

Gambia

Part 1: Situation update in the country

A child born in the Gambia today will be just 40 percent as productive when she grows up as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and good health. With current estimations that half of the population is aged 18 or under, the provision of services for children is increasingly a challenge for a Government burdened by chronic economic mismanagement and debt servicing representing 31.23 per cent of the annual budget. Funding for essential services for children is a real and persistent challenge. Several other elements negatively impacted the situation of women and children during the reporting period, such as high turnover in senior government staff and low investment in child protection systems. Structural gender and socio-cultural inequalities prevent the most disadvantaged children, such as those with disabilities and those on the move, from accessing their rights.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the year started with positive signs of the Gambia's move towards development, such as the development of the National Development Plan 2018-2021 (NDP). The Plan represented a significant step by the new Government to articulate development priorities and the roadmap for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It promotes an equitable chance in life for every child, through the inclusion of the flagship project 'building resilience through social transfers for national security in the Gambia' (BReST). For this project, UNICEF supports the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) and the National Nutrition Agency (NaNA) to distribute social cash transfers to mothers, coupled with a systematic effort to increase their knowledge, monitor the growth of their babies, provide a birth certificate, and induce changes in nutritional and caring practices. The project is financed by the European Union (EU). In addition, the Government sent out a clear signal that social protection and the establishment of a social protection minimum floor is a priority, backed up by moves to establish a functional social protection secretariat with the capacity to manage the country's first single registry.

Further, it is anticipated that in 2019, the Government will bring together a number of (currently unaligned) agencies to form a Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, thus elevating the status of these areas to cabinet level and working to ensure efficiency and complementarity between agencies. UNICEF Gambia's work has primarily involved raising awareness and increasing demand for interventions and advocacy for inclusive social development – especially for the most vulnerable children and young people. The government decision to undertake a multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) in 2018 will result in key disaggregated data on the situation of children in a number of sectors, enabling more systematic monitoring of equitable progress towards the SDGs.

Further to promises made by the new administration upon taking power, the Truth and Reconciliation process moved forward significantly in 2018 and appointed commissioners, including a youth commissioner. The transitional justice process consists of judicial and non-

judicial measures to address past human rights abuses. The viability and sustainability of the transitional justice programme will largely depend on the involvement of children and youth, who represent half of the Gambian population. UNICEF advocated for children's issues as a fundamental part of all process and instruments. For the same reason, UNICEF was also part of the national strategy for transitional justice drafting committee. During the process, UNICEF supported the National Youth Council and set up a network of children. The network conducted sensitization activities in communities and schools on transitional justice. They developed a child-friendly version of the Truth, Reconciliation, Reparations Commission Act of 2017, along with songs and drama scripts to raise awareness on transitional justice. The network was trained on child rights and sensitized on development agendas – including Gambia's national development plan, the SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063. They also built networks with key government institutions, including The National Assembly, Department of Social Welfare and The Shelter for Children, as well as with NGOs such as SOS Children's Village.

Another key electoral promise of the coalition Government was the establishment of a Constitutional Review Committee, which during 2018, was established and mandated to review constitutional issues. The Committee represents an opportunity for UNICEF to support the Government to position and strengthen the rights of children within this process. Given the wide-reaching scope of the Constitution, the opportunity presented is not limited to enshrining the rights of children into the review, but also to build in mechanisms to ensure children's and adolescents' participation and engagement in decision-making.

During 2018 the National Assembly made significant strides toward realizing its mandate, strengthening the understanding of its role among its relatively young and enthusiastic members and holding Government accountable. The establishment of a functioning Select Committee on Health, Children, Women, Refugees, Disasters and Humanitarian Relief in the National Assembly has meant that a voice for children is being heard in parliament. During the year numerous actions have questioned ministerial spending, service delivery and access by children and women to health services. This marks a significant step by Gambia towards holding duty-bearers accountable for closing rights gaps for children.

Across sectors and in partnership with line ministries, several key donors (including Dubai Care, the EU, the Italian government and UK Department of International Development, DfID) and implementing partners, programming in 2018 supported strengthening the quality of service delivery, capacity development and systems building.

Significant efforts were made by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) in accordance with the country's early childhood development policy 2016-2030, to pursue the early learning annexation program, working to bring children into school earlier to multiply the investment in primary education and build school readiness. To improve enrolment, coverage and especially focus on early learning, a project on early childhood development (ECD), featuring linkages with nutrition and antenatal care, was launched and is being implemented. The project ('Parenting practices for early childhood development in the Gambia') is to be implemented in 30 communities; 10 in each of three targeted regions: Central River, North Bank and Lower River). The project is only six months old; however it is assumed that it will help nurture children's physical and mental potential.

Children in the Gambia in 2018 enjoyed high levels of protection from disease through immunization, as a result of several years of enviable coverage rates: 94 per cent of DTP3 coverage was achieved in 2018, 4 per cent above the 90 per cent target. Strong coverage

statistics also applied across other immunization areas. The weakest area was relatively high dropout rates between measles-containing vaccine 1, (coverage of 90 per cent) and measles-containing vaccine 2 (coverage dropped to 67 per cent). The overall impressive results are indicative of strong commitment by the Government, stakeholders and UNICEF to the immunization agenda. UNICEF began a project for the construction and refurbishment of outreach sites to address low coverage in urban areas. Initially construction of 23 new outreach sites in urban areas and seven in rural areas was planned, along with refurbishment of a number of health facilities. However scarcity of funds led to just five facilities being constructed in urban areas in 2018.

Despite strong commitment from the Government on preventing all forms of violence against children, ensuring a protective and violence-free environment for children and adolescents remained one of the key challenges in the Gambia, where 90.2 per cent of children report being affected by violence (MICS 2010). UNICEF worked with the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and other line ministries in several areas to advocate for the creation of a child protection mechanism in the country to identify, report and manage each child protection case and to increase the limited social workforce numbers and capacity. In 2018 this included training on psycho-social support for all social workers in country. UNICEF also supported community engagement on child protection issues, including bullying in schools. Fifty school children from a selection of schools in Region One were trained on violence against children (mainly bullying).

