

Pacific Island Multi-Country Programme

Part 1: Situation update in the country

International Monetary Fund economic projections from October 2018 indicate that most Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) grew modestly in 2018 and will continue to do so in 2019, with gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates in 2018 ranging from 0.8 per cent in Palau to 4.3 per cent in Tuvalu. Relatively high growth rates are expected in Vanuatu (3.8 per cent), Solomon Islands (3.4 per cent), and Fiji (3.2 per cent). Nauru is the only PICT projected to have negative GDP growth (-2.4 per cent). These projections do not signal major changes to available domestic public resources and expenditure to social sectors. Overall public expenditure as a share of GDP ranges from approximately 12 per cent in Tuvalu, to 32 per cent in Fiji, to 133 per cent in Kiribati. The leading social sectors of health and education take a combined share of government expenditure of more than 30 percent in the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Palau, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. The share of GDP expenditure in health and education ranges from approximately 7 percent in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) to approximately 35 per cent in Kiribati and 47 per cent in Tuvalu, reflecting the cost of delivering social services in small and dispersed populations.

Natural disasters present significant downside risks to economic growth and stability, particularly in the face of climate change-induced extreme weather events. The PICTs are classified as either medium- or stable risk in the 2019 Index for Risk Management. The Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of Marshall Islands rank relatively high, while Samoa ranks as low and stable risk. Risks have been classified as stable for the past three years in 10 of the 11 PICTs included in the assessment. Tuvalu is the exception, where a decrease in risk is attributed to the decrease in socio-economic vulnerability because of improved development. In 2018, natural disasters affected children in several PICTs. Volcanic eruptions in Vanuatu (Ambae Island and Ambrym) and tropical cyclones in Vanuatu (HOLA), Tonga (Gita) and Fiji (Kenny and Rosie), as well as prolonged dry spells in Fiji and Tuvalu, affected the lives of approximately 112,000 children. Typhoid, hepatitis and other water-borne disease outbreaks followed water shortages and lack of sanitation and hygiene during ongoing droughts in Fiji and Tuvalu.

Five PICTs – FSM, Kiribati, RMI, SLB and Tuvalu – were on the 2018/2019 list of Fragile States, according to World Bank/Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development criteria. SLB and Kiribati were found to be eligible for graduation from least developed country (LDC) status because of significant growth in per capita gross national income and human assets index scores in 2018. The economic vulnerability in those two countries remained a concern. Given the high levels of inequality, growth in gross national income might not be benefiting all. As measured by the Gini coefficient, inequality remained high in Kiribati (37.0), SLB (37.1), Vanuatu (37.6), Tuvalu (39.1) and FSM (40.1). Vanuatu is on track to graduate from the list of least developed countries in 2020.

The political environment was generally stable in 2018 across the PICTs, with no significant impact on the implementation of programmes for children. A vote of no confidence on the Prime Minister of SLB in 2017 affected budget approval in 2018 and resulted in delays in programme implementation across sectors. The President of RMI faced a no-confidence vote

but it did not lead to a change in government. The run-up to November 2018 elections in Fiji was generally calm, with minimal government slowdown.

The situation of children in the Pacific

Overall, significant data gaps hampered monitoring of the situation of children related to health and nutrition, education, water and sanitation and protection. Administrative data sources in key sectors to track changes in the situation for women and children across the 14 PICTs remained weak.

Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

Across the 14 PICTs, coverage gains were sustained among children younger than 1 year receiving three doses of combined diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus vaccine (DPT3). Eight PICTs (Fiji, Tuvalu, Niue, Cook Islands, Palau, SLB, and Kiribati) exceeded the global coverage target of 90 per cent for DPT3. Six PICTs exceeded Pacific regional targets of 95 per cent coverage. Nauru (87 per cent), FSM (73 per cent), RMI (80 per cent), Samoa (74 per cent), Tonga (81 per cent), and Vanuatu (85 per cent) did not reach 90 per cent coverage, according to World Health Organization/UNICEF national immunization estimates.

All 14 PICTs faced stagnating or declining health budgets resulting from modest economic growth and fewer growth opportunities. This was coupled with stagnation and an expected decline in donor contributions. Stagnating health budgets were contrasted with an ever-growing threat of rising sea levels and an increasing disease burden as a consequence of warming temperatures. Allocations are unlikely to improve, so health ministries will increasingly need to focus on improving efficiencies.

Fiji recorded three disease outbreaks in 2018: meningococcal C, dengue and typhoid. The Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services declared an outbreak of meningococcal C in March 2018 that prompted a nationwide vaccination campaign that reached out to 80,000 children and adolescents. Between January and April 2018, 55 cases of meningococcal C were recorded, with the majority of the cases (95 per cent) recorded among children and adolescents aged 19 years and younger and an average incidence rate of 6 per 100,000. By May 2018 approximately 3,200 cases of dengue were recorded. Typhoid surfaced in August and 31 confirmed cases of typhoid and 14 suspected cases were recorded by December.

Analysis of recent data showed coexistence of stunting and obesity in households of the Pacific. Secondary analysis of the Integrated Child Health and Nutrition Survey of 2017 in RMI revealed a significant proportion of stunted children living in households with overweight and obese mothers. This new evidence suggests that both stunting and overweight may be rooted in the early undernutrition of children, with early disadvantage impacting health and well-being throughout the life course. While obesity and non-communicable diseases are widely acknowledged in the Pacific, stunting is largely forgotten, despite increasing evidence of its prevalence.

Goal area 2: Every child learns

Available data suggest pre-primary net enrolment increased in some PICTs. Notable gains were recorded in Vanuatu, where pre-primary net enrolment increased from 42.5 per cent in 2017 to 78 per cent (76 per cent girls) in 2018 and, where net enrolment increased from 27.2 per cent (27.5 per cent girls) in 2017 to 35.6 per cent (37.1 per cent girls) in 2018. The increase

in Vanuatu was due to the Government's efforts to improve registration of early childhood care and education (ECCE) centres and enhanced investment in ECCE, particularly in policies to pay teachers and expand per-capita grants to include ECCE. The Government of SLB developed and initiated plans to take a pre-primary year to scale in 2019. Other PICTs, including Fiji and Kiribati, also expanded domestic investments in ECCE.

Net enrolment at primary level also increased in target PICTs. There were improvements in the availability of gender-disaggregated data. The quality of learning remains a concern in most PICTs countries. Increased enrolment has not translated into expected improvements in learning outcomes, as revealed in Grade 4 literacy and numeracy results for the 2015 Pacific Island Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA). New estimates in progress toward achieving learning outcomes are expected in 2019 with the release of 2017 PILNA results.

