

East Asia and Pacific

Regional Office Annual Report 2018

Bangkok - February 15, 2019

1. SITUATION UPDATE: REGIONAL TRENDS THAT AFFECT CHILDREN AND WOMEN

East Asia growth projections stand at 6 per cent for 2018 and 5.7 per cent for 2019 despite lower forecasts for the newly industrialized economies (ADB). Growth in the People's Republic of China is still expected to be 6.6 per cent in 2018, moderating to 6.3 per cent in 2019. The Southeast Asia growth forecast is 5.1 per cent for 2018, assuming robust consumption and infrastructure investment. Adjustments of growth rates for Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand lower the 2019 outlook by 0.1 percentage point to 5.1 per cent.

The latest information on government expenditure on social services presents a mixed picture across countries and sectors. Government education expenditure ranges from around 20 per cent of total government expenditure (UNESCO recommendation) in Malaysia, Viet Nam, Thailand, Indonesia and China, to less than 10 per cent in Lao PDR and Cambodia, based on World Bank data.¹ Government health expenditure ranges from close to 15 per cent of total government expenditure (the 'Abuja Target') in Viet Nam and Thailand, to around 10 per cent in the Philippines, 6-8 per cent in Malaysia, Indonesia, China and Cambodia, and less than 4 per cent in Myanmar and Lao PDR, based on WHO data.² There has been a general trend of steadily increasing government revenue to GDP ratio in recent years, particularly in countries where social sector spending remains low, creating potential fiscal spaces for these under-funded social sectors.

China's expansion of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the region presented both challenges and opportunities. Massive infrastructure-led investment may play a significant role in promoting transport connectivity and regional integration, leading to higher long-term growth and therefore stronger government fiscal capacity. However, the amount of investment being made raises concerns over debt sustainability and squeezing out social sector spending that is crucial for children, at least in the short-run, in the countries concerned. The issue around the transparency of these mega projects is also perceived by some players to have negative implications on governance in participating countries.

Rapid economic growth has led to a significant decrease in extreme poverty in many parts of the region in recent decades. While more countries recognize the importance of social protection as a major public policy tool for stability and reduction in inequities, progress has been uneven in terms of coverage as well as expenditure and investment. In 2018, more countries were developing or scaling-up specific child grants. Those grants focusing on the early years are gaining popularity, and a life-cycle approach to social protection has been introduced in progressive national policies and regional strategic frameworks. Recurring natural disasters in 2018 underlined the importance of solid national shock-responsive social protection systems.

The main implication for UNICEF's strategic positioning is to strengthen government commitment and capacity to maximize national resources for children, starting with allocation and expenditure in social sectors. A lot remains to be done in equity and investment in services for children, and the risk that a small economic slowdown may imply a reduction of investment in social services must be avoided.

In social protection, there is a need to strengthen the focus on exclusion error (entitled children not receiving benefits) rather than inclusion error (non-poor receiving the benefit). In designing solutions, there is a need to avoid developing parallel independent systems for cash in emergency.

Urbanization and local governance. The East Asia Region continues to experience fast-paced urbanization and is home to nearly half of the world's urban population. While the 'urban advantage' fuels economic growth and poverty reduction, major attention was given in 2018 to the so called 'urban Paradox' whereby disadvantaged urban citizens fail to benefit from the urban advantage due

¹ Except the figure from China, which comes from government sources.

² Ibid.

to inequality and exclusion. Urbanization is challenging the way UNICEF is designing and implementing different programmes, and building partnerships with municipalities and the private sector to promote child-friendly cities. Municipalities across the region showed interest in working with UNICEF in identifying strategies and interventions to make cities more child-friendly. A first major regional event organized in 2018 in Surabaya called 'Growing Up Urban' was a milestone meeting for UNICEF and cities.

Health. Remarkable progress has been made in the region to improve the health and well-being of women and children. According to the latest data available in 2018, under-five mortality has dropped from 57 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 16 in 2017 (a 72 per cent decline compared with the average global reduction of 58 per cent). In 2018, Malaysia was the second country in the region (after Thailand) to be certified by WHO as having eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis. For immunization, per the latest evidence from WHO/UNICEF Estimates of National Immunization Coverage, regional coverage of the third dose of Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis vaccine (DTP3) – used as a proxy indicator – increased to 94 per cent (28,166,186 children vaccinated out of 30,104,825 in target) compared to 93 per cent in 2016 (27,557,396 children vaccinated out of 29,785,993). However, around 1.9 children are un/under vaccinated, and unnecessarily vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases.

Based on the latest annual data, 487,000 children died before the age of five in the region, and 241,000 (49.5 per cent) of these deaths occurred in the first 28 days of life. Newborn deaths were also notably higher among the poorest, most marginalized, hard-to-reach rural and urban migrant groups. At the end of 2017, only 57 per cent of pregnant women living with HIV in the region were receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) to treat themselves and protect their unborn child from mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT), compared to the global average of 80 per cent, with coverage of only 11 per cent and 13 per cent of in the Philippines and Indonesia, respectively. While ART coverage of children living with HIV had increased from 48 per cent in 2010 to 68 per cent according to the latest data, only 28 per cent of infants born to women living with HIV were tested for HIV within two months of birth, including 26 per cent in Myanmar, 5 per cent in the Philippines and 2 per cent in Indonesia. Outbreaks of traditional diseases have reemerged in some EAP countries. Chronic health system issues and persistent low immunization coverage have led to a vaccine-derived type 1 polio virus outbreak in Papua New Guinea (about 26 cases have been reported so far), and persistent inequity has led to measles outbreaks, with 29,623 cases reported in the region in 2018.

Important emerging health concerns involving older children and adolescents include: complications arising from teenage pregnancy and childbirth; mental health issues; injuries; and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Data show that levels of adolescent births were stagnant or increased between 1995 and 2015 in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The causes of increasing adolescent fertility vary between countries but are likely linked to increasing sexual activity and limited access to sexual and reproductive health information and services.

Nutrition. New data on the nutritional status of children became available in 2018 from countries including DPRK, Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Marshall Islands, Mongolia and Timor-Leste.³ Nine countries have between 25 and 33 per cent stunting prevalence,⁴ and half of children in Timor-Leste and PNG are stunted. The Global Nutrition Report 2018 shows that only China, Mongolia and Thailand are on course to meet the SDG 2 target. More countries are off-course for wasting, and there is a general trend of stagnation or even increase. A lack of commitment and in some countries 'wasting denial' may be constraining progress on scaling up treatment of children with severe acute malnutrition. EAPR also has the single largest number of overweight children aged under 5 – almost 9 million.

³ The anthropometric data from the 2016 Timor-Leste DHS was shown to be of too poor quality to be plausible and therefore not usable.

⁴ The new WHO prevalence thresholds categorize prevalence of 20-30% as "high" and ≥30% as "very high".

