Executive Summary

UNICEF Gulf Area Office is unique within the organization, providing programmatic support to the countries of the sub-region (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) and serving as the organization’s main interface with Gulf partners for resource mobilization efforts.

In 2016, the World Bank anticipated that growth in Gulf Cooperation Council countries would drop from 3.1 per cent in 2015 to 2.2 per cent (Middle East and North Africa Economic Report, Spring 2016). In response to this dampening economic outlook, Gulf countries have taken to a variety of reforms aimed at accelerating economic diversification, reducing reliance on oil-based revenue, rethinking the public sector and grappling with ways of ensuring reliable transition-to-work programmes for their youthful populations. In 2016, Saudi Arabia outlined this ambition in its Vision 2030 agenda and the related National Transformation Plan (2020) with sectoral development targets. The most sweeping reforms of government bodies were carried out in the United Arab Emirates, addressing emerging challenges such as climate change and youth development, while adjusting the remit of ministries dealing with health, education and foreign affairs.

Despite a challenging economic landscape, the partnerships arm of UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to operate under its 2014–2017 strategy for engagement. The strategy priorities call for an integrated approach to resource mobilization with a focus on four channels (governments, foundations, major donors and corporations) and a geographical focus on Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

During the reporting year, UNICEF Gulf Area Office initiated and sustained partnerships with a total of 24 donors in both the private and public sectors across the Gulf, which resulted in securing US$122.3 million. Of this, US$1.40 million was allocated to UNICEF regular resources, US$93.98 million was allocated to UNICEF other resources and US$26.93 million was allocated to UNICEF other resources emergency.

Notable collaborations included the newly established partnership with Alwaleed Philanthropies, which resulted in a five-year grant of US$50 million (US$10 million each year) for the elimination of measles; the Government of Saudi Arabia’s contribution of US$29 million to UNICEF’s operations in Yemen channelled through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre; the significant growth of UNICEF’s global partnership with Educate a Child (EAC), a private-sector foundation in Qatar, which is now generating a US$190 million income for UNICEF’s education work with out-of-school children; and the Government of Kuwait’s contribution to UNICEF’s response to emergency (at US$4 million for the fourth consecutive year, as a result of the International Pledging Conference for Syria hosted by the Emir of Kuwait and the United Nations Secretary-General).

Programmatically, with a physical presence in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office pursued programming to inform national level action and policies in line with the priorities of the Area Programme Document (2014–2017). In the United Arab Emirates, UNICEF collaborated with the Supreme Council for Motherhood and
Childhood (SCMC) and the General Women’s Union (GWU) to support the finalization and submission of the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021) and the Strategic Plan for Children with Disabilities (2017–2021) to the Prime Minister’s Office for final approval. The two frameworks are fully aligned with the United Arab Emirates’ next National Development Plan (2017–2021) and provide tangible accountability mechanisms for advancing the child development agenda. In Saudi Arabia, achievements included UNICEF Gulf Area Office partnering with the National Family Safety Program, the National Commission for Childhood (NCC) and the Ministry of Education to launch a national anti-bullying campaign and programme that is now being implemented nationwide and is paving the way for further work in child protection.

The most significant shortfalls were in regards to developing systems for data collection and monitoring, which affected several result areas. In the United Arab Emirates, a multi-pronged partnership to support a household Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, was ultimately unsuccessful due to funding challenges. In Saudi Arabia, the late receipt of the Government’s programme contribution caused delayed in workplan implementation, including the identification of an agreement to a set of child development indicators to systematically track child well-being. A new development agenda in Saudi Arabia and the roll-out of the Sustainable Development Goals are presenting new opportunities for addressing this gap.

Programmatically, the absence of basic cooperation agreements with Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar has constrained the scale of engagement in these countries. In addition, programme funding is largely limited to the contributions by the governments of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, with regulations and legal frameworks in the countries limiting the possibilities for pursuing public fund-raising activities.

**Humanitarian assistance**

The reporting period was marked by an increase in the number and scale of emergencies. UNICEF Gulf Area Office supported humanitarian assistance by mobilizing funds to support the organization’s response. This included sharing humanitarian appeals with target donors in the Gulf and cultivating partnerships to support specific emergency needs.

These efforts allowed UNICEF Gulf Area Office to generate resources to support the response to many of these emergencies, including in Gaza, India (the floods in Chennai), Iraq, Myanmar, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. For example:

US$4.02 million was received for the Syrian emergency response (US$4 million received from the Government of Kuwait and the balance received from corporate partners in the private sector and major donors). After almost five years of conflict, Syrians are now facing the largest humanitarian crisis in the world, with grave protection and human rights violations occurring daily. An estimated 13.5 million people require urgent life-saving assistance inside the Syrian Arab Republic, including 6 million children, according to UNICEF situation reports.

US$5.92 million was received from the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre in Saudi Arabia in response to the UNICEF Yemen Flash Appeal signed in 2015. In addition, stakeholders in the Gulf contributed significantly to the response to the Yemen crisis following the escalation of conflict in March 2015. More than 21.2 million people, including 9.9 million children, require humanitarian assistance. An estimated 2.3 million people are now internally displaced, 14.1 million people require access to basic health care, 19.3 million people require access to safe, clean water and 1.8 million children are out of school due to fighting and insecurity.
In Iraq, more than 10 million people are affected, including 4.7 million children. The continuous sharing of humanitarian appeals with selected donors throughout the Gulf is being used as a strategy to raise the needed funds.

US$50,000 was received in response to the emergency in Myanmar from the Government of Kuwait.

While humanitarian funds received in 2016 were less than in 2015, there has been an increase in funding from some partners such as Alwaleed Philanthropies, Dubai Cares and the EAC programme for non-emergency programmes.

**Emerging Areas of Importance**

**Urbanization.** During the reporting year, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office devoted increased attention to the impact of urbanization on child development and well-being. In the United Arab Emirates, UNICEF Gulf Area Office supported the Emirate of Sharjah (specifically, the Sharjah Baby Friendly Office) to initiate and work towards the ‘Child Friendly City’ designation in line with international accreditation standards. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office recognizes the importance of child-friendly services and the provision of a clean, safe environment where children and adolescents can thrive. The Emirate previously invested in similar efforts to focus municipal services and support to children and their families through the Sharjah Baby Friendly City initiative and was seeking to ensure similar holistic support through the second decade of life. This initiative seeks to prioritize and enhance the well-being of children and adolescents through sectors.

During this initial phase, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office provided technical assistance through a consultancy firm that has been supporting UNICEF globally with guidance on implementation of the Child Friendly Cities initiative to carry out a comprehensive assessment to determine service gaps and support families across sectors. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office developed checklists, a set of indicators, discussion guides and surveys to obtain comprehensive data that reflects all aspects related to children. Cross-sectoral discussions and assessments were then conducted with several national and federal authorities from various sectors, including health, education, protection, participation, leisure, development, culture and media. Children’s views, perspectives and recommendations were a crucial component of the assessment and were obtained through surveys and focus group discussions with approximately 100 children and adolescents (boys and girls) in public and private schools and child and adolescent centres ensuring that gender perspectives were considered.