Learning was interrupted in 2018 because of Tropical Cyclone Gita in Tonga and a volcanic eruption on Ambae Island in Vanuatu. Gita affected learning for approximately 25,000 students (37 per cent of all students) in 109 schools in Tonga. In Vanuatu, 650 preschools and 2,200 primary school children were evacuated following the volcanic eruption. Although rapid multi-sectoral responses ensured most children could return to school, populations remained displaced and systems were still recovering.

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

Anecdotal reports were received in several PICTs in 2018 regarding children adopted by relatives living abroad who faced exploitation as domestic labourers, were denied proper care and access to education and health services and who previously received child welfare allowances. A significant percentage of the children were not living with their parents because of migration or customary adoption linked to schooling opportunities. These adoptions are not adequately covered in existing adoption legislation. Only limited avenues exist to address issues that arise in cases of intercountry adoption. Of the 14 PICTs, only Fiji is party to The Hague Convention on Inter-Country Adoption. Some PICTs have identified and are considering action to rectify this child protection gap.

Corporal punishment remained a very sensitive issue in the Pacific. Some PICTs were considering its re-introduction in schools. In Samoa, debates emerged in 2018 over reinstating corporal punishment, which was banned in schools in 2013. An amendment to the Education Act was proposed to give teachers the right to use 'reasonable force' to discipline students. This threatens to reverse progress achieved in recent years to eradicate corporal punishment. Ten of the 14 PICTs prohibit corporal punishment in schools, but the prohibition is not fully enforced. Teachers are not always trained in positive discipline methods and reporting and response mechanisms generally do not exist.

Sexual exploitation of children linked to foreign labour in the logging industry was highlighted in various reports. Logging industries exist in Fiji, SLB, and Vanuatu, where protective measures have been inadequate in eliminating abuse. A 2018 report by WorldFish highlighted the sexual exploitation of underage girls and women by logging industry personnel in SLB. Underage pregnancies are high in logging areas, for example in Malaita Province of SLB, with implications for both the welfare of the mother and child, particularly since children born from foreign fathers are not eligible to inherit primary land rights.

New funding was received from the European Union and Australia to respond to high rates of

domestic violence in the Pacific region. The funding presented opportunities for collaboration in areas where violence against children and violence against women intersect, but violence against children tended to be subsumed into violence against women and the distinctions between the two were generally not considered. Areas of child protection beyond violence against children that require comprehensive and distinct prevention and response systems were at risk of being undermined. Child protection generally was not well understood by development partners, governments and non-governmental organizations. To provide conceptual clarity, UNICEF Pacific commissioned a technical paper to highlight intersections and distinctions between violence against women and girls and child protection issues and responses, and implications for programming.

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

Approximately 91 per cent of the population across the 14 PICTs used improved drinking water sources, according to the UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme, while 74 per cent used improved sanitation. While efforts to improve access to basic water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services were made in all the PICTs, many such efforts were not able to keep pace with population growth and levels of urbanization. Sanitation and water coverage in the Pacific was stagnant. Large inequalities persisted and disproportionately affected women and girls. Very high rates of open defecation were prevalent in the SLB and Kiribati. Several enabling environment barriers persisted to undermine accelerations in access to water and sanitation, including outdated national policies, insufficient budget allocations and a lack of reliable data to inform decision-making. Gaps remained in integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into WASH policies (and vice versa), particularly in SLB and Kiribati. Fiji initiated a process to update its policies in 2018 and a plan is in place to update policies in Vanuatu.

With an El Niño looming in 2019 that may affect tropical cyclone patterns and threaten water security in capital cities and outer islands of PICTs, the mainstreaming of risk into WASH programming became a priority. With an increased focus on the adaptation needs of vulnerable small island developing states, the engagement of the WASH sector in climate financing presents opportunities to bridge development gaps related to basic access and address adaptation deficits in the safe management and security of WASH services.

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

Evidence on poverty and deprivation continued to show increasing experiences of hardship and poverty across the PICTs. This growing body of evidence on poverty brought poverty and hardship to the attention of policymakers. In September 2017, the Pacific Leaders Forum prioritized Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators on poverty (both monetary and multidimensional poverty) among 132 other SDG headline indicators to monitor SDG progress in the Pacific. However, significant gaps still exist in measuring poverty. Only one PICT reported new poverty estimates in 2018 and very few age-disaggregated estimates have been produced over the past five years. Poverty estimates published by Tonga in 2018 showed that 36 per cent of children lived in poverty compared with a 2014 WHO estimate of approximately 22 per cent of adults. Previous World Bank studies also confirmed that poverty rates in the region were substantially higher among households with more children. Small area poverty estimates in SLB (published in December 2017 using poverty estimates from a 2012/2013 survey and 2009 census) suggested that progress toward reducing inequalities in rural areas helped reduce headcount poverty.

A review of non-contributory social protection programmes in the Pacific produced by UNDP and UNICEF in 2018 found 34 non-contributory social protection programmes running in 11 PICTs. (No programmes were identified in RMI, Tokelau, and FSM.) More than half of those programmes were started in the last decade. Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, Niue, and Tonga had child-focused programmes in place. With the exception of Cook Islands, the depth and/or breadth of coverage of those programmes remained weak.

2019 outlook and funding environment

With modest economic growth rates projected in 2019 and beyond, external donors will remain an important source of funding for social sectors in the Pacific. Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) were the dominant donors in social sectors, particularly in UNICEF Pacific target countries. In 2018, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and China expanded their investments. Moving into 2019, such investments will require new partnership and collaboration modalities. The Asian Development Bank is ramping up its presence in 11 PICTs. New bilateral donors showing interest in the Pacific include the United Kingdom, Canada, and Sweden.

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 Pacific's multi-country child health and nutrition programme focuses on developing quality, resilient services and care practices, with an intensive focus on Vanuatu, Solomon Islands (SLB), Kiribati, the RMI and the FSM and targeted interventions in nine other PICTs.

The policy and resource environment coordinated by health ministries and grounded in reliable data contributed to improved service quality. With UNICEF's technical assistance and the involvement of multiple stakeholders, Kiribati Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MOHMS) revised its breastfeeding policy and developed a costed multi-year plan for immunization. The plan incorporates vitamin A supplementation and deworming into immunization policy for the first time in the Pacific. This allows for sufficient resources to be mobilized and/or allocated and contributes to improved immunization rates and reductions in stunting, low birthweight, and neonatal mortality.

