

## Comoros

### Part 1: Situation update in the country

#### **Political environment**

The Union of Comoros experienced several waves of political instability in 2018 that threatened peace and stability, originating from the disputed national dialogue to assess the 42 years of independence of the country. Initiated by the civil society 'The August 11 Movement', the dialogue was taken over by the President who, in his message to the nation on July 6, 2017, unveiled the plan to organize it during the first quarter of 2018. The dialogue was held in February 2018 without the participation of the main opposition or the Governor of the island of Anjouan. Of the five recommendations issued from the dialogue, only one on political governance held Government and supporters' interest.

Thus, a new constitution was drafted and submitted to voters during the referendum held on July 30, 2018. This was largely boycotted by the opposition parties and the population. Meanwhile, in a decision taken on April 12, 2018, the President of the Union self-granted full powers defined in Article 12-3 of the Constitution and transferred the powers of the Constitutional Court, elections' referee, to the Supreme Court. It is therefore the Supreme Court that ratified the results of the referendum for which the 'Yes' is said to have won more than 92 per cent.

The new constitution made changes to the principle of rotating presidency and the voting system, and abolished vice-presidents at central government level and commissioners at the island level. The reforms brought significant changes in the national and island administrative structure, which, to some extent, hampered the implementation of UNICEF Comoros 2018 workplan with central and island implementing partners. With the removal of island commissioners, no clear provisions were provided indicating the new authorities empowered to take over the implementation of development partners' programmes and projects. The confusion was dispelled once the Supreme Court issued a ruling stipulating that the island commissioners continue their role until constitution-enabling laws came into effect.

In October, armed clashes between security forces and insurgents in Mutsamudu Medina in Anjouan, caused at least two casualties and several injuries. This followed several destabilizing events declared by the Government, including a failed coup. Those deemed responsible were tried by the State Security Court, created in 1981 to judge "crimes and offenses against the

security of the state, other crimes and political offenses" and whose legal existence was contested by defense lawyers.

## **Economy**

Comoros continued to perform in line with recovery started in 2016. After a 3 per cent growth in 2017, consolidation of economic activity is expected in 2018. This sustained growth is justified by the maintenance of the quasi-regular supply of energy, allowing resumption of activities of small- and medium-size businesses and the local very small enterprises. In addition, the country embarked on or is pursuing various major public investment projects, such as road infrastructures on the three islands and the construction of the El Maarouf hospital.

From a sector point of view, since 2017 agriculture and livestock were invested in heavily, with the introduction of new banana plants with high-production capacity and new production techniques, such as greenhouses which allow vegetables to be grown throughout the year. The primary sector (agriculture, fisheries and livestock) accounts for more than a third of real gross domestic product (GDP) and would contribute 1.3 per cent to growth in 2018. The Central Bank of the Comoros noted that between the second and third quarters of 2018, imports dropped by 19.3 per cent, mainly due to the lower domestic demand after the summer festivities, while exports rose sharply due to the destocking of cloves. These contrasting developments led to an improvement of the trade deficit, dropping from 28.2 billion to 18.1 billion in the first half of the year. In 2018, inflation showed an upward trend reaching 2.3 per cent vs. 1.0 per cent in 2017. The average annual rate of inflation should be contained under the community standard of minus 3 per cent set by the Franc Zone and Common Market for Eastern and South Africa countries.

In public financial management, according budget briefs produced in 2017 and disseminated in 2018, budget practices are characterized by limited credibility. The Government must prioritize the implementation of its public financial management reform programme to ensure that budgets reflect sector strategies and cost plans and to be anchored in realistic revenue projections. Provisional data for the first half of 2018 on the fiscal space show improvement in domestic revenues (+41.7 per cent) and a reduction in domestic spending (-7.2 per cent) compared to the levels in the same period of the previous year. This evolution of domestic resources is attributable to the increase in excise duties and in non-tax revenues, despite their small share in their composition.

According to 2018 fiscal space analysis, domestic revenue currently accounts for around 11 per cent of GDP, well below the country's estimated fiscal potential (19 per cent). Some efforts were made to reduce tax exemptions, but more comprehensive efforts are required to raise income levels significantly. The Government is now focusing on public infrastructure, which is critical to increasing productivity in key sectors including agriculture, and improving growth prospects. However, the quality and quantity of public investment remains low. On the expenditure side, the current focus on payroll and spending on administrative institutions were obstacles to fiscal space for child-friendly spending.

According to 2018 World Bank report on poverty in the Comoros, the living conditions of Comorian households have improved, and income poverty decreased by more than 10 per cent between 2004 and 2014, in both rural and urban areas. This report indicates that in 2014, 42 per cent of the population lived below the national poverty threshold of US\$58 (25,341 KMF) per capita per month. About 23.5 per cent of the population lives in extreme poverty and is therefore unable to meet their minimum nutritional needs of 2,200 kilocalories (kcal) per person per day.

### **Social context**

The 2017 Situation Analysis of Children and Women Report stresses that multidimensional poverty also declined considerably with the improvement of living conditions. The report stressed, however, that the sustainability of this progress remains uncertain because of the high inequalities, particularly between rural and urban households. It points to persistent lack of access to services and property. The context of both monetary and multidimensional poverty in some households weakens children and makes them more vulnerable and sometimes unable to enjoy many of their rights. It is not uncommon for children to accumulate deprivations of rights in the Comoros.

The 2018 Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) provided a comprehensive analysis of the multidimensional aspects of poverty and child deprivation in the Comoros. The total population of children under 18 was subdivided into two age groups: the zero to four years old age group and the five to 17 years old age group. It considered six dimensions for each group: health, nutrition, water, sanitation, housing and protection against violence for children under four years old and water, sanitation, housing, protection against violence, education and information for those aged five to 17.

Deprivation of access to hygiene, measured through use of unimproved toilet, affects the largest number of children under four years old (62 per cent). For children aged five to 17, the deprivation of access to information is most prevalent (63 per cent), characterized by the absence of television, radio, telephone, laptop and computer in the household. More than half of children under four years (59 per cent) accumulate deprivations. Health, nutrition and hygiene are the most likely dimensions to aggregate and affect almost one in ten children (9 per cent). Children aged five to 17 years accumulate deprivations particularly in education, information and hygiene (44.6 per cent).