Although the Gambia is close to being 99 per cent open defecation-free (ODF), monitoring reveals some startling data regarding E-coli infection of water sources. This highlights a significant threat to the health of children and women and represents a clear indication of the challenges for the sector. In addition, the rate for moving up the sanitation ladder is still low, which may be attributed to many factors; an assessment will be conducted to determine bottlenecks and solutions for supporting sustainable ODF. To enhance the prioritization of this agenda, UNICEF Gambia supported the participation of the Minister of Health and Director of Public Health in the Global Sanitation Conference in India in early October 2018, allowing the delegates to share sanitation success stories and learn from each other's experiences. The Minister returned home with heightened commitment and expressed desire to lead the ODF agenda to its successful culmination as quickly as possible.

Despite limited resources during the reporting period, 51 schools were provided with basic water, sanitation or hygiene (WASH) facilities through direct UNICEF support. The schools are located in rural areas; 12 are secondary schools, while 39 are primary schools. In addition, the programme also integrated some menstrual hygiene management (MHM) programming in the construction of latrines and provision of water by providing boxes to store sanitary materials. More effort, however, is required to ensure that the programme will be mainstreamed and will go beyond the provision of boxes to awareness-creation, gender segregation, privacy and safety of facilities provided. Through this support, the children in these schools also gained access to safe drinking water. During 2018 UNICEF also assisted the MoHSW in the development of WASH guidelines for health facilities.

UNICEF continued to play an active role in Delivering as One, collaborating closely with sister UN agencies in joint programmes and initiatives, for example, partnering with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) on the food and nutrition insecurity. The country office has intensified efforts to mobilize resources and will continue to broaden its donor relationships and strengthen partnerships with international financial

institutions and public and private sector actors in 2019.

UNICEF signed a tripartite agreement with Government and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) to address strategic priorities in areas one and four of the country's National Development Plan, which address: good governance, respect for human rights, the rule of law and empowering citizens through decentralization and local governance; investing in Gambians through improved human capital development and building a caring society. In addition, the agreement will address institutional capacity gaps of decentralized structures and community-based organizations (CBOs), thus giving communities strong, accountable and efficient local structures and institutions that could propel and serve as vehicles for sustainable community development. This agreement will support the Nsa Kenno (we can do it) initiative developed by UNICEF Gambia to increase focus, coherence and achieve greater impact for children across programmes. In the rest of the country programme, this initiative should facilitate communication, participation, connection, interaction, and exchange between duty-bearers and communities. The goal is to offer a responsive approach to community organizational relationships, with engagement practices that aim to both understand and be responsive to the needs, views and expectations of children and youth.

Looking forward, UNICEF Gambia will undertake a mid-term review of its country programme in 2019, placing more emphasis on the importance of inter-sectoral programming and collaboration between different government and other agencies, to deliver more comprehensive and effective programmes for children; especially in the areas of survive and thrive, protection against violence and fair chance for children, youth and adolescent development.

Part 2: Major results including in humanitarian action and gender, against the results in the country programme document

Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

The Gambian population is estimated at 1.9 million. The high population growth rate of 3.0 per cent has implications for health services, particularly for primary healthcare (PHC) services and specialized care, in the face of increases in non-communicable diseases (2013 Census). The country is also witnessing rapid rates of urbanization; nearly 60 per cent of the entire population now lives within the Greater Banjul Area and Western Coast Region. This undoubtedly exerts unparalleled pressure on limited social services such as health, education and water supply.

Significant gains have been registered in the health service delivery system, such as expanded programme on immunization and reproductive maternal neonatal child and adolescent health. However, sustaining the gains in service management areas, such as the health management information system, health financing, drugs and supply chain management, governance and management and service delivery (including referral systems and services) remain a challenge to the overall health system.

During 2018 the MoHSW continued to receive support from UNICEF and other partners for the comprehensive assessment of the health sector, with the overall objective of assessing the functionality of the six building blocks of the health system. Specifically, UNICEF supported assessment of health facilities on maternal and new-born care. In conjunction with the recent

primary health care revitalization roadmap, the recommendations will guide interventions and the establishment of a minimum care package and service delivery standards in the health system. The guideline for WASH in health care facilities, on the other hand, supplements the minimum care package by providing guidance on the provision of WASH services that support PHC and quality care interventions.

UNICEF supported the participation of the Speaker of National Assembly and the Minister of Health at a global conference on primary health care (PHC) in Astana, Kazakhstan, as an advocacy measure to enhance understanding and thereby commitment to expand primary health care coverage and attain universal health coverage for the Gambian population.

UNICEF and WHO jointly supported planning for an end-year review meeting scheduled for January 2019, with the objective of taking stock of the progress and constraints within the health sector for 2018 and work on strategies for 2019. The meeting will also serve to inform the health compact adopted by the Government and partners in November 2018. The compact provides a platform for better aid effectiveness to achieve improved health outcomes in line with the Paris declaration.

As of November 2018, some 59,650 deliveries had taken place, of which 50,043 (84 per cent) were skilled deliveries at health facilities. UNICEF supported the MoHSW to build the capacity of 48 health workers (100 per cent of those targeted for the year) on emergency maternal newborn and child health, 48 on kangaroo mother care and 20 on integrated management of newborn and childhood illness through training sessions. The training provided health workers with the skills to manage complications of maternal, newborn and childhood illnesses in health facilities. Furthermore, the capacity of 50 village health workers to manage childhood illnesses in communities was strengthened, with the aim of decreasing the number of referrals to health facilities and reducing child morbidity and mortality. According to the country's Demographic and Health Survey, the proportion of severe pneumonia cases managed at health facilities reached 98 per cent, and the pneumonia case fatality rate was 2 per cent.