The assessment highlighted promising practices for children and families in Sharjah and reflects a high level of commitment and willingness to improve ongoing initiatives and programmes, primarily through coordination and overall systems strengthening to facilitate comprehensive service delivery across sectors for children. With the indication that counterparts are interested in scaling up the effort across the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will bring lessons and evidence from this experience to support the effort.

**Summary Notes and Acronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AWP</td>
<td>annual work plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNTRY MANAGEMENT TEAM</td>
<td>Country Management Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAC</td>
<td>Educate a Child</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>information and communication technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>GWU</td>
<td>General Women’s Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>National Commission for Childhood</td>
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</table>
Capacity Development

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office utilizes capacity development as a key strategy for generating results for children.

In the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office partnered with the SCMC, the GWU, the Abu Dhabi Education Council and the Ministry of Education to address the issue of bullying in schools to improve safety in the learning environment. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office trained 62 teachers (30 males and 32 females) in 24 schools (selected to ensure diversity of contexts for lessons) in workshops held in cooperation with the partners. A variety of tools (pre- and post-questionnaires, focus group discussions, observation and routine monitoring) were used to contribute to an understanding of the nature and prevalence of bullying and to assess the effectiveness of the programme.

The results point to a reduction in reported bullying. The programme is monitored and sustained in each school by multisectoral teams of school health nurses, social workers and management. Also in the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and partners, with funding from the private sector (Al Tamimi Group), convened 42 representatives from a wide range of child protection institutions and services in a training workshop to address gaps previously identified in a child protection systems mapping conducted in 2015.

In Saudi Arabia, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, the NCC, the Arab Gulf Programme for Development and the General Administration for Kindergarten partnered to advance the child protection agenda in early learning. With a focus on kindergartens, training manuals outlining the nature and manifestations of abuse in schools and approaches for detection and response in schools, families and communities were developed and used to conduct trainings-of-trainers with teachers and supervisors (58 females trained from 45 provinces to carry out trainings with an additional 472 practitioners). These ‘soft components’ will be used to inform an ambitious scale up of early child development (ECD) and kindergartens in Saudi Arabia as part of the latest National Development Plan.

Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office recognizes the importance of generating timely and relevant evidence to inform and guide national policies and programmes within high-income country contexts. Examples from Saudi Arabia include:

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office partnered with the National Family Safety Program, the NCC and the Ministry of Education to respond to violence in schools with a focus on bullying. Beginning with a review of the situation and a capacity assessment, a toolkit and accompanying training package was developed for teachers, supervisors and communities. In rolling out the national programme, the materials were consistently updated, with the content now featuring in the ministry training modules for all teachers. To kick-start the school-based programme nationwide, a high-level launch was conducted in November 2016. Next steps by the partnership include ways of sustaining the programme in every school through innovative and child-friendly tools (such as a phone application) that continue to raise awareness and document action by children, their schools and their communities.
The first-ever situation analysis on children was completed with contributions from the health, protection and education sectors. After a thorough review, the key findings will be used to convene representatives from all sectors in early 2017 to a policy roundtable to link the conclusions with the national priorities outlined in the Vision 2030. The Vision 2030 has emerged as the principal roadmap for social and economic reforms in the country.

**Partnerships**

Partnerships are central to the achievement of results by the UNICEF Gulf Area Office. Programmatically, UNICEF Gulf Area Office in the United Arab Emirates continued to work with the SCMC and the GWU and through this partnership engaged with a number of new line ministries and actors. In Saudi Arabia, the partnership with the NCC, the Arab Gulf Programme for Development, the National Family Safety Program and the Child Helpline resulted in a number of capacity development efforts in education and child protection.

Partnerships also formed the bedrock of resource mobilization efforts. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office consistently raised the children’s rights and business principles when engaging with donors, with focus on those developing their corporate social responsibility agenda. In 2016, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office managed active partnerships with public and private sector stakeholders in the Gulf. These partnerships resulted in:

**Saudi Arabia:** The largest contribution of US$10 million was directed from Alwaleed Philanthropies for a measles elimination agreement of US$50 million signed in 2016. US$20.7 million came from Saudi Arabia through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre in response to the Yemen emergency. US$2 million was committed by the Saudi Fund for Development for the emergency in the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Kuwait:** Kuwait has been the largest humanitarian donor with a new 2016 contribution of US$4 million (for the Syrian Arab Republic) and US$50,000 (for Myanmar).

**The United Arab Emirates:** The United Arab Emirates Red Crescent committed to US$200,000 as a second instalment of the US$1 million for a health project in Mali; Dubai Cares contributed an amount of US$500,000 and is committed to an additional US$977,000 (Iraq and Vanuatu).

**Qatar:** The UNICEF Gulf Area Office’s largest private sector donor (EAC) contributed US$17 million in 2016 and is committed to another US$57.3 million. UNICEF received US$3.3 million for education in Gaza from Al Fakhoora, another programme of Education Above All and the Qatar Fund for Development committed to US$500,000 for South Sudan.

**External Communication and Public Advocacy**

In line with the global communication and public advocacy strategy, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office focused on a set of actions aimed at increasing understanding and awareness of key children’s issues and attracting audiences to act on behalf of children. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office Programme Document, which outlines the key expected results, includes cultivating and sustaining partnerships to increase channels for public advocacy and engagement.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office supported its lead counterpart, SCMC, to hold its inaugural Fatima bint Mubarak Motherhood and Childhood Forum, on the occasion of Universal Children’s Day, an event convening a range of actors in the public and private sphere (including high-level representation from other countries in the region and world, councils of motherhood and childhood, school communities and the public) to engage on the topic of innovation in education and learning. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office facilitated senior
participation from UNICEF’s Global Innovation Centre and developed (with UNICEF Lebanon) a booth showcasing innovation initiatives for and by children. Finally, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office provided technical assistance for the meaningful participation of children during a well-attended session showing the ways in which children can act to develop solutions to issues affecting their lives.

As a result of the Forum, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office engaged in advocacy efforts with the Minister of Youth to consider opportunities for advancing the child and youth participation and innovation agenda in the United Arab Emirates. It is expected that this will lead to the United Arab Emirates' adoption of U-Report (a UNICEF app for engaging with young people).

Communications and advocacy formed key aspects of the UNICEF Gulf Area Office’s engagement with public and private sector partners. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to pursue its communications strategy along three lines: strengthening media relationships to increase the UNICEF footprint; strengthening donor engagement to increase trust; and supporting internal communication to optimize output.

**South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation**

During the reporting year, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office contributed to efforts to promote South-South cooperation in specific ways that are relevant to the priorities of the sub-region.

Given challenges related to effectively engaging in the justice for children agenda in the Gulf, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office prioritized its participation in a seminar organized by the Gulf Cooperation Council, ‘Juvenile Justice System: Responsibility of State, Family and Civil Society’, which took place in the Ministry of Social Affairs in Kuwait (May 2016). The participants included official representatives of ministries of social affairs from Gulf countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates). With technical guidance from the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office presented the organization’s toolkit on diversion and alternative measures to detention. While most of the interventions in the seminar were focused on the role of family and school, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office emphasized the role of all parties, especially the Government in addressing gaps in justice for children. In addition, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office advocated for recommendations to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility and ways to minimize children’s exposure to the adult criminal system. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office is using this participation to engage in bilateral efforts to address the issues of protection and juvenile justice in the Gulf.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office also supported organizational efforts to better define and strengthen cooperation between UNICEF and the Islamic Development Bank. A cross-team delegation (representing the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, UNICEF Indonesia, the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office and UNICEF Headquarters) undertook a mission to dialogue with the Bank on areas for improved collaboration at the country and global levels. The revived partnership will consider programming initiatives that can be pursued in the short term and innovative financing modalities to benefit children.

