be available in September 2018.

In addition, no sex-disaggregated data are available at this stage on immunization. UNICEF had supported the production of data collection tools, including sex disaggregation, in 2016. However, these were not used efficiently in 2017, so the data on sex disaggregation could not be generated and analysed. An improvement of this process is included in the 2018 priorities for immunization.

An immunization equity study provided evidence to address knowledge gaps in inequities of access. It also helped chose the reach every child approach to reduce inequities in immunization starting in 2018. The findings were used to inform the drafting of the GAVI Health System Strengthening 2 proposal. UNICEF played a key role in assuring the quality of the proposal, which led to its selection as the principal recipient for the first two years of the programme. To reduce preventable newborn deaths and in line with the implementation of the 2017–2021 Every New-born Action Plan, 80 out of the existing 150 care providers were trained on newborn care, including neonatal emergencies to accelerate the reduction of the estimated neonatal mortality. In 2018, UNICEF will train the remaining 60 health agents to improve the quality of care. An assessment of all maternity services was carried out and 8 out of the 22 structures were equipped. UNICEF conducted the rehabilitation of the Idjikoundzi health facility. Coverage of skilled birth attendants is at 82 per cent.

The Health Management Information System provides disaggregated data by age, sex and geographical distribution at national and subnational levels. However, the production of reports is not consistent. No community health workers were trained in 2017. The training initially planned was suspended pending the finalization of the strategy. Health expenditure data have also been integrated in the statistical yearbook. Financial support was provided for the publication of monthly statistical reports for immunization as well as the 2016 statistical yearbook for the health sector, which was launched in the first quarter of 2017. Delays still occur in the publication of the monthly immunization reports.

**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 in humanitarian situations.
**Analytical statement of progress**

UNICEF played a key role in the finalization and validation of the country multi-year strategic plan for immunization. UNICEF, as the managing entity of GAVI funds for Comoros, supported the implementation of all immunization interventions. In 2017, the country did not experience diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis or measles vaccines stock-out. UNICEF helped forecast needs and develop a distribution plan for the vaccines, hence contributing to this achievement. UNICEF also procured all vaccines for routine immunization, as no government public funds were availed for this. To ensure continuity, UNICEF advocated with the Government for a greater financial contribution from the Government budget. Thus, the Government committed to fund all traditional vaccines starting from 2019.

The cold chain in health facilities was strengthened through procurement of nine new solar refrigerators, the repair of 27 existing ones and rehabilitation of one cold rook. This led to 100 per cent operational cold chain, with all existing structures fully equipped in 2017. Four cold-chain technicians (central and islands levels) were trained with UNICEF support to maintain the appliances in all facilities across the three islands.

In addition, the Idjikoundzi health facility was rehabilitated. Eight health facilities rehabilitated in 2016 were equipped to improve the quality of service provision. To increase demand, operational communication plans were developed for the three islands. With regard to immunization coverage, by November 2017 only 10 out of 17 health districts had reached 80 per cent coverage, four had reached between 60 and 80 per cent and three were below 50 per cent coverage. In the same year, 75 per cent of children aged 12–23 months old were immunized for the required three doses of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis containing vaccines.

No sex-disaggregated data are available at this stage on immunization. UNICEF had supported the production of data collection tools, including sex disaggregation, in 2016. However, these were not used efficiently in 2017. Hence, data on sex-disaggregation could not be generated and analysed. The improvement of this process is included in 2018 priorities for immunization. Moreover, the routine immunization data may hide inconsistencies with the denominators used to follow progress of indicators.

In addition, an immunization equity survey was conducted. Its findings show that there are no major inequities based on gender. Inequities in vaccination mainly depend on socio-geographical factors. The findings were used to target 10 districts out of the existing 17 for major activities in the next five years (GAVI Health System Strengthening 2 proposal). UNICEF played a key role in assuring the quality of the proposal. This led to UNICEF being selected as the principal recipient of the next two years of GAVI funds (US$3.5 million over five years). One important constraint in 2017 is due to the three-month strike of vaccination service workers. To prompt reactivation of the vaccination services, UNICEF advocated with the Government for the payment of outstanding dues to the health agents.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**

UNICEF advocated and took the lead role in establishing a steering committee for the development of the 2018–2022 Community Health Strategy that includes a policy on home visits of newborns. The committee was put in place and became operational in 2017. It includes all
health sector partners at central and decentralized levels, donors and government technical partners. UNICEF recruited a national consultant to coordinate the review process and revision of an existing strategy (which is defined as a policy in the relevant indicators). A roadmap for the development of the strategy was approved by the committee and validated.

A participative situation analysis leading to a community intervention mapping exercise was carried out. Five strategic pillars were defined. Because of a delay in the implementation of the roadmap, the strategy will be adopted in the first quarter of 2018. The validation will be followed by the development of annual operational plans. The Health Management Information System provided disaggregated data by age, sex and geographical distribution at national and subnational levels. However, the production of reports is not consistent. No community health worker was trained in 2017. The training initially planned was put on hold awaiting the finalization of the strategy.

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
Neonatal mortality is still high in Comoros, at 24 deaths per 1,000 births, which represents 41 per cent of all under-five mortalities. UNICEF has made this a priority area of its work during the reporting period. In 2017, a roadmap was developed to implement the every newborn action plan validated in 2016. However, the policy for home visits for newborns is not available. This is to be developed as part of the community health strategy which will be available in 2018.

The finalization of the community health strategy in 2018 will also allow the definition of a training programme for health workers on eight essential family practices and the setting up of health districts with a local health committee that is functional.

To increase the number of health facilities offering delivery services with functional newborn resuscitation equipment (functional bag and mask in neonatal size), UNICEF supported the assessment of all 22 main maternal health facilities and equipped eight of them, representing 36 per cent of all facilities as per the target. To ensure availability of human resources with sufficient capacity, UNICEF supported newborn care training for 80 out of 150 identified health agents in all three islands. In 2018, UNICEF plans to train the remaining 60 health agents to improve the quality of care. The weak coordination of the health sector and lack of leadership is a significant bottleneck. For the follow-up of community health and neonatal health roadmaps, technical committees are relied on. Strong advocacy was undertaken with the authorities to ensure that the coordination of the health sector is effective by 2018. The last coordination meeting was held in 2013.

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

Analytical statement of progress
The Ministry of Health lacked a reliable Health Management Information System, providing disaggregated data by age and sex. UNICEF provided technical and financial support for the improvement of the System. This has involved the development and adoption of questionnaires integrating sex and age disaggregation for immunization and maternal health. A database with
age- and sex-disaggregated data on immunization and maternal health is now available. With this considerable support, it is hoped that disaggregated data will be available from 2018. Health expenditure data have also been integrated in the statistical yearbook. Financial support was provided for the publication of monthly statistical reports for immunization as well as the 2016 statistical yearbook for the health sector which was launched in the first quarter of 2017. Delays still occur in the publication of the monthly immunization reports.