The *Lancet* publication 'Worldwide trends in body-mass index, underweight, overweight, and obesity from 1975 to 2016' shows rapidly accelerating prevalence of overweight among children aged 5 to 19, especially in East Asia and among boys. There are an estimated 82 million overweight boys and girls aged 5 to 19 in the region. Growing acknowledgement of the 'double burden' of malnutrition in children is observed, with governments in the region increasingly incorporating child overweight into their national strategies and adopting policies to address the obesogenic environment. For example, taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages have been introduced in Brunei, Malaysia (after successful advocacy from UNICEF), the Philippines and Thailand, and there is advocacy for more countries to follow suit. Sugar taxes need to be complemented by a wider package of policy measures, including restrictions on marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children, front of pack warning labels for unhealthy foods and beverages, mandatory standards for healthy school meals and restricting sale and promotion of unhealthy foods and beverages in and around schools, and policies on physical activity in schools. While some progress on school policies and interventions is observed, no countries have marketing restrictions or warning labels. While Asia represents the biggest growth prospect for unhealthy foods and beverages governments in many countries are not motivated to enact measures to counter this growth, facing significant food industry opposition and widespread conflict of interest, with industry deeply entangled in national government, professional associations, academia and institutions including health facilities and schools. For example, the industry-sponsored organization International Life Science Institute shares offices with China's CDC and has influence on public health initiatives, which almost always promote exercise rather than cutting calories or the consumption of processed food and sugar-sweetened beverages.⁵ Similarly, deep financial partnerships between the world's largest food companies and nutrition scientists, Government policymakers and academic societies have influenced policy and guidelines in Malaysia, where sales of processed and unhealthy foods have increased 105 per cent over the past five years.⁶ Momentum is growing for UNICEF to step boldly into the space of policy and programming to tackle child overweight.

WASH. Despite considerable progress in improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation, around 519 million people in 2017 were still without access to basic sanitation, and more than 75 million people, mostly poor, still practiced open defecation⁷. In terms of access to safe water supplies, 727 million people do not have access to safe water supplies in 6 of the 26 East Asia and Pacific countries⁸. Access to WASH in schools is a cause for concern, with 12 per cent of the schools having no drinking water service at all and 32 per cent of the schools with no sanitation service in the region⁹.

In 2018, more than 1.3 million people gained access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in EAP through UNICEF programmes. Some 800,000 people were reached in emergency contexts alone, in DPRK, Indonesia, Lao PDR and Myanmar, and EAPRO led or co-led the WASH cluster in five countries in the region. Some 948 schools were supported with child, gender and disabled-friendly WASH facilities, benefitting around 190,000 children.

Education. In 2018, the political economy context at regional level also favored putting education at the center of several technical agendas, with adolescent and youth engagement and resilience, and out of school children and youth prominent during Singapore's presidency of ASEAN. The 4th Asia Pacific Meeting on Education 2030/SDG4 focused on SDGs 4.3 and 4.4 and policies to achieve equal access to vocational, technical and tertiary education, and skills development for employability and entrepreneurship. Improving Learning, and the South-East Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) were priorities for the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), and highlighted

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/09/health/obesity-china-coke.html>

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/23/health/obesity-malaysia-nestle.html>

⁷ A Snapshot of Sanitation and Hygiene in East Asia and the Pacific, 2017 Regional Analysis of UNICEF programme countries.

⁸ A Snapshot of Drinking Water in East Asia and the Pacific, 2017 Regional Analysis of UNICEF programme countries.

⁹ Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in schools, global baseline report 2018.

in several high-level political and technical forums. The World Bank report, 'Growing Smarter: Learning & Equitable Development in East Asia Pacific', and its new Human Capital Index focused on equity, learning improvement and skills for employability, and boosted the debate in the region.

Despite these strong political statements and sophisticated technical guidance, challenges remain in translating them into effective continuing political and technical action, natural disasters and ongoing conflict in countries such as Myanmar, PNG, Lao PDR, the Philippines and Indonesia also slow reform. Key bottlenecks to reform include: complexity and multi-sectoral education barriers; insufficient budget increases; lack of system capacity; geographical dispersion of schools and families; limited political will and capacity; as well as key regional partners' limited financial and human resources.

In 2018, Indonesia and Malaysia launched improved data systems to define key education strategies, and DPRK implemented a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) Learning module. Innovative public financing is an important regional trend, and strengthening equity, increasing learning, improving teacher support and deployment, expansion of early learning, and improving secondary education, skills development and alternative models are priorities in all EAP countries.

Child protection. Continuing threats to human and child rights in the region include government proposals to roll back key child rights standards. National human rights institutions are only operational in eight EAP countries and only five (Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia and the Philippines) of these comply at least partially with the Paris Principles on National Human Rights Institutions.

However, in 2018, Cambodia, the Cook Islands, Micronesia, Tuvalu and Tonga all submitted periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – with Tonga submitting for the first time. Most had enacted legislation to respond to CRC Concluding Comments, and coordinating mechanisms related to children were recently revived in Tuvalu and the Cook Islands. The common recommendations for the Pacific are the need for effective implementation plans and resources of child-centered law and policies, the need for an over-arching children's strategy, abolition of corporal punishment, strengthening of juvenile justice as well as addressing climate change. A number of concerns were raised for Cambodia such as lack of judicial independence, restriction of freedom of expression through its draft Cyber Law, the banning of peaceful assemblies, and violence towards peaceful protestors. In 2018, recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review were issued for China, Malaysia and the Philippines, focusing mostly on civil and political rights as well as extrajudicial killings in the Philippines.

The situation and rights of children affected by migration remains a sensitive topic in the region, and the drivers of migration are complex. However, there were positive developments in this area in 2018. In Malaysia, the changing government brought opportunities to strengthen child protection, including for children affected by migration, for example, implementation of the Zero Reject Policy to ensure that all children, including certain groups of undocumented children, have access to education (however, the government decided not to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, contrary to prior indications). Thailand continued to lead the region in further expanding its generous national policy framework towards migrant children and as chair of ASEAN in 2019 will be key to moving the child rights and migration agenda forward. The 2018 launch of a cross-regional programme on migration, co-funded by the EU and UNICEF, and coordinated by EAPRO, will benefit and build upon these positive developments.

While all EAP countries have signed the CRC and either signed or ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (except some Pacific Island Countries), these international treaties must be translated into domestic laws and policies, backed up with appropriate budgets, programmes and services. In 2018, the adoption of the 'ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025', developed with support from UNICEF, aims to mainstream the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and marks a new milestone for the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities in the region.

The rapid penetration of the Internet is creating enormous opportunities for children and young people but also poses significant risks. The prevalence of online sexual abuse materials emanating from the region has grown significantly, and 2018 saw leadership on this topic from ASEAN, including: the Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development hosted an Intersectoral Dialogue on child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) online; the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children moved towards an ASEAN Declaration on CSEA online; and the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly led an initiative to strengthen the legal framework in the region specifically to address CSEA in travel and tourism and online. However, government implementation and enforcement of laws for online protection is largely lacking. Some new cybersecurity laws adopted in part to protect children, have actually increased censorship, suppressing freedom of expression and access to information.