Despite delays in the implementation of activities by the MoHSW earlier in the year, routine immunization coverage for the country remains on track. UNICEF continues to support the national immunization programmes through procurement services and by ensuring that potent vaccines are available at all levels, through its support in vaccine transportation and supply chain management. UNICEF is also managing the Gavi health system-strengthening grant aimed at building capacity at all levels, generating demand for immunization services and managing data and information for evidence-based planning.

UNICEF Gambia developed the Nsa Kenno initiative, which puts village development committees at the centre of all community interventions to strengthen demand for essential care and healthy practices, and create greater accountability and sustainability of all activities. This initiative is in line with the implementation of integrated community case management, whereby community health workers provide services for common childhood illnesses. This platform is an entry point for the promotion of health-seeking behaviours, including the increasing uptake of nutrition, immunization, vitamin A and deworming and birth registration services.

Africa Vaccination Week served as an advocacy opportunity to promote immunization awareness and generate demand, through a press conference, engagement of traditional communicators and outreach activities in urban centres. As of September 2018 the dropout

rate between DPT1 and DPT3 was 5 per cent, which is better than the 5.5 per cent target set for the year, Penta 1 coverage was 61 per cent and Penta 3 was 58 per cent. Eighty-one per cent of health facilities have adequate cold chain capacity, ensuring availability of vaccines— a prerequisite for immunization access and coverage. Cold chain monitoring visits were completed, involving preventative maintenance for all cold chain equipment and no reports of stock-outs. The operational deployment plan for the 114 solar-powered refrigeration units to be installed at 80 sites was completed, and the equipment was expected to arrive in country in 2019.

UNICEF collaborated with NaNA and the MoHSW to promote and protect optimal infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices through baby friendly hospital initiatives. One hundred-twenty health professionals were trained on the code of marketing of breast milk substitutes in health facilities and to provide counselling to the mothers of newly delivered children. Support was given to the MoHSW to advocate for breastfeeding in work places and for employers to observe the six months maternity leave for working mothers.

MOHSW staff received UNICEF support to develop TV and radio spots on breastfeeding for broadcast over a period of six months, to expand public views and audiences; and 300 village support groups were oriented on breastfeeding counselling, who in turn counselled 18,000 mothers.

UNICEF supported the MoHSW's Vitamin A and deworming efforts through grants and in-kind donation for the routine supplementation and campaign. Routine supplementation has been on course, but the campaign to be implemented in 2018 was delayed. Now Vitamin A and deworming is planned together with the meningitis A campaign, slated for 2-8 February 2019.

UNICEF is the only agency supporting the Ministry of Health for the treatment of severe acute malnutrition (SAM). At the beginning of 2018 the total caseload for SAM cases was estimated at 17,450. SAM cases are referred to 112 of 165 facilities, indicating 58 per cent coverage. There are 24 functioning inpatient facilities, and the other 88 facilities conduct outpatient (OTP) as well as PHC services. As of November 2018, total SAM admissions numbered 3,434 children under five years of age (1,477 male, 1,957 female). The treatment results show a cure rate of 84.3 per cent, default rate of 13.9 per cent and death rate of 0.9 per cent. This compared to baseline 2017 data; total admissions were 5,793 (2486 male, 3307 female), cure rate of 88.3 per cent, defaulter 10 per cent, and death 1.3 per cent. The treatment programme also supported training of health workers to enhance their skills in managing these cases. Sixty community health nurses were trained in treatment of SAM without complications as outpatient treatment, and on inpatient treatment, which should further improve programme quality. During 2018 the programme also supported procurement of nutrition supplies (5000 cartons of RUTF, antibiotics), as well as Vitamin A and deworming tablets. This support is expected to have a positive impact on reducing morbidity and mortality.

UNICEF Gambia, in collaboration with partners (including WFP, NaNA and the MOHSW) supported the integrated management of acute malnutrition programme. The project supported joint screening for MAM and SAM; 67,329 children were screened, of whom 3,235 with moderate acute malnutrition and 232 with SAM were treated.

UNICEF was also a co-implementer of the EU-funded post-crisis response to food insecurity and malnutrition with the FAO and WFP. The project had two donor monitoring missions, the first of which took place in 2017. The second donor project monitoring took place in October

2018, and resulted in commendations for UNICEF's nutrition prevention and treatment programme. The mission praised the agency's joint collaboration, which ensures synergy and complementarity with partner agencies.

UNICEF also supported the implementation of a micronutrient assessment survey to assess the status and prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies among women and children in the Gambia. The final report is expected by end-February 2019.

Goal area 2: Every child learns

The number of children out of school continued to be a major challenge for the education sector. The Gambia's education management information system (EMIS) calculated in 2018 that of the 310,796 children of primary school age (7–12 years), 277,415 were enrolled in school, while 33,381 were not enrolled. For lower secondary (13–15 years), of the 144,133 children in that age group, 98,108 were enrolled and 46,025 were not. These figures yield a total of 79,406 children out of school, representing 17.45 per cent of the country's population of 454,929 seven-to-15-year olds) – an improvement from 21 per cent the previous year.

The EMIS reported 7,551 children (4,124 boys, 4,427 girls) with special needs, of whom 1,333 were in pre-school, 4,386 in primary and 1,382 in lower secondary. Lack of facilities and technical capacity to support the learning of children with disabilities cause many of them to be unable to access secondary education.

The 2018 Early Learning Assessment Report was validated and approved by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE). The report provided useful data on the children's performance in several early child developmental domains, such as language, spatial recognition, recognition of pattern and socio-emotional skills. The report also highlighted disparities between different formulation of 'early learning', in terms of number of years spent in pre-primary or at ECD facilities. It also pointed to small difference in performance between children who attended government-run early learning centres and those who attended private early learning centres, indicating lower quality in government institutions.