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

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF continued high-level advocacy to ensure that nutrition becomes a national priority. Thanks to UNICEF advocacy, a SUN multi-stakeholder platform was established and operationalized to scale up nutrition efforts. In collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, UNICEF supported the elaboration and validation of the national social and behaviour change communication strategy on infant and young child feeding.

UNICEF’s main strategies to combat malnutrition were based on strengthening prevention through a package of interventions at the community level in the 69 most vulnerable villages and the management of cases of severe acute malnutrition. UNICEF supported the Health Information Directorate to set up a data collection and analysis system related to the management of malnutrition. In this regard, a community-level data collection and analysis system was set up to track the anthropometric measurements of children and the identification of cases of severe malnutrition and their referrals.

The capacities of 105 community health workers were strengthened on data collection and on the promotion of infant and young child feeding. The workers provided systematic and integrated screening of children under 5 years old through outreach activities, cooking demonstrations and sanitation activities. Thanks to these activities, 3,226 children aged 0–23 months old and 5,721 children aged 24–59 months old were screened for malnutrition through monthly visits (i.e., 27 per cent of the children under 5 years old in the 69 villages). CHWs conducted 14,778 sessions of weight and height measurement among the children 0–23 months and with mid-upperarm circumference among children aged 24–59 months.

As a result of screening, 571 cases of severe acute malnutrition were treated in 2017 (January–November). Among the children discharged, about 50 per cent were cured, 49 per cent dropped out, 0.6 per cent died and 0.5 per cent did not respond to treatment. UNICEF procured the essential therapeutic foods and the equipment of all 17 nutrition district centres. A referral and management system was set up to accelerate treatment for severe acute malnutrition through the involvement of the community health workers. This is a major achievement of 2017, as only five cases of severe acute malnutrition were treated in 2016.

Despite UNICEF support for developing disaggregated data tools, ownership of this change is not yet effective. Hence, disaggregated data by sex are not yet available. The continuous supervision of the community health workers will remedy this gap in 2018.

The capacities of 30 agents were reinforced through training on severe acute malnutrition case management in 2017. In 2018, UNICEF will set up additional sites to reach beneficiaries and reduce the high drop-out rates. Support was provided to improve supply chain management
skills and real-time monitoring. Because of the lack of funding, vitamin A was only distributed through routine activities. The coverage remains very low, at 17 per cent. In 2018, UNICEF plans to conduct a vitamin A supplementation and deworming campaign to ensure that all children under 5 years old get the two vitamin A doses.

The proportion of the population having improved sanitation facilities remains low, at 34 per cent. Hence, UNICEF focused on improving access to sustainable sanitation (toilet) services at household level, which contributes to the reduction of diarrhoeal diseases prevalence. These are main causes of the current 30 per cent chronic malnutrition prevalence children under 5 years old in the country. Based on knowledge from 2016 in 26 pilot communities and following stakeholder consultations, UNICEF Comoros introduced low-cost toilet technologies. Despite delays with the procurement of essential items, the collaboration with the NGO Maeecha increased the effectiveness of UNICEF-supported improved sanitation interventions. A total of 152 artisans were trained, and 56,563 people (41.6 per cent under 15 years old) were sensitized on the use of the improved sanitation facilities. Fifty families constructed improved sanitation facilities in their dwellings. Maeecha worked on four main vulnerability criteria (household status, habitat security, number of children and household-owned property) to identify 491 most vulnerable households which will benefit from subsidized improved sanitation equipment.

The water and sanitation enabling environment remains weak: non-existent coordination, outdated laws and a national Water and Sanitation Directorate functioning with very limited resources. UNICEF works with the latter to restore the formal national coordination platform. Reliable data on services coverage is inexistent. Hence, UNICEF Comoros supports DGEME to develop a water information system. Such a system allows a coherent water resources and water supply system inventory, as well as the regular monitoring of service quality. So far, the system has been implemented within the capital city of Moroni, confirming that the water service does not provide consistent water quality. This is the first step towards really understanding drinking-water coverage in Comoros, while incorporating SDG indicators. This, in turn, will allow the sector to prioritize investment based on equity.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**

In 2017, UNICEF supported the Government to develop the national strategy for infant and young child feeding and to elaborate and validate the national social and behavioural change communication strategy on infant and young child feeding. In 2018, UNICEF will support the development of an annual operational plan to ensure the operationalization of these strategies.

UNICEF supported community nutrition services by providing growth promotion and monitoring materials.

The capacities of 105 community health workers in the 69 most vulnerable villages were strengthened to deliver a package of interventions related to the promotion of infant and young child feeding. Focus was placed on monitoring the growth of children aged 0–23 months and 24–59 months in the 69 most vulnerable villages. A total of 69 community sites were equipped with anthropometric tools, equipment for cooking demonstrations and communication materials.
In this regard, a community-level data collection and analysis system was set up to track the anthropometric measurements of children and the identification of cases of severe malnutrition and their referrals monthly.

Despite UNICEF’s support to develop disaggregated data tools, ownership of this change is not yet effective. Hence, disaggregated data by sex are not yet available. The continuous supervision of the community health workers will remedy this gap.

Thanks to these activities, 3,326 children aged 0–23 months and 5,721 children aged 24–59 months could integrate the regular monitoring programme (i.e., 27 per cent of the target in the 69 villages). Community health workers conducted 14,778 sessions of weight and height measurement among the children 0–23 months old and with mid-upper arm circumference among children aged 24–59 months.

Thanks to this regular growth monitoring, 571 cases of severe acute malnutrition and 2,420 cases of stunting were recorded in these 69 communities. A referral and management system was set up to accelerate treatment for severe acute malnutrition through the involvement of the CHWs.

Complementary services provided included information for awareness raising, infant anthropomorphic checks and referral to appropriate services for the treatment of the consequences of chronic and severe malnutrition and ponderal loss. The experience highlighted the importance of involving communities in the definition of their needs and of the rights of their newborns. Demand for health and malnutrition prevention services increased because of a better understanding of prevention through regular monitoring and early detection of malnutrition.

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

Analytical statement of progress

In 2017, with UNICEF support, all 17 health district facilities were providing treatment to severe acute malnutrition. The 17 structures were equipped and 30 staff benefited from a training on severe acute malnutrition case management. Despite equipment and training, the quality of case management remained weak because of no compliance to management guidance and the referral system that is not yet operational. In 2018, the revision of the severe acute malnutrition management guidance is planned with the support of the UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office and the strengthening of continuous supervision to improve quality of care.