Drawing upon evidence generated from a 2017 Integrated Child Health and Nutrition survey by RMI's Ministry of Health and government partners, more than US\$12 million was leveraged from the World Bank to fight stunting during the first 1,000 days of life under the early childhood development (ECD) umbrella over the next five years. In other countries, the existence of both undernutrition and overweight/obesity was addressed primarily through preventive interventions aimed at optimizing nutrition early in life, advocacy and technical support to strengthen health systems, including relevant policies and regulatory frameworks. UNICEF advocated for the prioritization of children in Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).

UNICEF supported PICTs in improving multi-sectoral coordination on early childhood development (ECD), in line with the 2017 Pasifika Call to Action on ECD. RMI established a

Cabinet-level, multi-sectoral committee on ECD, chaired by the President, to coordinate ECD programmes, including an Early Years Project funded by an International Development Assistance Grant from the World Bank. That project addresses health and nutrition, early learning and social protection of young children. The SLB Government hosted a national forum on ECD that drew commitments from various ministries on improving and harmonizing ECD efforts. Vanuatu submitted a Cabinet paper that details a series of national initiatives to improve ECD, including establishing a coordination mechanism under the auspices of the Office of the President. Kiribati established a multi-sectoral ECD committee to coordinate investments and actions on children across health and nutrition, education, WASH and child protection sectors. UNICEF's advocacy contributed to a commitment by leaders from 18 PICTs in the 49th Pacific Islands Forum Communique to address alarming stunting rates through ECD. In 2018, UNICEF secured funding from New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to develop the implementing guidelines and monitoring framework of the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD.

Kiribati, SLB and Vanuatu developed frameworks and guidelines for High Impact Nutrition Interventions that drew on global evidence and were customized based on country-specific data. Eight such nutrition-specific, nutrition-sensitive interventions were identified to reduce high rates of stunting. In response to high rates of acute malnutrition in some parts of SLB, the management of acute malnutrition was included as a ninth intervention.

Strengthening primary health care systems was at the core of UNICEF's approach to improving service quality and building health and nutrition system resilience. Supportive supervision gap analyses completed in Kiribati, SLB and Vanuatu in 2017 informed the development of guidelines outlining the steps, tools and estimated costs of undertaking horizontal health systems supervision.

UNICEF provided technical expertise to SLB Ministry of Health and Medical Services to design a service provision assessment survey of clinical practice adherence to national protocols and patient satisfaction. A health system expenditure assessment completed by the Vanuatu Health Facility Costing Working Group with UNICEF's technical assistance identified four areas to improve efficiency: health workforce reform, referral processes, supply chain and provincial resource flows. Given that health sector resources are stagnant or declining, identifying additional resources through greater efficiency will be crucial to improving child health and nutrition indicators.

Under the UN Joint Programme for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) with the UN Population Fund and World Health Organization in Vanuatu, UNICEF led the coordination of agency inputs into the annual costed implementation plan of the Ministry of Health and provided technical assistance to the Ministry to convene five national steering committee meetings to govern and monitor RMNCAH actions.

Health ministries in SLB and Kiribati adopted sustainable approaches to health sector capacity-building by including Integrated Management of Childhood Illness training programmes in national nursing school curricula. The capacity of 42 health workers and trainers in Kiribati to provide integrated management of childhood illness was improved. The Kiribati Ministry of Health and Medical Services, School of Nursing, UNICEF and certified counselors collaborated to develop pre- and in-service counselling and interpersonal communication curricula and courses. UNICEF provided guidance to integrate into the curricula.

Immunization coverage in the 14 PICTs was sustained in 2018, with eight PICTs exceeding the

global coverage target of 90 per cent. In Vanuatu, to address equity issues caused by remoteness, vaccine delivery trials were completed using unmanned aerial vehicles (commonly known as drones). This marked the first time a commercial drone company was contracted by the Government to transport vaccines. A vaccine payload was successfully landed after a 50-kilometer flight. A nurse, trained to offload the vaccines, immunized a one-month-old baby on Erromango Island, who became the first person on the globe to receive vaccines delivered by drone. A 2017 pilot project using hepatitis B outside the cold chain in three SLB provinces demonstrated an increase of 38 per cent for facility births and 20 per cent for home births. In 2018, the SLB Ministry of Health and Medical Services scaled up hepatitis B outside the cold chain to 13 facilities in two provinces, reaching an estimated 500 additional children with timely hepatitis B vaccine.

UNICEF provided technical advice to the Asian Development Bank and health ministries in Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu on the introduction of rotavirus, pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines. This resulted in a US\$25 million project to introduce new vaccines over the next five years.

The Kiribati Ministry of Health and Medical Services endorsed a three-year Digital Health Roadmap to span the entire health system. The roadmap aimed to help primary health care workers improve the quality of care and child health indicators by strengthening data collection and decision-making. UNICEF provided technical expertise for the development of the roadmap and supported a multi-stakeholder consultation process that included the World Health Organization, World Bank, and donors.

To promote healthier caregiver practices in Kiribati, RMI, SLB and Vanuatu, UNICEF, together with health ministries, conducted behavioural research; designed strategies for health sector engagement with communities, families, and parents; and campaigned to raise awareness about stunting.

Formative research in nutrition and WASH in Kiribati, SLB, and RMI that examined multilevel factors influencing maternal and child undernutrition was a critical first step in the design and implementation of communication for behaviour change and other interventions. Results identified context-specific determinants of nutrition and WASH behaviours, promoters and barriers influencing nutrition and WASH practices during the first 1,000 days. In SLB, formative research informed a Ministry of Health and Medical Services expansion of immunization communication strategy to include maternal and child health and nutrition.

The first phase of a nationwide advocacy campaign to reduce stunting in SLB was launched, focusing on three critical components during the first 1,000 days: antenatal care, including micronutrient supplementation; maternal, infant and young child feeding practices, with emphasis on breastfeeding and dietary diversity; and the three steps to good WASH practices.

Community engagement guidelines were developed in Kiribati, SLB and Vanuatu to specify the role and activities of skilled health workers in community engagement, including community mapping, home visits, community dialogue, engagement with local governance structures, accountability to communities, community demonstrations and outreach services. The guidelines will contribute to an increase in the percentage of caregivers with knowledge of essential family practices.

UNICEF, together with the World Health Organization, contributed to the response by Fiji

Ministry of Health and Medical Services to a meningococcal C (MenC) outbreak response by procuring 324,830 doses of MenC vaccine, resulting in 90 per cent coverage of children and adolescents aged 1–19 years. UNICEF also took mitigation measures to prevent the spread of polio from Papua New Guinea to SLB.

Goal area 2: Every child learns

UNICEF Pacific supported PICTs to realize the right of every child to access quality education and learning.

