UNICEF Annual Report 2017

The Gambia

Executive summary
After 22 years, 2017 ushered in a new Government in the Gambia. The democratic change brought in a new set of government priorities and new appointments of political officers. This year UNICEF Gambia also commenced a new country programme. Following the change in priorities of the new Government, UNICEF Gambia adjusted the country programme to include emerging issues such as children on the move and transitional justice. UNICEF’s alignment in response to the situation of children in Gambia was taken into account in the ongoing revision of the United Nations Development Assistant Framework (UNDAF).

After several years supporting the development of a social protection policy and instruments, the Country Office (CO) secured funding from the European Union to provide cash transfers to mothers who were lactating with children under 24 months old. The initiative targeted 6,000 mothers and child couples, which is nearly 10 per cent of all Gambian newborns. It complemented the World Bank prenatal cash transfers that cover the critical first 1,000-days period of a child’s life.

Working with the transitional justice priorities of the Government, the CO supported the Ministry of Justice to ensure that children’s voices were heard in a key high visibility government programme. UNICEF Gambia also made progress against female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage, including supporting a conference on Islam and family values that aimed to dispel the myth that the Koran provides evidence for the practices.

A reproductive maternal newborn adolescent and child health (RMNACH) policy and strategic plan were developed. The CO adopted the concept ‘Never Again in My Generation’ that embraced child, youth and adolescent participation to commit to the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting, child marriage and open defecation.

The community-led total sanitation (CLTS) initiative focussed on the verification and certification of open defecation free (ODF) districts by monitoring and following-up with communities triggered in 2016. Nineteen districts were declared ODF.

UNICEF Gambia stepped-up its work supporting ‘Children on the Move’. It partnered with the newly-established country office of the International Office of Migration (IOM) to ensure coherence between the two agencies. Partnering with the Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW), UNICEF Gambia supported service provision and reintegration for child returnees.

The CO initiated work in supporting minimum standards in Majalis (informal Koranic schools) that house undocumented children. The adoption of the UN-wide Business Operating Strategy increased effectiveness and efficiencies. UNICEF Gambia was a key driver in UNDAF and United Nations Country Team (UNCT) coordination, continuing fruitful partnerships with FAO, World Food Programme (WFP), UNFPA and World Health Organisation (WHO) among others.
The change in Government delayed the development of the National Develop Plan, as a critical mass of government office-holders were new. This resulted in the slow implementation of activities by government partners and increased the amount of time invested by the CO in sensitization of the new Government’s policy and administrative holders on historical partnership existing between the ministries and the UNICEF. UNICEF Gambia also experienced understaffing and turn-over, limiting the CO response to programmatic requests.

Despite the challenges, UNICEF Gambia made significant gains for children in several areas, including engagement in domestic public finance for children. The CO established a collaborative partnership with the new National Assembly that centred on advocating for public financing for children in Gambia. The National Assembly was supported with specific trainings and external visits to reinforce the policy makers’ skills in implementing their mandate. Members of the National Assembly visited UNICEF’s project on cash transfers and noted the positive influence on the lives of mothers and their children in poor households.

UNICEF Gambia worked with the commercial law firm, DLA Piper, in a programme to ensure children’s voices were heard and articulated on the transitional justice agenda of the Government. The CO supported a ‘children’s caravan’ to solicit children’s voices, and initiated a programme ensuring the participation of children and adolescents in healing human rights’ violations that were recorded during the previous Government.

The CO started a partnership with Dubai Cares on the early childhood development (ECD) programme in Gambia. The partnership implemented the national strategy on ECD with the roll-out of sensitization and training of young parents on parenting skills and practice, and to improve support structures capacity on early childhood development.

**Humanitarian assistance**

After the elections on 1 December 2016, the Gambia entered a period of political tension with the threat of engagement of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia (ECOMIG) troops in Gambia in January and February 2017. This raised fears and contributed to an outflow of Gambians to Senegal and rural areas from the high-density greater Banjul area: approximately 162,000 people moved as internally displaced persons or as short-term migrants in Senegal. Most of the displaced relied on family and tribal connections in host communities, and returned in February and March as political tensions abated and the prior President departed to Equatorial Guinea.

UNICEF participated in a joint United Nations assessment that estimated that approximately 162,000 people moved during this period, and an estimated 65 per cent were children. The CO supported the safe movement of migrants and returnees at border areas and in rural areas in partnership with the Gambian Red Cross. Support focused on water, sanitation and health (WASH) activities in 225 host communities across the country, and on supporting movement of populations at border posts and at Gambia river crossings.

Red Cross volunteers conducted sensitization in 225 communities on the subject of hygiene and sanitation, including the community-led total sanitation approach, to trigger communities for latrine construction and construction of “tippy-taps” for handwashing. Sensitization on hygiene promotion resulted in the construction of tippy-taps in most of the communities. Also, demonstrations of proper handwashing practices, oral rehydration solution preparation and proper up-keep of latrine as well as other good sanitation practices were disseminated. To prevent disease in host communities, UNICEF supported the disinfection of 559 water points.
The CO provided support to families affected by flooding in Kuntuar where houses were destroyed during heavy rains. The CO provided WASH support to prevent the spread of water borne disease.

**Equity in practice**

In 2017, the CO started to implement the European Union-funded Building Resilience through Social Transfers (BReST) Programme that provides cash transfers to deliver assistance for children during their first 1,000-days (up to two years old), a child’s most critical stage of development. The BReST intervention was complimentary to a World Bank cash transfer component that delivers cash transfers to pregnant women to encourage check-in for facility-based pre-natal care. The BReST cash component takes over from the child’s birth, providing the mothers approximately US$12.5 per month until the child is two years old. The cash transfer programme targets districts with the highest rates of global acute malnutrition (GAM). It was the first blanket cash transfer in the country at scale.

Fundamentally, the programme establishes a social protection floor for the most vulnerable children with the aim to affect nutrition outcomes. The cash transfer was accompanied by a range of nutrition and social education, such as nutritional best practice (i.e. breastfeeding, complimentary feeding), gender issues (cash management within the household) and micro-savings and investment.

Complimentary to this component of the project, UNICEF Gambia and partners delivered evidence to government decision-makers for building commitment and fiscal budgetary commitment with the view that the social transfer programme be co-funded by the government budget. This was complimented by training and support to National Assembly members who review and approve budget allocations of Government. Under the new incumbent administration since early 2017, the National Assembly is comprised of an often-younger cohort, who ask questions and hold government ministries, departments and agencies accountable.

UNICEF supported the Special Committee on Women, Children, Refugees and Humanitarian Affairs with training on how to read and review proposed government budgets, and hold ministries, departments and agencies responsible for results against prior expenditure. The first ministers of parliament who were trained enhanced social-sector spending in the 2018 Government Budget of The Gambia when it was reviewed and debated in the National Assembly in December 2017.

Over the first year of the new administration, following Gambia’s peaceful transition to power, the Government drafted the new strategic document, the National Development Plan. In December 2017, the BReST project was chosen by the Ministry of Finance to be a flagship project of the National Development Plan. The CO aims to translate this commitment into a budgetary commitment and advocated for stakeholders to also contribute to the expansion and scale up of this project.