UNICEF supported the Health Information Directorate to set up a data collection and analysis system related to the management of severe acute malnutrition. Regarding severe acute malnutrition management, 571 cases were recorded in 2017 (from January to November). Among the children discharged, about 50 per cent were cured, 49 per cent dropped out, 0.6 per cent died and 0.5 per cent did not respond to treatment. The high drop-out rate was mainly due to the lack of support measures for families. These vulnerable families cannot afford to accompany their malnourished child during hospitalization. They are also not able to pay the lab fees. Resource mobilization efforts are underway to support these families with a cash transfer project.
In 2017, all nutrition commodities (Plumpy’Nut, F75 and F100) for management of severe acute malnutrition were procured by UNICEF and the Japan International Cooperation Agency. UNICEF continued to technically support the supply chain at the national and regional levels by playing a key role in the forecast, procurement and nutrition commodity distribution plan development to the three islands. No nutrition stock-out was recorded in 2017.

In 2017, due to a lack of financial resources, the two vitamin A mass distribution campaigns could not be realized. The distribution of vitamin A through routine immunization has posed significant problems due to lack of ownership by health workers. Similarly, the lack of completeness and quality of the data collected on vitamin A did not make it possible to exploit them. This lack of quality leading to missed opportunities has been highlighted and will be addressed in 2018 through an improved integration of nutrition and vaccination interventions.

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

Analytical statement of progress
In 2017, the Government, with UNICEF support, validated the national strategy for infant and young child feeding and the multi-sectoral food and nutrition policy.

Advocacy and policy dialogue were conducted in collaboration with WHO, UNFPA, UNDP and FAO to push forth the SUN agenda in the country, including the setting up of a national steering committee for nutrition. In November 2017, a SUN multi-stakeholder platform was established and operationalized to scale up nutrition efforts. The coordination body chaired by the Ministry of Health includes representatives from the Ministries of Production, Education, Economy and Trade. Each of the three islands nominated a focal point to coordinate activities. The platform increased capacity to engage with authorities. As a first result, stakeholders conceptualized the 2018–2025 multi-sectoral food and nutrition policy integrating gender equality. The challenge will be to maintain the nutrition partner platform operational in the coming years.

In 2018, UNICEF will continue to advocate for a better institutional anchorage of the Nutrition Unit within the Minister of Health organigram. Currently nutrition is located under the Directorate of Family Health.

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

Analytical statement of progress
The Ministry of Health lacked a reliable Health Management Information System, providing disaggregated data by age and sex. UNICEF provided technical and financial support for the improvement of the Health Management Information System and the integration of nutrition data at the community level. This has involved the development and adoption of questionnaires integrating sex and age disaggregation for immunization, maternal health and nutrition. In this regard, a community-level data collection and analysis system was set up to track the anthropometric measurements of children and the identification of cases of severe malnutrition and their referrals monthly. A database integrating nutrition at community level is now available.

Despite UNICEF support for developing disaggregated data tools, ownership of this change is not yet effective. Hence, disaggregated data by sex are not yet available. The continuous
supervision at the different levels will remedy this gap. At the national level, the Ministry of Health has appointed a planning, monitoring and evaluation for nutrition focal point. It is hoped that this change will improve the compiling and analysis of the nutrition data. The capacities of 105 CHWs were strengthened to collect nutrition data at the community level. Focus was placed on monitoring the growth of children aged 0–23 months and 24–59 months. With this considerable support, it is hoped that nutrition disaggregated data of good quality will be available from 2018.

In Comoros, there is no strategy on micronutrient supplementation or fortification and it has not been identified by the Government as a priority in the current cycle. UNICEF will continue its advocacy to sensitize decision makers.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**
UNICEF Comoros’ intervention in the WASH sector focuses on improving access to sustainable sanitation (toilet) services at the household level, which contributes to the reduction of the prevalence of diarrhoeal diseases, the reduction of mosquito breeding sites, as well as a reduction in the risk of intestinal parasites. These are all causes of the current 30 per cent chronic malnutrition status for children under 5 years old in Comoros. Based on a 2016 knowledge and practice evaluation in 26 pilot communities and following stakeholder consultations, UNICEF Comoros introduced low-cost toilet technologies: a dry toilet slab or SanPlat option, a pour-flush toilet option, and a pit lining based on trapezoidal cement blocks option. Despite delays with the procurement and importation of essential items (i.e., molds), 152 artisans were trained on the construction and installation of the different models. Initial response to the toilet options introduced looks positive, especially for the most affordable SanPlat,

In parallel, UNICEF Comoros identified the 491 most vulnerable families, including 386 women-headed households, in the 26 pilot communities, which represents 5 per cent of families. Those families are receiving a 25,000 Comorian francs (about US$60) voucher to buy a toilet from a trained artisan. The word ‘toilet’ and the management of excreta remain taboo topics, which are not mentioned in the national strategy or by decision makers. Due to delays mentioned earlier, the sanitation promotion campaign focused on the pilot project communities, where toilet models are tested. The national-scale campaign will resume in 2018. Following heavy rains in April, May and June, UNICEF, under the coordination of the Government, took part in a multi-sectoral rapid assessment. Furthermore, UNICEF contributed to the government response with key hygiene messages and with the clean-up and refilling of contaminated water cisterns for 91 families (no gender-disaggregated data available).

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

**Analytical statement of progress**
The water and sanitation enabling environment remains weak: non-existent coordination, outdated laws and a national Water and Sanitation Directorate functioning with very limited resources. UNICEF works with the latter to restore the formal national coordination platform. Unfortunately, a draft decree revising the membership and roles of the coordination platform
was not signed and it remains a challenge to get senior-level government officials to participate in the coordination. Likewise, the revised water law remains a draft, despite the availability of resources to support its finalization. UNICEF offered to fund a consultant to finalize the document in 2018.

As a small island developing state, Comoros is likely to suffer strongly from adverse effects due to climate change, exacerbated by a growing population. This will put a tremendous stress on its freshwater resources, which are already threatened by deforestation.

Reliable data on services coverage are non-existent. Hence, UNICEF Comoros supported DGEME in developing a water information system. This system allows a coherent water resources and water supply system inventory, as well as the regular monitoring of service quality. So far, the system has been implemented within the capital city of Moroni, confirming that the water service does not provide consistent water quality. This is the first step towards really understanding drinking-water coverage in Comoros, while incorporating SDG indicators. This, in turn, will allow the sector to prioritize investment based on equity. Based on the experience gained through implementing the water information system (SIEC), in November 2017 UNICEF Comoros launched a nationwide WASH survey to assess services in primary and secondary public schools. The analysis of the data was not yet available in December 2017. However, the use of mobile technology allowed 443 schools to be surveyed in two weeks, following which data were immediately available online for review.

**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 2017, UNICEF supported progress towards the establishment of an enabling environment to improve quality of preschool education services in Comoros. Support was provided for the finalization of contextualized teaching and learning materials with government copyright. These include an intersectoral parenting education guide with its training manual and the teaching and learning materials for preschool classes aimed at children who are between 4 years old and 5 years old.