**Support to Integration and Cross-Sectoral Linkages**

During the reporting period, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to prioritize the implementation of programmes and support policies focusing on cross-sectoral linkages or requiring integrated approaches.

In the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, in partnership with SCMC and the GWU, provided technical and financial support for the development of the Strategic Plan
for Children with Disabilities (2017–2021). The Strategic Plan was based on a situation analysis of children summarizing current policies, initiatives and services across sectors available to children and made an assessment around gaps, in line with international norms and standards. Targeted advocacy with partners facilitated the submission of the Strategic Plan to the Prime Minister’s Office for review and approval.

Similarly, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, SCMC and GWU facilitated the drafting of a National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021) that offers a framework with expected outcome areas (education, health, protection, participation and improved knowledge base for policy for formulation) across ministries and authorities. The strategy also serves as a platform for multisectoral implementation and coordination efforts.

In Saudi Arabia, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office works in close collaboration with the NCC on programmes with substantial cross-sectoral components. During the reporting year, this included the national launching of an anti-bullying programme that included a partnership with the National Family Safety Program and the Ministry of Education. The Child Helpline continued to bring partners together across sectors, including the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, to review the types of child protection cases reported through the line to determine trends and use these to inform capacity development efforts to address child protection systematically.

**Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation**

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office supported efforts to advance the human rights-based approach to programming.

In Saudi Arabia, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office worked with its partner, the NCC, to finalize the situation analysis on children. UNICEF also advocated with its partner to frame an upcoming policy roundtable on the report to increase awareness of recommended areas of action for enhancing child rights and place children at the heart of the highly visible Vision 2030 Agenda.

In the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office worked with its partners, the SCMC and the GWU, to facilitate two national policies and frameworks that will elevate the rights of children in the national development agenda: the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021) in support of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Strategic Plan for Children with Disabilities (2017–2021) in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability. Both are under final approval in the Prime Minister’s Office and are fully aligned with next National Development Plan (2017–2021). The UNICEF Gulf Area Office will be working with the relevant partners to support the accountability mechanisms for these frameworks at the technical and decision-making levels.

UNICEF Gulf Area Office has partnered with the Sharjah Baby Friendly Office to conceptualize the implementation of the Child Friendly Cities initiative in Sharjah Emirate, noting the rapidly urbanizing context of the United Arab Emirates. This framework holistically considers the rights of all children and has been a strong convening platform for a range of stakeholders across sectors and society (including children) to assess strengths and gaps in service provision. The findings will inform scale-up efforts in the United Arab Emirates.

Finally, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office has prioritized child participation with partners as the central focus of the next workplan as a means of supporting authorities to implement the participation-related articles of the recently enacted Law on Child Rights. The meaningful participation of children in civic life at the community, municipal and federal levels will serve to strengthen the voices of children in the national development landscape in the United Arab Emirates.
Gender Equality

During the reporting year, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office focused on the priority, "promoting gender-responsive adolescent health".

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued its work on HIV/AIDS in 2016 by implementing the ‘All In’ initiative, a process for convening relevant actors across sectors to prioritize responsive action for adolescent boys and girls and HIV based on the available data. The aim was to scale up HIV prevention efforts, noting the low levels of comprehensive knowledge among adolescent boys and girls (average score of 61 per cent according to a 2014 knowledge, attitude and practice survey) and the lack of adolescent-friendly health services. Recommendations arising following the assessment and discussions with stakeholders included the development of a National Strategic Plan for HIV that addresses these components and ensures all adolescents (boys and girls) have equal opportunities to education, treatment and care.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office’s engagement under the ‘All In’ framework, which included providing leadership and technical support, strengthened the relationship with the Ministry of Health, which will be instrumental in developing the National Strategic Plan in 2017 should funds be identified. The National Strategic Plan for HIV in the United Arab Emirates would aim to guide different stakeholders to priority areas and activities to decrease the spread of HIV and its impact. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office’s contribution to these efforts in 2016 continued through support to peer health educators from five universities across the United Arab Emirates to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS among university students.

In addition, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office in the United Arab Emirates secured the commitment of its strategic partners, the SCMC and GWU, to focus on children’s participation in the forthcoming workplan. This focus on child participation will be a means of working with partners to implement the related articles on child engagement in the recently passed Law on Child Rights. The planned priorities include partnering with peer educators to address issues in adolescent health, with a focus on adolescent girls.

Environmental Sustainability

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office receives its programme funds from government contributions in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. These programme funds were not earmarked for work on climate change assessments and or programming response. In view of this limitation, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office through the United Nations Country Team framework will explore opportunities in 2017 for supporting inter-agency efforts in climate change response.

Despite these challenges, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office in the United Arab Emirates supported the conceptualization and implementation of the Child Friendly Cities initiative in Sharjah Emirate to learn from and guide further scale up. The preliminary assessments took into consideration the impact of urbanization on factors such as the provision of green spaces as a means for providing children and their families with space for leisure activities. The budget for the effort so far has been US$54,495.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office took several steps to eliminate and reduce its carbon footprint in its daily work. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office in Saudi Arabia replaced regular lights with energy saving lights in all rooms and common areas; insulators were installed on the air conditioning machines to improve their efficiency; and insulators were applied on the glass windows to prevent them from overheating offices in the daytime. The good habits of switching off equipment and lights after working hours were encouraged.
Effective Leadership

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office utilized the country management team as the primary means for reviewing and strengthening operations and programme management.

To inform internal practice and ensure adherence to organizational rules and regulations, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office received technical assistance from UNICEF Regional Office (operations) and the UNICEF Division of Private Fund-raising and Partnership (PFP) (finance and accounts) through a peer audit review. The mission, mission report and related follow-up actions were used to strengthen areas of office functioning, including the development of the annual management plan, contracting processes, governance committees, reporting systems for resource mobilization and the broader resource mobilization strategy. A committee from the programme unit and resource mobilization unit, under the leadership of operations was tasked with developing a roadmap for addressing the identified gaps. The committee has reported key issues to the country management team.

While the various units continue to track and monitor progress against annual work plan and annual management plan priorities through documented section meetings, the country management team was used to systematically monitor management indicators, ensure compliance to formerly closed audit recommendations as well as adherence to the recommendations by the peer audit missions, review the functionality of office statutory committees and address emerging and ongoing risks related to programmes, resource mobilization and operations. Organizational tools such as the dashboard and office scorecards are used by the country management team to assess office performance during all its meetings.

Risk management constitutes an ongoing priority for the country management team. The risk library and profile were updated semi-annually, with all units reviewing the validity and mitigation efforts for each risk identified. The peer audit review was instrumental to assessing possible risks objectively. A summary of the key risks and related actions were then discussed during country management team meetings. The business continuity plan was updated during the reporting year. The country management team, with guidance from the United Nations Country Team and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), monitored the prevailing security situation of the country.

