

Gulf Area Sub-Regional Programme

Executive summary

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office maintains a dual function: it supports programmes in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and engages in fundraising and advocacy with Gulf-based partners on behalf of the organization. The overall goal is to progressively realize the rights of girls, boys and adolescents to development, protection and participation, with a focus on the most disadvantaged. In 2017, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office was granted a one-year extension (2018) of its 2014–2017 Area Programme, to allow for substantive consultation with all five countries to support the identification of well-informed priorities for the next programme cycle.

The next programme cycle will be shaped by the rapid pace of economic and social change in the region. Against a backdrop of slowing growth rates, the Gulf countries have embarked on a series of ambitious reforms to generate demand and spending while modernizing their economies. While these reforms vary in scope and magnitude, recent developments in Saudi Arabia, the largest economy in the Gulf, demonstrate a new prevailing environment, such as increased opportunities for youth and the inclusion of women in the workforce, which is expected to be facilitated by the recent decree permitting women to drive in 2018. Ensuring that all children are duly prioritized in these reform efforts will be a continued area of dialogue for the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and partners.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office engages with governments in the Gulf sub-region, foundations, major donors and corporations to generate resources and cultivate new partnerships to support the rights of children globally. The year 2017 has been marked by an increasing number of emergencies, both new and protracted. Securing funding for the UNICEF Gulf Area Office's and partners' responses to these situations has been exacerbated by reduced economic growth in the sub-region. Despite this challenge, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office was able to raise a total of US\$166.6 million (exceeding the target by 34 per cent) during 2017. This was made possible by donor interest in focusing support on Arab and Muslim countries, new partnerships, strengthened corporate sector engagement, alliances and events that not only generated resources but raised the visibility of the UNICEF Gulf Area Office.

Key achievements include: 1) a contribution of US\$32.6 million through the Qatari private sector partnership with the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, Educate a Child (EAC); 2) a US\$12 million contribution from His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, for polio eradication; 3) a pledge of US\$33 million from King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSRelief) for cholera response in Yemen.

New partnership agreements were established with: 1) the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science, which led to US\$6.65 million in support of the UNICEF Gulf Area Office's response to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and the impact on Jordan and Lebanon; 2) the Kuwait Fund for Arabic Economic Development, resulting in US\$5.5 million to fight famine in northeast Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, as well as cholera in Yemen; 3) a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Qatar Charity (QC) in support of

the Syrian Arab Republic (US\$2 m); and 4) a partnership agreement with Level Kids, as part of the Chalhoub Group (US\$1million).

In addition, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office facilitated new projects through the Dubai Cares (DC) partnership, with a focus on early childhood development (ECD) and education in the Comoros, the Gambia and Kiribati (US\$3 million). Finally, a new MOU was signed with the United Arab Emirates' Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC) for US\$2 million, which will be directed towards supporting women and children in Yemen. These partnerships have the potential not only to generate additional funding in the future but also to be leveraged for children's rights.

Programmatically, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office focused on engaging with counterparts in the five countries of the sub-region on the priorities of the next area programme. In countries where UNICEF has not been present, such as Bahrain, this dialogue resulted in establishing renewed partnerships with counterparts and a reintroduction to the public through topical seminars, technical consultations and stronger engagement in the United Nations Country Team. In addition, in Saudi Arabia, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office worked closely with its new lead counterpart, the Family Affairs Council (FAC), to re-program existing funds and determine key activities to generate evidence to inform the agreed areas of collaboration around ECD, improved data on children and the prevention of violence against children.

In the United Arab Emirates, the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood (SCMC) and the UNICEF Gulf Area Office launched two strategies after the Cabinet's approval: the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood, and the Strategic Plan for Children with Disabilities. The two strategies represent a key reference for decision makers in the field of childhood in the United Arab Emirates spanning over five years (2017–2021). The UNICEF Gulf Area Office presented to the Ministry of Education (MOE) clear evidence of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying programme after two years of implementation in schools across the United Arab Emirates.

Humanitarian assistance

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office was instrumental in mobilizing funds to support the organization's efforts in humanitarian assistance through ongoing and newly cultivated partnerships. As a result, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office was able to generate resources for many large-scale emergencies, particularly for the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Key achievements include:

- KS Relief in Saudi Arabia and the UNICEF Gulf Area Office strengthened their partnership and reviewed humanitarian needs in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. During the reporting year, KS Relief pledged US\$33 million to UNICEF programmes in Yemen aimed at containing the rapidly escalating cholera outbreak.
- The UNICEF Gulf Area Office facilitated the receipt of a total of US\$13.4 million for the emergency in the Syrian Arab Republic affecting over 6 million children: US\$5 million from the Government of Kuwait for the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic; US\$3.23 million from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, which is part of a US\$6.5 million agreement for Jordan and Lebanon; US\$3 million from the Saudi Fund for Development; and US\$2 million from QC for Aleppo Labbeh fundraising campaign (as part of its humanitarian project in the Syrian Arab Republic), and the rest of the funds from corporations in the private sector and major donors).
- Significant funds were raised for Yemen. This included: a US\$3.5 million multiyear contribution agreement signed with the Kuwait Fund to fight famine in northeast Nigeria ,

Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen; a US\$2 million multiyear contribution agreement signed with the same partner and US\$50,000 from the Arab Gulf Programme for Development to address the acute watery diarrhoea/cholera crisis in Yemen; and a commitment by the United Arab Emirates' MOFAIC to contribute US\$2 million for life-saving and early recovery actions.