In 2017, UNICEF was also able to mobilize funds for the scaling up of preschool education through a four-year project that will start in 2018. This will contribute to making progress on the pre-primary enrolment ratio, which dropped to 21 per cent in 2017 from the 24.6 baseline registered in 2014. This drop is most likely a symptom of the lack of resources in the subsector to scale up the provision and respond to the increasing demand. UNICEF is the only government partner supporting pre-primary education in Comoros. Between 2014 and 2017, the only funding available to UNICEF in this area was earmarked for the development of teaching and learning materials. Through the Dubai Cares-funded project starting in 2018, UNICEF will be able to support the opening and equipment of new preschool classes as well as the printing and distribution of teaching and learning materials, including educational toys to existing ones.

Discussions with potential donors also started in 2017 on the implementation of a parenting education project now that the tools are available. This will contribute to provide parenting education to an initial cohort of parents to make progress towards the 2019 target of 8,000 parents benefiting from parental education. A discussion within the Country Office is also ongoing on how to ensure the integration of parental education using the newly developed guide in the existing outreach activities for pregnant women and mothers of newborn children related
to the child survival and development nutrition programme. This will facilitate low-cost dissemination of parenting education basic principles with health and nutrition monitoring facilities as an entry point.

The process of developing contextualized teaching and learning materials contributed to the establishment of a pool of 15 authors with the expertise to develop and edit educational materials and textbooks. This is a major achievement for Comoros. One major challenge that can be foreseen will be future capitalization of the capacities developed and strengthened.

UNICEF continued its advocacy with the Ministry of Education and partners to ensure that record is kept at Ministry level of the list of the authors involved in the process and their mobilization for any future similar activities. UNICEF agreed to support the establishment of a project to establish a partner coordination unit in the Ministry, which will ensure coordination in the sector and keep Ministry records for the capitalization of capacities developed. The unit was due to be put in place in 2017, but there have been delays in the nomination of a coordinator and its team. It is expected that the unit will be put in place and made functional in 2018.

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

Analytical statement of progress
In 2017, UNICEF continued to provide financial and technical support to the Ministry of Education for the development of a contextualized cross-sectoral guide for parenting education and teaching and learning materials for two levels of pre-primary education through the Renovated Koranic Education approach. This school-readiness approach is designed for children aged between 4 years old and 5 years old. It combines faith-based education with modern preschool education, aiming to develop young children’s cognitive, reasoning and concept development skills, language, reading and writing skills, as well as motor and social skills.

The tools were finalized in 2017. The parenting package includes the guide for parents and the training guide for trainers. The tools integrate intersectoral issues such as newborn health, immunization and nutrition, basic physical, nutritional and environmental hygiene practices, and the different stages of children’s linguistic, psychological, social and cognitive development.

Through the tools, parents are sensitized on children’s basic rights, such as the rights to birth registration, education and protection, and to be protected from discrimination based on gender.

The Renovated Koranic Education teaching and learning materials include a teacher’s guide for the two levels, one workbook for Renovated Koranic Education level one and one for Renovated Koranic Education level two combining mathematics, French, Arabic graphics and three posters (Arabic alphabet, French alphabet and numerals). The teacher’s guide sets the standards for the implementation of the early learning curriculum in continuum with the primary competency-based curriculum. The process of developing contextualized teaching and learning materials contributed to the establishment of a pool of 15 authors with the expertise to develop and edit educational materials and textbooks. This is a major achievement for Comoros. One major foreseeable challenge will be future capitalization of the capacities developed and strengthened.
UNICEF continued its advocacy with the Ministry of Education and partners to ensure that record is kept at Ministry level of the list of the authors involved in the process and their mobilization for any future similar activities. UNICEF agreed to support the setting up of a project to establish a partner coordination unit in the Ministry, which will ensure coordination in the sector and keep Ministry records for the capitalization of capacities developed. The unit was due to be put in place in 2017, but there have been delays in the nomination of a coordinator and its team. It is expected that the unit will be put in place in 2018.

Funding was secured in 2017 from Dubai Cares to ensure the printing and distribution of the teaching and learning materials to all Renovated Koranic Education classes between 2018 and 2020 and the training of all Renovated Koranic Education teachers on their use. This will facilitate the implementation of the early learning curriculum and provide the basis for tracking the quality of its delivery at the school level.

OUTPUT 2 Young children, including those with disabilities, benefit from Renovated Koranic School readiness programmes.

Analytical statement of progress
Major progress in this area in 2017 was the finalization of the teaching and learning materials for Koranic Renovated Education classes. Hence, Comoros’ education system is provided with curriculum-supporting teaching and learning materials, which are contextualized and for which the Government holds the copyright.

The Renovated Koranic Education teaching and learning materials are aimed at children aged between 4 years old and 5 years old. They include a teacher’s guide for the two levels, one workbook for Renovated Koranic Education level one and one for level 2. The package includes mathematics, French, Arabic graphics and three posters (Arabic alphabet, French alphabet and numerals). The teacher’s guide sets the standards for the implementation of the early learning curriculum in continuum with the primary competency-based curriculum. Following the revision, a major challenge is to ensure that Renovated Koranic Education teachers’ capacities are strengthened to deliver the new curriculum through the available teaching and learning materials. In 2017, UNICEF mobilized US$2 million from Dubai Cares to scale up Renovated Koranic Education provision. This will contribute to improving the physical environment of Renovated Koranic Education classes and to strengthening the capacities of the actors. Pupils will be provided with individual learning tools with the printing and distribution of the teaching and learning materials to all Renovated Koranic Education classes between 2018 and 2020. All Renovated Koranic Education teachers will be trained on the use of the new teaching and learning materials. All these interventions will facilitate the implementation of the early learning curriculum and will provide the basis for tracking the quality of its delivery at the school level.

With regard to Education Management Information System, no specific reports on the enrolment of children with disabilities were produced. However, data on children with disabilities in the school system were captured by the school census, although still characterized by medical diagnosis. To improve data quality in this area, UNICEF advocated for the integration of the Washington Group/UNICEF-developed module of child functioning tool in the Education Management Information System. The integration of this tool will result in more appropriate data capturing on the presence of children with disabilities at all levels of the system to support planning for a more inclusive education system.
OUTPUT 3 School communities are sensitized on their role to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the Renovated Koranic Schools.

Analytical statement of progress
The institution of primary school management committees was set up so that communities could be involved in the planning and monitoring of education services. By the same token, it was also meant to ensure that the preschool programme facilitates pupils’ access to primary school at the right age. The Government, with the support of UNICEF, established preschool Renovated Koranic Education classes within the mainstream primary school system. This should have been sufficient to extend the involvement of the school community in the management and monitoring of preschool services. Unfortunately, these efforts have not yet translated into a tangible formal involvement of parents and communities in the planning and monitoring of primary education or early learning programmes.