UNICEF supported community engagement and sensitization on the importance of early learning and education in general, which created demand for more space and infrastructure, reflected insignificant increases in the gross enrolment rate: from 46.5 per cent in 2017 to 52.1 per cent in 2018 (boys, 50.9 per cent; girls, 53.3 per cent). Under UNICEF's new Nsa Kenno approach, community engagement will be strengthened, and there will be greater linkage and cross-sectoral engagement to create access to education for marginalized and vulnerable groups. Increased engagement should lead to a reduction in the number of out-of-school children, thus contributing to KRC 3 targets.

UNICEF continued its support for strengthening of the early learning system through the development of ECD minimum standards covering quality of education, health, nutrition, WASH and child protection in services provided at ECD facilities. About 107 education officers were familiarized with the standards and how to use them as a monitoring tool. UNICEF also supported a review of the early learning curriculum to ensure that it is orientated toward developing competencies and skills that are essential for school readiness and life-long learning.

Pre-school education is a potential area for which the Gambia can contribute to KRC 3.

Through early child development parenting interventions, more parents have acquired awareness of the importance of pre-school education. UNICEF also provided learning and play materials to 60 pre-schools and training of ECD facilitators and caregivers. These interventions removed cost barriers for parents and enhanced facilitators' capacity to deliver quality interactions and learning experiences. Adopting a cross-sectoral approach to ECD will ensure holistic development of children and maximize their school-readiness in 2019 and beyond.

Through the Dubai Care-supported ECD programme; 1,200 young parents acquired awareness and applied knowledge of children's rights and parenting skills; 30 communities were sensitized and demonstrated acceptance of improved child care, development and nurturing practices through social and behaviour change communication. Furthermore seven of these communities (ECD schools) were provided with improved outdoor playground equipment and facilities. As a result of UNICEF support to community engagement under the Nsa Kenno approach, 15 itinerant teachers acquired skills to provide regular pedagogic support to children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The monitoring capacity of the itinerant teachers will also be strengthened through the provision of motorbikes to facilitate monitoring and support. More than 40 low-enrolment communities were engaged through sensitization on the importance of education and the social and individual benefits of girls completing secondary education. This engagement resulted in the launch of more than 15 new schools in low-enrolment districts.

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

During 2018 UNICEF supported the DSW to expand community child protection committees (CCPCs) in three districts in the West Coast Region of the Gambia. These committees, including children and youth representatives, form part of child protection structures in regional settings working for the protection of children, receiving and reporting issues to the respective bodies (such as the police) for action and resolution. The community child protection committee network is present in all seven regions of the country. Children and youth are to participate fully in these committees, and training is planned for child-led communities, to undertake child protection activities in their schools, related to bullying and other forms of violence.

Building on this, UNICEF Gambia supported the DSW in preparations for rolling out a child protection information management system in 2019, through procurement of IT equipment and development of a clear roadmap for a case management system.

UNICEF has worked to support the expansion and systematization of birth registration services through procurement of supplies to facilitate the production of certificates, to reduce the gap between children registered and those certified. Over the year, 20,622 children under one year of age, 32,392 under-fives and 51,506 children between the ages 5 and 17 years were registered in the system. UNICEF also advocated for the full integration of birth registration into the civil registration and vital statistics system. Additionally, UNICEF supported the Government to raise community awareness about birth registration for 6,000 children as part of the building resilience through social transfers (BReST) project's birth registration programme. This activity is ongoing.

During the period under review the country office continued to support the transitional justice process with the Ministry of Justice and supported the inclusion of a youth commissioner on the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission. The draft transitional justice strategy has been prepared and UNICEF supported work to sensitize children and adolescents about the

process, to ensure children's participation. Further, the country office supported the establishment of a Children's Transitional Justice Network, which aims to ensure that children understand the process and how it affects them and how they can engage. Forty-nine children were trained as peer focal points. UNICEF supported the National Youth Council to raise awareness on transitional justice, including school principals and set up a children's network to sensitize school children on transitional justice. The network developed songs and drama scripts to promote peace among children. The Transitional Justice Act was also simplified into child-friendly versions and printed for schools across the country. UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and stakeholders, participated in the development of the national transitional justice strategy for directions on the truth, reconciliation and reparations process currently underway.

In collaboration with the National Youth Council, UNICEF delivered awareness-raising and community sensitization activities on risks associated with irregular migration for children. Support for children on the move reached over 1,000 people (including children and youth, parents and guardians, community leaders and service providers).

Twenty-five service providers, including DSW staff, police and immigration officers were trained on child protection-related matters (e.g., case management, psychosocial training, family tracing and reunification, standard operating procedures). Sixty shelter staff and staff from other children's institutions, as well as 90 community child protection committees were trained on psychosocial support for children, with the aim of strengthening common understanding of child protection issues in the country.

In addition, UNICEF supported the National Youth Council and National Assembly to establish a Children's National Assembly—a non-statutory platform for children. The platform was designed to create opportunities for children to engage, stimulate discussions and dialogue on issues that affect their rights, well-being and potential to develop to their fullest potential among themselves and with government officials. The Assembly is comprised of 105 children between the ages of 10 and 17 years who were elected across all the regions and municipalities. The official launch will be in 2019. The Assembly will advocate for advancing the rights of children as enshrined in the Children's Act and international legal instruments.

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

UNICEF continued to promote gender equity in WASH through promotion of gender inclusiveness in planning and implementation of WASH interventions. UNICEF and partners deliberately promote active participation of women, men and children in making decisions concerning provision of WASH facilities in schools and communities by ensuring that they are ably represented on water and sanitation committees, village development committees and mothers' clubs.

Water and sanitation facilities for 51 schools and six health facilities constructed during 2018 benefitted mainly the most isolated and hard-to-reach communities where women and girls face the biggest burden and have to travel long distances in search of water. Capacity building of mother's clubs was also conducted to empower women to manage the operation and maintenance of WASH facilities in communities and schools. In addition, latrines constructed in schools and health facilities were also designed to accommodate ramps, enabling children with physical impairment to access and use them. To address menstrual hygiene management in schools that benefitted from sanitation facilities in rural areas (all regions), 51 latrines were also

constructed with boxes to provide safe storage for sanitary materials with the aim of enabling girls to enjoy dignity and privacy during their menses while at school.