**Strategic Plan 2018-2021**

**Every child survives and thrives.**

The Gambia has witnessed dropping coverage rates in urban areas; in 2018, the CO will dedicate resources to communication for development (C4D) approaches to reverse the worrying trends and drive up demand. There is an opportunity to support health sector reform now, after previous years when poor management and low visibility deteriorated health services for children and women. The new administration has renewed efforts to improve health service coverage, eliminate inefficiency and earn back the trust of bilateral donors.
Every child is protected from violence and exploitation. The CO will work on strengthening child protection by developing an adolescent and youth network approach to address female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage that builds on the demographic dividend as 48 per cent of the population is under 18. The approach empowers adolescents and youth and drives dialogue and new social norms under the ‘Never Again in My Generation’ initiative. The aim is to eliminate harmful practices in a generation.

Further, work to improve access to justice for children will include cooperation with the transitional justice agenda of the Ministry of Justice, aiming to redress injustices of the past and to ensure children’s voices are heard.

Every child learns. The Country Programme 2017 – 2021 focuses on two areas where the CO has comparative advantage: early learning/ECD and excluded children. The education programme works to ensure all children have access to education in a country where the completion rate for secondary school, particularly in rural areas and for girls, is very low. Working with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, the programme aims to ensure excluded children are brought into the formal education system where informal Koranic education is often considered a replacement. The focus on out-of-school children aims to strengthen opportunities for children to return to school, particularly girls who have dropped out for hygiene, early marriage or pregnancy reasons.

Every child lives in a safe and clean environment. Following through with the previous president’s declaration to achieve national ODF by 2017, UNICEF Gambia will work to achieve the ambitious target. The Gambia has a good rate of ODF-triggered communities but institutional sectors, schools, health centres and markets remain a challenge that the CO will address.

Every child has an equitable chance in life. In 2017, there was stakeholder progress and interest in the development of social protection mechanisms. Continuing the work undertaken in the BReST programme, UNICEF aims to build a social protection mechanism to afford cash transfers to all mothers covering the child’s first 1,000-day period, in order to drive down malnutrition (where stunting persistently remains at 25 per cent and global acute malnutrition over 10 per cent nationwide). Initial results from the BReST were encouraging in addressing malnutrition and prioritising a healthy start for children.

Emerging areas of importance

Migrant and refugee children. Based on European Union data on migrants arriving illegally in Italy, the CO determined that per capita, Gambia was the highest contributor of illegal migrants to Europe. It is estimated that 0.5 per cent of the total population of the Gambia arrived in Italy per year (2016) compared to 0.2 per cent for Eritrea and 0.04 per cent of neighboring West African countries.

The CO brought in specialized support in working with IoM to address issues of returnees and participated in sensitization in coordination with IoM to police customs officers and border officials. The CO worked with IoM to ensure that children’s considerations were taken into account in trainings, in supporting the return of children from overseas, and supporting reception facilities in dealing with children, notably through the existing mechanisms of the Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.
The CO is part of a regional proposal for funding to DFID and will undertake further resource mobilization in 2018. The specialized support scheduled for 2017 is now scheduled for 2018, due to the poor engagement of the selected consultant to review the migration planning of the CO.

**Early childhood development (ECD).** In 2017, the allocation of funding was marked for the Gambia’s Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme by Dubai Cares. The funding complements the work done to date on supporting and strengthening the Government of The Gambia’s ECD policy, implemented through the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, most notably the policy of ECD centres annexed to lower basic schools to avoid cost duplication of capital assets and to encourage continuity between early learning with enrolment into lower basic education. The Dubai Cares funding puts the national ECD strategy into practice with: the roll-out of sensitization and training of young parents on parenting skills; improving capacity (notably of ECD facilitators, community health nurses and social workers); and the provision of ECD equipment in ECD-annex centres. The project implementation will start in 2018 where 1,200 young parents in 30 communities will have improved child care activities and well-managed ECD outdoor facilities for social and psychomotor development.

**Child labour.** In 2010, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) had been vetoed by Gambia’s then President due to the inclusion of a section on child labour. With the new administration, child labour will now be included in the MICS6 due to gather data in early 2018 following significant preparation in 2017. The CO will undertake a comprehensive nutrition survey following the MICS6 to provide critical data in a data-scarce country, that has had a gradual increase in global acute malnutrition and stunting in the previous two decades despite significant investment in food security and agricultural programmes.

**Summary notes and acronyms**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>C4D</td>
<td>communication for development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLTS</td>
<td>community-led total sanitation</td>
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<td>CO</td>
<td>Country Office</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>early childhood development</td>
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<td>GAM</td>
<td>global acute malnutrition</td>
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<td>HACT</td>
<td>harmonized cash transfer</td>
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<td>IMAM</td>
<td>integrated management of acute malnutrition</td>
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<td>IYCG</td>
<td>Investing in Young Children Globally</td>
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<td>MISC</td>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey</td>
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<td>MoBSE</td>
<td>Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education</td>
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<td>MoHSW</td>
<td>Ministry of Health and Social Welfare</td>
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<td>MOSS</td>
<td>Minimum Operating Security Standards</td>
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<td>ODF</td>
<td>open defecation free</td>
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<td>SAM</td>
<td>severe acute malnutrition</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNAIDS</td>
<td>Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/Aids</td>
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<td>UNDSS</td>
<td>United Nations Department of Safety and Security</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>UNCT</td>
<td>United Nations Country Team</td>
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<td>UNDAF</td>
<td>United Nations Development Assistant Framework</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>united nations population fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
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Capacity development

The CO strengthened community engagement to address the main causes of under-five deaths with the ‘4+2 approach’ that expanded in 2017 with two additional practices: ‘4+4’. The targets were defined by the greatest threats to under-five survival based on WHO and the Child Health Epidemiology Reference Group (CHERG) 2014 analysis.

The additional two targets address infant death rates with early antenatal registration and essential newborn care. Community messages were delivered by traditional village communicators using song and dance to deliver messages, supported by the primary health care system of village health workers and the community health nurse system.

The CO adopted a new strategy on social behaviour communication and change based on a network approach, building on the growing adolescent and youth demographic. The communication strategy influenced and drove social norms with children and adolescents, and challenged the often rural and elderly concepts of the value of female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage.

The CO adopted a concept entitled ‘Never Again in My Generation’ that embraces child, youth and adolescent participation to create a critical mass of children, adolescents and youth committed to the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting, child marriage and open defecation. This strategy engaged communities, particularly adolescents and youth, to empower them with education on human rights and supported the mobilization of communities to engage around these issues.

Evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy

The first out-of-school study cast light on a problem that has important gender, geographic and poverty dimensions. The review started to realign education priorities to review the reasons why children stay out of school or drop out of school to better address the root causes. Children are not in school often because of harmful traditional practices (such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage) or child labour, particularly in rural communities.

The Gross Enrolment Rate of primary education was an estimated 104 per cent and gender parity was attained in enrolment for primary and lower secondary schools. However, an estimated 187,000 children were still either out of school or at risk of dropping out (22 per cent of school children). The World Bank supported by the Education Sector Public Expenditure Review estimated that 30 per cent of children in the country are out of school.

In 2017, the CO engaged a partner to work with Majalis (informal Koranic education centres run by local holy men, or ‘Maribus’) regarding entrance into formal education, sensitization and monitoring of basic rights issues. (There are often scale incidences of child labour, violence and threats to public health through poor sanitation conditions.)