Humanitarian action. In 2018, EAP remained the most disaster-prone region in the world, accounting for 70 per cent of the people affected by disasters globally.¹⁰ A rising number of extreme weather events including typhoons, cyclones and floods struck EAP countries including Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Tonga and Viet Nam. Increased seismic activity led to a series of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions that affected millions of people in Indonesia, PNG and Vanuatu. An estimated 25 million people, including more than 7.5 million children, were affected.¹¹ Meanwhile, some 4.7 million children are suffering from acute malnutrition across the region.¹² The impact of natural disasters on the region is likely to increase as rapid urbanization, population growth and climate change exacerbate children's vulnerability, and conflict and ethnic strife affect hundreds of thousands of children, particularly in Myanmar, PNG and the Philippines.

Private sector engagement. For businesses in East Asia, social sustainability is rising in importance, along with environmental sustainability with consequences for the majority of children's rights issues. There is a growing focus on child labour and family friendly workplaces, particularly in countries with a growing demand for workers and large anticipated demographic changes in the workforce. For example, in 2018, through collaboration with UNICEF, the global Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) multi-stakeholder initiative that develops and implements global standards for sustainable palm oil, revised its Principles and Criteria (P&Cs) to, among other things, include stronger safeguards for children's rights. Now, 3,920 RSPO members in 91 countries have a formal policy on the protection of children, involving age screening and training for company staff on child protection in plantations and smallholder plots, benefiting the approximately 128 million children living in RSPO-certified palm oil plantations.

EAPRO and its partners are delivering country-level programmes with key industries to build capacity and pilot interventions around family friendly policy, including enhanced maternity protection, breastfeeding rooms, access to affordable and quality childcare, and improved working conditions in the workplace and living conditions in communities. This push for family friendly policies, coupled with learning from these industry programmes can guide movement towards at-scale policy.

2. KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED AGAINST THE REGIONAL OFFICE MANAGEMENT PLAN

In 2018, EAPRO strengthened its programming focus by clarifying its strategy against its three Regional Headlines: 'Early Moments Matter', 'Safe and Sustainable Environments', and 'Adolescents' Potential

¹⁰ Australian Red Cross, '2 Billion People Affected by Natural Disasters in Past 10 Years', Australian Red Cross, 2018, www.redcross.org.au/news-and-media/news/world-disasters-report-2018, accessed 20 November 2018.

¹¹ Consolidated figures from UNICEF, governments and inter-agency situation reports, 2018.

¹² UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the World Bank Group, 'Levels and Trends in Child Malnutrition: Key Findings of the 2018 edition', UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Group, 2018.

Unleashed'. Three brochures, one for each Regional Headline, were published and disseminated within and outside UNICEF, constituting a key communication, advocacy and fundraising tool.

During the year, EAPRO responded to over 650 requests for technical support from country offices effectively supporting the achievement of results at country level. This included technical advice and quality assurance for country offices reaching strategic programming milestones, including Cambodia and the Philippines for the development and approval of their Country Programme Documents, and China, Indonesia and Malaysia for their Mid-term Reviews.

GOAL 1: EVERY CHILD SURVIVES AND THRIVES

In line with Regional Headline 1 – *Early Moments Matter* – EAPRO focused its support on Maternal and Newborn Child Health (MNCH), preventive and curative nutrition services and Early Childhood Development (ECD). In addition, under Regional Headline 3 – *Adolescents' Potential Unleashed* – EAPRO focused on gender-responsive adolescent health and nutrition.

In terms of programming for at-scale results for children, EAPRO continues to lead the efforts to strengthen immunization programme across the region, contributing to improving immunization systems in eight East Asia and the Pacific (EAP) countries, and information and data generated through digitalized health information contributed to improved strategic decision-making. In addition, with EAPRO technical advice and advocacy support, the first ever Public Health Emergency Tabletop Exercise in Myanmar identified key operational gaps. In collaboration with country offices, the regional office completed Gender-Responsive Adolescent Health (GRAH) assessments in five countries and their results will support strengthening the adolescent health response in the region.

Building on the successful certification of Malaysia as having eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV (EMTCT) and syphilis, EAPRO initiated South-South collaboration through learning exchange on the dual/triple elimination of HIV, Syphilis and Hepatitis B (in China, Myanmar, Thailand and India) and Newborn care (in China and Viet Nam). In addition, the strategic partnership between the Thailand International Cooperation Agency, Ministry of Public Health Thailand and UNICEF (Thailand Country Office, EAPRO and HQ) has been strengthened, which will lead to a joint work plan in early 2019 on EMTCT and syphilis through South-South and triangular cooperation.

Triple elimination of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B is also on the H6 health partnership (UNICEF, WHO, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UN Women and the World Bank Group) priority action agenda for 2019-2020 in Viet Nam. The EAPRO-led formative assessment on adolescents and at-risk youth in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam (in partnership with UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNFPA, Youth LEAD, Y PEER and Youth Voices Count) identified their most critical health support needs, including facilitating access to education, family/peer support, communications and mental health.

EAPRO continues to support evidence generation to inform policy and action for children and women in the region through strengthened survey quality, analysis and data use. It is advancing its urban health agenda through a series of analytical publications on urban health and immunization, including a gender-responsive adolescent study with case studies from China, the Philippines, Mongolia and Timor-Leste providing analysis for future programming of adolescent health. EAPRO has also supported MICS6 training in Thailand and Mongolia, the planning and design of a national micronutrient and dietary intake survey and Health Management Information Survey in Viet Nam, and national household survey plausibility analysis in DPRK, Lao PDR, the Philippines and Timor-Leste.

EAPRO has intensified its strategic and technical assistance and support for policy advocacy, with visits to 13 countries in 2018. EAPRO advocacy efforts have led to an ASEAN agreement to develop nutrition standards and guidelines and strengthened nutrition surveillance systems. Four more countries are adopting updated Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM) protocols, six have conducted landscape analysis on maternal nutrition and complementary feeding, and six are initiating strategies on overweight. EAPRO has successfully conducted advocacy in Cambodia, Myanmar and

Indonesia to include a package of key nutrition interventions, including infant and young child feeding and IMAM in the World Bank Global Financing Facility.

Deepening its partnership with ASEAN, UNICEF advocacy and inputs led to the adoption by ASEAN of additional activities to develop nutrition standards and guidelines. Technical partnership included the development of a draft ASEAN scorecard for nutrition. Support to the Philippines led to the finalization of the ASEAN Nutrition Surveillance System.

As part of its advocacy efforts and harnessing the power of evidence, UNICEF made a major contribution to the joint UN Annual Regional Report of Food Security and Nutrition. Eleven manuscripts were completed on Maternal and Child Nutrition for the EAPRO supplement: *Triple Trouble: Research and Analysis from East Asia and the Pacific*, and eight country and regional oral presentations and publications were presented at the International Atomic Energy Agency International Symposium on the Double Burden of Malnutrition.

Regional capacity building and technical consultation events supported by EAPRO in 2018 included health system strengthening for breastfeeding in nine countries, and for nutrition in emergencies through ASEAN and in Myanmar. The regional office also fostered cross-sectoral programming, facilitating the development of a WASH-Nutrition theory of change in Lao PDR, and another in Myanmar further integrating Early Childhood Development and Social Protection components. These efforts are contributing to strengthen programming across the region, with lessons learned from WASH-nutrition programming being documented and additional technical assistance on linking ECD and nutrition was provided to Viet Nam, the Philippines, Thailand and Myanmar.