UNICEF supported efforts in Kiribati, Vanuatu, Fiji, and Kiribati to strengthen policy and investment in early learning. Kiribati developed an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Act, which was passed by Parliament in 2018, to guide registration and regulation of ECCE centres. SLB set aside funding to advance universal pre-primary education for children aged 5 years starting in 2019. Investment in early childhood care and education increased in Fiji and Vanuatu as the governments paid teacher salaries and introduced first-ever per-capita school grants for students. Vanuatu expanded its Education Management Information System (EMIS) to improve data on early learning.

With support from UNICEF, Vanuatu and Kiribati developed standards to improve early childhood care and education centre quality. Vanuatu piloted quality standards and improvement planning guidance in one province and provided training, pictorial guidance and planning tools to 69 such centres. Australia committed support to scale up this effort nationwide. Vanuatu launched a campaign to register early childhood care and education, guided by the standards, which contributed to a more than doubling of the net enrolment rate (from 42.5 per cent in 2017 to 78 per cent in 2018). Kiribati developed and tested a quality standard tool to guide early childhood care and education centre assessments and improvements.

With support from UNICEF, Kiribati, SLB, and Fiji tested new models to expand access to quality early learning. Kiribati launched a six-week accelerated school readiness programme during school holidays based on a 2017 costing and finance study. The programme was delivered by 290 trained teachers on 5 of 21 inhabited islands to an estimated 1,200 (nearly half) of the country's children at age five. SLB developed a new pre-primary year programme and prepared for its nationwide implementation starting in early 2019. In Fiji, a Mobile Kindy programme was tested as a cost-effective way to expand access to preschool in squatter settlements and other high-density urban areas where the existing system has little reach.

UNICEF supported efforts in Kiribati, Vanuatu, Fiji, and SLB to strengthen parent engagement in early learning and early childhood development. Kiribati developed an early childhood development positive parenting programme linked to an accelerated school readiness programme to be implemented on five islands. Vanuatu piloted an early childhood development parenting support programme in one province in 2018, delivered by 114 trained teachers. Fiji developed and field-tested a 10-episode local animated series to promote parent engagement in early learning and development that is expected to launch in 2019. SLB launched a small-scale parenting initiative, with 17 facilitators providing group-based parenting support and storybooks to 200 households.

UNICEF was the lead agency for early childhood care and education under a new 10-year Pacific Regional Education Framework that is expected to guide collaboration and attract new

resources for education in the Pacific. UNICEF served as Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Council for ECCE (PRC4ECCE), which promotes cooperation and knowledge exchange on early learning and is expanding its mandate to include multi-sectoral support for holistic early childhood development. UNICEF and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supported a Pacific Early Childhood Care and Education Teacher Competency Framework Workshop where officials from 12 countries and 3 teacher training institutions drafted action plans to implement the framework to strengthen teacher training.

UNICEF supported SLB, Vanuatu, and Kiribati to strengthen the inclusivity of education for children with disabilities and other vulnerable populations. SLB developed a module to help teachers identify students at risk of dropping out and those with disabilities and to provide practical tips on classroom management and individualized instruction for children with diverse needs. Training was delivered to 19 school heads and 78 primary teachers in 21 schools to pre-test the module, which was then finalized, with a plan to pilot it in 2019. Vanuatu developed a guide for early childhood care and education teachers on the identification of children with special needs to improve the availability of data on such children. A pilot programme delivered training to 7 school improvement officers and 114 ECCE teachers from Penama Province. Multi-grade teaching (MGT) is the only feasible option for many small communities in Kiribati. , New training modules were developed and 26 master trainers provided training to 15 pre-service teachers and 170 practicing primary teachers who implemented multi-grade teaching on six of eight targeted islands.

With funding through a Global Partnership for Education (GPE) grant, UNICEF also supported Vanuatu's completion of an Education Sector Analysis and a Barriers to Education Study, which informed the ongoing development of the Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy (2019–2030). Education ministries in SLB, Kiribati, and Tonga started using the innovative mobile data collection tool RapidPro at schools in anticipation of integrating school data into Education Management Information Systems in 2019.

Category 4 Tropical Cyclone Gita hit Tonga in February 2018, causing severe damage to 109 of 154 schools on the Islands of Tongatapu and Eua, affecting an estimated 23,000 students (37 per cent of the Tonga student population). UNICEF supported recovery efforts with supplies (tents, tarpaulins, schools-in-a-box, recreational and early childhood development kits, school bags, water bottles) that benefited 640 preschool students and 16,220 primary students. National- and local-level officials were trained in emergency response, coordination and situation monitoring. Most of the severely affected schools were functioning within two weeks.

In Vanuatu, the eruption of a volcano on Ambae Island in July 2018 forced the compulsory evacuation of all inhabitants, including 2,760 schoolchildren (560 preschool age and 2,220 primary school). Supplies (tents, schools-in-a-box, recreational and early childhood development kits) helped re-establish early childhood care and education centres and schools on Maewo Island, where most Ambae residents relocated. Most children were back in school within one month. Psychosocial support training reached 28 school principals and 56 teachers serving more than 2,100 students on Santo and Maewo Islands.

UNICEF supported Fiji, Vanuatu, SLB and Tonga to develop school-based disaster risk reduction training and guidance to build school and community capacities to reduce risks and enhance resilience. Initial stakeholder consultations were held to guide the development of context-specific materials for each country.

UNICEF also supported Tonga, Vanuatu, and SLB to build capacity on education in emergencies, including the impact of emergencies on children and education, damage assessment and analysis, risk-informed contingency planning, and basics of disaster risk reduction and disaster management planning. Training was delivered to 17 master trainers in Tonga, 16 in Vanuatu, and 8 in SLB, who subsequently trained principals and school heads (56 in Tonga, 20 in Vanuatu and 20 in SLB). Training evaluation and subsequent monitoring suggested that awareness and capacity on education in emergency preparedness and response increased. UNICEF also provided training on technology-based data collection in emergencies using AkvoFlow, which was used to collect timely damage assessments that informed the rapid response in Tonga.

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

Significant policy and legislative achievements resulted from the provision by UNICEF of high-quality international technical assistance and funds to strengthen understanding of child protection issues, systems and international standards. Two PICTs developed child protection system designs (Nauru, Vanuatu). Two worked on comprehensive child protection legislation (Fiji, Vanuatu). Three elaborated costed multi-sectoral national child protection plans, inter-agency guidelines and referral pathways and strengthened national coordination mechanisms (Kiribati, Nauru, SLB). Fiji revised its inter-agency guidelines. Three PICTs worked on adoption legislation (Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu) and three worked on child justice bills (Fiji, SLB, Vanuatu).