The CO supported around 2,500 children in Koranic education with access to improved sanitation, and basic literacy in English and numeracy interventions. UNICEF provided assisted-learning devices and supplies to 188 children with disabilities (151 hard-of-hearing and 37 children with visual impairment).
**Partnerships**

Building on the partnership with DLA Piper established in 2016, the CO received the support from a seconded pro bono human rights lawyer working in the CO on female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage legislation and benefitted from a further secondment for 3rd and 4th quarters of 2017, moving into 2018 to complete a year.

The secondment is focused on supporting the government’s transitional justice agenda and to ensure that children’s voices are represented and heard in what is a priority focus for the new government, notably to undertake a Truth and Reconciliation process. The partnership with DLA Piper draws upon the significant pro bono resources available across the significant network of the company across the globe.

The CO and DLA Piper provided legal technical support to draft the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission Act that was approved by the National Assembly and enacted as law in December 2017. Support ensured the legislation took children’s issues into account, as well as in providing support to legal text, where legislation (such as the Children’s Act of 2005) suffered from a degree of weak legal expression.

The CO engaged with National Association of Cooperative Credit Unions of The Gambia in the delivery of cash transfers that generated market potential for micro-savings and loans in rural areas. The steady injection of cash into village economies can reinvigorate trade in the communities that are targeted under the BReST programme. After seven months of activities, mothers were implementing local savings and loan schemes.

**External communication and public advocacy**

UNICEF Gambia issued a total of seven news notes and press releases on activities and developments at both local and international level. The communication unit provided technical support to partners for all communication and visibility needs on their respective projects and activities all working to raise awareness of issues in The Gambia affecting children with the public.

In the year under review, the CO recorded an increase in engagements on social media, through its official accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The UNICEF Gambia Facebook Page recorded an increase from 2,722 page likes in 2016 to 5,366 page likes in 2017, virtually a 100 per cent increment; the Twitter account recorded an increase from 963 followers in 2016 to 2,700 followers in 2017, nearly tripling followers; and Instagram account recorded an increase from 433 followers in 2016 to 1,300 followers in 2017. The Gambia CO Facebook page recorded a total reach of 623,989 and 39,258 engagements.

The CO took part in the Youth Takeover of African Dialogues in Accra in commemoration of UNICEF’s World Children Day in Accra. The CO in collaboration with partners held an event in that six children selected across the six regions in The Gambia engaged with selected members of the National Assembly, with a live audience of children present.

The CO supported the sixth National Social Protection forum in The Gambia. UNICEF presented the BReST project as a pilot of a social protection programme that could be adopted nationwide at the forum. The CO supported the Capacity Strengthening on Budget Scrutiny of the Public Health Delivery System for National Assembly Select Committee on Health, Women & Children. This work in communication for development focused on children’s health issues with the chair of the committee attending a conference on financing of nutrition programming that was held in Burkina Faso.
South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation

In 2017, UNICEF Gambia worked on three South-South cooperation initiatives to strengthen knowledge and expertise of implementing partners through experience sharing in nutrition, health and social protection.

The CO supported a visit of Gambia’s National Assembly members (the chair and members of the Select Committee on Children, Women, Refugees and Humanitarian Aid) to Burkina Faso on financing of nutrition programming. This was preceded by the facilitation of visits by the members to UNICEF-supported facilities that treat severe acute malnutrition (SAM). This was the first time these members had seen such a situation of acutely malnourished children and the visit to Burkina was fuelled by a strong desire of National Assembly members to address this situation.

With UNICEF WCARO support, The Gambia social policy section supported a triangular South – South study tour on universal health coverage and insurance to Rwanda. The triangular cooperation was planned for The Gambia, Nigeria and Senegal to conduct a week-long study tour in Rwanda comprising of high level national and regional health policy makers. The study is pushed forward to 2018 due to the fact that planned dates in August 2017 coincided with the Rwanda’s national presidential elections. Consultations had advanced for a second planned study tour in 2017 on the social protection universal single registry database and management for the upcoming national social protection secretariat. The tour is expected to take place in the first quarter of 2018 as Ghana had presidential elections and the host Ministry was unable to host a study tour in time.

Support to integration and cross-sectoral linkages

The CO worked closely with the new National Assembly to strengthen their role under the initiative started in previous years as the Budget Observatory Platform. With the elections in late 2016 and the subsequent change of Government, the National Assembly not only had a significant change in membership, but inspired by the relative youth of new National Assembly members, generated significant energy in re-establishing the primary role of the National Assembly, in holding government ministries, departments and agencies to account.

The CO worked with the National Assembly to strengthen budget oversight particularly in health and education where the main budgetary interests for children reside. Over 2017, the CO supported the National Assembly in a number of initiatives to strengthen the capacity for budget analysis under the banner of the Budget Observatory and to link democratically elected National Assembly members with concerns of women and children in The Gambia. An opportunity to undertake South-South Cooperation to exchange with was the opportunity to engage National Assembly members with the situation of the treatment of severe acute malnutrition in local health centres and hospitals.

The CO was awarded a grant from Dubai Cares to implement an ECD programme to bring the education and health sectors together to provide support to pre-school children, driving district and regional implementation of a programme that focuses on the three to six years age range.

In 2017 the CO ensured that excluded children were on the agenda of a number of ministries, departments and agencies, particularly MoBSE and MoHSW where through advocacy and the publication of the Out of School Study, issues pertaining to children’s disability and access to education, girls drop out due to harmful traditional practices and hygiene concerns as well as children in non-formal education (Majalis), often who are undocumented Senegalese boys, has
risen in prominence on the respective agendas and donors. The evidence based study and subsequent advocacy has in part contributed to the allocation of funds at a national level to instigate a social protection programme to support the disabled, funded by the European Union, and projected for 2018 onwards.

World Children’s Day raised awareness on child rights, and children ‘took over’ the National Assembly. This event was well publicised and an impetus for the inclusion of children’s issues and voices in the review of the Children’s Act of 2005 scheduled for revision in 2018. The CO will support the revision and work to ensure children’s representation influences the revision, with the support of the National Assembly that committed to ensure children’s voices are considered in the drafting of the revision.

**Gender equality**

UNICEF Gambia worked with the new administration to pursue the child marriage agenda. The issue of child marriage constitutes a component of the CO’s “Never Again in My Generation” campaign that aims to mobilize youth and adolescents to speak out about their experiences and make a commitment that their generation will be the last with child marriage.

The campaign incorporates the issue of female genital mutilation/cutting and the CO’s shift in strategy to address harmful traditional practice by mobilizing youth and adolescents. Previously the strategy was to build community-level awareness of rights. The Conference on Islam and Family Well-being was led by the Vice-President who in a clear statement rejected child marriage.

The CO focused on resource mobilization in WASH to ensure all girls in school have access to separate toilet facilities, and to support menstruation management initiatives in secondary schools. The BReST cash transfer programme supported newborns with a monthly cash transfer of US$12 (600 Gambian Dalasi). Key in the project design was the management of the cash transfer to women in the family. In order to mitigate the risk of misdirected funds, sessions on education and cash management awareness were conducted with the women receiving the transfer, as well as a robust and simple system to register complaints and concerns of participants within the programme. The issuance of cash has anecdotally worked to empower women, to be validated in the upcoming programme assessment.