Open defecation targets have remained static at 99 per cent at the national level, although regional community-led total sanitation (CLTS) monitoring conducted at the end of December 2018 will provide data and ideas for the way forward in 2019. Decreasing rates of access to basic (non-shared, improved) sanitation facilities (JMP 2000-2015) and reaching the final 1 per cent (or last mile) of ODF has posed a significant challenge due to a number of constraints. Markets and other public facilities in places such as ports and transport hubs present a challenge; UNICEF has been exploring possibilities for developing a cost-recovery model and engagement with public authorities in charge of maintaining these spaces to address these issues. In addition, riverine communities with high-water tables have proved challenging in terms of ensuring that they have the facilities to practice ODF. Institutionally, ODF is constrained by the supply of water in public schools (nearly half of schools in sub-Saharan Africa lack drinking water service (JMP WINS baseline 2018) and health facilities, which continue to be a priority for UNICEF. Ongoing work is needed to ensure that the mapping of open defecation in both rural and urban areas is correct, which has posed a challenge at a national level. The mapping of functional water facilities also lagged behind, and institutional ODF is heavily dependent on the provision of running water. Behaviour-change communication activities in support of community-led total sanitation reached 13,850 people (7,064 female and 6,786 male) from 230 communities across the country, with a focus on those communities yet to declare open defecation free.

UNICEF Gambia contributed to the provision of access to safe drinking water for 49,505 people in eight schools and six health facilities across the country, while access to sanitation and hand washing facilities supported 20,827 people (10,426 girls and 10,366 boys) nationwide. Access to safe drinking water was provided through construction of nine new water points (boreholes) constructed at six lower basic schools and three health facilities; rehabilitation of five water points (two at lower basic schools and three at health facilities) also received UNICEF support.

Further, the country office supported construction of 53 VIP toilet blocks with 318 toilet pits at 51 lower basic schools. (159 for boys and 159 for girls). This activity was augmented by training of 130 water management committee and mothers' club members on the proper upkeep and sustainable use of WASH facilities (latrines and water points). UNICEF continued to support the strengthening of the early learning system through the development of ECD minimum standards covering the quality of education, health, nutrition, WASH and child protection services provided at ECD facilities.

UNICEF also supported the MoHSW's development of WASH guidelines for health facilities, which are currently under review for validation and approval in 2019.

Ongoing monitoring indicates that water quality is a significant issue in the country and the need to ensure consistent water quality monitoring is increasingly a priority. This needs to be informed by strong evidence-generation, which is a challenge in the Gambia.

Priorities for the forthcoming year include the need to drive sanitation and hygiene solutions for public places (markets, transport hubs) and develop an effective model for reproduction at scale. The work supporting water provision in health facilities and schools remains a priority as well as supporting actors in the WASH sector to build capacities, since the sector is small and has relatively few actors with strong WASH skills. This, in turn, has the potential to enhance

mapping and closing the 1 per cent gap, thus achieving the goal of an ODF Gambia (including addressing the problem of sanitation facilities in riverine communities). Advocacy around financing, in terms of budget allocation from Government and follow up on the commitment by the minister of health and social welfare to lead the ODF agenda to its successful culmination, following her participation in the global sanitation conference in India, will continue, to enhance stronger government leadership.

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

In 2018 UNICEF worked with the UNDP, WFP and World Bank to support the Government to design and gain approval by the National Assembly of a National Social Protection Secretariat, and to allocation human and financial resources for its operation. Along with other agencies, UNICEF provided financial and technical assistance to contract the services of a consultant to support the set-up process and help the Government manage the Secretariat during its first six months of operations.

UNICEF also worked with national stakeholders, particularly the Gambia Bureau of Statistics, to conduct the first-ever multidimensional child poverty analysis

The National Assembly obtained UNICEF support for conducting a mid-line budget review of the social sectors, which provided a platform where key social ministries and the ministry of finance could present their work and challenges. In addition, UNICEF is currently supporting the National Assembly to conduct scrutiny and analysis of the 2019 national budget. Through UNICEF advocacy, gains were achieved in the 2019 budget for investment in the social sectors, particularly those that affect children –such as education, which received a 1.9 per cent increase compared to 2018.

In collaboration with NaNa and the DSW, UNICEF continued to implement the BReST initiative –a social cash transfer project aimed at delivering cash and infant and young child feeding education for lactating mothers during their child’s first 1,000 days of life. By the end of 2018, some 6,176 mothers had been registered for a monthly cash transfer in the rural Central River, Upper River and North Bank regions of the country. Monthly cash transfers alongside infant and young child feeding sessions were conducted at 10 health facilities, and initial results show improvements in health service uptake and improved infant and young child feeding practices, such as exclusive breastfeeding. The programme was subject to an EU ROM mission and was highly commended by the evaluator across the DAC criteria.

Several key high-level policy and advocacy meetings were carried out by UNICEF, NaNa and DSW heads of implementing agencies. The meetings targeted key policy makers, such as the ministers of finance, health, education, the vice-president and the speaker of the National Assembly, advocating for the case for the BReST intervention and social protection programming in general. These advocacy meetings significantly contributed to the inclusion of the BReST project as a flagship social protection programme of the national development plan.