The weak capacity of the school management committees continues to represent a barrier to the full involvement of parents and communities in the management of Renovated Koranic Education. The lack of resources has prevented UNICEF Comoros from supporting initiatives that would contribute to progress in this area so far.

In 2017, however, reflection started as part of the development of the 2018–2020 Education Sector Transition Plan on how to effectively involve communities in the management of primary school and, by extension, of preschool provision. The scaling up of Renovated Koranic Education was integrated in the Plan as a priority as well as the role of school management committees as key actors in ensuring good governance at the school level.

A project proposal to the Global Partnership for Education to support the implementation of the Plan, which UNICEF Comoros started to prepare during the last quarter of 2017, included the implementation of a minimum package of interventions aimed at improving school governance through capacity development of school management committees. The mobilization of these funds by mid-2018 will maximize the results expected in the pre-primary subsector through the US$2 million project funded by Dubai Cares to scale up preschool education in Comoros between 2018 and 2021.

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
The three-year transitional plan and the inclusive education strategy were finalized with UNICEF support. In the inclusive education strategy, the Government has stated its commitment to the inclusion of children with disabilities and to granting access to schooling for out-of-school children.

UNICEF supported government provision of early learning textbooks (covering history, geography and science) for all private and public primary school pupils. Teachers were provided with orientation sessions on the use of the new textbooks. Such large-scale actions contributed to produce results that show progress towards learning achievement targets. Thus, the national education management information system registered an increase in the proportion of children who completed primary education. In 2017, 77 per cent of primary school pupils completed the cycle (78.1 per cent boys and 76.7 per cent girls). This represents a significant increase
compared with 70 per cent completion in 2014. It also means that school retention improved in primary schools, resulting in the repetition rate dropping to 16.6 per cent (17.3 per cent for boys and 15.7 per cent for girls). The out-of-school children rate was 18.7 per cent in 2017 (18.1 per cent for boys and 19.4 per cent for girls). These figures are indicative of progress towards expected targets.

However, it should be noted that 2016/2017 was disrupted by several rounds of teachers' strikes. This contributed to a drop in the success rates at the end of primary cycle national examination. Besides, the preliminary results of the PASEC/CONFEMEN national literacy and numeracy assessment held at the end of the 2016/2017 schoolyear show mediocre average scores both in the secondyear of primary education (44 per cent in French and 30 per cent in mathematics) and in the fifthyear of primary school (35.3 per cent in French and 33.1 per cent in mathematics). The final report, expected at the end of January 2018, will help understand the causes of pupils' low performance and the elements that have contributed to the degradation of teaching and learning. The support to the finalization of locally contextualized primary core-subject textbooks continued throughout 2017. Thus, Comoros now has its copyright, ‘Eveil’ (science/history/geography), French and math textbooks and teacher guides. By the end of the 2016/2017 school-year, 135,000 ‘Eveil’ textbooks had been printed and distributed to all public and private primary schools, benefiting 91,000 pupils in grades 3 to 6.

The editing work on French and math textbooks has been completed and, once printed, it is expected that all primary pupils will have access to individual textbooks through a loan system in these core subjects by the 2019/2020 school year and all teachers will have been provided with orientation sessions on the integration of the new teaching and learning materials in their lesson planning. The system already benefits from sufficiently qualified teachers (97 per cent of the teachers in service hold academic qualifications). However, in 2017, primary-level repetition rates remained relatively high at 17.3 per cent (15.7 percent for girls) nationally. It is expected that the availability of individual textbooks for every child and guides for every teacher will contribute progressively to decreasing repetition rates based on the improved quality of the teaching and learning environment.

Remaining challenges include the need to improve system efficiency by further decreasing the proportion of elementary schools with student/teacher ratios less than 90 percent of the national norm (40:1). This proportion was at 48 per cent in 2017 in the public sector, which represents progress from the 75 per cent baseline, but is still far from the 15 per cent target expected. Teachers' unions will need to be involved in the discussions around this issue. UNICEF will continue the support to the Ministry to ensure that trade unions are more actively involved in the local education group.

Another challenge to be addressed through teacher orientations in 2018 is the effective textbook management at all levels, particularly in the classroom, where teachers must commit to making regular use of textbooks as part of their teaching practice. UNICEF will continue to work closely with island-level education authorities to establish a robust monitoring system. The focus on strengthening school management committees in the next Global Partnership for Education programme will contribute to providing possible solutions to this.

**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**
In 2017, to improve teaching and learning and the management of teachers’ performance, UNICEF continued to support the establishment of a school-based quality control approach. By the end of 2017, 55 primary schools had adhered to the initiative, which aims to improve both pupil and teacher performance through regular classroom-based assessment of pupils’ learning, leading to remedial actions.

The support to the finalization of contextualized primary core-subject textbooks continued throughout 2017. Thus, Comoros now has its copyright, ‘Eveil’, (science/history/geography), French and math textbooks and teachers’ guides. By the end of the 2016/2017 schoolyear, 135,000 Eveil textbooks had been printed and distributed to all public and private primary schools to benefit 91,000 pupils in grades 3 to 6. Grades 1 and 2 pupils continued to benefit from the 58,000 Eveil textbooks provided by UNICEF since 2016.

Following completion of the editing work on French and math textbooks, it is expected that all primary pupils will have access to individual textbooks through a loan system in all core subjects by the 2019/2020 school year, and all teachers will have been provided with orientation sessions on the integration of the new teaching and learning materials in their lesson planning. The system already benefits from sufficiently qualified teachers (97 per cent of the teachers in service hold academic qualifications).

Unfortunately, in 2017 primary-level repetition rates remained relatively high at 17.3 per cent (15.7 percent for girls) nationally. It is expected that availability of individual textbooks for every child and of teacher guides for every teacher will contribute progressively to decreasing repetition rates and increasing completion rates based on the improved quality of the teaching and learning environment.

Remaining challenges include the need to improve system efficiency by further decreasing the proportion of elementary schools with student/teacher ratios less than 90 percent of the national norm (40:1). This proportion was at 48 per cent in 2017 in the public sector, which represents a progress from the 75 per cent baseline but is still far from the 15 per cent target expected. Teachers’ unions will need to be involved in the discussions around this issue. UNICEF will continue the support to the Ministry to ensure that these unions are more actively involved in the local education group.

Another challenge that will be addressed through teacher orientations in the next year, is the effective textbook management at all levels, especially in the classroom through teachers, commitment to make regular use of textbooks as part of their teaching practice. UNICEF will continue to work closely with island-level education authorities to establish a robust monitoring system. The focus on strengthening school management committees in the next Global Partnership for Education programme will contribute to providing possible solutions to this.