**Environmental sustainability**

UNICEF Gambia converted the office to a solar powered system where the CO shares a common building with other UN agencies. The greening committee was active and reviewed other means to reduce the environmental impact (i.e. banning plastic water bottles from the office, and UNICEF supported events).

**Effective leadership**

UNICEF Gambia worked to close audit actions from the 2016 audit; all of the actions were completed. This translated into more rigorous adherence to processes, particularly in documenting decisions at a country management team, operational and programming level.

The CO took part in an effective Business Operating Strategy exercise that resulted in greater effectiveness and efficiencies across UNICEF and other UN agencies in the Gambia.

The CO undertook a systematic review of risks and in 2017, the Enterprise Risk Management exercise was completed with full staff participation to ensure buy-in and consensus around programme risks, premises and the brand. One identified risk acted upon during the political
impasse was the possibility of civil unrest. Whilst this risk identification and mitigation worked well for business continuity and international staff, national staff felt somewhat isolated during the crisis. The challenge remains on measures to address national staff concerns in such an event.

The business continuity plan was tested early in the year when the political impasse led to the evacuation of non-essential international staff and families. Limited emergency programming was undertaken as well as core activities including communications with the UNICEF Regional Office.

One main challenge was the delay in paying allowances and transport refunds to participants of workshops organized by partners. The externalization of this service to banks came after a country management team decision to mitigate the risks of giving a DCT advance to MoHSW directly that was at the time rated as a “significant risk partner” by the procurement audit conducted by the Government in early 2016. A proper review of DCT payment modality should now be envisaged further to the results of the micro-assessment of all implementing partners.

**Financial resources management**

The main results achieved by the country management team in 2017 were the implementation of the 2017-2021 Country Programme Document and Country Programme Management Plan that had been delayed due to the impasse. The CO continued to implement key priorities, including the implementation of the Business Operating Strategy, that identified areas for cost efficiency, including travel, fuel procurement and contracting office services.

As part of the 2017 Annual Management Plan, the office management performance systems were reviewed in line with the eight opportunities issued by DFAM and the revised Enterprise Risk Management guidance. The CO moved to an electronic version of travel authorizations. Most of the stand-alone printers were replaced by network printers and had benefitted from the GrAF for the installation of air-conditioners with inverters in all offices.

Bank reconciliations were prepared and submitted on time with no outstanding reconciling items. UNICEF was the harmonised cash transfer (HACT) lead of United Nations in the country, and ensured coordination and encouraged agencies to participate in HACT meetings. HACT work this year undertook the micro-assessment of 27 implementing partners.

The non-post cost of the IB allocated in 2017 was fully utilized. The CO was able to get two additional staff salaries on the support budget as well as an increase of 19 per cent of the non-post costs of the support budget during the last global programme budget review.

Under the new Country Programme Management Plan the CO has had a significant increase of the number of staff (over 40 per cent) and as a result, office space was a challenge. The CO has a significant number of new staff unfamiliar with UNICEF processes and procedures and the ongoing training and sensitization to UNICEF practice was a priority for 2017, and will be in 2018.

**Fundraising and donor relations**

Twelve proposals were submitted between August and December 2017, with a cumulative value of US$22 million. Two of these proposals were approved tentatively and one rejected; feedback was waiting on the remaining nine proposals. The single maximum request for funding was an access to justice proposal for US$6 million.
The CO secured US$500,000 funding from Dubai Cares in 2017. The fund was targeted for ECD and strengthening parental practices. This is a premier partnership between the donor and the CO, and the CO is hoping to build a long-lasting relationship with Dubai Cares. In 2017, the CO built and strengthened relationships with donors and development partners within and outside The Gambia. Among them were European Union, World Bank, UNFPA, DFID, IOM and UNICEF National Committees (notably Germany, Norway, Sweden and UK).

A draft resource mobilisation strategy to complement the 2017-2021 Country Programme Document was developed by the partnership unit of the CO. To be updated throughout the duration of the country programme document, it aims to build on the CO’s strength in leveraging financing as limited funding has greater relevance and impact in a small country context.

The 2017 Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan was developed and implemented. Significant events included the roll-out of MICS6 and data collection will start in January 2018. Significant and successful efforts were made to mobilize resources for the survey that cost, for a small CO, was significant. A national micro-nutrient survey was planned and initiated in 2017, designed to coincide with the MICS6 to reduce costs. The Nutrient Survey is scheduled to start data collection in the first quarter of 2018, shortly after the start of the MICS data collection.

An evaluation of the child survival and development programme was scheduled for 2017 that was not completed due to staffing and scheduling constraints. This is planned for 2018.

To further monitoring migration data, the CO advocated to pay attention to the external migration problem that the country was experiencing. Analysis of statistics coming from the European Union indicated that The Gambia is massively over-represented in illegal migration flows to Europe, when extrapolated on a per capita basis. The CO worked to raise awareness both in the country and overseas regarding the possible ‘hidden crisis’, as Gambian migrants represent 10 times more per capita flow to Europe over neighbouring counties.

**Efficiency gains and cost savings**

The United Nations in the Gambia finalized the Business Operations Strategy document that was signed and endorsed by the Resident Coordinator in June 2017 under the lead of UNICEF OM as Chair of the Operations Management Team. It is aligned with and supports the UNDAF for the period 2017-2021 and the implementation started from September 2017. A spending analysis covering 31 commodity groups was initially conducted with 2015 as baseline for existing services. The spending analysis showed that six commodity items/services are almost 40 per cent of the total annual procurement value and 65 per cent of the total annual transactions in 2015. These high-value, high transaction and high-impact services include travel, fuel, office supplies, security services, vehicle maintenance and communications (internet/mobile). By focusing on these areas, the CO is expected to generate additional savings, reduce transactions costs and improve the quality and timeliness of support services with the least investment cost.

A result framework was drafted summarizing the projected outcomes and outputs, key performance indicators, risks assumptions and expected results for the management of business operations harmonization, procurement, information and communications technology, security services and vehicle maintenance. These matrices serve as benchmarks to manage the successful implementation of the Business Operating Strategy, measure efficiency gains, and to monitor and accurately report on the performance of the operations management team and the whole UN system.
Finally, the current governance structure was enhanced with all accountabilities clearly defined and being reflected in the job descriptions and performance appraisals of all staff contributing to the goals and inter-agency work of the operations management team.

**Supply management**

Supply worked closely with programmes to ensure that the supply plan was developed and continued the support through close monitoring. Initially, the supply plan was missing programme areas due to the ongoing recruitment of specialist staff in sections such as nutrition and the expanded programme of immunisation. This resulted in a vast increase in the second part of the year when the plan was updated in June and September. Some of the items included were not funded as they were part of a proposal to GAVI to support health system strengthening project. This resulted in major procurement activity during the third and fourth quarter of the year.