- Finally, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office used available opportunities to raise awareness about emergencies and humanitarian crises around the world. Humanitarian appeals were circulated to donors throughout the Gulf to raise awareness about the Rohingya refugee crisis, which affects half a million people, 60 per cent of whom are children.

Strategic Plan 2018–2021

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office has been working consistently throughout the year to better align the next Area Programme with the organization's recently approved Strategic Plan (2018–2021).

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office continues to work with countries to use evidence from recent situation analysis reviews to identify priorities that leverage the comparative advantage of UNICEF as outlined in the Strategic Plan. This has resulted in renewed requests by governments (Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) for support around multi-sector issues such as ECD, with a focus on the first 1,000 days of a child's life. There have also been substantial consultations in countries such as the United Arab Emirates on the ways in which early learning, creating an enabling environment for children in schools and violence against children can be addressed. Finally, cutting across all thematic issues is a growing commitment to improve methods for monitoring data on children in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The emerging priorities of the next area programme are all multidisciplinary, requiring concerted action across line ministries under the leadership of the UNICEF Gulf Area Office's main counterparts. As the UNICEF Gulf Area Office expands its programme presence in the sub-region, countries will increasingly require quality and timely technical assistance to develop programmes at scale and in line with international best practice. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office will be seeking guidance from the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENARO) to facilitate this support. In addition, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will consider opportunities to routinely improve its understanding and knowledge of the situation of children to ensure a strong evidence base and monitoring tools for selected priorities.

The Strategic Plan makes reference to leveraging partnerships, both public and private, for the benefit of children. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office will continue to invest in its partnership efforts not only to support the generation of income for the organization but also to partner with actors in the Gulf as they seek to become more visible for their development and humanitarian contributions around the world.

Emerging areas of importance

Child-friendly cities. In 2017, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office partnered with the Sharjah Baby Friendly Office (SBFO) to announce Sharjah, the United Arab Emirates, as a candidate city under the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI), culminating the Emirate of Sharjah's efforts over the past three decades to advance progressive policies and programmes for children and youth.

A plan of action was developed based on an assessment mapping out current policies and

programmes with a view to identifying short- and long-term objectives, key interventions and benchmarks under each core component needed for accreditation. High-level roundtable discussions were conducted with several authorities from various sectors, including health, education, protection, participation, leisure, development, culture and media, to review the plan of action, which was then finalized based on the comments and feedback from stakeholders.

In addition, SBFO and the UNICEF Gulf Area Office signed another MOU to expand their partnership in implementing the short-term objectives outlined in the plan of action, such as increasing the understanding and awareness of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative and child rights principles, addressing equity and non-discrimination and ensuring the active participation of all children in their community. A multisectoral steering committee was established to ensure the cooperation and coordination of all directorates, departments and entities with relevance to child well-being and to follow up on the implementation.

Early childhood development (ECD). During the reporting year, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office increasingly advocated for the introduction or scale-up of comprehensive ECD programmes in the countries of the sub-region. In March 2017, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, DC, and the United Arab Emirates' MOFAIC jointly launched a series in *The Lancet*, 'Advancing Early Childhood Development: from Science to Scale'. The event presented the latest evidence of what works in policy and practice in ECD, particularly the need to invest in the 'first 1,000 days' of a child's life, which can positively influence the development of a child's brain and life-long ability to learn through a nurturing care framework that emphasizes the role of caregivers.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office used this evidence to advocate with countries around the Gulf sub-region for national programmes that are context appropriate and promote cross-sectoral support for young children, mothers and caregivers more broadly. This has resulted in the identification of ECD as a key area of inclusion in the next Area Programme, especially as reflected in country consultations in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office will be working with these countries to develop country programmes that define an appropriate package for a caring, rights-based programme for young children and their families in order to go beyond healthcare service delivery.

Summary notes and acronyms

CFCI	Child Friendly Cities Initiative
CMT	country management team
DC	Dubai Cares
EAC	Educate A Child
ECD	early childhood development
FAC	Family Affairs Council
ICT	information and communication technology
KSRRelief	King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre
Kuwait Fund	Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development
LIGHT	Lightweight and Agile Information Technology
MENARO	Middle East and North Africa Regional Office
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOFAIC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (the United Arab Emirates)
MOU	memorandum of understanding
PPF	Private Fundraising and Partnerships (UNICEF Division)

QC	Qatar Charity
SBFO	Sharjah Baby Friendly Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SCMC	Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood (the United Arab Emirates)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Capacity development

Throughout 2017, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to support national partners through capacity development efforts.