### **Early childhood education and education**

With regards to Sustainable Development Goal 4, and 4.2 in particular (the provision of an environment for young children to be developmentally on track and access pre-primary for school-readiness), the latest available statistics from 2017 show that gross pre-primary enrolment is at 21 per cent in Comoros. Across the islands, 13,920 children, including 6,953 girls and 6,967 boys, attend public, private or community pre-primary. Of these 7,629 including 3,852 girls and 3,777 boys are in government schools. Studies conducted over the past few years show an opportunity for the provision to expand as there is a demand for pre-primary education in the country. The low enrolment rates, however, are linked to inadequacies from

the supply side. Pre-primary provision is mainstreamed through government schools, but the Government lacks the financial means necessary to upscale the subsector.

According to the most recent education statistical data (school year 2016-2017), primary gross school enrolment is 108 per cent in the Union of the Comoros. However, primary repetition rate is 16.5 per cent (15.7 per cent for girls) across the three islands, with a peak of 17.2 per cent in the island of Anjouan. Knowing that the Education Sector Plan aimed a 15 per cent repetition rate for 2017 and 10 per cent for 2019, the target is still far from being reached. The data indicate that the repetition rate is especially high in the early grades of the primary cycle, and it reaches 18 per cent on average in CE2 (fourth grade) with a slight disparity to the detriment of boys, with almost 20 per cent boy repetition compared to 17 per cent for girls. The same data source indicated that out of 100 children entering CP1 (first year of primary), 59 per cent on average reach CM1 (fifth year, i.e. pre-final year of primary) and 44 per cent complete the cycle successfully. Thus, in the Comoros fewer than one out of every two children enrolled at primary level complete the cycle. This is undoubtedly a consequence of a high repetition rate, which causes a great deal of dropouts and 18,7 per cent primary-school-age children to be out of school in Comoros.

## **WASH**

Children need clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) to survive and thrive, whether at home, at school or when seeking medical consultation and treatment. Although over 80 per cent of the population have access to a basic service for drinking water, the country shows a worrying downward trend. Access to drinking water is not uniform across the country. Rural areas are less served than urban areas. The lowest quintile of economic well-being the least access to basic drinking water services. While the collection and use of rainwater is considered globally as basic drinking water service; in Comoros only 17 per cent of the population use rainwater as their main source of drinking water and most rainwater harvesting systems are rudimentary and unprotected. Tank capacities are not sufficient to ensure supply for more than a few weeks.

While open defecation is limited with less than 1 per cent, only 36 per cent of the population has access to basic sanitation, predominantly in rural areas. However, access to sanitation does not appear to be linked to wealth, as only the highest quintile a better access. According to 2012 DHS-MICS estimates, only 15 per cent of the households reported having a hand-washing device. This estimate is currently contested by the Government as hand washing must be practiced several times a day as part of religious practices.

Out of all health facilities, 61 per cent lack water services, 75 per cent lack hand-washing facilities, 49 per cent lack sanitation services and 39 per cent do not manage medical waste. Services are not equally available across the country. Most health posts and health centres in Grande Comore, and 67 per cent in Mohéli lack water services and use unprotected water sources. While more than half health facilities (61 per cent) can sort medical waste at the point of use, only 15 per cent do it properly, while only 4 of them safely dispose of medical waste.

School conditions are also problematic: 56 per cent of schools lack water services, 45 per cent lack sanitation services and 83 per cent lack hand-washing facilities. For 2017/2018 school year, this meant that 43 per cent of pupils had no access to water, 81 per cent had no access to hand-washing facilities and 43 per cent had no access to toilets while at school. Girls are slightly worse off than boys in terms of access to toilets with 44 per cent of girls with no toilets compared to 42 per cent of boys. Schools being locations children stay for most of the day time, it is key they be granted access to potable water and hand washing and sanitation facilities.

### **Health and nutrition**

In terms of health, significant progress was made in reducing under-five mortality from 104 per cent (DHS, 1996) to 50 per cent (DHS-MICS, 2012), a decrease of 51.9 per cent. The decrease in young child mortality is mainly attributable to positive results in the fight against malaria, as the Comoros is in the process of eliminating the disease at national scale.

However, a disaggregation by age shows that infant mortality (from 77 per cent in 1996 to 36 per cent in 2012) and juvenile mortality (from 29 per cent in 1996 to 15 per cent in 2012) decreased by 50 per cent or more while neonatal mortality (from 38.2 per cent in 1996 to 24 per cent in 2012) declined proportionately less. This situation calls for particular attention to the quality of maternal and perinatal care. Several partners, including United Nations Population Fund and the PASCO project, are engaged with UNICEF in this area. While contributing to the capacity building of the mother and newborn services structures, UNICEF is particularly committed to improving the synergy between maternal and neonatal health partners and in the development of integrated and budgeted operational plans that can be used as a basis for resource mobilization.

There has been a slight change in vaccination coverage over the past two decades. According to the above-mentioned surveys, the proportion of children who received the three doses of pentavalent vaccine increased from 68.3 per cent in 2016 (DHS, 2016) to 72.7 per cent in 2012 (DHS-MICS 2012). According to the situation analysis conducted in 2017 by UNICEF, the low progress in immunization coverage in recent years would be linked to two major factors, namely the low availability of workers in charge of social mobilization and a very limited participation of local leaders and communities in the planning and implementation of immunization activities.

UNICEF Comoros works to promote an integrated approach to community health and to enhance immunization equity, including the identification of small and underserved communities with many unvaccinated children.

The nutritional situation in the Union of the Comoros in recent years was precarious with high prevalence of malnutrition, affecting mainly children under the age of five. The Demographic Health Survey 2012 revealed that 30 per cent of children under five years old suffered from stunting, 11 per cent from wasting and 16 per cent were underweight. The contribution of malnutrition to infant and juvenile mortality is 43 per cent, of which 9 per cent is for severe

malnutrition. Poverty, lack of basic services, underutilization of health services and persistence of negative socio-cultural beliefs impacts on children's nutrition.

### **Protection**

In 2018, Comoros produced the third universal periodic review report on human rights implementation, including child rights. The report pointed out that Comoros implemented 102 of the 119 recommendations of the 2014 review and is committed to continue its work. The report will be presented to the Human Right council on 25th January 2019.

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

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

UNICEF Comoros supported the development of the Every New-born Action Plan costed with support from the UNICEF Regional Office. Contacts were established with the World Bank and the French Development Agency to mobilize resources to finance the plans.