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<tr>
<th>Procurement Activity 2017</th>
<th>Value of all supply input</th>
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<tr>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>1,387,369.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational supplies</td>
<td>131,712.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>251,160.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channelled via regular procurement services</td>
<td>439,454.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channelled via GAVI</td>
<td>1,679,974.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International freight</td>
<td>118,951.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total supplies &amp; services received</td>
<td>4,008,622.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items purchased ranged from cold chain equipment, vehicles and spare parts, school supplies, therapeutic feed, medical drugs and equipment, computer equipment, security equipment, fuel, stationery and office furniture. To overcome challenges of the country’s limited local market, the CO accessed regional and international markets through UNICEF WCARO and UNICEF Supply Division for procurement of items that were not locally available.

The CO continued to support Government and partners in PS for supplies ranging from vaccines, hospital equipment, pharmaceuticals, vehicles, medical equipment and hospital furniture.

The Contract Review Committee met twice in 2017 and obtained approval for all submissions.

The supply assistant, as a chairperson of the UN procurement sub-committee, participated in meetings and all processes leading to sign global long-term agreements for goods and services. She served for the last three years before handing over to WFP in September 2017. A long-term agreement was maintained with fuel suppliers at a discounted rate off the duty-free price. The supply assistant continued to provide support on supply-related trainings to ensure submission of clear and accurate supply requests in improving efficiency.

The CO does not manage a warehouse. Supplies procured were directly delivered to implementing partners who did clearing and storage. Spot checks were conducted at partner warehouses to confirm deliveries and conditions of supplies. The implementing partner for expanded programme of immunisation encountered challenges of wrong comments on shipping
documents that resulted in delays in clearing goods and accumulation and payment of demurrage charges.

**Security for staff and premises**
The UN system in the Gambia is composed of 14 agencies, nine are housed in the UN House and five are located outside of the common premises. The agencies housed in the UN House are UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNDSS, United Nations Volunteers, World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The challenges of 2017 that started with the political impasse were opportunities to test security systems and the business continuity plan.

Security updates were an integral part of the monthly United Nations County Team meetings. The Country Security Risk Management document was approved at the last United Nations County Team/Security Management Team in December 2017, pending DO’s approval online. The Residential Security Measures were approved in May 2017, thus valid up to May 2018. The Security Plan was approved/endorsed in March 2017, thus valid up to March 2018. It includes all Standard Operating Procedures towards the MOSS compliance of the common premise. A warden system was established and maintained for international and national staff. It is currently being complemented by the SMS platform used to disseminate instant advisories to all staff.

The UNICEF Regional Office supported a security budget of US$32,000 for the procurement of first aid kits, training on ETB and improvements of the fire system in the UN common building.

The common security budget covered: a baggage scanner for the UN House; VHF infrastructure migration to digital pursued for implementation, but impossible in 2017 due to technical demand emanating from the vendor. The CCTV system is budgeted for 2018.

**Human resources**
Staff: There were 42 established positions and one temporary appointment, of those 32 were filled. The staffing includes: four international professionals, 16 national officers and 12 general service staff members. Non-staff comprise One UN Volunteer, one consultant and one pro bono lawyer from DLA Piper.

Staffing Structure: A new staffing structure took effect 1 January 2017 with the recruitment of 13 new staff. There were two category changes from general staff to national officer category. Three new International staff positions were recruited: one has started and two reassignments will start in January 2018. Seven positions were vacant and two were UN Volunteers. It is expected that the seven positions will be filled in 2018 depending on funding availability.

Global Staff Survey: The CO received the results of the global staff survey. A plan was put in place by all staff and is being implemented.

Results based: six consultancies were contracted for: cold chain, ODF Last Mile, the MICS, a conflict analysis for peace building, to support C4D and on the Migration of Children. Apart from the cold chain consultancy, five have contract end dates in 2018.

Global Shared Service Centre: The talent management system was used in the recruitment of 13 new staff. The interaction with the Global Shared Service Centre team ensured a smooth transition of staff.
Effective use of information and communication technology
The increase in staff impacted the functioning of the Microsoft Office365 suite and different automation tools. UNICEF Gambia required more bandwidth capacity that was increased from two to four Mbps. Skype for Business was used for video or voice communication to recruit staff. All staff were equipped with smartphones by the CO, in order to access Office365 applications and services and email.

The installation and use of the local Citrix application on staff laptops allowed access to VISION and other UNICEF services. It enabled staff to work with UNICEF business applications remotely, when required.

The use SharePoint team sites and OneDrive for sharing content encouraged staff to discover the benefits of adopting the cloud-based solutions in their daily work for storing data.

As part of the CO business continuity plan, the residences of senior management and core staff were equipped with a 4G WiMAX wireless connection provided by a local ISP. A wireless connection and a BGAN 700 was installed at the business continuity plan site at the Representative and Operations Manager residences.

The CO’s used social media including Facebook and Twitter to support communications, information sharing and visibility; assist human resources with vacancy advertisements; and support fundraising strategies.

The green agenda was at the heart of UNICEF agenda. A Greening Committee was formed and was successful in securing funds to replace air-conditioners to solar efficient ones. As part of reducing ICT footprint, Travel Authorisations were no longer printed, and staff were encouraged to reduce printing documents and reuse paper.

Programme components from RAM

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 Gambian children and women have access to and utilize improved and equitable quality maternal and child health services, learn and practice healthy behaviours. Children will benefit from immunization and other preventive services, childhood diseases will be recognized and treated appropriately and maternal, neonatal and child mortality will be reduced.

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF Gambia in 2017 provided technical support to the Government in the development of the National Development Plan (2018-2021), the country’s development blueprint, and prioritized the health and well-being of the population. The CO supported various policy and strategic documents in the health sector including technical and financial support for the Reproductive Maternal New-born Child and Adolescent Health Policy and Strategic Plan (2017 – 2022) that provides the framework to accelerate progress to end all preventable maternal and child deaths. Support was provided in the development of the Viral Hepatitis Policy and Strategic Plan that outlines the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care and support of viral hepatitis at all levels of the health system to reduce the transmission of viral hepatitis and its related morbidity and mortality.

UNICEF provided technical support to validate and finalize the Roadmap for Revitalizing and Scaling-up of Primary Health Care in The Gambia. The roadmap was developed to respond to
the government commitment to reposition the primary health care strategy at the centre of the health sector agenda. It will guide Government and partners’ efforts to avail essential health services for all Gambians, particularly pertaining to access to health services.

UNICEF supported interventions, including strengthening primary health care for service uptake for antenatal visits where deliveries are conducted in health facilities and children are referred to health services for appropriate treatment. The supported policy and sector strategy reforms and formulation improve the enabling environment in order to increase access and utilization of maternal and child health care services in the country. Progress on the indicators for 2017 are unavailable.

Under service delivery, UNICEF supported the implementation of kangaroo mother care at the main referral hospital in Banjul, in collaboration with the Medical Research Council and launched by her Excellency the First Lady. The evidence-based intervention aims to save the lives of pre-term babies. Capacity-building health workers knowledge and skills on the effective implementation was supported. Immunisation continues to be a key priority in The Gambia: 81 per cent of children under one year old received DTP-containing vaccine at the national level. This was a significant drop from the target due to challenges in activity implementation in 2017 with the country’s political and government management changes.

**OUTPUT 1** Institutional capacities built to provide equitable and quality maternal and child health services for all girls, boys and women.

**Analytical statement of progress**
The primary health care roadmap is a blueprint for the provision of quality maternal and child health services. The CO planned to train community health workers on skills to manage maternal and childhood illnesses at the community level in selected regions of the country. However, due to ongoing changes in the financial management systems at the Ministry of Health, the planned training of community health workers could not take place in 2017.