Introductory workshops on child protection systems took place in Samoa and Tuvalu to inform the ongoing development of child protection policy and/or legislation, and in Palau and RMI to develop a roadmap for child protection system strengthening. In Vanuatu, a rapid assessment of child protection community-based committees was conducted to inform revisions to a child protection policy that will provide the framework for child protection legislation. The availability of solid legislation, policies, plans and guidelines and specific costed interventions to be included in government budgets provided a normative framework for improving coverage and quality of services for children in need of care and protection. Costed plans included the addition of social workers as per human resource strategies that are part of child protection policies. Three countries (Kiribati, SLB, Tuvalu) developed policies on child protection in schools, which, once implemented, will contribute to a reduction in school violence and an increase in the detection and reporting of child protection cases to social services.

UNICEF advocated for and provided technical assistance related to the inclusion of global child protection modules in the 2018 Kiribati Multi Indicator Cluster Survey, which will provide data for planning, monitoring and advocacy purposes.

The social welfare system, which is one of the key pillars of child protection systems, is either weak or non-existent in the PICTs. The capacity-building priority for service providers is to strengthen the social welfare sector to coordinate child protection interventions, implement prevention activities and deliver services. UNICEF contributed directly and indirectly to the management of 1,373 cases of children in need of care and protection in four PICTs (Fiji, Kiribati, SLB, Vanuatu). UNICEF provided support for training workshops, planning and review meetings, supervision, computers and transport equipment. In Vanuatu, UNICEF also supported additional social worker positions and operational costs.

A Programme Cooperation Agreement was developed with ChildFund Australia to develop and implement a capacity-building package in child protection for the social welfare sector in Fiji,

Kiribati, Nauru, and SLB. The package will include case management guidelines, planning, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and tools and training of all social welfare government personnel. In 2018, inception visits were conducted in three PICTs to observe existing case management and referral practices and assess the educational and professional background of government social workers. In Fiji, Kiribati, and SLB, 63 social welfare officers participated in short-term training workshops on case management and referral pathways. UNICEF partnered with Australia's Volunteer Programme to place social work specialists in the social welfare ministries of 10 PICTs.

Thirty-nine judges in Fiji and 15 police officers and 10 lawyers in Kiribati participated in three-day workshops on handling children in contact with the justice system.

A total of 35 government officials working in social welfare, justice, education and health sectors in 11 PICTs participated in five regional conferences on alternative care, child justice, violence against children, corporal punishment and diagnosis, treatment and reporting of child abuse by health professionals. These conferences provided opportunities to expose different practices and for networking with colleagues from other countries and resulted in increased capacity and commitment to child protection.

Child protection community facilitation manuals and supporting communication materials were developed for four PICTs (Fiji, Vanuatu, Kiribati, and SLB). The manuals and supporting materials were designed to be used by trained facilitators to conduct interactive sessions with caregivers in communities. The intervention aimed to: improve understanding of child development, child protection issues, laws, and services; encourage constructive dialogue about positive and harmful practices; promote learning about parenting skills; and stimulate positive child protection-related behaviours. In the first three PICTs where the intervention was implemented, community leaders were oriented on the manuals so they could facilitate workshops in their own communities. A new approach was implemented in SLB in which six church activists conducted 90 minute sessions twice a week over a three month period. In 2018, the intervention reached an estimated 1,945 caregivers in the four PICTs. UNICEF partnered with the Pacific Conference of Churches to provide technical assistance to develop modules on child protection to be included in the curricula of theological colleges and facilitation manuals and supporting communication materials to be used by church leaders and activists with men, women, youth and children during regular church activities.

UNICEF supported birth registration in five PICTs (Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, SLB, Vanuatu) through mobile registration, public awareness campaigns and delivery of training. UNICEF also supported provision of computer equipment required to decentralize birth registration services and issue certificates and provided funds to cover four staff posts and operational costs in Vanuatu. UNICEF also supported the participation of civil registrars from five PICTs (Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, Niue, Tonga) in a data analysis and report writing course organized by the Pacific Community. As of 31 October 2018, the registration rate of children born since the beginning of the year in relation to the number of projected births for the whole year was 49 per cent in Fiji, 64 per cent in Kiribati, 49 per cent in Samoa, 11 per cent in SLB and 59 per cent in Vanuatu. Data on the issuance of birth certificates was not available in Fiji, SLB or Vanuatu. Kiribati and Samoa reported that certificates were issued to 100 per cent of registered children. An estimated 80 per cent of registered children in Vanuatu received certificates.

UNICEF responded to emergencies in three PICTs: the sinking of a ferry in Kiribati, Tropical Cyclone Gita in Tonga and a volcanic eruption in Vanuatu. Psychosocial support was provided

through individual home visits, group talks and child-friendly spaces, reaching 1,229 children (654 females).

UNICEF collaborated with stakeholders focused on ending violence against women and girls. These included UN agencies and other development partners, child-focused international NGOs, the Australian Government Volunteer Programme, Australian Government law, justice, and police programmes, Pacific Conference on Churches, Brisbane Accord Group and South Pacific Council of Youth and Children's Courts.

Goal Area 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

More children in the Pacific are now living in a safe and clean environment because of increased and equitable access to WASH services at schools and health care facilities and infrastructure upgrades following community drinking water safety and security planning. UNICEF Pacific's multi-country WASH programme strengthened equity by prioritizing countries with poor WASH and child health indicators, such as Kiribati, FSM, SLB and Vanuatu, and/or high levels of exposure to natural hazards and climate risks, such as Fiji and Tonga. UNICEF's increased role in WASH in emergencies and WASH in Schools provided entry points for wider engagement in the sector, with recognition of UNICEF as a partner of choice and broker for WASH sector coordination by governments, NGOs and development organizations.

UNICEF supported efforts by National WASH Steering Committees in Fiji, Kiribati, SLB and Vanuatu, with the involvement of multiple line ministries, NGOs and development partners, to strengthen sector coordination and assess Sustainable Development Goal commitments and progress through centralized WASH monitoring dashboards. National WASH baseline surveys and capacity assessments were organized with technical assistance provided by specialized partners, including Akvo, International Water Conference and the University of North Carolina. These activities informed the development of a WASH in Schools (WinS) policy in Fiji that will help institutionalize the Three Star Approach for WinS within the government system. At year end, the policy was drafted and was pending government approval. WASH evidence generation was strengthened in three PICTs. The Kiribati Multi Indicator Cluster Survey incorporated water quality at point-of-use. Provincial targets were adopted for community-led total sanitation (CLTS) implementation in the SLB. Drinking water safety and security planning (DWSSP) was adopted in priority communities in Vanuatu.