#### **Kangaroo mother care**

Kangaroo mother care was launched in 2018 and capacities of five national trainers were built as master trainers. Training materials were made available to 55 health staff from maternity and neonatology services. UNICEF procured mother and newborn care equipment for 16 new health-care units. As a result, a 'kangaroo mother care' unit was set up at the National Hospital Center of El Maarouf (in Ngazidja) with a capacity of five beds. The incubator room was equipped with chairs to allow mothers of premature and low birth weight newborn to offer kangaroo mother care every three hours. Similar facilities are expected to be implemented in 2019 in the reference hospitals of the two other Islands. UNICEF Comoros collaborated with United Nations Population Fund and the PASCO project, both providing the same facilities with maternity equipment, thus supplementing the support provided by UNICEF. Establishment of health local committees in the supported districts was postponed for 2019.

#### **National community health strategy**

To allow strategy implementation, operational plans were developed through a participatory process including central and island administration, civil society organizations and non-government organisations operating in the health, nutrition and WASH sectors. These plans were costed with support from the UNICEF regional office and two proposals were developed for submission to the Global Fund and the World Bank.

#### **Community health worker training**

UNICEF supported the development of integrated training modules and the identification and national recognition of 424 community health workers (50 per cent of women) as community development workers. However, the integrated training sessions planned for 2018 could not be organized. The constraints were related to the long timeline required to develop all the modules

and to mobilize resources from the partners for implementation. With UNICEF Comoros advocacy, the setting up of a community health directorate at the central level is underway.

### **Immunization**

As described in the 2017 analysis, the challenges of vaccine equity are significant, especially geographically. The country still large pockets of unvaccinated children living in marginalized and hard-to-reach communities. In 2018, more than one-third of districts reported less than 80 per cent DTP3 coverage, with even 15 per cent to 20 per cent below the 50 per cent threshold. To ensure equitable access to immunization, the Reach Every Community Child (Reach Every Community Child) approach been chosen by the country. UNICEF supported the development of budgeted micro plans that identified clusters of unvaccinated children in each health area and developed tailored strategies for their immunization through community empowerment.

The 2018 Effective Vaccine Management assessment composite score reached 87 per cent versus 65 per cent in 2015, with remarkable developments on most of the nine criteria of this assessment. The health system strengthening programme involved the cold chain rehabilitation and extension with the provision of 20 new solar fridges.

In 2018, no DTP vaccine stock-out was reported. UNICEF Comoros continued to procure all traditional vaccines and advocated with Government for a greater financial contribution from public funds. As a result, the Government committed to finance all traditional vaccines from 2019. UNICEF Comoros also strengthened the capacities of 14 EPI professionals (five at national level and nine at regional level) to manage and monitor vaccine stocks through the use and analysis stock management tool data.

Nationally, 16,553 Comorian children under 11 months (77 per cent of targeted child population versus 75 per cent in 2017), including 8,871 girls (54 per cent) and 7,662 boys (46 per cent) received the three required doses of DTP-containing vaccines. Despite progress, the 85 per cent targeted for 2019 is still not achieved and equity is still a challenge.

### **Health budget briefs**

In 2018, UNICEF Comoros supported the second health budget brief exercise, which revealed budget increase to 14 per cent compared to 5.7 per cent in 2017. However, the additional resources were mainly for hospital infrastructure rather than equity interventions and health promotion.

### **Nutrition**

UNICEF helped operationalize the multi-sector Scale Up Nutrition National Committee in 2017. This resulted in improved inter-sector work with Food and Agriculture Organisation and United Nations Development Programme for food security; and ANACEP in social protection. The advocacy led to the establishment of "RIZIKI", a civil society nutrition platform grouping of twenty associations.

UNICEF Comoros contributed to the development and budgeting of the 2019-2020 National

Nutrition Policy Action Plan, a lever to accelerate the scaling up of interventions.

UNICEF Comoros continued to strengthen the quality of community-level nutritional interventions that have been implemented in 69 villages since 2016. The strengthening of formative supervision and monthly follow-up of 105 community health workers improved growth monitoring for children under five years. A total of 12,711 children under five were monitored, including 5,945 children under 24 months. This growth-monitoring led to the detection of 322 cases of underweight, 388 cases of stunting and 125 cases of acute malnutrition in the 69 villages. To strengthen mothers' knowledge on the preparation and consumption of nutritious foods for children under five, UNICEF Comoros supported the launch of community food demonstration activities.

UNICEF and Food and Agriculture Organization jointly supported the development of a local product inventory and a nutrition knowledge, attitude and practice survey. Findings will be available in early 2019 to inform the drafting of a food guide.

### **Programme integration and partnerships**

Through nutrition and immunization-integrated community services, infant and young child feeding intervention coverage increased from 8 health districts in 2017 (47 per cent) to 12 districts in 2018 (70 per cent). Women and children under 5 benefited from preventive services such as vitamin A, deworming, routine vaccination, screening for malnutrition, sensitization on breastfeeding and child feeding practices. Thus, 83,672 girls and boys aged six to 59 months, received two annual doses of vitamin A, with coverage increase from 17 per cent in 2017 to 68 per cent in 2018. In the same period, 39,661 12 to 59 month's children received albendazole 400 mg.

Hospital-based nutritional recovery units are available in all 17 districts that provide care for severely malnourished children with medical complications. To reduce hospital-based nutritional recovery unit drop-out rate, UNICEF Comoros supported the establishment of seven additional nutritional recovery units (CRENAS) that treat uncomplicated severe acute malnutrition conditions and to which children are referred at the end of their hospitalization. This strategic choice reduced the dropout rate from 50 per cent in 2017 to 26 per cent in 2018.

UNICEF Comoros and Japan International Cooperation Agency provided essential therapeutic food for all treatment units, which prevented stock-out. UNICEF also supported the development of follow-up registries made available to all severe acute malnutrition treatment centres, thus enhancing surveillance. Nutrition commodities management was improved through the recruitment of a UNICEF-funded manager for the Ministry of Health Department of Family Health.

Although the country complies with only two of the standard "Sphere" indicators instead of the three expected for 2018, actions carried out have led to a significant improvement in the management of cases of severe acute malnutrition. In 2018, the available data show a clear reduction in the drop-out rate from 50 per cent to 29 per cent, an increase in the cure rate (from



49 to 69 per cent). Death and non-response to treatment rates are less than 5 per cent (0.7 per cent and 4 per cent respectively). Thus, 1,649 children with severe acute malnutrition were admitted to the care centres, including 752 boys (46 per cent) and 897 girls (64 per cent). The number of children discharged is 741.