Financial Resources Management

During the reporting year, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office used the dashboard financial reports to report to the country management team. This allowed timely monitoring and corrective action to be taken in the areas of contribution management and budget control. Programme coordination meetings monitored other resources budget utilization rates and grants expiry dates.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office relies entirely on other resources for its programme delivery. In 2016, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office received the contribution against the 2014 and 2015 AWPs for Saudi Arabia and the 2015 AWP for the United Arab Emirates. Delays in the receipt of funds has made it challenging to support timely implementation towards expected results. Programme resource utilization was 100 per cent, and 100 per cent of the institutional budget was utilized. The PFP budget for the UNICEF Gulf Area Office was reviewed twice to ensure maximum utilization rates, in collaboration with PFP. The PFP utilization rate was 88 per cent.

The country management team closely monitored the status of government contributions, budget control and financial procedures, direct cash transfer liquidation status, donor reporting and the bank reconciliation submission as part of the management indicators.
Work processes were updated regularly to ensure efficiency and reflect new changes to travel, contracting policies and staffing changes. Bank reconciliations for five bank accounts were finalized consistently and on time. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office ensured continuous monitoring of the segregation of duties through regular reviews and updates to its table of authority and SAP role assignments. Given the UNICEF Gulf Area Office’s unique operating environment, in which government provides the funding for programmes and no United Nations agencies have successfully carried out partner assessments, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office through the country management team directed that the direct cash transfer modality no longer be used. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office will be implementing the programmes directly with government.

The migration to the Global Shared Services Centre was completed in 2016. All financial transactions are now done through the Global Shared Services Centre. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office anticipates the move will reduce the time spent by staff on processing these transactions, which will allow them to focus on other priorities.

**Fundraising and donor relations**

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office facilitates resource mobilization in the Gulf for UNICEF at large, while carrying out programme operations primarily in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to use an integrated approach to resource mobilization, with a focus on four channels (governments, foundations, major donors and corporations) and a geographic focus on Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Collectively, resource mobilization efforts resulted in US$122.3 million being secured in 2016. This shows that the projected income for 2012–2016 has reached US$569.84 million, with annual income peaking at US$189.13 million in 2014 followed by US$135.42 million in 2015 and US$122.3 million in 2016. This can in part be attributed to the increase in other resources emergency for the Syrian and other crises in the region and the approach and strategy adopted for the management of partnerships in the Gulf Region. In addition, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office supports country offices that receive funds with quality assurance activities to ensure they adhere to expected donor requirements in quality reporting.

Programme delivery is almost entirely funded through government contributions. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the contributions against the 2014 and 2015 AWPs were received in 2016, and the funds against the United Arab Emirates 2016 AWP were received in December 2016. The unpredictable and irregular cycle of receiving contributions has made it challenging to ensure the implementation of results and their validity in the current context. Donor reports are prepared by the implementing officer and are reviewed by management in advance of the deadline.

**Evaluation and Research**

Though the UNICEF Gulf Area Office developed its integrated monitoring and evaluation plan as per organizational practice, its ability to include robust evaluation activities was constrained by available resources. During the reporting year, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office did not carry out any formal evaluations, as funds for programmes received by host governments were earmarked primarily for the implementation of programme activities.

Despite the lack of formal evaluations, each of the programmes included provisions for capacity assessments, pre- and post-tools and other measures for designing and informing implementation. For example, in the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office is assessing the short-term impact of the anti-bullying programme in schools across the
Emirates. Based on the results of the interim report, a second review will measure longer-term impact as well as the effectiveness of different methods to deal with bullying cases in schools.

**Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings**

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office shares common premises with six United Nations agencies in Saudi Arabia and occupies rent-free premises in the United Arab Emirates (Dubai and Abu Dhabi). This resulted in reducing operational costs for maintenance and security. A cost-saving culture was sustained during the reporting year, with staff made ever more conscious of energy-saving measures, reducing the carbon footprint and minimizing costs related to travel and all aspects of operations.

Outsourcing some services such as driver services, eliminating overnight stay during travel when possible, use of Voice over Internet Protocol or Skype-for-Business, securing service donations (such as for courier and the Internet), better planning of travel for optimal air fare rates, securing in-kind support from partners for programme implementation (facilitators, catering, venue), rent-free premises and negotiating common shared services cost with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) all contributed to savings of more than US$250,000 in 2016.

Use of other UNICEF offices and United Nations agency long-term agreements, including for stationery, hotel directory, Internet services and travel proved to be an efficient way to reduce workloads and staff time related to market research processes conducted by each agency separately.

**Supply Management**

The countries supported by the UNICEF Gulf Area Office are classified as ‘high-income’. Therefore, the current Area Programme and ongoing AWPs make no reference to procurement services. There is no end-user delivery, in-country logistics, warehouse management or support provided to governments on procurement.

To support results expected in the AWP, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office does seek the services of a range of consultants. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office collaborated with other United Nations agencies to utilize long-term agreements for office supplies and consumables and used the Regional Office database for individual and institutional consultancies when relevant.

The cash value of these services, as well as consumable items, in 2016 is captured below (US$306,421).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of service</th>
<th>Value of supply input (goods and services) (US$)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical assistance</td>
<td>192,672</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operational services and supplies</td>
<td>113,749</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Security for Staff and Premises**

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office locations in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Riyadh are all Minimum Operating Security Standard compliant. Compliance rates were 100 per cent in the United Arab Emirates and 97 per cent in Saudi Arabia. According to the 2016 security risk assessment, Saudi Arabia is classified at Level 2 (low risk) and the United Arab Emirates is classified at Level 1 (minimal risk).
The UNICEF Gulf Area Office participated in all Security Management Team meetings in which the prevailing security situation was assessed as were any resulting implications to staff, premises and programmes. In Saudi Arabia, this required an ongoing monitoring of the security situation in the region, particularly the situation in Yemen. Notably, ballistic missiles were intercepted by Saudi ground forces along the border with some frequency in the last two years. In both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, no emergency-related activities were carried out.

To ensure staff security in and outside of the office, staff were updated on any imminent and emerging security threats. Precautionary measures were advised when necessary and security updates and guidance were promptly provided to staff. Staff and office security are assessed as part of country management team management indicators. All staff completed the mandatory security in the field courses. A business continuity plan is in place to ensure the continuation of services in case of emergency.

**Human Resources**

The office structure was amended to establish two public partnerships positions. The programme assistant post in the United Arab Emirates was upgraded. Given the limited staff make-up, programme staff recruited a number of consultants to support the delivery of specific tasks in the AWPs. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office continues to depend on the Regional Office for remote and on-the-ground technical assistance.

The reporting year was a time of transition, with the on-boarding of the Deputy Representative and the departure of the Area Representative. During this period, the Representative from UNICEF Oman provided oversight as the officer-in-charge.

A new talent management system was introduced and used to complete the recruitment of all newly recruited positions in the office (three in the international professional category and two in the general service category). All UNICEF Gulf Area Office staff completed their work planning and mid-year reviews with linkages to the office goals in the recently launched Organizational Performance Appraisal System. Throughout country management team and unit meetings, supervisors and supervisees were encouraged to maintain open dialogue on performance.