The WHO-UNICEF global Nurturing Care Framework has helped country offices to increase collaboration across sectors. As part of its advocacy efforts, EAPRO contributed to have ECD as a core topic at several high-level policy forums, including the World Health Assembly in May, the G20 meeting in Argentina in November and the ASEAN 'First 1000 Days' agenda. EAPRO, the World Bank and New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade have also begun partnering for coordinated service delivery of IECD packages in Solomon Islands and the Marshall Islands.

GOAL 2: EVERY CHILD LEARNS

In line with Regional Headline 1 – *Early Moments Matter* – including quality pre-primary and primary education and learning, and Regional Headline 3 – *Adolescents' Potential Unleashed* – including adolescent education and learning, EAPRO focused on upstream support for policies, and data and evidence generation and utilization to improve equitable access and completion, learning and skills development, before, during and after emergencies. During 2018, the Regional Office has achieved strategic milestones in the four prioritized areas of education: a) improvement of pre-schooling and early learning; b) equity in primary schooling and learning; c) second decade education, learning and skills; and d) system strengthening – governance, financing and data, including in emergencies.

As part of its strategy to create an enabling environment to improve learning in the region, and in partnership with the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and the Australian Council for Educational Research, EAPRO strengthened the capacity of Ministries of Education to measure learning outcomes in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Viet Nam, through the completion of the pilot phase of Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) and the launch of its main survey, which will be the first-ever large-scale regional learning assessment. EAPRO organized a Regional Consultation with participants from seven national Ministries of Education and conducted a study on potential SEA-PLM Governance structures. In addition, EAPRO, in collaboration with UNESCO-Bangkok, ARNEC and UNICEF ROSA, organized the 3rd Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education, with planning, financing, equity, monitoring and assessments of early learning at the core of the debate of participating ministries and high-level stakeholders from the region.

EAPRO supported governments and 11 country offices to improve data collection, processing, analysis and utilization in the education sector, including through the Out-of-School Children (OOSC) initiative, technical advice and system analysis to the Education Management Information System (EMIS), and sector analysis and planning, including for equitable budgeting and financing.

The capacity of Timor-Leste, Viet Nam, the Pacific Island Countries, Myanmar and Thailand to expand access to quality pre-school services was strengthened through technical and strategic advisory support on community-based pre-schooling, socio-emotional skills development and curriculum development and school readiness. In addition, at least five country offices received specific technical support to improve learning equity related to several strategic initiatives, including: emergencies response (Myanmar, Lao PDR, Indonesia and PNG); teacher policies (Myanmar and the Philippines); multilingual education (Cambodia and Viet Nam); education and climate change (the Pacific); and skills and learning policies (PNG and the Philippines). The regional office also provided specific surge support during emergency responses in Indonesia and PNG.

Technical support, including introduction of the new skills framework and guidance on strategies for improving in and out of school adolescents' learning, from EAPRO has helped to build a strong foundation for regional programming on Second Decade Education programming and skills development in Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, China, Viet Nam, Timor-Leste and Malaysia. These countries, together with Cambodia and Papua New Guinea have also begun to revise their adolescent and education programming. As part of its advocacy efforts, EAPRO, jointly with ASEAN, hosted a conference on 21st century skills and young people's participation, in Singapore in November 2018, gathering some 80 participants, including senior government officials, UN organizations, ASEAN social entrepreneurs aged under 30, and representatives from the private sector and academia, and young people. Concrete results of the conference included the agreement between ASEAN delegates and EAPRO to partner with regional research bodies and invest in research and evidence generation on specific themes, including: industry, digitalization and youth engagement; pathways for girls' empowerment through 21st century skills and innovation; and development of typologies for public-private partnerships for skills development.

GOAL 3: EVERY CHILD IS PROTECTED FROM VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION

In line with Regional Headline 1 – *Early Moments Matter* – including the positive parenting and care practices; Regional Headline 2 – *Safe and sustainable environments* – including access to justice; and Regional Headline 3 – *Adolescents' Potential Unleashed* – including preventing and responding to violence, EAPRO strengthened the capacity of country offices during 2018 in child protection programming, with a focus on systems strengthening, legal reform, justice, online protection, treaty body reporting, migration and disabilities.

In October and November, UNICEF, WHO and the Government of Cambodia convened the Regional Conference Towards the Implementation of INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children (VAC) in Phnom Penh, gathering governments, country offices and NGOs from 20 countries. The conference contributed to the first regional showcase of evidence-based prevention and response initiatives, and helped build the capacity of UNICEF offices and multisectoral government delegations to design and evaluate strategies and interventions to prevent and respond to all forms of VAC.

To advocate for and support legal reform to strengthen the protection of children from on- and offline sexual exploitation and abuse, EAPRO co-organized a workshop with the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly that raised awareness among ASEAN states of international standards and reviewed national legal frameworks. Building on the recommendations of the UNICEF study on 'Diversion Not Detention', EAPRO built the capacity of justice professionals from 15 countries at the Third Regional Justice Conference on Access to Civil Justice for Children, to strengthen and scale up diversion programmes and alternatives to custodial sentences for children in conflict with the law in seven countries (Lao, Malaysia, Thailand, Viet Nam, Indonesia, PNG, Cambodia). EAPRO also provided technical advice on law reform in four countries on diversion, increasing the minimum age of criminal

responsibility, surrogacy and child protection. EAPRO and ASEAN also co-convened a regional consultation on children deprived of liberty in Bangkok, which resulted in all ASEAN countries making submissions for the UN Global Study of Children Deprived of their Liberty. It also co-convened a regional workshop with The Hague Conference on Private International Law to build national capacity on strengthening systems and procedures for children involved in civil proceedings (especially those related to child protection). Indonesia and the Philippines ratified additional Hague Conventions following the conference.

EAPRO also scaled up its regional engagement on child online protection (COP) by supporting the drafting of minimum legal standards on child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) online protection and an ASEAN Declaration on online CSEA, arising from the ASEAN Regional Dialogue on COP. Both documents will be launched in 2019.

EAPRO support was provided to Cambodia, the Cook Islands, Micronesia and Tuvalu to submit their periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and successful advocacy led to Tonga submitting its first report to the CRC, and Lao PDR was supported to submit reports on the Optional Protocols to the CRC.

GOAL 4: EVERY CHILD LIVES IN A SAFE AND CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

In 2018, in line with Regional Headline 2 – *Safe and Sustainable Environments* – EAPRO strengthened its technical and capacity building support for country offices and key counterparts at critical stages of WASH programming as well as continued to focus on strengthening the knowledge base and use of evidence to improve WASH access and coverage, with a strong emphasis on ‘leaving no one behind’. Significant effort and investment was made to strengthen the systems and enabling environment to advance and scale up WASH initiatives in the region, with more than 300 key WASH sector professionals from governments, I/NGOs and UNICEF staff capacitated through 10 EAPRO-led trainings and workshops on topics of emerging interest.¹³ This resulted in increased governmental demand to roll out training at country level, including: WASH Bottleneck Analysis Tool and Enabling Environment in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Pacific Islands and Viet Nam; Leaving No One Behind in the Philippines; and WASH in Emergencies and Financing in Indonesia. In addition, Cambodia, China, the Philippines and Indonesia received support to develop road maps to eliminate open defecation by the new Strategic Plan period and there has been discussion with the ASEAN secretariat on adopting a WASH declaration.