In contributing to the school bullying prevention programme, the UNICEF Gulf Area office, in cooperation with the SCMC, MOE, and the Abu Dhabi Education Council, strengthened the capacity of 161 (72 men, 89 women) school staff members by convening a training on bullying and intervention methods to address 62 schools across the United Arab Emirates. The programme in total targeted more than 5,000 students 11–15 years of age (2,700 boys, 2,300 girls) in raising their understanding of bullying and strengthening their ability to prevent and respond to incidents of bullying more effectively. The bullying programme provoked a broader interest in addressing additional factors impacting the school environment for children. These factors, such as the meaningful involvement of parents in schools as well as support for mental well-being, will be addressed in the next workplan with the relevant actors.

In Saudi Arabia, the reporting period was one of transition for the UNICEF Gulf Area Office. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office's programming partner, the National Commission for Childhood, was constituted into the Family Affairs Council (FAC), with committees focused on women, children, the elderly and violence in the family. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office worked to support the Council in using available evidence to guide programme priorities. These orientations and ongoing support to the new Council culminated in a one-day workshop with all Council members to re-affirm areas for joint work in the next year and the next area programme based on the situation analysis report disseminated earlier in 2017 and the national development plan: ECD, improving the availability and quality of data on children and addressing violence against children.

Evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy

In March 2017, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, in partnership with DC and the United Arab Emirates' MOFAIC, co-hosted a series in *The Lancet*, 'Advancing Early Childhood Development: from Science to Scale'. The UNICEF Executive Director also used the occasion to undertake advocacy on ECD with authorities in the United Arab Emirates. These efforts resulted in greater attention to early childhood, including the formation of an inter-ministerial committee to oversee a law governing early childhood services and learning for children aged 0–6 years as well as interest in creating programmes around the first 1,000 days of a child's life when growth is most consequential. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office will continue to provide technical assistance for these efforts.

In the United Arab Emirates, two national strategies, the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021) and the Strategic Plan for Children Living with Disabilities (2017–2021) that were developed with substantial technical assistance from the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and coordination by SCMC, were officially launched in 2017. During the launch, the SCMC announced the formation of a national team, consisting of representation from line ministries and varying authorities, that would monitor the implementation of the strategies. In addition, 15 March was declared a National Day for Children, representing another commitment by the

Government to raise awareness about children's rights.

In Saudi Arabia, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office facilitated the dissemination of the situation analysis report on children in the presence of representatives from all line ministries and national entities. This was followed by a country visit from the UNICEF MENARO director to engage with ministers and high-level authorities on the key messages and findings of the situation analysis report. The issues raised will be the areas of focus for programming in the coming year as well as the next area programme.

Partnerships

Identifying and maintaining strong partnerships in the Gulf is a key strategy for delivering local programmes in the region and generating resources on behalf of vulnerable children globally.

In Saudi Arabia, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office strengthened its relationship with KSRelief, which is playing a prominent role in development assistance in the region. This involved the partial placing of a UNICEF staff member in the centre to support resource mobilization efforts, build capacity and share information.

Key partnerships established and money received in 2017 included:

- **Saudi Arabia:** US\$6.2 million from Al Waleed Philanthropies as part of a US\$50 million agreement to address measles; a pledge of US\$33 million was signed from KSRelief for cholera in Yemen.
- **Kuwait:** Two agreements were signed with Kuwait Fund for US\$5.5 million to fight famine and cholera. The Kuwait Government gave US\$5 million for the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic.
- **The United Arab Emirates:** The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi contributed US\$12 million for polio eradication. DC contributed US\$3.4 million (for the Comoros, the Gambia, Kiribati, Kurdistan, the United Republic of Tanzania, Rohingya, Education Can't Wait) and committed to US\$1.6 million. The United Arab Emirates' MOFAIC contributed US\$1 million to the UNICEF response in Yemen.
- **Qatar:** A new agreement for US\$2million was signed with QC for the Aleppo campaign, EAC contributed US\$32.6million and committed US\$48.5million. Al Fakhoora committed US\$550,000 for education in Gaza and US\$500,000 was received for South Sudan from the Qatar Fund for Development.

Given the reduced growth of economies of the region, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will continue to invest in understanding countries' priorities and investing in development and humanitarian assistance. This approach will assist in recognizing partners for their contributions where relevant, supporting current and emerging champions for children's rights and mobilizing additional resources for UNICEF actions. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office raised awareness on child rights during World Children's Day, where students from a Global Education Management Systems school in the United Arab Emirates visited the International Humanitarian City and came through as 'leaders', exchanged hopes for children around the world and learned about United Nations work

External communication and public advocacy

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office is increasingly using communication and public advocacy to engage with public and private actors in the region to spur action on behalf of children, increase the visibility of UNICEF in the region and identify new programme partnerships and donors. In

2017, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office collaborated with partners on a number of events to highlight key challenges affecting children's rights around the world and the UNICEF commitment to addressing these, particularly in emergency contexts:

- Attention was drawn to the No Lost Generation initiative aimed at supporting children and youth affected by the Iraq and Syrian Arab Republic crises through a number of activities, such as the ITP Media Group's Architectural Digest Gala attended by royal families from across the Gulf as well as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Mona Zaki; a month-long advocacy campaign that aired on OSN (the most expansive paid television platform in the region) during Ramadan and at an estimated value of US\$1.2 million; and a partnership with Qode (a United Arab Emirates-based event management company) that yielded US\$50,000 for the initiative while raising awareness about UNICEF more broadly.
- A Montblanc partnership launch event marked the global alliance partnership in the region. It was attended by brand ambassadors, celebrities, Montblanc's chief executive officer and the UNICEF Gulf Area Office team.
- World Children's Day was commemorated on several fronts. A launch event for Level Kids and the UNICEF Gulf Area Office's new partnership (thus far resulting in US\$1 million directed to the 7 Fund, David Beckham's UNICEF-based fund) included a fashion show for children by children as well as a private dinner hosted by David Beckham in his capacity as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, which was attended by members of the royal family, business leaders and notable guests. In addition, ITP Media Group leveraged their varied media outlets and digital influencers (with a reach of over 25 million followers) to mark the occasion.

South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation

The SDGs have given new urgency to the need for countries to have access to timely, relevant and accessible data to inform national policy and practice. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office in the United Arab Emirates convened line ministries and various statistics entities to discuss current indicators and approaches for gathering data, including sectoral and administrative information as well as data from existing surveys. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office facilitated the participation of UNICEF country offices in the region (Egypt and Morocco) in addition to UNICEF MENARO and UNICEF Headquarters in New York and focused on methods of data collection, ways of publishing collected data (such as statistical bulletins) and ongoing capacity development efforts with government statistics centres in these countries.

The discussions led to a recommendation to carry out a more comprehensive audit of currently used indicators across sectors and to map these against the United Arab Emirates' SDG priority targets as well as other frameworks, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This audit would be used to develop an action plan for addressing gaps and improving the quality of data collection where and as needed. This work is ongoing and will carry on into 2018.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office partnered with the SBFO to support the Emirate of Sharjah in seeking CFCI accreditation. In Sharjah, the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office facilitated a training by the Arab Council for Childhood and Development (affiliated with the Arab Gulf Program for Development) targeting 54 media professionals on professional guidelines for the Arab media on the rights of the child. These guidelines were formally endorsed by the League of Arab States (Council of Arab Ministers of Information and Media). The purpose of the

training was to not only raise awareness about the CFCI through the local media but to encourage the media to consider itself as an ally in advancing the rights of children.

Identification and promotion of innovation

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office employed new strategies to increase the visibility of UNICEF in the United Arab Emirates while raising awareness about the UNICEF mandate and its focus on support to the most vulnerable children in the world.

Through a pilot partnership with MAF VOX Cinema entity, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office used their online platform to raise awareness about children in emergencies by creating a dedicated UNICEF page or link on the VOX page which gets over 1 million unique visits per month. Customers were given an option to donate to UNICEF online every time they booked their cinema ticket. Communication with customers was disseminated through the VOX site, social media pages and by direct email. In the first month, the campaign communication reached over 500,000 customers and 12,000 donors pledged donations through the online system, which was an unprecedented conversion in the industry. Furthermore, VOX has contributed to advocacy efforts by adding cinema pre-rolls before movies and by expanding the campaign to malls, retailers, kids' entertainment and hotels.

At a strategic location within the Dubai International Financial Centre, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office set up a booth to display the 'There is Hope' exhibition – a campaign which uses powerful individual testimonials of children and adults across the world who have benefited from the essential services that UNICEF is able to provide. The 20-day exhibit opened to coincide with the popular Dubai International Financial Centre art night attended by 20,000 people and ended with a World Children's Day celebration with students from Global Education Management Systems schools, strategic partners and media. The exhibit included interactive spaces for visitors to learn about children's stories of hope, leave behind messages and donate to UNICEF through an online page that connected to an instant video showing donors the potential impact of their donation.

Human rights-based approach to cooperation

In July 2017, the United Arab Emirates launched two national strategies: the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021) and the Strategic Plan for Children with Disabilities (2017–2021) after the United Arab Emirates Cabinet Office had approved them in March 2017. The development of the strategies was informed by international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, they are fully aligned with the United Arab Emirates Vision 2021 and with the United Arab Emirates Child Rights (Wadeema) Law.

The strategies represent a key reference for decision makers in the field of motherhood and childhood in the United Arab Emirates for five years (2017–2021), as they are based on a situation analysis summarizing current policies, initiatives and services across sectors. A fully participatory process was employed to ensure the active engagement of all key stakeholders, including government authorities, ministries, civil society and children.

In preparation for the next area programme, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office developed situation analysis reviews of each country in the sub-region to assess key statistics on children and the structural causes of these as they relate to girls and boys and to align recommendations for action with national development plans. The reviews helped to orient consultation with partners through evidence-based dialogue to identify priorities for the next area programme.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to partner with the Emirate of Sharjah on innovative policies and programmes informed by human rights principles. As a part of the CFCI, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office ensured the inclusion of all groups of vulnerable children (e.g. children with disabilities and non-national children excluded from specific services) through a services equity mapping study that the Emirate agreed to conduct in 2018. The mapping will determine the current quality and coverage of services and will inform the development of a strategy to address exclusion and disparities.