Gender dimension

UNICEF and implementing partners supported government efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). As a result, 775 community members and 830 security personnel were sensitized on the importance of the Women’s Amendment Act 2015; three established ‘young couples’ fora’ (to be replicated in communities), providing a platform allowing 44 women

to discuss these issues openly with their husbands. Four pilot 'stepping stones' consultations held in various communities resulted in the public presentation by village heads of signed action plans to support community action plans to end female genital mutilation/cutting. Forty wives of traditional rulers and three community child protection committees were sensitized about problems related to the practice; 77 positive deviants were identified and engaged in selected districts to advocate for change within their own communities. UNICEF Gambia also supported the Women's Bureau to strengthen the monitoring and coordination of activities for the elimination of female genital mutilation/cutting in the country. An NGO consortium was developed to work with UNICEF and the Women's Bureau to work on strengthening community behaviour change related to it as well as child marriage and out-of-school adolescent girls. With UNICEF's support, the Women's Bureau also organized community dialogues involving young men and women and religious leaders throughout the West Coast Region of the Gambia.

UNICEF hosted a high-level event graced by the First Lady to launch its CoM programme in August 2018, for which the office received funds from DfID and the Italian Government. The First Lady confirmed her commitment to serve as champion on issues related to children on the move and advocate for their support and protection.

Another gender-related activity was UNICEF's construction of an equal number of school latrines for boys and girls, specifically to facilitate menstrual hygiene management. The latrines were constructed with boxes to provide safe storage for sanitary materials to enable girls enjoy dignity and privacy during their menses while at school. During post-construction monitoring, however, it was noted that awareness and use of the boxes and materials being provided was not optimal at some schools. Thus it was agreed that in the future all latrine construction for girls would be accompanied by strong social mobilization and health education components.

Humanitarian situations

In October 2018 the Government, in response to food security concerns expressed by stakeholders, declared a state of emergency. The main reason was the delayed onset of rains, coupled with long dry spells resulting in smaller than expected crops. Based on this, it was estimated that rice and wheat import would have to increase to offset the decrease in local cereal production. UNICEF Gambia collaborated with WFP and FAO to support the pre-harvest assessment of food security. However, it was agreed that since the MICS survey had been carried out recently and nutrition surveillance was ongoing, there was no need to carry out a nutrition assessment. As part of routine emergency preparedness planning, following consultations with the National Disaster Management Authority, WFP, WHO and other stakeholders, sectoral response plans were reviewed and updated for the health, nutrition and WASH sectors. These sectoral plans are also reflected in UNDAF plans for the relevant sections. It was also agreed internally that an existing standby agreement with Gambia Red Cross on emergency response will be reviewed and extended for another two years (until end-2020). An emergency response plan was also finalized in 2018. To ensure proper coordination and accountability, UNICEF has designated the chief of its child survival and development section as the focal point, and the emergency management team was notified. Emergency preparedness updates are a standing agenda point for country management team meetings and emergency training was included in learning plans for relevant staff.

Other cross-cutting work

UNICEF Gambia prepared and regularly updated its monitoring and evaluation plan. Key

activities implemented included the: MICS 6, micro-nutrient survey, teacher absenteeism study, and an evaluation of the programme for improved quality and standards in schools (PIQSS). MICS 6 field work, data processing and analysis were completed currently and the first draft of the survey findings report and draft statistical snapshots were generated. The final MICS report is expected in February 2019.

MNS fieldwork was also completed; at end-2018 data were being analysed in advance of the release of the final report in early 2019. UNICEF is conducting a teacher absenteeism study with the UNICEF Regional Office and the Innocenti Centre, seeking to better understand the determinants of teacher attendance at primary schools and of their motivation for teaching. Survey instruments were finalized and recruitment of a survey firm was at an advanced stage in late 2018. Evaluation of the PIQSS is ongoing; the final report is due by the third week January, and will provide information and data regarding the effectiveness of UNICEF's support for education and its potential impact on quality education outcomes in the Gambia.

UNICEF conducted training on the harmonized approach to cash transactions (HACT) for its implementing partners and with sister agencies, to build capacity and enhance efficient and effective programme delivery. Targets were achieved and UNICEF Gambia was rated among the top three countries for outstanding performance in the region. The country office worked closely with UNDP and UNFPA to implement joint assurance activities for shared partners. A situation analysis of children and women in the Gambia was conducted by UNICEF in 2015. The findings showed that bottlenecks were hindering the realization of some results for children and women, including: limited outreach at the regional, district and community levels; limited awareness by stakeholders and end-users; limited coordination among institutions responsible for children; traditional and cultural beliefs and practices; and low community engagement and participation. As part of measures to address these bottlenecks, the country office launched a community engagement approach known as Nsa Kenno, which means 'we can do it' in the Mandinka language. Nsa Kenno is a communication for development, behaviour-change and demand-creation community engagement strategy to harness social capital for changing social norms and promoting services through young people and existing community mechanisms to drive results for children.

As a pilot, in September 2018 UNICEF and UNDP, working in collaboration with the Ministry of Land and Regional Government (MoLRG), developed an initiative entitled building capacities of regional decentralized structures in Lower River and Upper River Regions. This was a first step in ensuring implementation of Nsa Kenno, intended to address institutional capacity gaps within 550 decentralized structures and 337 CBOs and endow 500 communities with strong, accountable and efficient local structures and institutions to propel and serve as vehicles for sustainable community development. Implementation will be led solely by the MOLRG, in consultation with decentralized government structures in the two pilot regions. On 4 December 2018, a high-level policy meeting was held to officially present Nsa Kenno to the President, who expressed delight at the prospect that Nsa Kenno would engender engagement and empowerment of communities to advance national development.

As part of measures to expand UNICEF Gambia's partnership model, the office reached out to academic and research institutions. The Medical Research Council of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine collaborated with UNICEF on the newborn survival programme. UNICEF also developed terms of reference for setting up a 'friends of Gambian children' (FGC) platform, in close collaboration with the MoLSW. The platform serves as informal advocacy to mobilize and coordinate support for advancing children's rights within key intergovernmental

processes, as well as thematic issues of importance to children including ECD, child protection and migration, among others. In addition to raising awareness, The Gambian Chamber of Commerce and Industry serves as the business platform that coordinates the private sector in the country.