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 2017, UNICEF continued to support a pilot programme for out-of-school children. The programme aimed to provide access to schooling to 20,000 estimated out-of-school children between 2015 and 2017. The figures were based on the 2012 Country Status Report on the estimated number of children out of school in the country. The initial target for 2017 was to ensure schooling for 10,000 out-of-school children. The programme had started to enrol children
in 2015–2016. By end 2017 a total of 14,036 children had been enrolled either through the accelerated learning programme or through direct enrolment into mainstream schools.

In 2017, only data for the accelerated learning courses were available. Based on these data the accelerated learning programme had benefited 4,624 children during the year, of which 1,931 were girls and 2,693 boys. To facilitate their access, UNICEF constructed/rehabilitated 103 classrooms in 32 schools. A total of 90 volunteer teachers (53 women and 37 men) were trained on multi-grade classroom management. A last round of activities is due to take place in 2018 to provide schooling for the remaining number of out-of-school children to reach the target of 20,000.

To monitor progress on enrolment and to ensure availability of qualitative as well as quantitative data on the beneficiaries of the programme, UNICEF had supported the establishment of a data collection system specifically targeting this initiative. Unfortunately, the lack of ownership and commitment of the planning directorate at central ministry level, who had the role of coordinating the monitoring activities and collating the island-level information, has prevented the system from yielding the scientifically robust data hoped for. The lack of data collection and analysis capacity at island level exacerbated the problem.

Despite the failure of the information system, the island-level education authorities could confirm that, of all the pupils who attended the 2017 accelerated learning programme, a total of 3,124 transitioned to mainstream (1,354 girls and 1,770 boys). This represents 67.5 per cent of all former out-of-school children who attended the accelerated learning programme during the year.

Other major achievements during the year were linked to the strengthening of the policy environment to ensure access to primary education, particularly for the most vulnerable. In 2017, UNICEF supported the development of the 2018–2020 Education Sector Transitional Plan and the inclusion in it of priorities around access to schooling for out-of-school children, as well as the development of a strategy on inclusive education. These represent important tools to mobilize the support of the Government and partners around access to quality education of out-of-school children and of children with disabilities.

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

Analytical statement of progress
A literacy (French) and math national assessment was carried out in 2017 with UNICEF support. One major achievement was the integration of the assessment database in the Education Management Information System. This will facilitate the establishment of a regular national assessment every two years. The assessment involved 9,000 pupils in grades 2 and 5 from 150 schools.

The preliminary results for Grade 5 show a 34.2 per cent achievement score in both subjects, which is 2 percentage points above the 32 per cent 2010 baseline. Disaggregation of the results shows that since 2010, performance in French improved, with scores increasing from the 30.7 per cent baseline in 2010 to 35.3 percent in 2017. On the contrary, in mathematics the scores declined, from 35.7 per cent in 2010 to 33.1 per cent in 2017. In both cases, the results are still far from the 50 per cent target.
Important work is needed to ensure the efficient and effective use of textbooks in the classroom by pupils and teachers. The 2017 school census data show that only 15 per cent of Grade 5 pupils have access to French textbooks at school or at home for homework. As for mathematics, 12 per cent of the pupils have access to the textbooks. The PASEC/CONFEMEN national assessment conducted in 2009–2010 had already highlighted the lack of textbooks as a major reason for poor pupils, literacy and maths skills. The assessment report recommended that French and mathematics textbooks be made available for pupils to take home to do their homework, which would improve learning and academic performance. It is therefore important for UNICEF Comoros to support interventions that will encourage the use of textbooks both in the classroom and at home to improve learning and academic achievement.

The results of the 2017 assessment, once finalized, will provide more details on several quality factors and their impact on the academic achievement in grades 2 and 5 in both disciplines. The final report is expected at the end of January 2018. Its publication will offer the opportunity to discuss with the Government and partners how to ensure interventions to support the sector plan and consider its findings.

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
In 2017, the national child protection policy and the national youth policy were developed. The 2008 National Gender Equality and Equity Policy was updated. The implementing decrees of the Family Code aimed to harmonize marriage rules were drafted. This contributed to strengthen the legal and policy framework for child protection in Comoros. Four groups of children who require special protection and who had never been considered before in any statutory document were identified in the child protection policy because of UNICEF advocacy. These include child victims of violence, victims of trafficking, victims of economic exploitation, and victims of abuse (early marriage).

A multi-partner child protection committee including the Government, civil society and international partners was set up to strengthen coordination mechanisms. However, the committee was not formalized and has not been operational since the finalization of the child protection policy.

One major bottleneck to establishing a stronger framework for the protection of women and children against violence and gender-based violence, is the poor implementation of these policies and laws. With regard to the Criminal Code adopted since 2014, the delayed promulgation represents a bottleneck to the application of all sanctions to violence against children and women. In 2017, UNICEF continued to advocate for the promulgation of the Criminal Code by addressing the President directly on this issue.

Awareness of key stakeholders in five municipalities in Mwali, Ndzuwani and Ngazidja was raised on the importance of setting up pilot listening services and their helplines in town halls. These entities have been invested with the responsibility to manage social services at the local level through devolution.

Community-based action on child protection and the fight against child marriage was strengthened through the sensitization of traditional religious structures, including 60 religious
leaders (all men) on the Family Code, which sets 18 as the legal age for marriage for both sexes. The dialogue between the religious traditional structures which are delegated by the judges to celebrate weddings ceremonies and the judicial structures responsible to ensure compliance to statutory rules, including the Family Code, was strengthened through their mutual involvement in the trainings supported by UNICEF.

The existing listening services were strengthened by the addition of a second toll-free number availed through partnership with Telma, the newly established cell phone service provider in the country. The aim of this service is to provide confidential listening support, information and guidance for child victims of violence. This helpline is accessible on all three islands. The toll-free numbers allow the entire population of the three islands to report cases of violence, and provide an effective response for victims or children at risk. Through their staff, the centres can facilitate access of victims to health and legal services.

UNICEF played a key role in the mobilization of 226,000 euros from the European Union to fund a support project for listening and protection services submitted by the Comorian Association for Family Welfare. One objective of the project is to increase availability of quality data on violence against children and women. Up to 2017, data on violence were collected by the listening services hosting the island-level helpline and consolidated by the National Human Rights Delegation. The data were collected only sporadically in the past as the capacity to analyse them was weak. Therefore, routine administrative data collection systems and publications on violence, exploitation and abuse of children including violent deaths and injuries are very weak and sporadic. The resource mobilization that UNICEF supported in 2017 will contribute to strengthen capacity for violence-related data production and to regular and timely availability of quality information on violence to inform planning, advocacy and support behavioural change interventions.