Gender equality

Through its main partnership with the SCMC and the General Women's Union, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office in the United Arab Emirates supported the overall promotion of gender equality through the development of the National Childhood and Motherhood Strategy (2017–2021) and the Strategic Plan for Children with Disabilities (2017–2021).

The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia programmes are planning for national early childhood programmes addressing the first 1,000 days of a child's life in preparation for the next area programme. In an effort to improve the lifelong development of children as supported by evidence, the programmes will consider how to strengthen support to mothers and fathers through the health platform, including guidance on how to improve caregiving practice, strengthen attachment with children and stimulate cognitive development. Interventions under consideration include training for service providers in health and social development as well as an easily accessible phone application with tips and strategies.

Gender-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data is a strong aspect in the development of a strategic plan for a data system in the United Arab Emirates and monitoring SDGs which will serve as base to tackle inequalities that may exist.

Environmental sustainability

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, was selected to undergo an energy audit to enable UNICEF to understand current electricity consumption patterns and prepare an energy savings action plan, including the utilization of on-site renewable energy sources. It was selected based on having the highest electricity consumption per square meter (kilowatt hours per square meter) as per the environmental footprint assessment. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office is presently recruiting a consultant to perform this audit.

Effective leadership

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office utilized the country management team (CMT) as the primary means for reviewing and strengthening operations and programme management. Operations and programme management priorities were established in the annual management plan and linked to individual work plans. Priorities focused on including child rights indicators in the database system, establishing platforms for children's and adolescents' participation in the United Arab Emirates, dissemination of the situation analysis in Saudi Arabia, generation of sustainable income from Gulf donors and simplification of work processes in the office.

While the various units continue to track and monitor progress against annual management plan priorities through team meetings, there was also constant follow-up and monitoring by management. The country management team systematically monitored management indicators, ensured compliance with formerly closed audit recommendations, reviewed the functionality of office statutory committees and addressed emerging and ongoing risks related to programmes,

resource mobilization and operations. Key internal workflow processes were reviewed along with the table of authority. Statutory committees were reconstituted and terms of reference were shared with members of the respective committees to ensure the smooth functioning of the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and the tracking of efficiency and effectiveness.

As a part of team-building efforts, a staff retreat was held early 2017 to strengthen programme delivery during the area programme document extension phase and discuss the process for developing the new area programme document, put together a resource mobilization operational plan and update staff on the launch of *The Lancet* series on ECD in the United Arab Emirates. Another mini-retreat was held in October to discuss the ongoing priorities of the UNICEF Gulf Area Office.

Risk management constitutes an ongoing priority for the country management team, which reviewed the risk library and mitigation measures and updated some of the institutional risks related to funding and external relations. The business continuity plan was updated to ensure efficient implementation in case of an emergency.

Financial resources management

During the reporting year, the country management team monitored the financial performance of the UNICEF Gulf Area Office via dashboard financial reports and office score cards. This allowed timely monitoring and corrective action to be taken in the areas of contribution management and budget control.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office relies entirely on other resources for its programme delivery and delays in the receipt of funds made it challenging to support timely implementation of programmes towards expected results. The primary partner and donor in Saudi Arabia was changed by a royal decree appointing a new lead partner for UNICEF programmes. The total programme resource through-put was lower than anticipated because of the change and the UNICEF Gulf Area Office reprogrammed the amounts to 2018, resulting in 100 per cent utilization rates. The institutional budget was fully utilized. The private fundraising and partnerships (PFP) budget for the UNICEF Gulf Area Office was reviewed several times during the year to ensure maximum utilization rates, in collaboration with PFP. The PFP utilization rate was 98 per cent. The CMT 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.

Cash and treasury management was undertaken with the objective of maintaining an optimum level of cash in the bank as per the financial procedures. Bank reconciliations for four bank accounts were finalized consistently. As anticipated, the move to the Global Shared Services Centre reduced the time spent by staff on processing payments and allowed them to focus on other priorities.

Fundraising and donor relations

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office is unique within the organization, serving as the main interface with Gulf partners for resource mobilization and partnership management.

The stewardship strategy implemented has had a dual purpose: 1) to maintain existing relationships and create opportunities for renewed income from current UNICEF partners ; and 2) to identify new potential partners to generate additional funds in support of UNICEF's global programmes.

As a result of the implementation of the 2017 workplan throughout the Gulf region, a total of US\$166.6 million was secured. Of that, US\$1.40 million was allocated to Regular Resources, US\$113.67 million was allocated to Other Resources and US\$51.53 million was allocated to Other Resources Emergency.