Two local joint consultative committee meetings were conducted in 2016. While the results of the Global Staff Survey were not disseminated given the small number of staff, periodic assessments and ongoing discussions in the local Joint Consultative Committee and Staff association were used to identify and respond to staff welfare concerns. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office participated in the organizational Ethics Dialogue Facilitator initiative. Despite resource constraints, a learning plan, including individual and group trainings, was developed based on country and regional priorities.

**Effective use of information and communication technology**

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office’s information and communication technology (ICT) systems utilized the Lightweight, Agile ICT Infrastructure standard in 2016, resulting in a reduced ICT infrastructure footprint. Office data was hosted in the Regional Office Light Service Centre and cloud-based Microsoft Office 365 services. The use of the Lightweight, Agile ICT Infrastructure enhanced user mobility and access to corporate applications, contributed to power and ICT hardware cost savings, improved business continuity and reduced the need for local ICT support.

Skype-for-Business unified communication tools improved staff effectiveness and efficiency
by improving collaboration between both internal UNICEF staff and external partners, offering free self-managed online meetings, chatting and audio/video calls. This led to communications cost saving and efficiency gains given that staff are located in three distinct locations and free Voice over Internet Protocol services are blocked in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The OneDrive for Business file sharing tool allowed staff to securely upload, access and share files at no cost and from everywhere, facilitating information sharing and business continuity. A new wireless system covering the entire office was installed in Riyadh with two wireless networks, one for office computers and one connected to the 4G backup connection for the Business Continuity Plan and visitors.

UNICEF Gulf Area Office ICT support is provided through the Regional ICT Support Hub modality. The ICT Hub also manages the overall ICT functions remotely for the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and was supplemented by two visits in 2016 by the UNICEF Regional Hub ICT Officer. This remote support has been assessed as timely and relevant by UNICEF Gulf Area Office staff.

Programme components from the Results Assessment Module

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 By the end of the programme cycle, governments, private sector and other partners in the Gulf Area demonstrate increased resources for and commitment to child rights in the Gulf region and globally.

Analytical statement of progress:
The UNICEF Gulf Area Office maintains a dual mandate, cultivating and maintaining partnerships in the Gulf region to generate resources for UNICEF globally and collaborating with national partners to implement programmes in Gulf countries (primarily in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates).

Programmatically, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office sustained strong partnerships with its lead counterparts, the SCMC and the GWU in the United Arab Emirates and the NCC in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office extended its partnerships with a number of line ministries and authorities in the United Arab Emirates to increase commitment to child rights, including the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Interior, the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, the Abu Dhabi Education Council, and the Sharjah Baby Friendly Office. Most notably, these partnerships resulted in the finalization of the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021) and the Strategic Plan for Children with Disabilities (2017–2021) as well as the adaptation of the Child Friendly Cities initiative in the United Arab Emirates. In Saudi Arabia, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office also continued to work with the Arab Gulf Programme for Development and the National Family Safety Program. Collectively, these partnerships advanced the child protection system and facilitated the completion of a comprehensive situation analysis for children that will serve to guide the UNICEF Gulf Area Office’s potential support areas in line with the National Development Agenda (Vision 2030).

In resource mobilization, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to operate under the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan. The 2016 workplan called for an integrated approach to resource mobilization throughout the Gulf with a focus on four priority channels: governments, foundations, major donors and corporations. Similarly, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were prioritized geographically to drive this approach. The stewardship strategy that was implemented had a dual purpose: 1) to maintain existing relationships and create opportunities for renewed income from current partners to UNICEF; and 2) to identify new potential partners in order to generate additional funds in support of UNICEF’s global
A total of US$122.3 million was secured as a result of the implementation of this workplan throughout the Gulf for 2016. Of this, US$1.4 million was allocated to regular resources, US$93.98 million was allocated to other resources and US$26.93 million was allocated to other resources emergency. Most notable were the newly established partnership with Alwaleed Philanthropies, which resulted in a five-year grant totalling US$50 million (US$10 million each year) for measles elimination; the Government of Saudi Arabia’s US$29 million contribution to UNICEF’s work in Yemen, which was channelled through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre; the substantial growth in UNICEF’s global partnership with EAC, a private sector foundation in Qatar that is as of 2016 generating a US$190 million income for UNICEF’s education work with out-of-school children; and the Government of Kuwait’s US$4 million contribution to UNICEF’s work in response to the emergency in the Syrian Arab Republic (for the fourth consecutive year as a result of the International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria hosted by the Emir of Kuwait and the United Nations Secretary-General).

OUTPUT 1 Partnerships strengthened for effective programme delivery in the Gulf through policy dialogue, advocacy and innovation.

Analytical statement of progress:
In the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office maintained strong collaboration with its lead counterparts, the SCMC and the GWU. This facilitated the finalization of the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021) and the Strategic Plan for Children Living with Disabilities (2017–2021), which is now in the final stages of approval in the Prime Minister’s Office. In addition, through this collaboration, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office supported the inaugural Fatima bint Mubarak Motherhood and Childhood Forum, which aims to regularly advocate for emerging issues in children’s development (with a focus on innovation in early learning in 2016). In addition, there is ongoing advocacy with counterparts in a new workplan focusing on participation and civic engagement at all levels in line with the recently enacted Law on Child Rights (April 2016).

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office expanded its partnerships across the United Arab Emirates ministries and authorities. This included securing commitment for drafting the National Strategic Plan for HIV with the Ministry of Health, which, with funding, will be prioritized in 2017, consolidating emerging evidence to scale up the anti-bullying programme with the Ministry of Education and the Abu Dhabi Education Council and mapping the capacities and roles of child protection service providers and services with the Ministry of Interior among others. Finally, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office collaborated with actors at the municipal level (Sharjah Emirate) to inform and guide future work in the Child Friendly Cities initiative.

In Saudi Arabia, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office worked in close partnership with the NCC, the Arab Gulf Programme for Development and the National Safety Programme to complete a number of multi-year programmes. This included the finalization of the national Situation Analysis on Children, the launching of a national anti-bullying programme, the validation and finalization of national procedures on child protection and capacity development for kindergarten teachers across the country.


Analytical statement of progress:
In 2016, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to implement the UNICEF Global Resource Mobilization Strategy 2014–2017 throughout the Gulf with a focus on four channels: governments, foundations, major donors and corporations. Similarly, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were prioritized geographically to drive this approach.

In 2016, US$60.5 million was received, out of US$122 million in funds committed throughout the Gulf from public and private sector sources. The highest majority of these funds were generated in response to humanitarian appeals communicated extensively with Gulf donors both from the public and private sectors. More specifically, partnerships yielded the following results:

Saudi Arabia: The largest contribution of US$10 million was directed from Al Waleed Philanthropies for a measles elimination agreement of US$50 million signed in 2016. An addition US$5.9 million was mobilized from Saudi Arabia through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre for the response to the Yemen emergency (US$14.8 million is still committed). US$ 2 million was committed from Saudi Development Fund as a second instalment of the US$ 5 million grant for the emergency in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Kuwait: Kuwait has been the largest humanitarian responder to the UNICEF Gulf Area Office’s emergency work, with a new 2016 contribution of US$4 million (for the Syrian Arab Republic) and US$50,000 (for Myanmar).