EAPRO renewed its partnership with key stakeholders, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) Knowledge Hub, Lixil, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and Singapore Water Academy to strengthen WASH policy and the enabling environment for at-scale WASH programming, covering sanitation and hygiene, WASH in institutions (Schools and Health Care Facilities), urban WASH, and Climate Resilience in WASH among target countries. The results include: new and increased financing windows for the WASH programme; policy reform, including the development of a Sanitation Policy, Strategy and National Plans in Cambodia, DPRK, Lao PDR and Myanmar; Sanitation Road Maps for eliminating open defecation in Cambodia, China, Indonesia and the Philippines; and improved SDG monitoring with disaggregated data in Cambodia, DPRK, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea (PNG).

In 2018, The regional office supported countries that are vulnerable to disasters with technical guidance, training and exchange of information for managing an effective response. It also supported technically all countries in the region to assess their emergency preparedness, response and resilience

¹³ i) Joint WASH Nutrition ECD and Social Protection Toolkit in Myanmar; ii) Climate Resilient WASH Framework in Brisbane; iii) WASH in Schools in Brisbane; iv) WASH Enabling Environment and WASH Bottleneck Analysis Tool in Bangkok; v) WASH Financing in Bangkok; vi) Partnerships and Private Sector Engagement in WASH in Singapore; v) SDGs and Leaving No One Behind in WASH in collaboration with Singapore in Singapore; vi) Rapid Needs Assessment in Viet Nam; and vii) WASH in Emergencies in Bangkok.

capacity, and to identify operational gaps for effective response and recovery from disasters. Notably, with regional office support: Indonesia was able to quickly mobilize surge support from the Global WASH Cluster and deliver the supplies requested by the Government for a life-saving WASH response; Lao PDR developed a Post Disaster Needs Assessment and Recovery Strategy for the WASH, Child Protection and Education sectors; Mongolia was able to contain infections in kindergartens and ECD centers; Myanmar actively led and coordinated the WASH Cluster and responded to needs; and PNG was able to mobilize surge capacity and funding to respond to a large earthquake.

EAPRO led innovative approaches to collaborating with the private sector in 2018, including ‘first dialogue with private sectors’ as part of Singapore International Water Week on ‘Better Business for Children in WASH’, to improve understanding of how the private sector can collaborate with UNICEF to advance *WASH4Work* and contribute to the UNICEF Sanitation Game Plan on reducing open defecation. Renewed partnership and collaboration with global partners on emerging areas of interest including BMGF and Lixil on the ‘Reinventing the Toilets’ challenge in China has revolutionized the thought process in addressing sanitation issues globally. Similarly, Water for Women/DFAT for gender mainstreaming in WASH has been instrumental in advancing UNICEF’s agenda of equity and gender inclusion in WASH.

In terms of evidence-based advocacy, a first-time regional collaboration between UNICEF and FAO led to a special chapter on WASH in its flagship publication ‘Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2018’, which identifies improved WASH as a key driver of better nutrition status among children. Another key regional effort to gain the support of decision-makers is the advocacy for ASEAN to adopt the WASH Declaration, which would be a breakthrough in ensuring that high-burden countries with open defecation prioritize sanitation in national plans and budgets. EAPRO also facilitated the participation of ministers in the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention in India that has led to increased political will and commitment to accelerating the elimination of open defecation in the region.

EAPRO also worked to support children and adolescents in urban settings in 2018. It led the organization of the *Growing Up Urban in East Asia: A conversation with mayors on making cities safe and sustainable for every child* conference in Indonesia which gathered senior representatives from 14 cities in six countries in the region to discuss challenges faced by children and their caregivers in the context of rapid urbanization and increasing inequity. The event created momentum and provided a platform for continued dialogue with local policy makers to reduce inequity for children and adolescents. EAPRO also established a new partnership with United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific (UCLG-ASPAC), through the creation of a Children and Youth Committee that will focus on evidence generation, child and youth participation in the decision-making process and promoting Child Friendly Cities.

Key environmental degradation and climate change issues were identified for target country offices (Timor Leste, the Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar, Viet Nam and the Pacific Islands). EAPRO helped review their programmes and activities for gaps and opportunities to address pressing environmental and climate change challenges that are critical to children’s survival, health and well-being. Key evidence generation, advocacy and programming opportunities were identified and developed to further strengthen programming on climate change and environmental issues in the target country offices. For instance, in the Philippines, EAPRO advised on strengthening local government capacity to design child-sensitive adaptation plans and access funding; as well as explored potential for cross-sectoral joint support programme for Mindanao including climate change and environmental management. In Indonesia and Viet Nam, the regional office provided support for advocacy and representation to raise issues around air pollution and strengthen partnerships. EAPRO also advised on strengthening child-specific data in the climate-related disaster risk management information system; documenting good practice in child-sensitive climate change mitigation and adaptation and the need for air pollution and child health evidence. In Myanmar, EAPRO provide technical advice in the development of a climate adaptation and financing plan for climate-resilient WASH services.

Notable progress has been made in understanding the need for data, evidence and knowledge about environmental degradation and climate change that are relevant to EAPRO programming and country policies. EAPRO has therefore prioritized evidence gathering and partnership development around the links between children's health, the environment and climate change. In 2018, key progress included the launch of country profiles on children's health and the environment; regional analysis of available information, needs and information gaps relating to the impact of climate change on education; mapping, identification and development of partnerships with key regional partners on air pollution and child health and other environmental and climate issues; and consultations with the Children in a Changing Climate Coalition to coordinate child-focused organization work on climate change. Also, UNICEF was proposed as a key UN agency for the joint initiative on using Environmental Health Data and Tools to Advance the SDGs in ASEAN.

GOAL 5: EVERY CHILD HAS AN EQUITABLE CHANCE IN LIFE

In 2018, EAPRO promoted child and gender-sensitive social protection, particularly providing technical advice and assistance to the development of *ASEAN Guidelines on Disaster Responsive Social Protection*, which especially affects children and women, and advocated for child-sensitive social policy interventions at a number of ASEAN events. It also supported a multi-country initiative on Shock Responsive Social Protection funded by European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), which resulted in options papers and roadmaps for Viet Nam, the Philippines and Cambodia.

Regional partnerships with key stakeholders were built to expand the coalition for child-sensitive public expenditure, including a joint facility agreed with the EU to be launched in 2019 to support seven country offices under EAPRO and ROSA to strengthen PF4C engagement with host governments. UNICEF also partnered with United Nations ESCAP on its 'Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific' in reporting on financial gaps facing the SDGs, particularly those affecting children in the region. EAPRO's partnership with Public Expenditure Management Network Asia Pacific (PEMNA) was maintained to ensure a child lens in public finance policy decisions and their implementation.