For timely submissions and reviews of quality donor reports and project proposals, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office maintained a regular log and checklist of donor reports that were due, constantly following up and supporting country offices with proposal and report submissions and with quality assurance to ensure that they adhered to expected donor requirements. Moreover, a full-time UNICEF Gulf Area Office staff member was recruited for the review and standardization of the donor reports. In 2017, a total of 13 donor reports that were due were submitted successfully and on time, achieving 100 per cent timely submission. In addition, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office recently recruited a new staff member to prepare quality and on-time proposals and donor reports.

In developing the next area programme, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will reinforce the synergy between programmes and resource mobilization efforts to raise funds for new programme priorities through established and new partnerships.

Evaluation and research

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.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office developed its integrated monitoring and evaluation plan as per organizational practice. Recognizing that this is an organizational priority, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will work with MENARO to plan for and engage with counterparts on a more effective evaluation function in the formulation of the next area programme

Efficiency gains and cost savings

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to emphasize a cost-saving culture. Staff are more conscious of saving energy, reducing their carbon footprint and reducing costs. Positive practices inculcated include turning off lights, reducing communication expenditure, reducing the cost of travel and transportation by facilitating work with stakeholders through Skype calls and webinars, outsourcing services such as those of drivers, eliminating overnight stay during travel when possible, using Voice over Internet Protocol, securing service donations (for couriers and the Internet), improving travel planning for optimal airfare rates, securing in-kind support from partners for programme implementation (i.e. facilitators, catering and venues). These practices along with rent-free premises and the negotiation of common shared services costs with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) contributed to savings of more than US\$250,000 in 2017.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office in Saudi Arabia continued to be located in the United Nations common premises with the rent paid by the host Government, which contributes to cost savings on building maintenance, administration and security management. Common agreements for services, such as pouch, cleaning and security guard services, were maintained, contributing to a reduction in transaction costs and increased efficiency across agencies. UNICEF Gulf Area offices in the United Arab Emirates are also provided for free along with maintenance, utilities and security.

Use of long-term agreements and the move to the Global Shared Services Centre reduced the time and effort of staff, which helped them focus on other priorities and increased reliability.

Supply management

The countries supported by the UNICEF Gulf Area Office are classified as 'high-income'. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office programmes are designed to support high-level advocacy, evidence generation and capacity development. As such, supply and procurement services were limited to the procurement of technical expertise.

The use of the talent management system in the recruitment process increased efficiency, effectiveness and transparency throughout the hiring process for consultants.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office collaborated with other United Nations agencies to utilize long-term agreements for office supplies and consumables and referred to the MENARO database for individual and institutional consultancies when relevant.

The cash value of these services, as well as consumable items, in 2017 is captured below (US\$562,226).

Type of service	Value of supply input (goods and services) (US\$)
Technical assistance	358,681
Operational services and supplies	203,545

Security for staff and premises

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 for staff, premises and programmes. In Saudi Arabia, this required an ongoing monitoring of the security situation in the region, particularly the emergency in Yemen. The Government of Saudi Arabia continues to report intercepting ballistic missiles from Yemeni territory.

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 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 reporting year included some significant changes for the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, such as human resources reform, the proposed new typology for funding core staff positions, the results of the staff survey and the appointment of an interim representative.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to depend on consultants to support the delivery of specific tasks in the annual work plans and UNICEF MENARO for remote and on-the-ground technical assistance. The two manager positions of PFP and Public Partnership Division were

recruited in 2017 with starting dates in January 2018. Two professional Level 3 positions were recruited in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, as well, to support resource mobilization.

Staff performance was monitored through regular interactions with the supervisor and supervisee through regular check-ins as per the ACHIEVE performance management system. Two local joint consultative committee meetings were conducted in 2017.

The results of the Global Staff Survey were disseminated to the office. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office is developing an improvement plan based on the results of the staff survey.

The oath of office was reaffirmed by all staff in three locations and all staff were encouraged to take the webinar on ethics in fundraising and partnership. The ethics focal point facilitated an ethics dialogue during the staff retreat and presented various key considerations for upholding ethics in the workplace.

Effective use of information and communication technology

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office's information and communication technology (ICT) systems continued to utilize the Lightweight and Agile Information Technology (LIGHT) in 2017. Office data are hosted in the MENARO LIGHT Service Centre and cloud-based Microsoft Office 365 services. The use of LIGHT enhanced user mobility and access to corporate applications, contributed to approximately US\$40,000 of ICT-hardware and power cost savings and improved business continuity.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office's computers were upgraded to the new standard operating system, Windows 10, in 2017 with a new version of the Microsoft Office productivity suite (Office 2016). This upgrade aimed to increase staff productivity, enhance security for UNICEF assets and data with hard drive encryption and make computing and collaboration more user friendly.

Skype for Business unified communication tools improved staff effectiveness and efficiency by improving collaboration between both internal UNICEF Gulf Area Office staff and external partners through free self-managed online meetings, chatting and audio-visual calls. This led to communications cost savings 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 Microsoft OneDrive for Business file-sharing tool allowed staff to securely upload, access and share files at no cost, from everywhere, facilitating information sharing and business continuity.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office's 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; this remote support was supplemented by three visits in 2017 from the UNICEF Regional Hub ICT Officer. This remote support was assessed as timely and relevant by UNICEF Gulf Area Office staff.