The United Arab Emirates: The United Arab Emirates Red Crescent committed US$200,000 as a second instalment of the US$1 million for the Mali Health project signed in 2015. In 2016, Dubai Cares contributed US$500,000 (Measuring Early Learning and Quality Outcomes-Tanzania project) and committed US$977, 000 (Iraq and Vanuatu).

Qatar: In 2016, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office’s largest private sector donor (EAC), contributed US$17 million and committed to US$ 57.3 million. In addition to its successful relationship with EAC, in 2016, UNICEF received US$3.3 million from Al Fakhoora, another Education Above All programme for education in Gaza. The Qatar Fund for Development committed to the second payment of US$500,000 for South Sudan.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office maintains an integrated approach to relationship building in the Gulf, and acts as the one face and voice of UNICEF with all Gulf partners.

OUTCOME 2 By the end of programme cycle, national capacities for systematic generation and analysis of data and knowledge on the situation of child rights are strengthened; and timely and quality evidence on the situation of children is used to inform national policy dialogue and systems reform.

Analytical statement of progress:
While all the countries supported by the Area Programme have completed either a situation analysis or a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, this information is largely one-off and thus limited in terms of assessing trends in child well-being over time. To address this constraint, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to advocate with national counterparts to routinely carry out the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, and worked to support counterparts in the Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to identify, validate and generate data for a set of child rights indicators across sectors.

In the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office invested substantially in advocating for carrying out a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey that would not only assist in assessing the situation of children nationally, but also in each Emirate, offering a platform to address any identified gaps in equity in the situation of children. Despite this advocacy,
constraints related to a budget over the allocated envelope for the exercise, the position of counterparts that data would only reflect the federal situation (and not Emirate-level) and sensitivities around household level data collection provoked a reprogramming of the funds intended for the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. UNICEF Gulf Area Office will continue to advocate for holding a household survey. In the interim, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will support the lead counterparts, the SCMC, the GWU and the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority to facilitate agreement on a set of indicators in line with international standards and the related database for consolidating this data. The database will be linked to the national identification system, thus providing key authorities such as the Prime Minister’s Office with the means to report comprehensively on international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

In Saudi Arabia, UNICEF Gulf Area Office, worked with the NCC on the pending revisions of the situation analysis and submitted this for approval. The findings of the situation analysis are expected to be discussed in a policy roundtable in February 2017 that aims to link action against the findings with the Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Plan (2020). The development of child rights indicators was hindered by late receipt of programme funds for the activity. However, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and its lead counterpart, the NCC, will present possibilities for developing these indicators as a recommendation from the policy roundtable.

**OUTPUT 1** By 2017, policymakers have access to a set of child rights Indicators for systematic generation of data to monitor the situation of children.

**Analytical statement of progress:**
At the end of 2016, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office’s lead counterparts in the United Arab Emirates, the SCMC and the GWU, adjusted previous plans for developing a set of child rights indicators to a more expanded collaboration that would include a system for generating data to an agreed set of indicators, in line with international standards, that would assist in monitoring the situation of children in the United Arab Emirates. This revised plan would align the agreed set of indicators and their related data collection with the rolled out national database, registering everyone in the United Arab Emirates against their national identification number. The database would harmonize data collection efforts across the Emirates and provide authorities such as the Prime Minister’s Office with the tools to comprehensively report on national and international commitments (i.e. for Sustainable Development Goal implementation) related to children.

In Saudi Arabia, the late receipt of programming funds (received mid-year) as well as an ongoing government restructuring delayed the development of child rights indicators. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office and the lead counterpart are now preparing to use an upcoming policy roundtable on the recently finalized Situation Analysis on Children in Saudi Arabia to agree on key indicators across sectors that can be prioritized in identifying the means to gather the related data gaps.

**OUTPUT 2** By 2017, policymakers will have access to an equity focused Situation Analysis on Children in Saudi Arabia to guide national policies and programmes.

**Analytical statement of progress:**
The Situation Analysis presents a multi-year effort to gather and consolidate information on children. Its development included a desk review and causality analysis workshops with line ministries covering the main clusters of the report—education, protection and health. In addition, the report findings included interactions with children from 26 schools (under specific criteria to ensure diversity across age, gender and location) of those represented, as well as children under institutional care under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs.
Despite limitations in available evidence, the final report has been reviewed by focal points from the relevant line ministries, who have assisted in addressing some of the information gaps. Overall, the findings indicate a lack of specific and disaggregated data on the situation of children (i.e., for disabilities), the need for school health programmes promoting healthy living and sports, the need to work towards an education system more responsive to the eventual marketplace and the need for a robust protection framework to address violence against children, which clarifies overlap of roles and responsibilities and contributes to coordination of services and support. During a planned dissemination exercise in February 2017, and under the leadership of the NCC, the report and its related policy briefs will be presented before all relevant line ministries with a view to framing the conclusions in the context of the Vision 2030 and the country’s National Transformation Plan (2020) and to agree on an action plan for addressing priority findings.

**OUTCOME 3** During the programme cycle, timely and quality evidence on the situation of children is used to inform national policy formulation and systems reform.

**Analytical statement of progress:**
In the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, in collaboration with its partners the SCMC and the GWU, facilitated the submission of the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021) and the Strategic Plan for Children Living with Disabilities (2017–2021), which is now in the final stages of approval in the Prime Minister’s Office. Both frameworks were developed in line with the National Development Plan (2017–2021) and in close collaboration with relevant line ministries and authorities. In addition, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office strengthened its partnership with the Ministry of Health in the implementation of All In, a global initiative to bring attention to the situation of adolescents and HIV. Dialogue with the Ministry of Health has paved the way for the drafting of a National Strategic Plan for HIV in 2017.

In regards to programmes, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office in the United Arab Emirates advanced the child protection agenda on several fronts. In an effort to strengthen the child protection system, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and its partners SCMC, GWU and Al Tamimi Group convened a wide range of focal points of institutions and authorities with responsibility to support child protection services and referral mechanisms. In building on a comprehensive mapping conducted in 2015, a targeted training was conducted to address emerging gaps. In schools, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office worked to systematically address the issue of violence in schools, building on previous assessments identifying bullying as a major source of concern for learners, teachers and school management. During the reporting year, the first phase of the anti-bullying programme supported multisectoral school teams (consisting of the school nurse, school management and a social worker) to strengthen their ability to identify, respond to and prevent bullying in schools. Pre- and post-questionnaires assessed through qualitative and quantitative methods showed that there was a significant reduction in the proportion of students reporting being bullied, the proportion of students bullying others and the proportion of students reporting feeling unsafe at school. In addition, there was an increase in the proportion of students acting in a pro-social way. This provided evidence to inform the next phase of scaling up the programme to reach a larger number of students and schools in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Abu Dhabi Education Council and advocating for the programme to be endorsed by the education authorities as a national programme in 2017.