UNICEF Gambia also collaborates with two of the leading mobile network operators as part of efforts to commence implementation of U-Report and RapidPro in the Gambia. These partnerships are initial steps that the office believes will build relationships with telecommunication markets. In the year under review, the office had a United Nations Volunteer, to support its youth advocacy and monitoring. The volunteer was supported by the technology for development working group for establishment of the country's U-Report platform. The digital transformation project aims to rollout a new UNICEF website to various UNICEF regional and country offices, as one of the offices participating in the project, which will see a rebranding of the website, with updated information, photos and content.

During an international conference in Brussels hosted by the EU on behalf of the Gambia, the UN Secretary-General committed US\$20 million throughout the life cycle of the country's National Development Plan. A release of US\$7 million was made by his office to the Government –UN Country Team. The team submitted four proposals across the following thematic areas: lands, transitional justice, youth and women, and migration. UNICEF is a co-applicant of the youth and women proposal, with a budget share of US\$370,000. Some of the transitional justice activities involve children, so UNICEF will take on these activities with a budget of US\$170,000. In addition, the country office was awarded €2 million by Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in September 2018 to support system-strengthening for child protection in the Gambia. The Italian Government also awarded €3 million for accelerating progress in young child survival, growth and development. DfID's safety support and solutions phase II programme funding of approximately £7 million was received by UNICEF's West and Central Africa Regional Office. The project, covering six countries in the region including the Gambia, is targeted at protecting children on the move in the region from violence, abuse and exploitation. An official launch of the project was conducted in Banjul, and used as an entry point to build a stronger relationship with the British Embassy in the Gambia, obtaining further commitment to strengthening child protection systems through engagement by the First Lady on matters related to children on the move. As a result, the First Lady confirmed her commitment to champion children on the move issues and advocate for their support and protection.

In the year under review, UNICEF Gambia recorded increased engagements on social media, through its official accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram: Facebook: from 5,366 page likes in 2017 to 6,151 page likes in 2018; Twitter: from 2,700 followers in 2017 to 4,104 followers in 2018; and Instagram: from 1,300 followers in 2017 to 2,047 followers in 2018. Twitter reach for 2018 was 671,600, with 12,708 engagements, while on Facebook the office had a reach of 299,178, with 25,448 engagements.

UNICEF Gambia developed an advocacy strategy, aligned to the global advocacy strategy. Following the partnerships developed in 2018, an advocacy plan will be drawn up for 2019.

Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

During 2018 the country office reflected on the outputs from programme interventions to

understand what worked, what did not work, and identify bottlenecks requiring adjustment given the window of opportunity provided by the new Government.

Bottlenecks hindering achievement of results for children and women were: limited outreach at the regional, district and community levels; limited awareness by stakeholders and end-users; traditional and cultural beliefs and practices; high youth unemployment; and limited community engagement and participation. Despite prior commitments, ending open defecation by 2017 was not achieved, due to factors such as; limited funding (as UNICEF is the only partner supporting the Government), slow movement up the sanitation ladder to improved facilities (latrines constructed using temporary materials) and lack of technology options to address challenges faced by riverine and other vulnerable communities.

As part of measures to address these bottlenecks, UNICEF Gambia reviewed and reconstructed its approach to community engagement, resulting in the Ñsa Kenno initiative. Ñsa Kenno is significant because it mobilizes key actors to generate change and engage youth within communities (a key priority of the National Development Plan). Nsa Kenno will be leveraged as a great opportunity to intensify community engagement and involvement of key stakeholders in the campaign to end OD and achieve a national ODF declaration. As a result, UNICEF collaborated with the UNDP to re-engage with the local government structures, ensuring coherence (Delivering as One) and with shared responsibilities. The task of strengthening local accountability frameworks and linking them with relevant institutions was assigned to UNICEF; UNDP will address upstream governance mechanisms and ensuring alignment and coordination.

UNICEF's work in this area will aim to ensure that both demand creation in communities and behaviour change are channelled through local government structures, empowering agencies at these decentralized levels to engage and communicate with communities to drive change; while at the same time reinforcing existing local governance structures, which are mandated by law and policy to drive community engagement in development. This adjustment is a considerable step forward in overcoming some of the constraints identified, and brings UNICEF closer to its partners in Government and civil society and to the women and children it serves. In 2019 the office will be consolidating capacities and enhancing channels of communication to reinforce the engagement of children, youth and communities. Their engagement and participation will be essential to building a truly protective environment for every child in the Gambia. Also needed is sustained and coordinated advocacy with the rest of the UN system, development partners, the private sector and civil society organizations involved in children's issues to secure positive outcomes and achieve key results for children (KRCs).

KRC 1: Immunization-plus

During 2018, UNICEF Gambia continued its support to the Government on health system strengthening to improve immunization outcomes in line with KRC 1. Further collaboration is needed to ensure that the integration of services (such as immunization, Vitamin A and other screening services at service delivery level) is mirrored at all levels, particularly the national level, to improve planning and more effective use of resources. A national working group took initial steps to integrate Vitamin A and mebendazole into the vaccine supply chain to ensure the continuous availability of these supplies at the service delivery level. A key priority for UNICEF will be to continue to advocate and support the functioning and expansion of this working group to include stakeholders from other services, such as birth registration and HIV. The Nsa Kenno initiative, as a mechanism to strengthen multi-sectoral accountability, will guide

all community engagement activities in 2019 seeking to generate demand for increased utilization of services and achieve high coverage.

The findings and recommendations of the supply chain assessment conducted in 2018 will be implemented in 2019, as the country also continues implementation of the CCEOP to expand and improve cold chain capacity and performance at all levels, which will also aid in the integration of other services, such as Vitamin A supplementation.

KRC 3: Equitable and sustainable access to education

Pre-school age education is a potential area for the Gambia to contribute to KRC 3. Through early child development parenting interventions, more parents have acquired awareness of the importance of pre-school education. UNICEF also provided learning and play materials to 60 pre-schools and training for ECD facilitators and caregivers. These interventions removed cost barriers for parents and enhanced facilitators' capacity to deliver quality interactions and learning experiences. Adopting a cross-sectoral approach to ECD will ensure holistic development of children and maximize their school-readiness in 2019 and beyond.