UNICEF provided technical advice and support at upstream level to enhance institutional capacity and develop plans and funding proposals to strengthen immunization services. UNICEF supported the expanded programme of immunisation in the finalisation of the Comprehensive Multi-Year Plan (2017-2021), and supported the development of two key proposals to GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance for Immunization Services. The proposal for a national introduction of HVP vaccine was submitted to GAVI in April 2017, following a successful two-year demo. The introduction of the HPV vaccine will help prevent cervical cancer in the country’s girls and women; it will reach 24,963 nine to 13 year old girls in the first year.

The Cold Chain Expansion Optimisation Platform proposal was submitted in October 2017 to modernise the cold chain system with high-performing equipment to improve the efficiency and safety of vaccines.

**OUTPUT 2** Targeted communities acquire positive behaviour and demonstrate enhanced demand for health services, with particular focus on the neonatal period.

**Analytical statement of progress**
UNICEF supported scaling up key household practices for enhanced child-care practices with the development of child-friendly message booklets, training manual and pictorial flip chart
through Directorate of Health Promotion and Education, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. These materials will be used to facilitate sessions at community level on key household and health-related behaviours on the use of long-lasting insecticidal nets, practice of exclusive breastfeeding, handwashing with soap and running water at critical times, use of sugar/salt solution to reduce dehydration, household water treatment, seeking early health care behaviour for pneumonia, essential neonatal care and early antenatal booking.

At service delivery level, 30 multi-disciplinary facilitation teams and 96 village support groups in the Lower River Region built capacities on the key household behaviours. The knowledge and skills acquired will enable them to facilitate family and community dialogue for improved child-care practices. The multi-disciplinary facilitation teams in turn trained village support group members in six districts out of the 20 targeted, and reached 1,500 household in 12 communities. The village support groups provided information and life skills to caregivers to make well-informed decisions and to take appropriate actions to protect their children’s health. The trainings were completed with interactive radio programmes in one region on key household behaviour for child survival.

OUTPUT 3 Capacities of health services at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels are strengthened to deliver quality maternal and child health services.

Analytical statement of progress
Following the measles-rubella campaign in 2016 with support from GAVI, the country successfully introduced the measles-rubella vaccine into the routine immunisation programme. As of October 2016, 52,398 (64 per cent) of the target were reached with one dose of measles-rubella. UNICEF supported a mini measles-rubella catch-up campaign in May 2017, targeting children who were missed during the measles-rubella campaign or were ineligible at the time. A total 128,111 children were further vaccinated against measles and rubella.

UNICEF supported the implementation of the switch from the Rotateq to Rotarix vaccine in April 2017 and the switch from the single to the multi-dose presentation of the Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine in June 2017. Both switches reduced storage capacity-needs for the cold chain systems at all levels and improved vaccine management. The installation of new cooling units and multi-logs for continuous temperature monitoring at the national and regional cold rooms, in line with the effective vaccine management improvement plan, contributed to improved temperature monitoring of vaccines. This alongside the quarterly preventative management of all cold chain equipment that UNICEF supported ensured that equipment was assessed, problems identified and corrective action taken in order to prevent the incidence of cold chain failure and subsequent vaccine wastage.

There was a four per cent drop-out between DTP3 and DTP 1 coverage in 2017. The GAVI-funded Health System Strengthening (2017 – 2021) to increase demand and uptake of immunisation services began implementation in July 2017. Due to the delayed start and partners’ inability to access UNICEF funds at the ministry level, activities relating to reducing the dropout rate could not be implemented.

UNICEF supported the implementation of kangaroo mother care at the main referral hospital and the capacity-building of 30 health workers across the country. The primary aim of the technical support was to equip a core group of neonatal and paediatric health-care workers across the country with the knowledge and skills for kangaroo mother care implementation.
No progress was made on number of facilities providing paediatric ART and facilities offering delivery services with functional newborn resuscitation equipment.

OUTCOME 2 Children, adolescent girls and women, especially the most vulnerable, realize their rights and utilize equitable and quality nutritional services and nutrition and care practices.

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF continued to provide technical and financial support to the Government of The Gambia for the implementation of high-impact nutrition interventions in the country. Support was provided for the review of the National Nutrition Policy 2010-2020 and to develop a new nutrition strategic plan to reflect the emerging issues and align with strategic plan to address nutritional needs of children.

UNICEF promoted optimal Investing in Young Children Globally (IYCG) practices, sanitation and hygiene by supporting capacity-strengthening to enforce breastfeeding promotion regulation.

UNICEF continued to support Government to implement the integrated management of acute malnutrition (IMAM) programme through training nurses and doctors on IMAM protocol for managing and treating malnourished children with complication at inpatient facility. The capacity strengthening of health workers improved skills and treatment care services to reduce morbidity and mortality related to malnutrition.

UNICEF supported the National Nutrition Agency and MoHSW in nutrition surveillance data quality monitoring system and overall coordination. This capacity strengthening will improve quality data generation for policy and programme development.

OUTPUT 1 Institutional capacities strengthened to plan and monitor for improved quality and equitable IMAM, IYCF and micronutrient services including during emergencies

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF promoted optimal IYCF practices, sanitation and hygiene by supporting trainings of health facility staff on Baby Friendly Hospital Initiatives: 175 nurses and support staff were trained. The capacity strengthening will enhance the enforcement of breastfeeding promotion regulation.

TV and radio spots were developed on breastfeeding and presented to create public awareness on the importance and benefits of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of a child’s life and aimed to discourage the use of breast milk substitutes.

UNICEF continued to support Government to implement the IMAM programme. One hundred nurses and doctors were trained on IMAM protocol to manage and treat malnourished children with complications at inpatient facility. This capacity strengthening of health workers improved their skills and treatment care services leading to the reduction of morbidity and mortality related to malnutrition.
Lifesaving nutrition supplies of 5,000 ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF), F75, F100, and 11,000 assorted antibiotic drugs were procured for SAM treatment. As of October 2017, the total SAM admission was 5,153. The treatment results show a successful cure rate of 87.8 per cent, more than the 75 per cent target, thereby reducing deaths to 1.3 per cent and the default rate was 10.5 per cent. In addition, relapses were kept to a minimum due to community health nurse monitoring as part of regular home visits and counselling of mothers. The overall effect of the SAM treatment will reduce death rates and improve the growth and development of children in the programme area.

UNICEF supported National Nutrition Agency and MoHSW in nutrition surveillance data quality monitoring system and overall coordination. This partners capacity strengthening will improve quality data generation for policy and programme development.

UNICEF supported the rehabilitation of a well at the nutrition rehabilitation centre in Basse. The dysfunctional well had caused a water shortage in the centre and affected sanitation and hygiene conditions. The restoration of water supply solved the distressing challenge of clean water for drinking and sanitation. A water problem was solved at Kuntaur Health Centre to address a water problem and enhance access to clean drinking water at the health facility.

**OUTPUT 2** Caregivers in supported communities demand for and practice optimal nutrition and care practices for children, with particular focus on recognizing and treating SAM.