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 for the implementation of programmes in the countries of the Gulf. Programmatically, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office is present in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office's integrated partnership approach for resource mobilization focused primarily on mobilizing funds for UNICEF-supported programmes and leveraging UNICEF's role and work in the region. In line with its resource mobilization strategy, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office engaged with four key resource partner groups: governments, foundations, major donors and corporations.

Collectively, a total of US\$127.7 million was secured in 2017 through the UNICEF Gulf Area Office. This is an increase of 2.6 per cent from the set target of US\$122 million. The majority of funding (US\$121 million) raised in 2017 came from private donors. In addition, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office supported country offices with quality assurance activities for the funds received and ensured timely submission of all 13 donor reports that were due in 2017.

The reporting year also saw the development of new projects and partnerships, corporate sector engagement, alliances and events that helped to not only raise funds but also enhance the visibility of UNICEF work in the region. Some of the most notable results in 2017 included: a contribution of US\$12 million from the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, for polio eradication; a newly established partnership with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences resulting in US\$6.65 million for the Syrian refugee response plan for Jordan and Lebanon; a partnership with the Kuwait Fund resulting in US\$5.5 million to fight famine (in northeast Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen) and cholera (in Yemen); new projects signed with DC for US\$3 million focusing on ECD and education (the Comoros, the Gambia, and Kiribati); new MOUs signed with QC for US\$2 million for the humanitarian crisis in Aleppo and another with the United Arab Emirates MOFAIC for US\$2 million to be directed to supporting women and children in Yemen. A partnership agreement with Level Kids (a retail store specializing in children's clothing) resulted in a commitment of US\$1 million for supporting the UNICEF humanitarian response in the Syrian Arab Republic and an agreement with the First Central Group committing US\$100,000 also for the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The global and ongoing partnership between UNICEF and EAC, a private-sector foundation in Qatar, has generated US\$190 million in support for UNICEF in its education work without-of-school children. In 2017, EAC contributed US\$26.9 million. Other new global alliances with Louis Vuitton and Montblanc were also activated in the region and aimed at empowering children through primary education and literacy programmes all across the world. Finally, KSRelief in Saudi Arabia expressed interest in funding UNICEF humanitarian programmes in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. In August of 2017, the KSRelief centre publicly declared

its willingness to allocate US\$33 million to UNICEF programmes in Yemen aimed at containing the cholera outbreak.

Programmatically, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office used the reporting year to work with partners to assess achievements and constraints to date towards prioritizing key issues affecting children for inclusion in the next area programme.

In Saudi Arabia, a number of advocacy opportunities in 2017 paved the way for a solid foundation for the next programme: this included a visit by the MENARO director to the various ministers and high-level authorities to gather their insights on the key issues facing children given the national context of reform under Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. This was complemented by a national dialogue with representatives from all relevant government entities to review the key findings of a recently completed situation analysis report. After a period of government changes, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office was designated a new counterpart – the Family Affairs Council (FAC) with whom it has reviewed the situation of children to identify relevant priorities for immediate collaboration such as ECD, improving mechanisms for monitoring the situation of children in the context of the SDGs and lastly addressing violence against children.

Similarly, in the United Arab Emirates, the formal launch of the National Motherhood and Childhood Strategy (2017–2021) under the Prime Minister's Office offers clear direction for UNICEF's contributions in the coming years. Most notably, the launching of the strategy elevates children's issues by offering clear accountability mechanisms for its oversight as well as benchmarks for assessing its implementation. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office has been working with its main partners, the SCMC and the General Women's Union, to advance these priorities, as well as multi-sector initiatives that would strengthen the work of line ministries – such as comprehensive ECD, improving the collection and use of child-specific indicators and addressing child protection from a number of angles.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office has also made promising inroads on engaging new counterparts on potential programmatic work in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar, where UNICEF has not had a presence. Programmes are most likely to focus on ECD and child protection.

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

Analytical statement of progress

In preparation for the next area programme, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office invested substantially in both sustaining partnerships with its lead counterparts and initiating new partnerships that would result in child-responsive programmes and policies.

In Saudi Arabia, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office worked through the National Commission for Childhood to disseminate a national situation analysis report on children. The findings of the report provided a foundation for identifying priorities to consider for the next area programme. After a period of restructuring, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office was designated a new lead counterpart – the Family Affairs Council constituted under the Ministry of Labor and Social Development. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office worked with the Council to review the key recommendations of the situation analysis report, which were further assessed during a technical consultation to affirm the key priorities for the next area programme as well as the specific gaps to be addressed in each domain.