In partnership with Japan International Cooperating Agency, communication training modules focused on community nutrition were developed and made available to the Ministry of Health. In Anjouan, 40 health staff and 35 community health workers were trained. However, insufficient funds did not allow coverage of all local actors.

A US\$1.6 million agreement was signed between Japan International Cooperating Agency and UNICEF Comoros for two and a half years to help reduce mortality among children with severe acute malnutrition by improving the quality of care providing appropriate treatment across the country, building capacity, improving water and sanitation facilities, and equipping several new nutritional recovery and education centres (CRENA).

In partnership with World Food Programme Madagascar, UNICEF Comoros supported the training of local actors on emergency nutrition management. A sectorial plan aimed at reducing the malnutrition of the population affected by a crisis within the disaster risk management framework was developed under the leadership of the Directorate General of Civil Security.

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

In 2018, considerable progress was made in mobilizing US\$ 2.3 million from the Global Partnership for Education. In line with Sustainable Development Goal 4, and with Comoros Transitional Education Sector Plan, to ensure inclusive and quality education to every girl and boy in Comoros, this grant will support primary education governance, quality and equitable access. The Global Partnership for Education fund complements the Dubai Cares Foundation US\$ 2 million mobilized at the end of 2017 to support the pre-primary component of the same Plan. In terms of programme implementation, although the political context sometimes disrupted and delayed UNICEF-supported implementation, the results achieved are quite satisfactory.

### **Early childhood development and early years education**

In 2018, UNICEF mobilized funds for the reproduction of 7,800 parenting education guides of 675 trainers' guides. These tools are intended to make parents aware of the adoption of positive practices that promote the optimal development of young Comorian children. The sensitization and information activities for 1,500 parents scheduled for 2018 will start in 2019.

UNICEF Comoros supported the assessment of the status of pre-primary education. Findings will be available in the first quarter of 2019 and will inform the gradual scaling up of pre-primary renovated Koranic teaching classes in government primary schools. Renovated Koranic teaching constitutes a Government priority strategy to meet Sustainable Development Goal 4.2 which focuses on children being developmentally on track and accessing pre-primary education

for school-readiness.

Government pre-primary enrolment target for 2018 was 32 per cent. The most recent available data from 2017 report a 21 per cent pre-primary gross enrolment rate with 13,920 children, including 6,953 girls and 6,967 boys, enrolled in pre-primary and prepared for entry to primary school. In terms of gender, according to the data, public and community schools enrol more girls than boys, whereas this trend is reversed in the private sector.

The assessment preliminary findings revealed that the low enrolment rate in pre-primary is not linked to demand, but to insufficient offer of services. The data are detailed in a database produced as part of the assessment. The database provides information on pre-primary provision physical environment, pedagogical structures, human, material and educational resources. The study highlights improvements to be made, based on existing normative and regulatory frameworks and the training standard for pre-primary teachers.

In 2018, all pre-primary pupils in existing 189 schools with renovated Koranic teaching classes benefited from a total of 23,680 pupil workbooks, 1,826 teacher guides and 920 posters to cater for each pre-primary class. A total of 7,629 pupils (3,852 girls and 3,777 boys) and 258 teachers benefited from this intervention, i.e. 100 per cent of the government school pre-primary population and 52 per cent of all pre-primary pupils. Due to the late arrival of textbooks, training was programmed for 2019.

To promote learning through play, UNICEF Comoros procured 119 recreational kits as part of the basic intervention package. These complemented the 159 kits already available to schools since 2016 and for which teachers had been trained. A total of 3,570 pupils and 119 teachers - i.e. 50 per cent pre-primary pupils and 46 per cent teachers - benefited.

Despite these actions, the planned pre-primary basic package could only be partially provided because the supply of outdoor playground equipment had to be postponed to 2019. The purchase of the outdoor games depends on the validation of the recommendations of the pre-primary situation analysis.

At the end of 2018 an agreement was also reached between UNICEF Comoros and the national cultural association "CCAC Mavuna" to introduce drama in the pre-primary classroom. Interactive puppetry activities focused on active teaching and a will be offered in 20 schools as well as a puppet show to raise public awareness on the importance of schooling children at the appropriate pre-primary age.

### **Primary education**

In 2018, 124,505 grade 1 and 2 French and mathematics textbooks and 3,818 teachers' guides were procured for the benefit of about 62,000 pupils and 200 teachers. Textbooks acquired through Global Partnership for Education and Dubai Cares funding will enable pupils, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to gain free access to learning materials.

The results of 2017/2018 standardized tests carried out for the second and fifth year classes revealed an increase in the success rate in French - i.e. 45.87 per cent against 35.3 per cent in 2008. In mathematics, the increase was non-significant - 33.75 per cent against 33.1 per cent in 2008.

At the level of CP2 (second year), pupil enrolment was made up of 67 per cent boys and 33 per cent of girls while in CM1 (fifth year) figures show 82 per cent boys and only 18 per cent girls. UNICEF continued advocacy to have the test report shared with education partners to enable them to better support Comorian education system.

Regarding the results of the end of primary exam in 2018, 77 per cent of all pupils admitted to the exam (80 per cent girls and 74 per cent boys) obtained the minimum necessary to pass (7/20). Among them, 67 per cent (71 per cent girls and 64 per cent boys) obtained a minimum of 10/20.

### **Inclusion and equity**

As part of the implementation of the inclusive education strategy, UNICEF supported the construction of inclusive school buildings with a minimum of basic conditions to accommodate pupils with disabilities. In 2018, six primary schools (two per island) were selected as a pilot to provide a minimum package of inclusive education. This involves setting up quiet spaces, equipment adapted to the specific needs of children with disabilities, educational materials, first aid kits, accessible educational toys and mini-libraries. UNICEF Comoros also supported the training of 50 teachers, supervisors and school council members on learning disabilities in general and more specifically on hearing and visual impairments. At least 16 teachers from RTK classes, including 13 women were trained, as well as teachers from the six pilot schools. These interventions directly benefited 256 pupils living with disabilities. A televised debate was held during the training sessions with parents to raise awareness about the right to education of children with disabilities and how to interact with them.