In 2017, the three listening services recorded 560 cases of child victims of violence, of which 95 per cent were against women and girls. Victims received medical and psychosocial care as well as legal counsel. The cases reported concern essentially sexual assaults and physical abuse. The important increase in cases reported compared with 2016 (150 cases) shows that there is a slow change in behaviours and that the reluctance to report cases of violence is slowly being won. Community dynamics and social pressure, as well as lack of resources, often prevent dutybearers from addressing existing legal and support structures (such as the helpline) to respond to violence against children, particularly sexual gender-based violence, as violence is still a taboo topic in the public domain.

No progress was made in 2017 in identifying hosting families for children who have been victims of violence. As no budget was available at the government level to set up a hosting family service, the individuals who had been consulted to adhere to the hosting family group did not confirm their availability.

**OUTPUT 1** The protection policy framework is improved and the support to coordination mechanism is strengthened.

**Analytical statement of progress**
In 2017, UNICEF supported the development of the national child protection policy, the update of the 2008 national gender equality and equity policy and the development of the national youth policy, and the drafting of implementation decrees on the Family Code to harmonize marriage rules across the country. This contributed to strengthening the legal and policy framework for
With regard to the child protection policy, UNICEF supported the categorization of four groups of children who require special protection and who had never been regrouped before in any statutory document. These include child victims of violence, child victims of trafficking, child victims of economic exploitation, and child victims of abuse (early marriage). To strengthen coordination mechanisms, a multi-partner child protection committee including the Government, civil society and international partners was set up. Unfortunately, the committee has not been formalized so far and has not been operational since the finalization of the child protection policy.

The 2008 National Gender Equality and Equity Policy was updated in November 2017 with UNICEF and UNFPA support. The Policy is focused on gender-based violence. A new Youth Policy was validated in December 2017 by the Government with the support of UNICEF. UNICEF financed the process, including funding of four consultants who provided technical assistance to the Government.

One major bottleneck to establishing a stronger framework for the protection of women and children against violence and gender-based violence is the poor implementation of these policies and laws. Regarding the Criminal Code adopted since 2014, the delayed promulgation represents a bottleneck to the application of all sanctions to violence against children and women. In 2017, UNICEF continued to advocate for the promulgation of the Criminal Code by addressing the President directly on this issue.

UNICEF played a key role in the mobilization of 226,000 euros from the European Union to fund a support project for listening and protection services submitted by the Comorian Association for Family Welfare. The main aim of this two-year project is to contribute to the reduction of violence against women and children.

One objective of the project is to increase availability of quality data on violence against children and women. Up to 2017, data on violence were collected by the listening services hosting the island-level helpline and consolidated by the National Human Rights Delegation. The data were collected only sporadically in the past, as the capacity to analyse them was weak. Therefore, routine administrative data collection systems and publications on violence, exploitation and abuse of children, including violent deaths and injuries, are very weak and sporadic. The resource mobilization that UNICEF supported in 2017 will contribute to strengthen capacity for violence-related data production and to regular and timely availability of quality information on violence to inform planning.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**

To provide a framework for action for families to play their role in protecting children, UNICEF contributed in 2017 to the development of the action plan on child marriage, budget included. To support community-based action on child protection and the fight against child marriage, support was provided to sensitize 60 traditional religious leaders (all men) on the Family Code, which sets 18 as the legal age for marriage for both sexes. The training workshops were led by children judges. This has facilitated the dialogue between the religious traditional structures.
which are delegated by the judges to celebrate weddings and the judicial structures responsible for ensuring compliance to statutory rules, including the Family Code.

Children judges routinely participated in outreach activities funded by UNICEF. The Mwali Island judge for children was elected one of the 10 personalities of the year in 2017 by the main national newspaper Al Watwan, because of her efforts to fight child marriage. As municipalities are devolved responsibility to manage social services at the local level, UNICEF supported awareness-raising in five municipalities in Ndzuwani, Ngazidja and Mwali on the importance of setting up pilot listening services and helplines in their town halls. Training activities were conducted to the benefit of the focal points of these municipalities. This contributed to start building the capacity of municipalities to contribute to planning and monitoring activities against child marriage in their constituencies.

The support to communities, through the establishment and strengthening of community structures in charge of child protection, involved the setting up of six vulnerable children’s committees in addition to the 16 existing ones in various prefectures. Due to devolution of powers to municipalities, a decision was taken to replace these committees with the establishment of five pilot listening services. However, due to the absence of permanent staff in the municipalities who would be responsible for these services, this action had to be postponed. To ensure community involvement in the prevention of violence against children and of early marriage, UNICEF supported the sensitization of communities. A total of nearly 600 people were reached in 13 village communities and schools by the sensitization activities led by the Island Child Protection Directorates and the National Gender Commissioner.

No progress was made in 2017 to identify host families for children who have been victims of violence. As no budget was available at government level to set up a host family programme, the individuals who had been consulted to adhere to the host family initiative did not confirm their availability. Care for children removed from their families requires substantial financial resources. In the meantime, UNICEF was approached by the Ministry of Justice to support the opening of a centre for children in conflict with the law and children who are victims of violence. This intervention will be included in 2018 workplan.

OUTPUT 3 Access to age-appropriate and culturally relevant and quality holistic services is improved.

Analytical statement of progress
The child protection policy action plan supported by UNICEF in 2017 included the strengthening of available service, including a listening service and its helpline provided by Comores Telecom, the national cell phone provider. UNICEF contributed to the extension of access to child victims of violence by concluding a partnership on 8 December 2017 with Telma, the newly established second cell phone company in the country, availing a second toll-free number. The agreement brought together Telma, UNICEF and the General Delegation for Human Rights. The aim of this service is to provide confidential listening support, information and guidance for care of child victims of violence. This helpline is accessible on all three islands. The toll-free numbers allow the entire population of the three islands to report cases of violence and provide an effective response for victims or children at risk. This joint operation between UNICEF, the General Delegation of Human Rights and Telma Foundation aims to develop and implement an effective strategy and concrete actions to fight reluctance of witnesses and victims to report abuse of children. It aims to contribute to the creation of an environment conducive to better protection of rights by encouraging the population to denounce all forms of violence against children so that
assistance can be swiftly provided to victims.

Through its staff, the three existing listening centres can facilitate access of victims of violence to health and legal services. To strengthen the capacity of the managers of these services as well as the directors in charge of protection on the island and of children judges, UNICEF supported a training workshop at the end of the year. The aim was to share good practices in the prevention and care for victims of violence, reflect on the working methods of these services, stimulate supervisory coordination activities for listening services and harmonize data collection.