EAPRO provided technical assistance to country offices to engage host governments and other stakeholders to improve plans, budgets and expenditure for children, resulting in: a new government commitment to start a cash transfer programme targeting pregnant women and children in 2019 in Cambodia; increased social welfare allocation, including cash transfers for children and mothers in Myanmar; including important services for children in the basic package of essential public services in China; and improved medium and long-term expenditure planning for ECD in Thailand.

In 2018, the active outreach and engagement of the Regional Office with diverse regional and national networks and organizations resulted in increased advocacy and evidence generation on adolescent rights – particularly around adolescent health, access to education and 21st century skills, and online engagement – bringing together young girls and boys as key partners and contributors. EAPRO also engaged with countries in examining existing laws, policies and programmes that address adolescent needs and priorities, to better understand where UNICEF can add value as a technical partner of choice for national governments. Within sectoral programming, engagement has been higher for the education adolescent health components, alongside technical assistance in the nutrition and child protection components.

Technical support and guidance towards operationalizing cross-sectoral Adolescent Development Programming programmes enabled the Regional and Country Offices to articulate a better vision for adolescent girls and boys, and work with diverse partners to roll out comprehensive programmes that ensure strong components on adolescent participation. EAPRO contributed to the development of UNICEF's Second Decade Programme Guidance, which included good practices from countries in the region, and helped develop the UNICEF Global Guidelines on Adolescent Participation by facilitating the participation of seven country offices. EAPRO provided country offices with technical assistance

to develop comprehensive, multi-sectoral adolescent strategies aligned with national priorities and the needs of young girls and boys.

EAPRO's main partner on teenage pregnancy and child marriage is UNFPA, with implementing partners including UNESCO, Plan International and providing financial, organizational and technical inputs. In 2018 EAPRO and UNFPA began an important initiative to raise awareness of the patterns and links between adolescent pregnancy, child marriage and early union in the region, so that the issue is included on the agendas of governments and development partners. EAPRO, UNFPA, UNESCO, PLAN and IPPF gathered government and civil society representatives from eight countries to discuss required policy and programme interventions, leading to a SEA 'Call to Action' that was presented at the Global Meeting 'Girls Not Brides' in Kuala Lumpur in June. Innovative research on the social drivers of teenage pregnancy is being planned to generate evidence and recommendations to guide effective policy and programmes.

Teenage pregnancy and adolescent sexuality are linked with the lack of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and provision of information to girls on menstruation, puberty and reproductive health. EAPRO is co-leading to address gender inequality via innovative means. For example, EAPRO engaged with 560 girls in Mongolia and Indonesia on the design of a girl-centered period tracker app that can be used at global level, with support and funding from VentureFund, COs, WASH, RO and Gender. EAPRO also partnered with UNFPA, UNESCO, LoveFrankie, and YouthLEAD, to explore opportunities for sexuality education in the digital space, via the innovative 'TURNED ON – Digital Sexuality Education' interactive workshop.

In April 2018, UNICEF and UNFPA Regional Offices, supported by UNESCO, IPPF and Plan International, brought together government, UN and civil society representatives from 10 countries in Bangkok to deliberate on strategies and policies for tackling this problem, including the promotion of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in schools.

EAPRO continues to provide advisory services, capacity development, quality assurance and in-country to countries in their implementation of the gender action plan (GAP) and UNICEF Gender benchmarks. This include facilitating gender programmatic reviews, which is shaping workplans and targets for gender results. The China Country Office became the first in the region to develop a costed GAP implementation plan, based on EAPRO recommendations and a participatory assessment of gender integration in the country programme. Tailored gender training sessions were delivered to the Philippines, Cambodia, China, Myanmar, and Pacific Country Offices, and during regional sectoral network meetings. In 2018, EAPRO knowledge products include 'Practitioners' Guide to Articulating Gender in Results and Reporting'.

In 2018, EAPRO partnered with ESCAP and ASEAN to promote the rights of children with disabilities, organizing a meeting at the sixth session of the UNESCAP Committee on Statistics focusing on children at risk of being left behind, which was attended by more than 60 participants from regional government agencies. UNICEF and ASEAN are also collaborating on the 'ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities', which was launched in December 2018.

HUMANITARIAN ACTION

EAPRO has successfully strengthened regional and country-level capacity for preparedness and humanitarian response, expanding sustainable access to improved nutrition, health, water, sanitation, education and child protection services and fostering social cohesion for greater resilience and climate change adaptation.

In 2018, the Regional Office supported country office humanitarian responses in eight countries, (DPRK, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Pacific islands, PNG and the Philippines), reaching an estimated 2.2 million children with life-saving assistance in nutrition, health, WASH, child protection and education. This included 18 surge deployments through the regional emergency

response roster and other mechanisms as well as technical and financial assistance to country offices. In addition, emergency preparedness in all 14 country offices in the region and the Regional Office was strengthened through in-country preparedness and disaster risk reduction training and technical support on implementing UNICEF's new global guidance on emergency preparedness (EPP). Regional emergency roster training also enhanced the emergency response capabilities of 22 staff from 12 countries.

In 2018, EAPRO fostered regional partnerships with ASEAN, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Children and Youth Major Group (CYMG) to strengthen joint and integrated regional humanitarian action for children. This included joint advocacy by UNICEF and CYMG to the 24 governments in Asia Pacific that passed the Ulaanbaatar Declaration and committed to work for and with children and youth during the ASIAN Ministerial conference on DRR in July. Knowledge management has been strengthened to ensure greater predictability and accountability in humanitarian settings through regular webinars and the commissioning of an important research study, entitled 'Enhancing UNICEF's Programme Effectiveness in Fragile Contexts in the Pacific'. Two After-Action Reviews following emergencies in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia were conducted that helped to identify gaps and further strengthen emergency response and recovery efforts, at both specific local and more general levels.

During the Asian Ministerial Conference on DRR, UNICEF provided technical support to develop a concept note, conduct national consultations with children and youth and contributed to developing the Stakeholders' Action Statement.

CHANGE STRATEGIES

UNICEF's capacity in the region to **engage the private sector as a strategic partner in delivering its programme**, and as a duty bearer for children's rights, is steadily increasing, as evidenced by a number of promising initiatives undertaken by country offices and at regional level in 2018. Increased private sector participation in key regional events in 2018, including the ASEAN 21st Century Skills Conference in Singapore and the World Water Week WASH event, have enhanced the public-private dialogue and partnerships needed to support the SDGs, such as ensuring that every young person is in education, learning, training or employment by 2030, and providing universal access to WASH to the whole region. Integration of private sector engagement into programme discussions at global and regional level and joint research and planning are resulting in stronger updates detailing private sector engagement in regional programmes in the region, including ECD and WASH.

The *Better Business for Children* (BB4C) initiative, which puts child rights at the heart of addressing business impact on children globally and regionally, has been working with UNICEF country offices across global garment, ICT and palm oil supply chains in the region. After its launch in 2018, most of the initial country office members have come from Asia (Bangladesh, India, Viet Nam, and Indonesia).

Key achievements in 2018 include: introducing a 'children's rights and business' track into the regional private sector bootcamp for new staff; supporting strategic initiatives led by UNICEF country offices, including engaging in the revision of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) Principles and Criteria to include key children's rights issues; supporting a Child Rights and Responsible Business (CRBP) training programme for business in the Philippines through partnerships with training institutions; and engaging small- and medium-sized enterprises to support access to education for marginalized children in Thailand.