In 2018 UNICEF interventions sought to ensure that all children, especially the marginalized and vulnerable, have access to education — from pre-school to secondary school. This raised the need to rethink and create innovative ways of getting more children into school, e.g., children with disabilities. These children are generally either not in school or drop out because schools do not meet their unique needs. UNICEF supported the training of 15 itinerant teachers who provided regular pedagogical support to children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The provision of motorbikes to itinerant teachers facilitated their monitoring and support to the children. In addition, the provision of WASH facilities in schools facilitated access to safe water and basic sanitation facilities for children in school, which helped to create conducive learning environments.

Secondary education completion by girls increased as a result of community engagement and making schools safe and conducive for girls. Forty low-enrolment communities were engaged through sensitization on the importance of education and the social and individual benefits of girls completing secondary education. This engagement will be intensified using the Ñsa Kenno in 2019.

KRC 5: Violence against children

UNICEF Gambia reviewed the constraints and lessons learnt regarding provision of a more protective environment for children in 2018. A robust child protection system in the country and community level child protection interventions (notably to address child marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, and children on the move) is essential to preventing violence against children.

This involves strengthening community-based child protection mechanisms and linking them with regional and national mechanisms. This has been initiated and UNICEF will continue to strengthen the system and work closely with the new Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. One key priority for 2019 is to identify measures to increase the number of social workers within the ministry. This is imperative, as currently the ratio of social workers to children is 1:30,000. UNICEF will link KRCs 3 and 5 through an implementation roadmap in 2019 for addressing all forms of violence against children.

A significant opportunity is the commitment by the Government to set up a dedicated and functional social protection secretariat, which will be situated in the new Ministry for Women, Children and Social Welfare in 2019. This will provide a focal point for investment and capacity building and build synergies between UNICEF's support to work in child protection, social protection and other areas of intervention.

Following the advent of the new administration, UNICEF built a cordial relationship with the National Assembly. This relationship presents an opportunity to strengthen the Assembly's mandate and ensure that children's issues are on the agenda of the Select Committee on Women, Children and Refugees and other committees. Furthermore, this will ensure that line Government ministries, agencies and departments of are held accountable as duty-bearers in upholding the rights of children. The National Assembly budget planning and review meeting in 2019 represents a unique opportunity for UNICEF to speak out for children and drive government investment and accountability.

In the approved budgets of 2017 and 2018, funding for key social sectors such as education and health received marginal increases, which did not translate to an increase in the allocation of resources to key government programmes and budget lines aimed at improving the wellbeing of children. In 2019 and beyond, UNICEF's work on public financing for children will focus on advocating for increased government allocations to child-focused line ministries. Similarly, attention will be paid to the strategic social programmes that affect children and specific budget lines (such as pharmaceuticals and vaccines), rather than taking a sector-wide approach as in the past.

The Government is still characterized by high turnover among senior staff, including ministers and permanent secretaries, which represents a threat to closing rights gaps of children in the country. This continues to threaten Government coordination mechanisms and leadership for ensuring synchronization within sectors. The absence of a mechanism to coordinate implementation of the UNDAF is one of the factors responsible for weak coordination among the sectors. Discussions are ongoing to ensure that this is addressed in 2019. UNICEF, by taking on some broader coordination efforts, will continue to support the Government as a convener of some sectors to ensure relevance and coherence of this mechanism to achieve better results for children.

The continued short-term funding received for visibility remains a significant challenge, especially when the majority of other resources (OR) funds are limited to a 12-month duration. The office will work with the region to attract multi-year OR funding to facilitate long-term visibility. Also, the establishment of long-term agreements with service providers will reduce duplication of visibility material produced, enhance coordination and provide value for money when there is funding from multiple donors for similar programmes.

A key lesson learnt from engaging with the private sector in 2018 was that private sector stakeholders do not understand how they can deliver results for children through their marketplace. The office engaged them in 2018 and will continue to work with Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 2019 to provide knowledge and co-create solutions and products for children with the private sector. Through the sanitation marketing approach, the private sector will be engaged further to develop affordable sanitation products and services aimed at providing durable and sustainable sanitation solutions, facilitating the move to higher level of the sanitation ladder through improved and non-shared facilities).

The Country Office faced some challenges in the use of innovative technology for development to improve implementation of its interventions. In 2018, UNICEF Gambia initiated set-up of the U-Report with two network providers; the launch is scheduled for March 2019 at the African youth conference on African unity and development. The office will continue to consolidate 2018 efforts and explore new and innovative technology to help deliver better results for children.

The delivery of successful programmes is reliant on effective operational support within the office. In 2018, UNICEF Gambia improved its operational efficiency and effectiveness by, for example, launching long-term agreements as a key process for contracting on behalf of the operation management team (OMT), and consolidated guidance and capacity building for UNICEF staff and partners on managing UNICEF's financial support. It also continued to support increased efficiency within the UN country team in 2018, through active engagement by UNICEF operations staff on the operations management team.

Staff professional development was a key priority in 2018, to ensure that staff implementing programmes and operations have the required knowledge and skills to perform their tasks. During the year, management and staff worked together to identify ways to improve staff learning opportunities, resulting in the finalization of a staff human resource development strategy.

Standardization of practices through the development of standard operating procedures ensured implementation of programmes in line with UNICEF's global rules and policies. These procedures were essential to maximizing efficiency and effectiveness, especially in a growing office with a new programme cycle and high staff turnover. UNICEF was also instrumental in supporting the Gambia's efforts to end open defecation through technical support (facilitating the development of a national community-led total sanitation (CLTS) database and roadmap to end open defecation), financial support (funding most CLTS interventions in the country) and, most importantly, building the capacity of MoHSW staff through training, sharing manuals and relevant literature, mentoring and informal on-the-job discussions.

END/