A study of the education system revealed that about 25,000 children are out-of-school. To facilitate the integration of out-of-school children, UNICEF Comoros supported a five-month accelerated learning programme for the third year in a row. These children, who come mainly from the most disadvantaged households, were unfairly deprived of their rights to education and exposed to juvenile delinquency. Through an 'educate a child' project, UNICEF helped reintegrate a total of 19,334 pupils, including 8,256 girls and 11,078 boys, over project implementation, of whom 4,471 in 2018 (2,061 girls and 2,410 boys). A total of 154 teachers were trained on accelerated teaching techniques and management of multi-grade classes to facilitate these children's transition to mainstream education to continue their studies. To sustain the achievements, 49.5 per cent of school management committees (297 members of 99 school management committees) were trained and equipped for the initiation, implementation and monitoring of projects aiming at the reintegration of dropout children.

To increase access capacity of the schools housing these reintegrated children and to improve the environment, UNICEF provided 1,500 two-seater benches, benefiting 6,000 pupils in a

double-shift context, as well as textbooks, 422 school kit (catering for 40 pupils and their teacher each), as well as 16,599 school bags for the benefit of 16,880 primary school pupils. Supplies reached 95 per cent of the targeted 20,000 children over three years.

### **Emergency preparedness**

In line with education emergency preparedness plans, UNICEF procured and pre-positioned 20 "schools in cartoon" for primary pupils and 15 early childhood development kits to be used in pre-primary education emergency contexts. These will cater for 800 children in case of emergency.

### **Education financing**

UNICEF Comoros in coordination with education partners continued advocacy with the Comorian Government for compliance with international commitments on budget allocations. The Government, despite its good will to implement the Education Sector Transition Plan, was unable to allocate 26 per cent of the national budget to education in line with its commitment for 2018. The education budget for 2018, including teachers' salaries, is around 22 per cent.

Advocacy for the creation of a pre-primary budget line to enable the implementation of the development strategy in this sub-sector was continued. In Comoros, the expenditures on early childhood education are not listed, and the sub-sector is embedded in the primary school line in the state budget. This is probably because the staff assigned to the sub-sector are initially recruited as primary school teachers and that the pre-primary classrooms are in primary schools. Pre-primary education benefits from less than 5 per cent of the state budget despite its fundamental role. Moreover, according to the budget briefs, the state spends five times less for primary than for higher education.

### **School governance and sector coordination**

To ensure school efficiency and effective management of the educational offer, a school management committee capacity-building programme was developed in 2018 based on a needs analysis.

UNICEF Comoros continued to play a key role in sector coordination to ensure alignment of partners' interventions with the 2018-2020 Sector Plan. The collaboration with the European Union allowed the finalization of the joint rehabilitation and equipment of the Ministry of Education.

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

### **Human rights reporting**

The 2018 United States Report on Trafficking in Persons maintained Comoros, for the fourth year in a row, in Tier 3 of the group of countries that do not comply with the minimum standards of the United States' Victims Protection Act of the slave trade. The Government challenged this ranking and started implementation its anti-trafficking action plan. Awareness-raising activities were implemented by the General Delegation of Human Rights for the benefit of child

protection actors. The bill authorizing the Head of State to ratify the Additive Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking of Persons, Especially Women and Children was tabled in the Assembly.

UNICEF Comoros mentored civil society organizations in the preparation of the complementary report under the Universal Periodic Review. Through a participatory process involving 10 organizations, this report provided precise information about human and children's rights as well as the follow-up of the recommendations made during the 2014 exercise.

### **Legal framework**

As part of the implementation of the National Child Protection Policy, UNICEF Comoros supported efforts to transform the formal institutional protection system into an effective governance system, which connects the municipalities, the autonomous islands and the national level. Although not yet optimal, the situation improved.

A platform of state and non-state actors in charge of protection as set up; UNICEF Comoros was requested to provide secretariat support.

### **Protection services**

UNICEF Comoros continued to build the capacity of the three listening centres for the protection of child victims of violence. UNICEF supported the establishment of a database to harmonize the collection of information from the listening centres. It will centralize the information, and facilitate the analysis to guide response to violence and monitor progress. This will reinforce quality assurance. The steering committees of the listening centres supervised the activities of the help lines and monitored implementation of activities. The listening centres cared for nearly 698 children including 534 girls. Nearly 40 per cent of the cases benefited from legal and medical assistance.

Difficulties were encountered in identifying foster families who could accommodate children in danger. Most child victims are cared for by professionals in charge of protection or in the extended family. This informal system reached its limits and the country needs a legal system for the reception of child victims of violence. The reception of these children requires a legal framework and substantial financial resources.

Social workers were assigned to the Grande Comore and Anjouan listening centres. The staff of these three listening centres is limited to 10 (nine of whom are women). The Mohéli listening centre is staffed with a single facilitator, highlighting the dire need for staff. The difficulties encountered by the listening centres include: insufficient staff; a lack of transportation; the amicable arrangements between families of offenders and victims; discontinuing pursuit for financial reasons; and the lack of psychological support and follow-up.

Two additional listening centres were set up at municipal level. Initially, five were to be set up, but difficulties encountered in identifying the premises to accommodate these services and the lack of qualified staff limited this planned expansion. The two centres were equipped with office

furniture and information, communication and technology equipment. However, staff assigned to these centres were not yet sufficiently trained to start activities of the centres.

The Grande Comore Minors' Brigade, created in 2011 to prevent and treat all juvenile offenses, was rehabilitated and benefited from computer equipment and office furniture. This brigade collaborates with the judges for children and the listening centre and protection of the children victims of violence. To facilitate transport of investigators, UNICEF Comoros equipped minors' brigades of Mohéli and Anjouan with motorbikes. Training of the armed forces (police, gendarmerie, army) on the rights of the child of the autonomous island of Anjouan was organized. The training was not delivered to all the gendarmes who have brigades in their territory of coverage.

### **Raising awareness**

To fight against child abuse and early marriage, awareness-activities were organized in the six largest schools, in public and in the media. Regional directorates for child protection organized school debates and lectures for adolescents and specifically girls, to give pupils an understanding of: the legal framework that protects them from all forms of violence and early marriage; different types of violence; the consequences violence; as well as the victims most often of violence. The children learned of helplines and follow-up interventions that protect victims of violence, such as judges for children, protection services for child victims of violence and brigades of minors. National publicity disseminated helpline numbers that denounce violence against children. Twenty-five conferences and six television broadcasts reached more than 20,000 teenagers. They were facilitated by island protection staff, and religious and social animators.

Forty cadis (religious lawyers) and their deputies were trained on family code provisions that organize weddings and legal provisions protecting children victims of violence.

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

UNICEF Comoros is the only organization working with communities in Comoros to improve access to sustainable sanitation services; the other WASH actors, mainly AFD and United Nations Development Programme, focus on improving water service delivery with infrastructure investments.