**Analytical statement of progress**
To promote optimal nutrition and care practices, 775 Village support groups were trained on care-support for exclusive feeding and timely introduction of complementary feeding and care practices. This training served as a refresher and enhanced volunteers’ knowledge counselling skills to reduce childhood under-nutrition, morbidity and mortality.

UNICEF and WFP conducted joint mass screening for SAM and moderate acute malnutrition in five regions. This helped in early identification of children with acute malnutrition and referrals for treatment.

**OUTCOME 3** Children and their families have improved and equitable access to and utilize safe drinking water and sanitation services and adopt improved hygiene practices and behaviours.

**Analytical statement of progress**
According to the joint needs assessment: 162,000 Internally Displaced Persons were registered in the rural area of the country, out of that an estimated 60 to 70 per cent were children. The host communities were stretched and access to basic social services, especially WASH, affected.

UNICEF supported the Gambia Red Cross Society on humanitarian response on sanitation promotion activities in overstretched host communities. The Red Cross volunteers conducted sensitization on hygiene and sanitation that included the CLTS approach to trigger communities for latrine construction and construction of tippy taps for hand-washing.

The sensitization on hygiene promotion was conducted in 225 communities across the country that resulted in the construction tippy-taps in most of the communities, demonstration of proper hand washing, oral rehydration solution preparation and proper up-keep of latrines. Other topics
related to sanitation were discussed resulting in improved knowledge and skills on sanitation and hygiene.

Additionally, to prevent disease in host communities, UNICEF supported disinfection of water points, a total of 559 water points were assessed and chlorinated. The result of the microbiological analysis indicated that water sources were heavily polluted with faecal matters while the other parameters were within the recommended guideline of WHO.

OUTPUT 1 Capacity of WASH institutions at national and regional levels strengthened to plan, deliver and monitor WASH services for underserved populations, schools and health facilities including during humanitarian situations.

Analytical statement of progress
No data or information on progress towards the output indicators. Efforts concentrated on response to the refugee and internally displaced person crises that erupted during the political impasse in the country:

According to the joint needs assessment: 162,000 internally displaced persons were registered in the rural area of the country, out of that an estimated 60 to 70 per cent were children. The host communities were stretched and access to basic social services, especially WASH, affected.

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OUTPUT 2 Caregivers and communities use safe drinking water and adopt adequate sanitation and good hygiene practices.

Analytical statement of progress
No data or information on progress towards the output indicators. Efforts concentrated on response to the refugee and internally displaced person crises that erupted during the political impasse in the country.

OUTCOME 4 The child protection system is equipped to minimize and respond to violence, abuse and exploitation of children.
Analytical statement of progress

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Justice to conduct an assessment on the child justice situation in the country and the report was finalised. Findings of the report showed a lack of capacity within the judiciary as well as the other stakeholders in administering justice for children. Fifty-seven magistrates and panellists for the child courts and the regular courts were supported with knowledge, guidelines of international standards and precedence in the justice delivery for children, and adaption in the country context, at an orientation workshop on justice for children organised in partnership with the Judiciary. The magistrates made 14 commitments to pursue to administer child-friendly justice delivery. Apart from the two meetings held under the leadership of Ministry of Justice of the Child Justice Committee, decisions were taken to review the Children Act 2005 to make it more comprehensive and with child-friendly procedures harmonised with international standards. The terms of reference to recruit a consultant to review the Children Act was finalised in consultation with the partners.

Support was provided to the Department of Social Welfare to strengthen and operate the national Child Protection System through the National Child Protection Steering Committee and the 63 community child protection committees at the national and regional level through yearly activity plans harmonised with the Plan of Action and Child Protection Strategy. New and emerging issues, such as child irregular migration and transitional justice, were identified and how to address them by incorporating the quarterly plan of the steering committee.

The Birth Registration Unit under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare organised a sensitization programme for communities on the newly developed birth registration tools and to encourage communities to systematically register births. Initiatives were undertaken to integrate birth registration into the reproductive child health system and to provide supplies including IT equipment and machines to process the certificates. Eighty health workers were provided training on facilitating birth registration of new-born children.

The Women’s Bureau under the Office of the Vice President received technical support from UNICEF to develop, disseminate and validate a female genital mutilation/cutting communications strategy. The strategy provides comprehensive communication campaigns, structured advocacy and social mobilisation activities to reduce the prevalence of female genital mutilation/cutting.

As part of the advocacy initiative to increase participation of children in decision-making, the National Assembly Select Committee on Women, Children and Health agreed to include child representation at select committee sessions to bridge the committee and their communities.

UNICEF provided technical support to the Ministry of Interior to incorporate child-specific commitments in the National Migration Policy prior to its validation. A consultation with approximately 100 adolescent and youth took place whereby the issues raised and proposed by children were shared for incorporation.

UNICEF with IOM developed and facilitated an informative advocacy session on children on the move for 30 key stakeholder organizations from Government and NGOs to increase their understanding on the migration, and especially irregular migration of children. The partnership continued support for trainings for border officials in the most relevant areas on child migration and protection, specifically concentrating on the best interest of the child and how to promote safe migration.
OUTPUT 1 The child protection administrative, policy, legal and financing frameworks strengthened through advocacy and technical support.

Analytical statement of progress
The Country Programme 2017-2021 was built on the achievements of the previous Country Programme, with renewed partnership with all stakeholders and the Government to strengthen and functionalise the child protection system to respond to violence, abuse and exploitation of the children. A priority focussed on strengthening the technical support to the Department of Social Welfare to implement the costed Plan of Action on Child Protection and the Child Protection Strategy that was approved by the Government in 2016. These are mainly related to (1) advocacy and awareness raising, (2) technical support, (3) community empowerment and social mobilization, (4) youth involvement and (5) improved service delivery to the children.

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Justice to conduct an assessment on the child justice situation in the country and the report was finalised. Findings of the report showed lack of capacity within the judiciary as well as the other stakeholders in administering justice for children. Fifty-seven magistrates and panellists for the children courts had their capacities strengthened.

Support was provided to the Department of Social Welfare to strengthen and operate the national child protection system operationalizing the National Child Protection Steering Committee.

The Birth Registration Unit under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare organised a sensitization programme for communities on the newly developed birth registration tools and encouraged communities to systematically register births. Initiatives were undertaken to integrate birth registration into the reproductive child health system and to make it functional provision of supplies including IT equipment and machines for processing of the certificates; 80 health workers were provided training on facilitating birth registration of the new born children.

The Women’s Bureau under the Office of the Vice President received technical support from UNICEF to develop, disseminate and validate the female genital mutilation/cutting communications strategy. The strategy provides for comprehensive communication campaigns, structured advocacy and social mobilisation activities in the country in a bid to reduce the prevalence of female genital mutilation/cutting.

UNICEF provided technical support to the Ministry of Interior to incorporate child specific commitments in the National Migration Policy prior to its validation. A consultation with the 100 adolescent and youth took place where by the issues raised and proposed by children were shared for incorporation.

OUTPUT 2 Prevention and response services improved to provide equitable and quality protection services to all children.

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF supported the Birth Registration Unit under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare with the objective to attain 90 per cent birth registration for children by 2021. With this aim, UNICEF provided technical support to develop a birth registration strategy for the Government under the review of a technical committee. Moreover, to strengthen the smooth registration
system, UNICEF provided supplies and equipment for registration of births and to deliver certificates.