WASH in Schools (WinS), including menstrual hygiene management activities, was institutionalized in all priority PICTs. WinS activities in Kiribati resulted in the establishment of gender-segregated toilets and handwashing facilities in 32 schools, benefiting 2,425 girls and 2,360 boys. This was in line with the WinS Policy and relevant toolkits and guides developed in 2017 with UNICEF's support. In Fiji, UNICEF supported behaviour change campaigns, formative research on menstrual hygiene management and capacity building of teachers on the Three Star Approach. With UNICEF support, this resulted in the addition of menstrual hygiene rooms at 20 per cent of primary schools. The success of these WinS activities spurred commitments from the Governments of Fiji, Kiribati and in SLB to strengthen WASH in health care facilities through new policies and SDG monitoring for WASH in institutions.

Drinking water safety and security planning was successfully integrated into the Government of Vanuatu's national water service delivery framework through a capital assistance programme to improve access to safe drinking water inclusive of bilateral and national contributions.

UNICEF provided support to the SLB Government to scale up community-led total sanitation in rural communities. As a result, the National Sustainable Sanitation Plan was finalized and 115 communities in Malaita Province were declared open-defecation-free villages, benefiting approximately 17,000 people. Jointly with the WASH sector stakeholders group and health ministry's rural WASH programme, a sanitation marketing plan was developed and 14 local entrepreneurs were trained on piloting low-cost sanitation options, including Sato Pan toilets.

In 2018, UNICEF supported a gender assessment of WASH in SLB. Recommendations from the assessment informed training delivered to government ministries and development partners and revisions to Community-Led Total Sanitation Community Engagement Guidelines for Gender-Inclusive WASH programming. In Fiji, UNICEF, together with the education ministry, supported the incorporation of gender indicators in the Education Management Information System. That data was used by the Ministry of Infrastructure Support to prioritize schools. In Vanuatu, a gender action plan was developed at the request of the Department of Water Resources. A training was conducted with engineers and staff (including a female engineer) and the WASH cluster government lead focal point.

UNICEF continued to use digital platforms and social media to motivate children and drive behaviour change with national handwashing campaigns in Fiji, Kiribati, FSM, SLB and Vanuatu. These platforms were used regularly by UNICEF to feature information on WASH and field activities.

In FSM, UNICEF supported the training of 76 men and 161 women from the Chuuk State Department of Education on systematic monitoring and bottleneck analysis. A WASH module was developed for annual teachers' service training and a WASH learning session. Twenty-four schools were surveyed, which stimulated a demand to expand WASH inSchools activities to other states.

An innovative WASH safety planning approach was introduced in 32 schools in Kiribati, which led to improvements to water and sanitation and the addition of separate toilets for boys and girls. The WASH inSchools Three Star Approach was replicated at 13 health care facilities, which fostered improved access to WASH services for patients, their families and medical assistants. Cross-sectoral collaboration, including formative studies on nutrition and WASH, resulted in the design of the first-ever WASH in early childhood programme and financial commitments from New Zealand and the European Union to support WASH for babies activities in Kiribati and the SLB.

Cluster coordination training and support for information management were provided to WASH sector stakeholders in Fiji, Tonga, and Vanuatu, resulting in increased capacity to respond to emergencies. Governments in the PICTs demonstrated effective cluster coordination leadership with timely responses to drought in Fiji, Tropical Cyclone Gita in Tonga and the mandatory evacuation from Ambae Island following a volcanic eruption in Vanuatu. UNICEF support resulted in increased access to emergency supplies benefiting 3,577 children and 8,588 men and women in Fiji as well as 7,000 children and 18,000 men and women in Tonga.

Based on recent emergencies and best practices in preparedness, response and recovery, a Pacific WASH in Emergencies Coordination Handbook and Pacific WASH Resilience Guidelines were developed for Pacific governments, NGOs and the Pacific Humanitarian Team.

Innovative sanitation options were explored by the Fiji WASH Cluster with support from Habitat for Humanity and Field Ready. These included local production and marketing and trials of various rotational moulding applications, Sato Pan and compost toilets for use in emergencies and as public toilets.

UNICEF introduced community-based drinking water safety and security planning in Vanuatu and Fiji as a systematic, scalable and build-back-better approach to cyclone recovery. Both governments subsequently advanced the design of capital and technical assistance programmes to enable communities, schools and health care facilities to assess and manage risks to their own water and sanitation systems, improve overall preparedness and facilitate access to building resilient communities at scale. In Vanuatu, the drinking water safety and security planning approach led to a national implementation plan underpinned by a capital and financial assistance programme that was supported by multiple donors. The approach was prioritized through national consultations on climate financing and was targeted for consideration under the Green Climate Fund.

Following support provided for typhoid research in Fiji and the development of integrated approaches on drinking water safety, security and health surveillance in conjunction with Tropical Cyclone Winston response and recovery activities, UNICEF increased its participation in the Oceania Planetary Health Alliance. Advocacy for sustainable approaches for water, sanitation, and hygiene was supported through evidence-based multidisciplinary research to find solutions to health risks posed by poor stewardship of the planet. With inclusion of WASH on the agenda of the 2019 Pacific Health Ministers Meeting, UNICEF and partners, including the World Health Organization and the Pacific Community (SPC) can further raise awareness about water sanitation and hygiene within the context of the Pacific Healthy Islands initiative. Through the Pacific WASH Coalition, advocacy will continue for joint research activities and approaches to advance WASH resilience, underpinned by planetary health principles consistent with UNICEF Pacific WASH Resilience Guidelines.

Goal Area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life

As governments in the PICTs increasingly acknowledged the need for measures to address poverty, poverty reduction strategies were prioritized in national development strategies and plans. Gaps in measuring poverty persisted and impeded efforts to address it. PICTs agreed to monitor a subset of 132 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators as part of regional reporting on the SDGs, including monetary SDG indicator 1.2.1 and multidimensional SDG indicator 1.2.2. Only Tonga and SLB produced recent estimates on both multidimensional and monetary poverty. Efforts were underway to ensure disaggregated data becomes regularly available, since age-disaggregated data by age has not been consistent enough to identify the prevalence of poverty among children. As a member of the Pacific Statistics Methods Board and Pacific Statistics Standing Committee, UNICEF contributed to the production of guidance notes to help countries identify appropriate national multidimensional poverty measures.