In 2017, the three listening services recorded 560 cases of children victims of violence, 95 per cent being against women and girls. Some 212 cases benefited from medical, psycho-social and legal care. Also, 67 young mothers, of which 23 were in Ngazidja, 24 were in Ndzuani and 20 were in Mwali, benefited from a school allowance. Some 270 victims benefited from legal counsel, of which 134 cases were trialled. The cases reported concerned essentially sexual assaults and physical abuse. The important increase in cases reported in 2017 (150) shows that there is a slow change in behaviours and that the reluctance to report cases of violence is slowly being won. Community dynamics and social pressure, as well as lack of resources, often prevent dutybearers from addressing existing legal and support structures (such as the helpline) to respond to violence against children, particularly sexual gender-based violence, as violence is still a taboo topic in the public domain.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**

The capacity of protection service staff, including of the three listening services, was strengthened through UNICEF-supported training. Ten people (nine women, one man) participated in the training in the three islands in a two-day training workshop composed of seven modules, including: public procedural response to violence, the Family Code, protection service mapping awareness, and the legal definition of the different types of violence against children.

One hundred magistrates, gendarmes, police officers and actors in charge of child protection had their capacities strengthened as well through another two-day UNICEF-supported training sessions. These training sessions focused on the fight against early marriage and the fight against violence towards children. All those responsible for listening and protection services for child victims of violence benefited from these trainings as well. They strengthened their skills on the identification and reporting of violations of the rights of children.

The exchange workshop of the three listening and protection services made it possible to develop a database to facilitate data collection.

Considering the weak capacity in responding to violence and to the need to change attitudes, the office adopted a broader approach to trainings and sessions were organized for the target staff – i.e., social service workers and protection personnel, but also religious leaders, court personnel and other people involved directly or indirectly in the protection services. UNICEF also advocated with central and local authorities for the posting of additional staff to the three listening and protection services to strengthen their capacity to respond to demand. On the island of Ngazidja, advocacy efforts led to the posting of one midwife at the listening centre.
OUTCOME 6 Child victims of exclusion benefit from policies and programmes based on evidence.

Analytical statement of progress
The consolidated database for social protection system is now operational. Some 1,026 households are already registered into this database as beneficiaries of social protection interventions including the non-conditional cash transfer programme implemented by the national directorate of solidarity with the support of UNICEF and the security safety net programme implemented by the national agency of coordination and management of project funded by the World Bank.

Of these households, 3,112 children under the age of 18 are registered, representing 2.4 per cent of those living below the poverty line. Efforts are being pursued to promote this tool to help coordinate protection interventions in the country, with the aim of setting up a single register from this consolidated database.

The main challenge is related to the country’s new authorities who are not yet convinced of the relevance of social protection through both conditional and non-contributory monetary transfer programmes and projects. An evaluation of the social safety nets programme financed by the World Bank and implemented by the ANACEP is being finalized. This evaluation will complement the assessment of the non-conditional cash transfer project to provide sufficient evidence to strengthen advocacy for social protection with national authorities and potential donors for resource mobilization.

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

Analytical statement of progress
The consolidated database for social protection interventions developed in 2016 is operational and managed by the national directorate of solidarity and social protection. Some 1,026 households are already registered into this database as beneficiaries of either the cash for work project or the non-conditional cash transfer programme. This database serves to monitor household covered by these social protection interventions to avoid duplication and overlapping.

The UNICEF Country Office supported the Government of Comoros to assess the cash transfer pilot program which is being implemented since 2014. The report of this analysis was validated in August 2017 during a workshop that regrouped the key stakeholders of social protection in Comoros. Among other findings, the report showed the relevance of the cash transfer programme, as its purpose meets the needs of the most disadvantaged populations. It is also aligned to the national development strategy in the field of social protection. This analysis highlighted the contributions of cash received by beneficiary households in their efforts to support the most essential needs of children and to carry out, as far as possible, initiatives to strengthen their economic resilience.

The results of this situational analysis of the cash transfer project (report), particularly those relating to the realization of the rights of children, were disseminated to the authorities of the autonomous islands, particularly the governors. Public audiences were informed of the results of this project using other communication tools, including leaflets which were distributed by
The main message is the need to promote non-contributory social protection, particularly cash transfers, as an effective means of reducing household poverty and vulnerability and improving access to social services such as education, immunization, nutrition, and more for children.

Some institutions and projects that conduct non-contributory social protection activities refuse to provide the information they have, to feed this consolidated database. The absence of a law in force in the field of social protection limits the coercive power of the National Directorate of Solidarity and Social Protection on these institutions. Advocacy should be conducted in 2018 for the promulgation and application of the Law on Social Protection passed in 2017.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**

The government of Comoros pursued, with UNICEF support, the implementation of the unconditional cash transfer programme for disadvantaged populations following the assessment conducted on this subject during the first half of 2017. In seven localities, including three in Anjouan, two in Moheli and two in Grande Comore, only one payment was released in 2017 to 559 vulnerable households out of 565 selected as beneficiaries.

This shows an increase of 20 households compared with 2016, when the data relating to these households did not allow their ranking as beneficiaries. These households contain a population of 3,542 inhabitants, of which 1,802 are children under 18 years of age. The total amount paid during this operation was 23.9 million Comorian francs or approximately US $56,554.

To support the implementation of the social protection policy, 19 more agents, including 16 from Anjouan and 3 from Mohé, were trained in 2017 for four days on issues related to social protection, including mechanisms of social safety nets and cash transfers. This training enabled the acquisition of knowledge, as well as the forming of multidisciplinary teams including specialists in education, health, nutrition and child protection around social protection. The implementing report of the social protection policy was not yet produced. However, the template of the report was designed and validated for use in 2018.

The beneficiary communities of cash transfer were sensitized through communication for behaviour change sessions by multidisciplinary teams on each island. These multidisciplinary teams constitute a pathway to enhance coordination of social protection interventions with other sectors including nutrition, education and health. It is important to formalize such teams to ensure regular and systematic collaboration among sectors.

The non-conditional cash transfer programme is faced with the limited financial resources for its extension at scale. UNICEF will support the Government to develop a resources mobilization strategy that will enable approaching potential donors in this area. High advocacy will be pursued for more domestic resources allocation to social sectors including social protection.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**

Three budget briefs produced by the National Institute for Statistics and Economic and Demographic Studies are being finalized, one on the general economic context, one for health
and one for education. They show that the budget allocations for education and health services account respectively for 4.7 per cent and 5.4 per cent of the total budget in 2017. These shares remain below the standard thresholds required at global or regional levels.

Furthermore, the Open Budget Survey was finalized for Comoros and an Open Budget Index was calculated for the first time. The survey results show, among other weaknesses, the absence of a mechanism that ensures public participation (including civil society organizations) in the process of design, execution and verification of the national budget.

The monitoring of the budgetary implementation by the Supreme Court and the National Assembly is not done systematically nor rigorously. With respect to the accessibility of the budget information to the public, the investigation revealed that most of the documents are produced but not within the required timeframe or are not made available on the website of the Ministry of Finance.

The collaboration between UNICEF and the Ministry of Finance is not yet well established. From this evidence, the Comoros Country Office will strengthen its advocacy with national authorities, including the Ministry of Finance, to improve the financial management framework for Comorian children.

### Document centre

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