UNICEF supported the training and orientation of 63 Community Child Protection Committees in Kombo North, Central and South Districts on the National Child Protection Strategy and plan of action. The training emphasized the roles and functions of the community child protection committees and monitoring and reporting flow, and enabled them to identify the child protection issues within communities and what action the committee will take for the protection of children against violence, abuse and exploitation.

UNICEF provided technical support to the Judiciary to align judges, magistrates and panellists of the Children Courts in The Gambia on administering juvenile justice and international standards and guidelines. Fifty-three judicial officers across the country attended and learned from the presentations how to deal with children who are in conflict with law. Fourteen commitments were made by the judiciary that will be taken forward by the judges as an initial effort to make the justice system child friendly. Three children’s courts are functional in the country although lacking child-friendly procedures and infrastructure.

UNICEF jointly with IOM developed and facilitated informative sessions on children on the move for 30 key stakeholder’s organizations from the Government and NGOs to increase understanding on migration and its dynamics, and especially on irregular migration of children that is an emerging issue in the country. The partnership supported trainings for border officials in the most vulnerable region on child migration and protection, specifically concentrating on best interest of the child and how to promote safe migration.

OUTPUT 3 Capacity improved on female genital mutilation for families.

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF did not collect data on this, however UNICEF supported Government and CBOs to increase public awareness and developed legislations and supported institutional capacity to end female genital mutilation/cutting.

The Women’s Bureau under the Office of the Vice President received technical support from UNICEF in the development and dissemination and validation of the female genital mutilation/cutting communications strategy. The strategy provides for comprehensive communication campaigns, structured advocacy and social mobilisation activities in the country in a bid to reduce the prevalence of female genital mutilation/cutting.

UNICEF provided technical support to develop, revise and input government policy and legal reforms initiatives in the development of the female genital mutilation/cutting communications strategy. UNICEF supported the development of the draft strategy. NGOs, and government stakeholders and departments, under the leadership of the Women’s Bureau of the Office of the Vice President with the 12-member technical committee, reviewed and validated the strategic document. The document will guide the rolling out of nationwide campaigns in the coming years in the fight against female genital mutilation/cutting.

OUTCOME 5 An inclusive education system is equipped to provide comprehensive early childhood education to all children, in conjunction with health, nutrition and protection interventions, and to ensure the rights of all children to an appropriate quality education.
Analytical statement of progress
Strategic interventions to increase enrolment included: advocacy efforts to leverage funding from development partners and sustain government budget allocation to education. In 2017, interventions created educational demand for children who would ordinarily be excluded from education including children with disabilities, children in Koranic education and girls.

Education supplies (learning and play materials) were provided to a targeted 24,000 children to reduce cost barriers to education for families. Education sector staff were trained on preventing school-based gender-related violence (120 teachers), early learning facilitation (90 facilitators), improved use of UNICEF maths kit (60 teachers) and education in emergency (50 education officers) to acquire skills to improve the quality of services provided.

Progress for the year generally showed that many indicators were on track, but there are underlying challenges of exclusion and weak quality. Many excluded children are not reached. The Public-Sector Review of the Education (World Bank 2017) reported out-of-school rate at 30 per cent in 2015, whilst the UNICEF study in 2016 reported a 22 per cent rate. The quality of education service was weak especially in the early learning level that sets the foundation and pace for any future learning.

As a result of sustained advocacy and engagement of the education sector, early learning received favourable policy environment and high-level of government funding commitment through a World Bank and a GPE funded project. UNICEF support community engagement and sensitisation on the importance of early learning and education in general, and created demand for more space and infrastructure. This new demand is yet to be met with the required supply interventions despite UNICEF providing early learning supplies to reach 12,000 children. The early learning sub-sector has the potential to grow quickly but it is constrained by low facilitator capacity, and overall low quality of programme delivery.

In 2017, UNICEF supported demand-driven community sensitization activities; provision of early learning supplies to reduce the cost burden on parents; and 90 facilitators and caregivers who acquired relevant skills.

At the central level, the sub-sector’s capacity in monitoring and supervision was strengthened through provision of a laptop computer and funding monitoring field visits. Progress against targets showed a marginal increase of almost 2 per cent in the gross enrolment rate and the number of trained facilitators increased by 20 per cent.

OUTPUT 1 All children aged 0 - 6 years access formal and informal quality early learning opportunities for enhanced school readiness.

Analytical statement of progress
The CO support to community engagement and sensitisation on the importance of early learning and education created demand for space and infrastructure. This new demand is yet to be met with the required supply interventions despite UNICEF providing early learning supplies to reach 12,000 children. The early learning sub-sector has the potential to grow quickly but it is constrained by low facilitator capacity, and overall low quality of programme delivery.
In 2017, UNICEF contributed by supporting demand-driven community sensitization activities; providing early learning supplies to reduce the cost burden on parents; and supporting 90 facilitators and caregivers who acquired relevant skills.

At the central level, the sub-sector’s capacity in monitoring and supervision was strengthened through provision of a laptop computer and funding monitoring field visits. Progress against targets showed a marginal increase of almost 2 per cent in the Gross Enrolment Rate and the number of trained facilitators increased by 20 per cent.

**OUTPUT 2** Children excluded from mainstream education, including those affected by humanitarian situations, exercise their right to an appropriate quality and inclusive education.

**Analytical statement of progress**

Linking Gambia’s education sector policy and strategy to Sustainable Development Goal #4 created the environment to support the inclusion of all children. In 2017, UNICEF led the local education group to leverage funding from development partners and increase government education budget allocation. UNICEF targeted groups vulnerable to exclusion such as children with disabilities, children in Majalis and girls.

Communities were engaged at various levels, including Majalis operators and mothers’ clubs, to create appreciation and demand so that vulnerable children are given opportunity to formal education. UNICEF provided assisted learning devices and supplies targeting 188 children with disabilities (151 hard of hearing and 37 visual impairment). To provide children in Koranic education with a broad curriculum including literacy in English and numeracy, 2,500 children were targeted with literacy and numeracy and sanitation interventions. Mothers’ clubs in two targeted regions were engaged to sustain girls’ education gains. Progress against this outputs showed that the sector is on track to attain the target for out-of-school children rate. Similarly, the sector secured strong Government commitment through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, to allocate at least 20 per cent of Government’s annual budget to education sector.

**OUTCOME 6** The most vulnerable children benefit from an inclusive national social protection system.

**Analytical statement of progress**

UNICEF was a key partner of the Government in the establishment of a national social protection system and a civil registry system to improve coordination on social protection and strengthen national social protection capacity. The National Assembly re-launched the budget observatory platform to advocate for increased Government investment on children and thus Government expenditure in the 2018 budget estimates for the social sectors increased.

**OUTPUT 1** The social protection administrative, policy, and financing frameworks strengthened through advocacy and technical support.

**Analytical statement of progress**
The Implementation of the BReST cash transfer project was ongoing as planned. The establishment of a national social protection secretariat and a civil registry system for improved coordination on social protection and strengthening of national social protection capacity was ongoing. UNICEF contributed to the process, including funding and technical support provided to the national social protection forum of 2017. The National Assembly re-launched the budget observatory platform to advocate for increased Government investment on children and thus Government expenditure in the 2018 budget estimates for the social sectors increased because of these works.