The Regional Support Center (RSC) led the development and piloting of a one-day training package on private sector engagement for programme staff, which is to be rolled out in all offices in the region during the current ROMP. Six country offices in EAP and SA regions (Indonesia, Viet Nam, India, Bangladesh, China and Malaysia) are currently implementing large-scale engagements with high-impact industries, based on the Children's Rights and Business Principles, and following the "Better Business for Children" framework developed by PFP.

As part of its commitment to **better harness the power of evidence and knowledge**, EAPRO developed and disseminated a regional knowledge management strategy, engaging with country and regional office staff to identify ways to address knowledge management needs and gaps. It also implemented several knowledge management activities, including exit interviews, preparatory work for the redesign of the Enterprise Content Management project-teamsite, and developing the Country Support Request Platform.

Towards the end of 2018, the EAPRO review of UNICEF's field presence: analysed field office strengths and weaknesses in supporting the achievement of programme results; assessed their added value; and recommended ways to strengthen the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of UNICEF's subnational presence in the region, particularly in relation to its contribution to achieving results in development and humanitarian programming.

EAPRO actively provided technical and advisory support to strengthen **data availability, analysis and use** in relation to MICS in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Lao PDR, Mongolia and the Pacific, and provided technical and quality assurance support to survey work, including Malaysia Data Landscape, the Papua New Guinea (PNG) WASH Baseline, the Lao Education Baseline and Malaysia Disability Module integration. It also engaged with country offices on data strategy for children in Myanmar, PNG, Thailand and Viet Nam, and provided training and advisory support to DPRK, Malaysia and the Philippines in their efforts to localize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In 2018, the quality of evaluations improved with the establishment of quality assurance measures including standard operating procedures and in-country training for country office staff. Five of the 11 completed evaluations were rated 'Highly Satisfactory'. EAPRO also carried out evaluability assessments in 11 country offices, and supported evaluation scoping, planning, implementation and dissemination. The first phase of the joint UNDP/UNICEF Review of National Evaluation System and Capacity for evaluating SDGs completed its first phase. Country case studies for Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Thailand and a preliminary synthesis report were finalized. This joint initiative is considered good practice by national governments, regional bodies and major development partners.

In 2018, EAPRO's efforts to **win the support for the cause of children** involved progress on the digital transformation project enabled the regional and country offices to communicate more effectively on the regional headline results and issues affecting children in the region. Support to develop and implement advocacy agendas on regional headline results resulted in: advocacy training in Lao PDR and DPRK for 50 staff; international photographers capturing working in four offices to make the headline results visible; and content creation support for DPRK, Timor-Leste, Lao PDR and PNG. There were striking increases in the number of users accessing and returning to the revamped EAPRO website in 2018. Some 86,734 pageviews were conducted by 38,429 users (70.6per cent of whom were first-time users) and 12,046 returning users, representing approximately seven times the number of page views, five times as many users and 21 times as many returning users compared to 2017. After training support for country offices, almost half migrated to the new website during 2018. The EAPRO Facebook page and Twitter accounts currently have over 40,000 and 7,000 followers, respectively.

EAPRO contributed to enhance **UN coherence** at the regional level through capacity development of UNCTs and support for the development and finalization of UNDAFs in Cambodia, Philippines and Myanmar in collaboration with the UNSDG and as chair of the regional Peer Support Group. Additionally, UNICEF collaborated with UNFPA, UN WOMEN and UNDP to ensure roll out of and orientation on the implementation of the Common Chapter in EAP.

INTERNAL MANAGEMENT

The Regional Support Center directly supported raising, through Private Sector Fundraising (PSFR) offices, USD 65.6 million including USD 10.9 million of regular resources for programs in the region and to support global programming and emergency response. This represents a 12 per cent increase from 2017 results. EAPRO provided direct support to country offices to build their fundraising capacity. PSFR results for 2018 included raising USD 65.6 million, including USD 10.9 million of Regular Resources for programmes in the region and to support global programming and emergency response, a 12 per cent increase over 2017. EAPRO also provided direct support to country offices to build the capacity and skills of PSFR and management and programme staff; monthly calls with PSFR chiefs; a fundraising 'bootcamp' training; and GAP Partnership negotiation skills training for PSFR chiefs.

The Regional Office monitors key performance indicators and gender and diversity parity goals to help improve workforce planning and to make human resources (HR) management more effective. It has leveraged HR analytics for workforce planning and effective HR management by monitoring Key Performance Indicators and gender and diversity parity goals. During 2018, this was conducted via: technical support at a face-to-face HR network meeting in Bangkok; monthly calls with HR managers; HR webinars for the region; and in-person visits. The Regional Rapid Roster Mechanism (RRRM) continued to be a priority, bolstered by an increased strategic approach and building the capacity of roster members in Emergency Preparedness and Response. RRRM was also updated with 79 regional staff, and the surge workshop was supported with an HR in Emergencies presentation to spread knowledge of how the roster system works. Gender and diversity parity continue to be addressed in the region, where 57 per cent of staff are, and 43 per cent of IP staff are from Programme Countries.

The Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) & Partnership Support and Oversight have been implemented as planned, with detailed guidance and quality assurance provided throughout 2018. EAPRO conducted regular oversight on regional key performance indicators and HACT and provided support to offices facing challenges. The quality of HACT and CSO partnerships was enhanced through staff training and network building. There was also progress in Managing for Results in eco-sustainability, driver safety, Business Operations Strategy planning and E-tools implementation. Regional supply capacity was expanded resulting in greater direct engagement, training and oversight capacity. The Regional Office produced Quarterly Regional Management Indicator Reports aligned to organizational benchmarks and shared them for comparison and Country Management feedback.

3. LESSONS LEARNED AND CHALLENGES

Engaging with the private sector. There is growing recognition in the regional and country offices that the private sector can have a significant influence on children's rights across East Asia and the Pacific, and therefore could be a key partner in programmes and advocacy. Global initiatives such as GenU and WASH4Work also put great emphasis on the role of the private sector, which helps frame the engagement in sectoral and cross-sectoral programme contexts. Other emerging programme priorities, such as overweight and the double burden of malnutrition, and child online protection, highlight the need to programme with the private sector as a duty bearer for children's rights.

The November 2018 ASEAN-UNICEF Singapore conference on 21st century skills and young people's participation demonstrated that the private sector is interested in actively engaging on adolescent programming. It also showed the importance of strategically involving the private sector at an early stage in the development of programming approaches and strategies, because it can enrich discussions and bring innovative approaches, which are also welcomed by government and civil society partners.

Overall, UNICEF's capacity to engage the private sector as a strategic partner in delivering our programme, and as a duty bearer for children's rights, is steadily increasing across the region, as evidenced by a number of very promising initiatives undertaken by country offices and at regional

level. However, UNICEF requires a more systematic approach to engaging with the private sector and to track and account for its contribution in advancing and achieving results. The capacity to involve business in this way is still very uneven across offices and sections, which means potential bottlenecks in scaling-up business engagement for programme delivery in Asia and Pacific. A regional training on private sector engagement in programme design and delivery was developed and piloted in 2018 and will be rolled out across offices in EAP, to ensure baseline capacity to identify the private sector as a partner or duty bearer in programme design and delivery.