Fiji and Kiribati will implement consensual poverty modules in their respective 2019 Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES), which will bring to five the number of PICTs with both monetary and multidimensional poverty measures in those surveys and enable detailed analyses to inform poverty eradication efforts. In 2018, 2 statistics officials from Kiribati and 12 from Fiji were trained on how to collect multidimensional poverty measurement data as part of HIES. This training followed an introductory workshop in 2017 supported by UNICEF in partnership with Bristol University that provided hands-on skills training on consensual poverty

modules.

UNICEF, in collaboration with UNFPA, SPC and donors, made progress in supporting Pacific country governments' efforts to close data gaps. Following a Pacific Sustainable Development Survey Design workshop organized by UNICEF in collaboration with the Pacific Community (SPC) and attended by representatives from 10 of the 14 PICTs, several countries committed to using the Multi Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) to improve data availability. Data collection for the 2018 Kiribati Social Development Indicator Survey was 68 per cent completed by December 2018. It was the first in a series of MICS to be conducted in the region following approval by the Pacific Methods Board of the MICS for use in monitoring progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Similar surveys in Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Nauru will be conducted in 2019.

Government investment in social protection programmes increased in the PICTs. Existing programmes were strengthened in both depth and breadth of coverage, with 34 non-contributory social protection programmes underway in 11 PICTs (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu). Over half of those were launched in the past decade. Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, Niue, and Tonga implemented child-focused programmes.

UNICEF Pacific supported the participation of two senior government officials from Kiribati and Cook Islands to attend a regional shock responsive social protection meeting held in Fiji in 2018. The Pacific Regional Workshop on Shock Responsive Social Protection, organized by the World Bank and World Food Programme, also was attended by representatives from Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and Solomon Islands, who exchanged experiences and shared knowledge on strengthening social cash transfer programmes. The knowledge gained is expected to feed into the development of a child grant programme in Kiribati and support the implementation of recommendations from a 2017 national review of cash transfer programmes conducted in the Cook Islands.

In 2018, Cook Islands increased the age of beneficiaries of its child benefit programme from 12 years to 14, and will increase it to 16 in 2019. This change, which benefited an additional 570 children in 2018, came after a national review of social welfare programmes carried out in 2017 with UNICEF's support.

With UNICEF's support, RMI leveraged US\$2.7 million in World Bank International Development Association (IDA) funding to support a child grant for pregnant women and children up to 5 years of age that could benefit up to 3,000 children over the next five years. Tuvalu developed social protection legislation to create an enabling environment for the establishment of social protection programmes that will support the most vulnerable. The framework will pave way for institutionalizing social protection programmes. UNICEF worked with Ministry of Home Affairs and Office of the Attorney General in 2018 to put the process on motion. The Government of Fiji increased its budgetary allocation for social cash transfers by 18 per cent, compared to an overall national budget increase of 6 per cent. The budget for Fiji's care and protection allowance increased 37 per cent, benefiting an additional 1,034 children. The social pension scheme increased 28 per cent. A new parenthood assistance programme was initiated that targeted mothers in poor households, who will benefit from a one-time payment of US\$471. The programme could reach as many as 5,000 newborns annually.

Budget briefs on health and education sectors in Solomon Islands and Fiji were produced and

widely disseminated to advocate for improved investments for children. In Fiji, budget briefs were shared with Parliamentarians to feed into budgetary discussions. At a lunch convened with the Solomon Islands Parliamentary Accounts Committee, UNICEF shared key findings of 2019 budgetary analyses assessing the consistency of government budgetary allocations, commitments to national development plans and gaps in prioritization. This marked the first such analytical budget engagement meant to strengthen parliamentary oversight over government expenditure.

In Vanuatu, UNICEF initiated an assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of spending in the health sector to support government efforts to improve health service delivery. The preliminary findings pointed to opportunities to optimize spending in human resources, domestic referrals and strengthening evidence-based budgeting and planning. UNICEF will support further work in 2019 to track resource flow (through tracer interventions such as immunization, routine delivery and antenatal care) from provincial level to frontline health service provider, how this impacts providers' ability to deliver the services and how users perceive the services provided. The evidence generated will support efforts to unlock bottlenecks in primary health service delivery.

Adolescent and youth participation in key national development processes gained momentum in Fiji and Tonga. In Fiji, support was provided to the Ministry of Youth and Sports to develop a new National Youth Policy that includes consultations with adolescents. In Tonga, UNICEF supported the inclusion of five adolescents in the National Youth Parliament second session. The adolescents were exposed to parliamentary processes and contributed to dialogues on child-sensitive issues such as cyberbullying, education and climate change.

In 2018, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands and Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) cleared outstanding Convention on the Rights of the Child State Party reports. Tonga's initial report had been outstanding for 21 years and FSM's second periodic report was outstanding for 17 years. Niue and Kiribati produced drafts of outstanding reports that at year end were awaiting final approval for submission.

Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

Workplanning processes. In 2018, adjustments to workplanning approaches were necessary to deliver UNICEF Pacific's Multi-Country Programme (MCP) for 2018–2022, which shifts focus from a few countries to delivering support all 14 PICTs where children's indicators continue to lag. The following three workplanning approaches were adopted by UNICEF Pacific: on plan on budget; sectoral annual workplans; and consolidated multi-sectoral workplans, primarily with PICTs where programming is relatively small.

The on plan on budget approach is considered innovative and a best practice because UNICEF-supported activities are incorporated into government annual operational plans (AOP) and budgets. UNICEF provides a letter of funding commitment for activities supported by UNICEF in AOPs and on how these activities are linked and contribute to government sectoral plans and results. This approach was first initiated in Kiribati, Solomon Islands (SLB), and Vanuatu by three UN agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA, and WHO) implementing the UN Joint Programme for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health. UNICEF subsequently expanded the approach also to include education and WASH programmes. This approach supports UNICEF's ongoing commitment to promote national ownership of Multi-

Country Programme activities and ensures that delivery of activities harmonizes with national systems and procedures. It reduces transactional costs and demonstrates that UNICEF Pacific's contributions and partnerships align with the Paris Principles of Aid Delivery.

Strengthening inclusive emergency preparedness and response through cluster while supporting new efforts for disaster risk reduction and resilience. Disaster risk reduction and resilience approaches ought to be better integrated. Given persistent inequities (particularly related to gender and children with disabilities) and increasing exposure to risks that continue to endanger the lives of children, UNICEF continued to enhance support for cluster coordination and dedicated attention to gender-responsive and inclusive efforts in disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness and response. All countries and sectors do not realize this need and as such are not open to establishing relevant structures before disaster strikes.