### **Sanitation marketing**

A UNICEF sanitation marketing pilot project had promising results with an increase in improved-toilet coverage from 9 per cent to 15 per cent in a year. In addition, all 491 vulnerable families identified in 2017, including 386 female-headed households, acquired an improved toilet with UNICEF conditional cash assistance. This represented 51 per cent of the poorest households that had been identified by local authorities based on house characteristic, lack of land ownership, number of children, and head of household vulnerability (young or elderly, with handicap, single parent). This is the first year that the access of households of limited means improved sanitation was measured in the country: access to basic sanitation was up to 51 per

cent in UNICEF-supported areas compared to the national estimated baseline of 34 per cent.

To scale up access to improved sanitation, UNICEF Comoros extended its programme: support to communities increased from 26 to 56 localities, representing an estimated 26 per cent of the rural population. In addition, the community health strategy, which formalizes and supports community health workers, was an opportunity to scale up interpersonal communication on improved sanitation. However, limited capacity of partners, limited interest from senior Government officials, and unclear roles and responsibilities between national, regional and local authorities are bottlenecks for a national scale up scheme.

### **Water service monitoring**

Water service quality monitoring continued in Grande Comore with UNICEF support using the Kobo toolbox platform. The Water Information System inventory now includes 235 public tap stands, 15 water supply systems and 59 public rainwater tanks. Service monitoring highlighted inequities: chlorination is below international standards; on average water is available 14 hours per day (it varies from four hours to 24 hours) and five days per week; tariffs are unstructured and varied with free water in the capital city public taps, US\$3.5 monthly fees in some rural villages and up to US\$4 per m<sup>3</sup> in other villages.

UNICEF Comoros completed data collection and analysis of WASH services in 82 public health facilities and in 426 primary and secondary public schools. The situation is alarming, with no health facilities equipped with basic WASH services and only 3 per cent of schools with basic sanitation and basic hygiene services. This much needed mapping and knowledge creation contributed to UNICEF being able to include and advocate for a WASH in health component in the Japan International Cooperation Agency funded nutrition project to be implemented in 2019.

### **Country office partnerships**

Since November 2018, the country office has benefited from the expertise of a UNICEF Mali WASH specialist on a stretch assignment. The expertise has strengthened implementation of internal WASH strategies, plans and approaches in schools in the Comoros. A detailed road map and action plan will be developed to meet WASH Sustainable Development Goal targets, particularly in schools.

### **Goal area 5: Every child has a fair chance in life**

Following a 2017 analysis of the situation of children and women with support of UNICEF, there is up-to-date data on the deprivations children face concerning their rights to health, nutrition, education and housing. More than half of children aged zero to four years (59 per cent) face deprivations in water, hygiene, health, nutrition, housing and protection against violence. The children combine more deprivations when they come from households headed by a woman (63 per cent), or if they live in rural areas (64 per cent). They are also victims of more deprivations in Mohéli (68 per cent) than on the other two islands Anjouan (60 per cent) and Grande Comore (55 per cent).

With children aged five to 17, nearly 45 per cent accumulate deprivations in water, hygiene, education, information, housing and protection against violence. Children living in rural areas or living in Mohéli are more affected by these accumulated deprivations, 52 per cent and 55 per cent respectively.

### **Cash transfer**

A communication plan and an advocacy and resource mobilization plan for cash transfer programmes and safety nets were validated. Due to funding limits and the Government lack of support for unconditional cash transfers, these plans will raise awareness and engage national authorities and donors on the relevance of non-contributory social protection programmes and their effectiveness in reducing poverty among the most vulnerable households. The UNICEF Comoros communication for development officer and the programme, monitor and evaluation officer in charge of social protection availed technical expertise during the review and validation of these documents.

The National Directorate for Social Welfare made a single disbursement of funds to vulnerable households in the seven targeted localities of the unconditional cash transfer pilot programme, supported technically and financially by UNICEF. In total, 542 households benefited from this remittance, thus covering 1,985 children under 18, including 951 girls. The programme accounts for 322 households benefiting from the transfer in the three target localities of Anjouan for 1,202 children including 638 girls, 81 households in Mohéli (two localities, for 265 children including 120 girls) and 139 households in Grande Comore (two localities for 518 children including 193 girls).

### **Public financial management framework**

Several evidences were published in 2018 to strengthen advocacy for an improved public financial management (PFM) framework for children in the Comoros. The Citizens Initiative for Budget Transparency in Comoros in collaboration with the Budget Directorate, INSEED and UNICEF organized debates on the results of the budget briefs conducted in 2017 to explore the extent to which the national budget meets the needs of children under 18 years of age. More than 400 people from the central government, island executives, the National Assembly, civil society and the media actively participated in the debates and discussions.

The results of the 2017 budget briefs showed that despite a doubling of the state budget between 2015 and 2017, the shares allocated to social sectors that benefit children, such as education and health, remained at constant low of around 6 per cent. The state spent five times less for primary school pupils than for higher education students in 2016. At the health level, nearly 5 per cent of poor households spend over 40 per cent of non-food consumption expenditure on health care (the figure is 3 per cent of rich households). The findings revealed a problem of equity that raised questions about the quality of primary education and access to health care, especially for the poorest populations.

### **Capacity development**



UNICEF Comoros country office supported a general directorate of budget staff to participate in the Nairobi workshop for ownership of 2017 OBS results. Action plans were developed by the directorate with UNICEF collaboration to improve the budget transparency rating on the next OBS round.

The fiscal analysis showed that giving priority to the wage bill and the expenditure of administrative institutions was an obstacle to child-friendly spending. Wages consistently consumed over 60 per cent of country-generated revenues over the past decade, a much higher share than in other sub-Saharan African countries. This calls for partners such as UNICEF to be active in priority sectors, and to strengthen social mobilization on public financial management, monitoring and political engagement with the Government on the strategic allocation of internal resources. This requires advocacy, especially with development partners, to have a joint and consolidated action with the Government for greater budget transparency, better monitoring of public spending and greater allocation of domestic resources to the social sectors in favour of children.

UNICEF supported the National Director of Solidarity and Social Protection to participate in the annual meeting of the 'community of practice' on cash transfers from French-speaking African countries. This meeting enabled teams from 21 participating countries to share experiences and discuss the challenges with monitoring social cash transfer programmes. The exchanges focused on the development and implementation of unified social registers and support mechanisms for households receiving cash transfers.