A major challenge emerging at country office level lies in securing funding for existing and emerging private sector engagement programmes, particularly within the Better Business for Children initiative. Although grants from the private sector have been very valuable in supporting the startup phase of projects and in key activities, it is most likely that public sector funding will be necessary to sustain and scale up these initiatives. To support country offices, the Regional Office has conducted a donor mapping study focusing on key donors and opportunities that may support this area of work.

Cross sectoral work. EAPRO has significantly increased its efforts to work more cross-sectorally. This has been helped by the clearly cross-sectoral nature of the Regional Headlines agreed in 2017. During 2018, EAPRO programme sections worked together to further define and articulate each of the result areas under three Regional Headlines. This fostered collaboration and the identification of clear initiatives and approaches to strengthen cross-sectoral programming and support to country offices. An effective way of providing cross-sectoral support was through coordinated joint missions, for instance with education and adolescent or ECD and nutrition advisors. Other cross-sectoral approaches included developing joint theories of change, for instance between WASH and nutrition. The work on public finance for children involved joint efforts across social policy and other technical areas such as WASH, nutrition and health.

It was notable that significant efforts had to be dedicated to increase the awareness and understanding of staff throughout the region of comparatively new cross-cutting technical areas, such as climate change and adolescents. Much effort has been also dedicated to articulate programming frameworks and approaches, involving all technical sectors in EAPRO, to best guide the work at country level. It was found that programming initiatives at country level in areas such as adolescent empowerment lacked focus, and weak evidence remains a challenge. The lack of funding and technically qualified staff were major challenges to accelerating progress; particularly for climate change and adolescent programming, as well PF4C engagement. While the global public finance management training was well received, it only provided opportunities to a small number of staff. EAPRO is considering conducting regional training to ensure strengthened capacity.

The lack of results orientation in the public finance management institutions in most countries of the region is another constraint to monitoring and analysis of child-related expenditure and the related advocacy. UNICEF offices including Cambodia and Myanmar are making innovative efforts to improve linkages between inputs and results in social sectors, without necessarily changing the overall public financial management (PFM) system, which are proving to have a positive impact. The use of regional long-term PFM agreements has been an effective way of supporting countries.

On urbanization, the engagement of municipalities proved to be a very good entry point for UNICEF, which should be promoted in line with the global Child Friendly Initiative. However, this approach should be based on a solid political economy analysis, and on the real capacity and accountability of municipalities over their role in impacting the wellbeing of children. At the same time, it is critical that interventions at sectorial level take into consideration the need for a proper strategy for programming in urban areas.

Emergency. Although EAP is the most disaster-prone region in the world, the emergency preparedness and response (EPR) capacities of UNICEF and international partners in middle-income countries is sometimes limited, especially where governments have sufficient capacity to deal with

emergencies by themselves. While national authorities have increasing capacity to manage emergencies, UNICEF needs to adapt its approach to supporting countries. In many cases, EPR was mainstreamed within country programmes. In addition, effective mechanisms were put in place to allow flexibility while retaining capacity in the region. This includes the Rapid Response Roster Mechanism, whereby staff from one office can be temporarily deployed to another country. Strategic partnerships with standby partners have also been strengthened. However, some emergencies in 2018 have shown that UNICEF needs to ensure that it is sufficiently equipped at country level and institutionally positioned to effectively support emergency response efforts when large-scale disasters occur. UNICEF needs to maintain strong EPR capabilities at country level, even in countries with strong government response capacity.

Advocacy and outreach. Digital capacity continues to increase in UNICEF offices throughout the region, but communication team resources remain limited in both higher and lower capacity offices. The digital presence is growing, but not keeping up with general growth trends. There is clear space for improvement, but increased guidance, resources and support are required, as well as investment in monitoring tools. The digital outreach of the Regional Office is extremely limited without paid targeted promotion, due to regional differences (i.e. languages). The new UNICEF website and Facebook page, coupled with increased digital presence across the region brings an increased demand for regular, quality multimedia content. This requires increased planning and budgeting to generate content and ensuring closer ties with and training support for country offices.

Significant political sensitivity remains around a range of issues in the region. It is a challenge to raise the topic of migration with governments, especially in relation to child detention in the context of international migration and migrant children's access to basic services (e.g., protection, education and health). Changing political tides present a risk to implementation of the cross-regional EU/UNICEF programme, and there is a risk of gains being rolled back with changing leadership or public and political pressure. Advocating on these critical issues may place UNICEF on a confrontational path with government partners and could undermine engagement in other areas. Thailand continues to demonstrate leadership in the region (and beyond) by further expanding its generous national policy framework towards migrant children. Thailand's role as chair of ASEAN in 2019 provides an opportunity to raise the issue of children and migration and the potential to place more sensitive topics on the agenda at regional level. Full government ownership of and buy-in to the activities under the cross-regional EU/UNICEF programme, across key ministries and agencies, must also be secured.

The advocacy agenda for nutrition needs to be balanced across the multiple burdens of malnutrition – undernutrition, micronutrient deficiency and overweight. Advocacy for national protocols, policies and service delivery to treat severe acute malnutrition (SAM) within national health systems has been ongoing at country level, and in 2018 four more countries adopted updated protocols, more countries allocated national resources and Cambodia launched an innovative local ready-to-use-therapeutic food programme. However, the number of children reportedly treated for SAM in 2018 declined sharply, to half of the number treated in 2017. Indeed, the coverage of all nutrition-specific interventions in the health system is constrained by low investment and a limited focus on a systems approach to scaling up, quality assurance and monitoring. Too many UNICEF programmes, and too many governments, are still content with the 'train and hope' approach. Advocacy tactics must be revisited and sharpened. The public finance for nutrition initiative, supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the regional nutrition 'RISING' initiative conceptualized in 2018, afford opportunities to address some of these systems constraints. Advocacy for policies and strategies to address the obesogenic environment must also be stepped up and informed by evidence from studies of the commercial and socio-economic determinants of overweight and insights from key informants across a range of stakeholder organizations. The 2019 State of the World's Children on children and food presents an excellent opportunity for strategic advocacy for effective policies and systems strengthening approaches, as well as strategies to engage and communicate with caregivers, children,

young people and the wider public to promote healthy diets and to trigger food systems and social change in support of healthy diets.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2019

Based on the findings and recommendations from the 2018 Annual Review, EAPRO has agreed on 3 Management Priorities across the three Regional Headlines for 2019: 1) Emergency/Humanitarian Ready; 2) Urban Ready; and 3) Private Sector Ready. Efforts will be focused on strengthening regional office capacity to support countries offices and national counterparts in these areas and on building UNICEF CO capacities at national and subnational levels in partnership with HQ divisions.

Additional efforts will be made to strengthen Communications for Development (C4D) and to improve programming around adolescent development, children with disabilities and gender equality in line with global priorities and in partnership with other UN in the context of UNDS reform and coherence.