Given the rapidly urbanizing context of the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office partnered with the Baby Friendly Office in Sharjah Emirate to consider how the implementation of the Child Friendly Cities initiative could be adapted and implemented in context. The partners are working towards the official launching of Sharjah’s efforts under the initiative and will use lessons learned from the process to inform the scale up of the Child
Friendly Cities model in additional Emirates.

In Saudi Arabia, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office supported its lead counterpart, the NCC, with the finalization of the Situation Analysis on Children. In support of national programmes, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, the NCC, the National Family Safety Program and the Ministry of Education launched the implementation of a national bullying programme that was launched nationwide in 2016. A child safety training for teachers, school counsellors and school management in kindergarten settings was also completed. The process culminated in a number of preparatory steps, including an assessment of the school environment and the development of appropriate training tools. The partners developed training manuals outlining the nature and manifestations of abuse in kindergarten and approaches for detection and response in schools, families and communities. After significant critical review from partners, experts and those in the school environment, the tools were used to conduct a training of trainers with teachers and supervisors in all provinces. The participants were supported with communities of practice to exchange challenges in the implementation of the approaches and were assisted to further refine the training tools. Noting that the scale up of ECD centres and kindergartens is a key component of the new national development agenda, the programme will be used to inform the scale-up plan.

Finally, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office remains on the Steering Group of the Child Helpline, a platform of protection-focused partners across the public and private sector seeking ways of expanding the reach of the Helpline and the effectiveness of the responses and referrals provided to callers. In 2017, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will use similar efforts to work with partners to gather timely and relevant evidence and information and to support programmes and policies addressing the situation of children.

OUTPUT 1 By 2017, adolescents and school staff (principals, teachers and nurses) are more aware of the importance of physical activities to prevent obesity.

Analytical statement of progress:
In 2016, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office disseminated the electronic Health Education Manual developed in previous years to health and education authorities in the United Arab Emirates to guide health educators to deliver information on topics such as healthy eating and physical activity to students in a participatory and interactive way to prevent obesity among children and adolescents. In 2016, as a plan of attack against childhood obesity, a panel of 12 government agencies formed an obesity prevention task force committee that included representatives of the General Secretariat of the Executive Council, the Health Authority in Abu Dhabi, the Department of Municipal Affairs, the Abu Dhabi Education Council, the Urban Planning Council, the Quality and Conformity Council, the Sports Council, the Food Control Authority, Seha Ambulatory Healthcare Services, Abu Dhabi Media, the Family Development Foundation and Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care and Special Needs.

Some of the recommendations that came out of the task force included the need for an interdisciplinary approach to obesity prevention among children and adolescents that includes policymakers, school principals, children, teachers and parents. Abu Dhabi Education Authority hence reached out to the UNICEF Gulf Area Office requesting technical support to address this recommendation. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office shared the manual and process of implementing a healthy life-skills programme in schools.
OUTPUT 2 By 2017, Ministry of Education and relevant partners have strengthened capacities to provide a safe learning environment for children.

Analytical statement of progress:
During the reporting year, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office supported its partners in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia to improve the learning environment for children.

UNICEF Gulf Area Office and its partners in the United Arab Emirates, the SCMC and the GWU, collaborated to identify ways to improve safety within the school environment. To determine specific issues to address, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and partners supported an assessment of schools in the United Arab Emirates that indicated the need for concerted action to better determine the scale and manifestations of bullying and support mechanisms for duty bearers to intervene in schools and the community. In addition, focus group discussions with students revealed bullying to be most prevalent in secondary schools (i.e. among adolescents aged 11-15), in line with global experience. This informed the design of a relevant programme and the development of two manuals: anti-bullying and social activities manuals that were used to increase knowledge on bullying among students and school staff. During the reporting period, UNICEF Gulf Area Office cooperated with the education authorities (the Ministry of Education and the Abu Dhabi Education Council), and the programme was piloted in a total of 20 schools across the Emirates. The programme improved the skills of 62 teachers and multisectoral school teams (school nurse, school management and social worker) on bullying in schools through training workshops reaching a total of 1,793 students. An assessment of the pilot programme was conducted through quantitative and qualitative methods (pre- and post-assessments using surveys and focus group discussions). The initial results of the assessment revealed a significant reduction in 1) the proportion of students reporting being bullied; 2) the proportion of students bullying others; and 3) the proportion of students reporting feeling unsafe at school. In addition, there was an increase in the proportion of students acting in a pro-social way. The results of the pilot assessment have informed counterpart efforts to scale up the programme and facilitated the continuation of the study assessing the impact of using the different methods of intervention to deal with specific cases of bullying within schools.

In Saudi Arabia, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office partnered with the National Family Safety Program, the NCC and the Ministry of Education to respond to bullying. Beginning with an assessment of the situation and a needs assessment to determine the capacity to respond, a toolkit and accompanying training package were developed for teachers, supervisors and communities. In rolling out the programme, primarily among teachers, counsellors and school management (4,365 trained in total), the materials were periodically updated and the content now features in the ministry training modules for all teachers. To kick start school-based and community-based action, a high-level launch of the national programme was conducted in November 2016. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office, the NCC, the Arab Gulf Programme for Development and the General Administration for Kindergarten partnered to advance the child protection agenda in early learning.

OUTPUT 3 By 2017, capacities of adolescents and young people to practice effective intrapersonal skills and healthy behaviours are strengthened.

Analytical statement of progress:
In partnership with the Ministry of Health, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office facilitated the implementation of the All In initiative to scale up quality HIV prevention interventions for adolescents. Findings from the assessment indicate a lack of data on the situation of HIV, low levels of knowledge on HIV among adolescents and young people, limited skills to identify and prevent risky behaviour, and age- and gender-appropriate services.
In addition, there is limited information on the situation of key populations for HIV. Recommendations were endorsed during a multisectoral stakeholders’ validation meeting that included representatives from youth-related authorities and departments in the United Arab Emirates and included the need for a national HIV strategy with a focus on adolescents. With additional funds sourced in 2017, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will facilitate the development of the strategy through the participation of all relevant authorities and community representatives. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to support 65 existing peer health educators from five different universities across the United Arab Emirates, reaching approximately 5,000 students, to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS in partnership with Standard Chartered Bank.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office supported its lead counterpart, the SCMC, with the inaugural Fatima bint Mubarak Motherhood and Childhood Forum. The event convened a wide range of representatives from around the region and world to share best practice on a given theme. The 2016 theme was innovation in early learning. UNICEF worked with partners, to ensure child-led innovation featured prominently in the event. This included overseeing the participation of a group of children during a highly visible panel discussing youth-led innovation in practice, showcasing UNICEF’s organizational achievements in innovation, including U-Report, as well as in engaging in targeted advocacy. On the side-lines of the meeting, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and UNICEF Headquarters engaged in a dialogue with the State Minister for Youth on collaboration for advancing child and youth participation in the development of the country, including the adaptation of U-Report as a tool. In addition, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and its partners agreed to prioritize the scale up of platforms and mechanisms for meaningful child participation and civic engagement at the local, emirate and federal levels in 2017, in keeping with the recently enacted Children’s Law (2016). The UNICEF Gulf Area Office will offer technical assistance on tools, content and best practices in life skills and citizenship education and child participation.