### **Innovation**

UNICEF Comoros made progress on innovation and integration of new technologies. The Comoros Water Information System (SIEC), developed by UNICEF in collaboration with the National Directorate of Water and Sanitation, uses mobile phone technology to collect data and store it online. Kobotoolbox, which is a kit of data collection tools in the field, was set up. This innovative, efficient and effective data collection and processing system is expanding in light of its success.

As part of the sanitation-marketing pilot project, UNICEF Comoros developed an affordable user interface for toilets, 'the SanPlat'. A small structural weakness of the system was improved and the project has attracted interest in the Comoros.

UNICEF Comoros is popularizing improved models of affordable and safe toilets for parents and children's use. A household survey conducted this year shows that the toilet marketing strategy led to an increase in access to improved toilets from 9 to 15 per cent in just under a year. The introduction of new technologies, such as trapezoidal brick to reinforce the pits, or the SanPlat slab for a modern finish at a reasonable cost, raised household interest as well as that of masons and hardware stores. In 2019, the toilet-marketing programme will develop the private sector interest in these technologies in order to increase household accessibility.

As a small island state under development, Comoros is particularly vulnerable to climatic

hazards. UNICEF Comoros strives to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, through both programme and office operations.

With the marketing of improved toilets, UNICEF developed technical options that reduce cement use while promoting local production; this reduces the cost of toilets, and reduces the programme's carbon footprint. The education programme equips schools with locally-produced furniture, which promotes local employment while reducing the carbon emissions associated with freight. The health programme supports the Government with the maintenance and extension of the cold chain using solar energy.

UNICEF Comoros champion's renewable energy, demonstrating to other institutions and the private sector the profitability and return on investment of a 'green office'. Funds saved are reinvested in programmes for children, while greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution are reduced. The initiative has great potential for a snowball effect, with the result of improving children's health and preserving the environment in which they grow up. UNICEF Comoros is actively promoting, by example, the use of renewable energies, influencing and developing the local market, for example with the installation of solar air conditioners in all its workspace. Office air conditioning represents 76 per cent of electricity consumption; this innovation makes the office almost independent of fossil energy. This drastically reduced UNICEF Comoros office greenhouse gas emissions from 2.27 to 0.77 tons per month, while saving on operating costs through reduced consumption costs of electric energy of about US\$ 16,000 per year.

UNICEF uses WhatsApp to communicate with suppliers, availing information in real time and facilitating decision-making. The country office WhatsApp groups were created allowing instant sharing multimedia information of programme implementation.

### **Emergency**

UNICEF Comoros did not face a serious humanitarian situation in 2018. However, after an October armed insurrection on the island of Anjouan, access to basic social services in Mutsamudu was interrupted. UNICEF financially supported the Comorian Red Crescent to assess the situation following the humanitarian task force meeting with OCHA. A medical kit was provided to Mutsamudu hospital from the office contingency stock.

The country office strengthened the monitoring and evaluation officer's capacity for the introduction of cash transfers in humanitarian situations. The WASH programme organized and delivered WASH training in humanitarian situations to 60 officers of the General Directorate of Civil Security on the three islands. As a result, the Government and the officers gained operational knowledge and capabilities on the use of pre-positioned mobile water treatment units on each island. Besides, officers gained knowledge of emergency toilet facilities to set up and maintain sanitation facilities for affected populations. Following this training, partners' capacities were enhanced through the preventive maintenance of WASH emergency response equipment.

### **Country office programmatic and operational environment**

In 2018, the UNICEF Deputy Representative position was approved; the post was established to ensure the adequate coordination and integration of UNICEF programmes in-country. This change established new and solid foundations for improved programme coordination. The country office reviewed and revised internal coordination mechanisms. In 2019, with the new structure, the country office will set up a matrix management system for thematic cross-sectoral results. This year, efforts continued to build the capacity of Comoros country office staff to plan and monitor the results of the programme. Staff are now able to better track and document progress against set targets for children, analyse bottlenecks and work on corrective actions with partners at national and decentralized level.

In 2018, the UNICEF regional chief of information, communication and technology provided remote support to Comoros country office during the ICT officer's leave and the business continuity plan simulation. For the simulation, information, communication and technology staff from Somalia country office reviewed equipment required to perform the test. Main lessons from the simulation were the need to identify an additional relocation site to ensure the country office at least two relocations sites; formalize the devolution to Madagascar; and strengthen the emergency telecommunication system at the business continuity plan site. Building on these lessons learnt, the country office secured financial support from the UNICEF Regional Office to implement the recommendations.

The gender working group focused on mainstreaming gender into programmes and working with partners to promote gender-sensitive basic social services. A United Nations joint gender project was finalized. Efforts will be made in 2019 to mobilize resources for its implementation.

The Comoros country office was fully MOSS compliant throughout 2018, ensuring staff safety and security.

### Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

#### **The political environment and change**

Political concerns and reforms pushed by the Government have brought about changes in the national and regional administrative structure, including the announced removal of the Commissioner's portfolios at the island level, and a high turnover of technical staff and authorities in implementing partners' offices. This eventful year had many repercussions on programme implementation. Each political event kept government implementing partners distracted from projects, leading to tardiness in implementation plans. The reshuffle of the Government also created conflicts between the cabinets and technicians. Newcomers sometimes **questioned rules and regulations that more experienced** civil servants understand. Many meetings with the ministers were necessary to brief new ministers on UNICEF programming and implementation methodology and tools.

**Often, Government engagement for children was neglected for the benefit of the political agenda. Hence,** the nutrition platform, approved by the council of ministers for signature by the

president, is yet to come out. Engagements reimburse GAVI funds await remaining refunds, and the purchase of vaccine by the Government for 2019 is not yet secured.

### **Communication for development**

Communication for development is a critical dimension to accelerate the achievement of programme results. Tradition, religion and culture play a major role across the three islands. However, capacity in communication for development is an issue across partners both at national and local levels. Service provider capacity is also limited, resulting in conflicting or sometimes incorrect information provided to mothers/users, in particular concerning health and nutrition. Capacity gaps are massive across the three islands and will require an institutional approach to capacity building.