UNICEF demonstrated its ability to strengthen cluster coordination and related support during the Tropical Cyclone Gita response in Tonga, where the timely activation of the WASH emergency cluster enabled the country to quickly respond to WASH needs. UNICEF supported the education cluster to address coordination capacity gaps in the days following the cyclone, ensuring children could return to school within two weeks. UNICEF will provide support to strengthen capacities in Education in Emergencies (EiE) and expand EiE/Disaster Risk Reduction beyond the current focus on primary schools to include pre-primary and secondary as well.

Innovative resource mobilization and strategic partnership. UNICEF Pacific diversified funding sources through innovative resource mobilization and strategic partnerships. UNICEF succeeded in leveraging substantial development partner and government resources for children. Efforts were made to leverage financing through bilateral programmes. UNICEF provided technical assistance to governments to directly access Official Development Assistance for WASH activities in SLB (funded by European Union), in Vanuatu (funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Finance and Trade), and in Fiji and Vanuatu (through climate financing).

UNICEF engaged with multilateral and development banks on new funding opportunities and learned useful lessons. UNICEF used technical expertise to influence a US\$25 million investment from the Asian Development Bank to introduce new vaccines in four PICTs and ensured that the technical design of the project conformed to global standards and international best practices. UNICEF also leveraged resources to build the evidence base and advocate for greater investment for children. Drawing upon evidence generated from a UNICEF-supported 2017 Integrated Child Health and Nutrition Survey to develop a technical concept note to address stunting at the request of the Government of RMI, more than US\$12 million was leveraged from the World Bank to fight stunting during the first 1,000 days under the early childhood development umbrella over the next five years. Upcoming Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys in several countries will provide additional data that UNICEF will use in intensified evidence-based advocacy for sustained investment in children and social services.

Demand for services and behaviour change. Demand for services remained low despite investments in system building and service provision. UNICEF support to key sectors in 2018 identified important limitations in system capacities to strategically promote and sustain positive practices and engage communities. Entrenched social norms continued to challenge programme effectiveness. For example, due to the low status of children and women in many

PICTs, family reputations and community harmony tend to be prioritized over the individual well-being of children and their right to access justice. This hinders efforts to promote the adoption of positive practices for children and their access to basic child protection services. Demand generation and awareness-raising ought to be considered in the introduction of new programmes or modalities that are unfamiliar to service providers, families and communities. This is particularly relevant in the case of large-scale efforts such as the launch of the Accelerated School Readiness Programme (ASRP) in Kiribati and pre-primary year activities in SLB.

Communication ought to be considered in innovations and new service models for child well-being and development to ensure that lessons learned from early adopters are shared and adjustments are made as required in a coherent and timely fashion. While some investment was made in evidence generation and social data utilization, for instance, on stunting, research and disaggregated data relevant to changing behaviour and social norms was not robust enough to consistently inform evidence-based communication for development (C4D) strategies. Increased investment in evidence-based C4D is required, along with efforts to strengthen government systems and capacities for community engagement, to ensure activities go beyond ad hoc awareness-raising campaigns to systematized communication that promotes sustainable shifts in behaviour and social norms.

Pilot to scale. A key lesson learned in 2018 was the need to strengthen learning and build monitoring and research into pilots of new models from inception. The development of innovative models often has not been complemented by robust monitoring and data collection systems, which are required to capture the evidence needed to guide programme revision and to scale up planning. These systems are particularly relevant in taking to scale pilot programmes such as the Accelerated School Readiness Programme in Kiribati, pre-primary year activities in SLB and Community Facilitation Packages in Fiji, Kiribati, and Vanuatu. The initial implementation of child protection Community Facilitation Packages included one-off workshops for facilitators without adequate supervision, monitoring or evaluation mechanisms in place. Revisions to tools, materials, and implementation and coverage strategies are expected in 2019 designed to strengthen the packages. Across all its focus areas, UNICEF will work to enhance monitoring plans and complementary information management systems and build on existing government systems to ensure systematic data collection to promote learning for scale-up.

Constraints

Lack of reliable and timely data

Availability and access to child-centred data remained a challenge. The PICTs have limited capacity to monitor the situation of children and track progress against key development goals. National statistical systems in the PICTs are among the weakest in the world and are chronically under-resourced in terms of qualified staff and operational budgets. Most PICTs also lack high-quality administrative data sources, such as education and health databases and civil registration records. These challenges are compounded by weak coordination and cooperation between and among government ministries, and low capacity to analyze data and translate numbers into policy-relevant information.

The lack of reliable and timely data was a constraint in 2018 that impeded efforts to effectively target resources and programmes and track progress. Social surveys were infrequent and some PICTs, including Fiji, FSM, Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau, did not implement

recognized survey tools such as Multi Indicator Cluster Surveys or Demographic and Health Surveys. When data did exist, it was often too dated to be useful. For instance, Demographic Health Survey data in Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu is more than a decade old. Per capita cost of conducting surveys in the Pacific is high compared to other regions, as populations are small and thinly spread, which might contribute to the infrequency of surveys.

To address this constraint, UNICEF will continue to collaborate with UNFPA and the Pacific Community to support the administration of consistent surveys using the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey framework. UNICEF also will engage with other regional organizations, such as the Pacific Community, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, and with UN agencies, to complement existing efforts to improve administrative data sources. This will include innovations to enhance the range of data captured through tools such as Education Management Information Systems, and to provide equipment to clear backlogs in civil registration data. UNICEF will support Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Nauru to conduct Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys in 2019.

High exposure to climate change risks and adverse natural hazards

The PICTs continue to be exposed to a variety of hazardous events annually, including tropical cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and drought. This has sometimes interrupted programme implementation. Many PICTs, especially Tuvalu, Kiribati, and RMI, the so-called 'atoll states,' are made up of atolls that are only metres above sea level. Pressure on infrastructure and public services in those countries can be expected to be especially acute. Thus, better integration of disaster risk reduction and resilience approaches is required.

The complexity of the programme environment

Delivering the Pacific Multi Country Programme within a complicated management and operating environment remained a challenge. The programme must respond to highly scattered populations, individual country ministries in each sector, and civil society and private sector partners in 14 countries. Most of the countries have no UNICEF staff. The vastness of the region results in very high transaction costs. The increased level of regular resources in the new Multi-Country Programme has allowed UNICEF Pacific to support a variety of critical programming needs to reach the most vulnerable and excluded children in remote islands in the 14 PICTs. South-South Cooperation in the Pacific sub-region has increased value for money as it bypasses the learning stage and group activities, therefore, reducing costs. UNICEF Pacific translates lessons from one country to initiatives in another. This interaction also leads to greater synergies and offers the opportunity for collaborative dialogue.