**OUTPUT 4** By 2017, relevant government institutions in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia have been supported to conduct assessments of the child protection system and to develop national plans to address priority gaps.

**Analytical statement of progress:**
Previously, in Saudi Arabia, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, under the leadership of the NCC, facilitated the development of the National Guide on Child Protection Procedures in Saudi Arabia focusing on responding to violence and abuse against children. The Guide offers a review of existing procedures and assesses the child protection system. It further reviews all royal and ministerial decrees and resolutions related to child protection and maps the roles and responsibilities of relevant institutions. Finally, it summarizes gaps in legislation and outlines needed amendments in existing rules and regulations and recommends improved referral mechanisms. During the reporting year, the Guide and proposed referral systems were validated during a workshop with representatives from relevant institutions and authorities, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the police. In the development of the Guide and the validation workshop, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office introduced the use of global and regional best practices in child protection systems mapping and capacity development. The Guide has been finalized and is being disseminated. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office will work with its counterpart on potential areas for capacity development support in 2017 based on the recommendations.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office also built on work carried out in 2015 in the United Arab Emirates. Previously, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office supported a workshop with federal and local authorities to map out existing child protection services and identify priorities for addressing gaps in service provision. During the reporting period, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office secured private sector funding from the Al Tamimi Group and collaborated with the
SCMC to carry out a targeted training with 42 focal points from relevant institutions, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, the police and child care centres, to more effectively deal with child protection cases and strengthen the referral mechanisms between authorities and institutions.

**OUTPUT 5** By 2017, the rights of children with disability in the United Arab Emirates are strengthened through the completion of a situation analysis and related national action plan.

**Analytical statement of progress:**
After successful advocacy, the Strategic Plan for Children Living with Disabilities (2017–2021) was submitted to the Prime Minister’s Office for final approval and is fully aligned with the forthcoming United Arab Emirates National Development Plan (2017–2021). The United Arab Emirates signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its associated protocol in 2008 and ratified it on 19 March 2010. Federal Law 29/2006 guarantees the rights of persons with special needs and requires the Government to provide them with care according to international agreements. Despite federal and local government efforts in the United Arab Emirates to provide care and rehabilitation services and to integrate children with disabilities into society, there are still many challenges that limit the inclusion processes at the educational, academic and recreational levels. There is also a lack of data on children with disabilities. Therefore, during the reporting year, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, in collaboration with the SCMC and the GWU, assessed the situation of children with disabilities in the United Arab Emirates, including (but not limited to) services, legislation, data, integration and coordination mechanisms. After the desk review, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, in cooperation with partners, conducted roundtable discussions, field visits, interviews and focus group discussions with government ministries and authorities at the national and sub-national levels, as well as public and private service providers, organizations for persons with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities and children with disabilities.

The main challenges identified by this situation analysis included the lack of unified definitions, classification systems, quality standards and a comprehensive database for children with disabilities; the lack of an overall umbrella body that represents the main stakeholders and is responsible for coordination, monitoring and evaluation and aligning policies and plans with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Convention on the Rights of the Child principles; the lack of human resources and allocated financial resources necessary to provide quality services that cover all children with disabilities living in all United Arab Emirates communities; and the lack of effective participation of children with disabilities and their families and organizations in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, decision-making, and control of support and services.

Based on the findings, gaps and recommendations arising from the situation analysis, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office supported the development of a strategic plan that aims to enhance the rights and welfare of the children with disabilities and their families. The plan was finalized following consultations with and feedback from relevant stakeholders. In 2017, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will support its counterparts to implement the strategic plan by supporting the multi-sector mechanisms envisaged for monitoring and oversight at the technical and higher levels.

**OUTPUT 6** By 2017, the rights of children in the United Arab Emirates are strengthened through a National Childhood Strategic Plan for the United Arab Emirates (2017–2021) that is revised and approved by relevant authorities.
Analytical statement of progress:

In view of a rapidly evolving development context (including the new National Development Plan 2017–2021), the UNICEF Gulf Area Office supported its partners to update the National Childhood Strategy and facilitate its submission to the Prime Minister's Office.

In supporting its revision, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and its partners, the SCMC and the GWU, worked with a wide range of line ministries and actors to ensure that the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021) was realistic, responsive to the context and in line with the United Arab Emirates' 2017–2021 National Development Plan. The process included reviewing the priorities of the United Arab Emirates' Vision 2021, reviewing the provisions of the recently enacted Law on Child Rights, reviewing existing national sectoral strategies and providing technical assistance for the establishment of benchmarks in new areas such as promoting children's participation at various levels and building an improved knowledge base on children to inform national policy. The Plan was also developed in the format of all strategic plans issued by the Prime Minister's Office for ease of implementation and monitoring.

The resulting framework articulates five outcome areas (education, health, protection, participation and improved knowledge base for policy formulation) as well as related outputs and indicators and/or milestones. During the reporting period, the Strategic Plan was reviewed and validated again by all relevant ministries and authorities, a process that has included ongoing dialogue and advocacy to ensure the validity of all proposed results areas. The Strategy, which was submitted to the Prime Minister's Office for final approval and is expected in early 2017, represents a strong contribution to child rights and development in the United Arab Emirates. Discussions are underway for the establishment of the appropriate monitoring and oversight mechanisms.

OUTPUT 7 By 2017, the rights of children in urbanizing environments are promoted through the implementation and documentation of the Child-Friendly City Initiative in at least one Emirate.

Analytical statement of progress:

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office partnered with the Sharjah Baby Friendly Office to support the preparatory steps for the Emirate of Sharjah to be classified as a Child Friendly City. Findings of the process will inform scale-up actions in additional emirates and present a comprehensive approach to supporting child rights.

The Emirate of Sharjah was accredited by UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) as a Baby Friendly City in 2015. In 2016, the Government of Sharjah aimed to scale up its work by implementing the Child Friendly Cities initiative; however, there was a lack of suitable tools that could be utilized by the Government to develop and encourage building a Child Friendly City. Hence, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office collaborated with the Sharjah Baby Friendly Office to conduct a preliminary assessment on the current situation of Sharjah based on the building blocks outlined in the Child Friendly Cities initiative. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office developed checklists, a set of indicators, discussion guides and surveys to obtain comprehensive data that reflected all aspects related to children. Cross-sectoral discussions and assessments were subsequently conducted with several national and federal authorities from various sectors, including health, education, protection, participation, leisure, development, culture and media. Children’s views, perspectives and recommendations were a crucial component of the assessment and were obtained through surveys and focus group discussions with approximately 100 children and adolescents in public and private schools and child and adolescent centres. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office recruited a consultancy firm that is also supporting UNICEF in other offices with guidance on
Child Friendly Cities to further review data and documents obtained and verify the findings through field visits and meetings. Preliminary findings reveal the current strengths, weaknesses, gaps and constraints that helped in regards to prioritizing the actions required to transform Sharjah into a Child Friendly City.

### Document Centre

**Evaluation and research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Sequence number</th>
<th>Type of report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Protection Procedures Guide</td>
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<td>Training Manual for Health Educators in Schools</td>
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**Lessons learned**

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>“The Design and the Implementation of the Bullying Prevention and Response Programme in the United Arab Emirates”</td>
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**Programme documents**

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