Under the current country programme, one staff covers communication for development and external communication with a reporting line to the UNICEF Representative. Given the demands of external communication, advocacy and visibility, there is limited time to focus on communication for development. Despite investment in communication for development at the country programme inception (capacity-building workshops with counterparts, knowledge, attitude and practice study, a communication strategy), the interventions are most often campaigns and event-based, and they lack long-term community engagement or interpersonal communication approaches. There is a need to mobilize families and influencers to deliver social and behaviour change to support programmes. The UNICEF Comoros country office will hire a communication for development technical assistant and develop a new communication for development strategy using the findings of the knowledge, attitude and practice study.

### **Integrated community-based initiatives**

Despite significant results in the field, the integrated community-based initiative using infant and young child feeding as entry point, implemented by UNICEF with World Bank funding, will end in June 2019. UNICEF led advocacy to integrate a community-based nutrition component into a World Bank US\$10-15 million project. The Government plans to scale up the model nationwide. It would be critical for UNICEF to maintain technical leadership at the least during the transition process to sustain quality of interventions. Building on achievements in the 69 villages, an early childhood development package could be considered for delivery (taking into account partners' interventions).

### **Health**

A constraint that the immunization programme faced was the result of late resources made available on 1 May 2018. This was followed by a temporary suspension of disbursements when the Comorian State delayed reimbursement of GAVI funds. Advocacy by UNICEF and Alliance partners resulted in the release of two out of four tranches of arrears, due and the resumption of disbursements.

In 2018, remarkable progress was made in vaccine management due to investment in modern cold chain equipment and supportive supervision for EPI agents. This effort will continue in 2019 with a focus on setting up standard operating procedures and strengthen management

processes within all components of effective vaccine management.

The process of developing micro-plans at district level to address equity gaps in immunization confirmed the critical need for better social mobilization and community engagement. This will be a focus for the next implementing period. While working to develop a coherent, comprehensive and evidence-based national communication for development strategy, UNICEF will continue to support locally-tailored effective initiatives.

### **Sanitation**

UNICEF increased access to improved sanitation especially for poor households. However, limited partner's capacity, limited interest from senior Government officials, and unclear roles and responsibilities between national, regional and local authorities are bottlenecks for a national scale up. UNICEF Comoros already met the new sanitation sector authorities and will pursue high advocacy and technical guidance for more engagement and strong oversight of wash programme activities implementation.

### **Early childhood development and education**

UNICEF areas of intervention in the education sector fall under priorities of the Education Sector Transitional Plan and are a government priority. These include school-level governance to foster learning in a well-performing system that grants equitable access to all children school readiness and access from pre-primary to the end of the primary education cycle.

Despite this, insufficient public resources are made available for the implementation of the Plan. For instance, the lack of specific funds dedicated to the pre-primary component is a constraint on the implementation of activities. There is no budget allocation for pre-school education, and most donors continue to support only the primary. UNICEF Comoros must plea to donors who support Comoros to mobilize resources for children under five years old, and especially the zero to three years. The country office plans to continue the reflection and begin to develop an intersectoral early childhood development approach, possibly using education as an entry point to advocate for increased public spending on early childhood development.

### **Civil registration and vital statistics**

Civil registration and vital statistics is an area that deserves more in-depth reflection. The country plans to undertake civil registration and vital statistics to propose appropriate and innovative approaches to scale up civil registration service provision, as well as strengthen availability of real time administrative data on vital events.

Difficulties were encountered in implementing awareness-raising activities to identify foster families who could take care of children in danger. The reception of child victims is done according to certain family traditions and by professionals in charge of protection. This informal system reached its limits and the country needs a legal system for children in conflict with the law and children who are victims of violence. The reception of these children requires a legal framework and substantial financial resources. UNICEF will include this issue on the agenda of upcoming discussions of decision-making bodies such as the forum of technical and financial

partners and meetings with the national party.

### **Social protection and public finance for children**

In 2019, Comoros country office will support the mid-term review of the national social protection policy to integrate the vision of new authorities and identify a new type of cash transfer intervention to which the Government will be more supportive. Despite having generated evidence on the management of budget allocations and expenditures, particularly on priority sectors of health and education, UNICEF Comoros is not yet considered a key partner in the discussion and decision-making on public finance management for children. Economic and financial experts from UNICEF Regional Office supported the country office to leverage support and collaboration with the Ministry of Finance. The lesson learnt is that the right profiles are required with sector government partners for advocacy to succeed.

### **Data availability**

Comoros faces a lack of quality routine data. The most recent EDS/MICS was conducted in 2012. In 2017, a population census was carried out but the results are not yet available. The availability of quality sectoral data is weak; the 2017/2018 education dashboards are not yet finalized; the national health accounts launched in 2016 are not yet published; and routine data of programmes show discrepancies. The Ministry of Health manages all HMIS data manually in Excel spreadsheets, which significantly constrains the use of any data collected for planning and monitoring purposes.

In 2019, UNICEF will continue to strengthen data systems, including monitoring using sex-disaggregated indicators. Advocacy and resource mobilization will be conducted for the organization of a MICS in 2019/2020. Given the context, the use of new technologies especially for WASH, nutrition and protection is inevitable and would benefit systems. While there is initial interest in digitizing data, the overall assessment of the enabling environment for digital highlighted foundational gaps that should be addressed first.

### **Programmatic and operations**

UNICEF plans to recruit a 10-month monitoring and evaluation specialist to focus on sector information-system strengthening and evaluation. The UNICEF programme, monitoring and evaluation combines the functions of social policy and PME specialist. As per the new guidance, Comoros country office is committed to conduct at least one evaluation per year funded preferably with regular resources. The country office will also support capacity development into the new national evaluation office.

In 2018, UNICEF Comoros implemented several strategies to deliver on programme results, including service delivery with 32 per cent of annual budget expenditures; institutional strengthening of national system (26 per cent); and shaping markets (4 per cent) applied on the sanitation marketing project in rural areas. Evaluation, fostering innovation and use of new technology as well as South–South and horizontal cooperation were funded with less than 0.5 per cent of total expenditures. UNICEF Comoros should examine the funds ear-marked for operating costs of non-staff that gained almost 12 per cent of 2018 expenditures.

In 2018, the regional staff counsellor provided on-site psycho-social support to Comoros country office staff and management to boost moral on issues such as office dynamics, personal issues and work-life balance. The counsellor also provided technical support to the selection and recruitment of the national psychologist for Comoros Ministry of Health Directorate to Fight Aids. In 2019, UNICEF Comoros will continue with staff well-being as part of its annual work plan implementation.

In 2019, UNICEF Comoros will continue to strive to mobilize resources, with UNICEF Regional Office support, particularly where implementation was hampered in 2018 by lack of funding.

END/