In the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office continued to expand partnerships on federal and local levels. During the planning for strengthening its data system, UNICEF Gulf Area Office worked closely with local and federal statistics centres. Through the implementation of the CFCI action plan, new partnerships emerged, with urban planning for example. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office in the United Arab Emirates consolidated its partnerships with MOE and MOHP, providing technical support in many fields such as early learning and adolescent health strategies.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office re-engaged authorities in Bahrain on the situation of children and the opportunities for programmatic collaboration after limited engagement during the current programme cycle. This was facilitated by the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator through the development of the strategic partnership framework, which oriented discussions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and line ministries, leading to the identification of strengthened ECD programmes as a key priority for the Government of Bahrain. Subsequently, through its designated counterpart, the Ministry of Social Development, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office held consultations with the early childhood committee on 'unfinished business' such as a dedicated focus on the 'first 1,000 days'. This was further explored during a national consultation that is leading towards the development of a programme of work addressing ECD from a number of angles, including health, protection and social work.

In Kuwait and Qatar, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office approached the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of each country to reflect on possibilities for the programmatic presence of UNICEF in the countries.

OUTPUT 2 By 2017, expanded partnerships generate increased resources for child rights globally in line with targets of 2014–2017 Global Resource Mobilization Strategy (UNICEF).

Analytical statement of progress

During the reporting year, 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. Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were prioritized geographically to drive this approach.

In 2017, US\$72.5 million was received out of US\$166.6 million in funds committed throughout the Gulf from public and private sector partners. The majority of these funds were mobilized in response to humanitarian appeals communicated to Gulf donors. More specifically, new and ongoing partnerships yielded the following results:

- **Saudi Arabia:** US\$6.2 million was received from Alwaleed Philanthropies as part of the US\$50 million measles agreement signed in 2016. (UNICEF should be receiving US\$10 million every year from 2016–2021). US\$3 million from the Social Development Fund of the US\$5 million for the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. KSRelief pledged US\$33 million for the cholera response in Yemen.
- **Kuwait:** US\$3.2 million was received from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences for the response to Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon with another US\$3.2 million committed. Two new agreements were signed with the Kuwait Fund amounting to US\$5.5 million (US\$3.5 million for fighting famine in northeast Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen and US\$2 million for fighting cholera in Yemen). US\$5 million was transferred from the Government of Kuwait for the response to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic.

- **The United Arab Emirates:** The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi donated US\$12 million for polio eradication and the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent transferred the last tranche of US\$200,000 of the US\$1 million for the Mali Health Project signed in 2015. DC contributed US\$2.3 million (for the Gambia, Kiribati, Kurdistan and Education Cannot Wait projects) and has committed to US\$2.2million (for projects in the Comoros, Iraq and Vanuatu). The first payment of US\$1millionwas received from the United Arab Emirates MOFAIC for life-saving and early recovery support to children and women in Yemen. In the corporate sector, new partnerships emerged with: 1) First Central Group, which committed US\$100,000 to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and whose chairman has also donated US\$300,000 for three different projects; 2) Level Kids with a commitment of US\$1 million for supporting the humanitarian response in the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, other new global alliances were activated in the region such as with Louis Vuitton and Montblanc. New strategic events have taken place such as: OSN (Ramadan on-air campaign), ITP Media Group (in kind ads); events and galas (ITP Media Group, the Qode, Level Kids and Montblanc) and the UNICEF 'There is Hope' Exhibition.
- **Qatar:** A new agreement for US\$2 million was signed with QC for Aleppo Labbeh and EAC transferred US\$32.6 million and has committed US\$48.5 million in 2017. Al Fakhoora committed US\$550,000 for education in Gaza, State of Palestine, and the Qatar Fund for Development contributed US\$500,000 for South Sudan.

There is a significant potential for resource mobilization in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, in which the partner country, institution or potential influencer is a key donor, a global and local policymaker and a direct beneficiary all at the same time. But with geopolitical changes in the region affecting fundraising efforts, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will need to analyse the interest and focus of each country and its approach to each in the coming years. The shift from a transactional and operational approach to fundraising to a partnership approach will be key in ensuring multi-year funding streams, advocating for child rights and leveraging key policy measures for UNICEF on a global, regional and local level.

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

Given constraints in the programme cycle related to advancing data results with the countries of the Gulf, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office focused on advocacy efforts to better understand the challenges and priorities of national governments and to provide technical support accordingly. The roll-out of the SDGs galvanized governments in the region to prioritize strengthened data systems and facilitated greater discourse around the need to make existing data readily available and transparent.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office's new partner, the Family Affairs Council, prioritized the filling of data gaps as one of its main agenda items. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office has therefore outlined in its orientation and programmatic discussions with the partner the ways in which it can support this effort with a focus on data for children. With this political commitment now firmly established, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will be working with the Family Affairs Council to prioritize a mapping of available and existing data and related sources as well as benchmarks

for addressing gaps.

In the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office has been successful, along with its main partners, the General Women's Union and the SCMC, in convening representatives of key line ministries and the relevant statistical bodies to determine next steps for carrying out a review of current data gathered by various entities, its frequency and its alignment with international standards for each target indicator. These efforts have received additional momentum under the launching of the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021), which clearly outlines improved data systems for children as an outcome area. In addition, the United Arab Emirates' commitment to the implementation of the SDGs increased support for a national strategy for improving data collection and use for monitoring child well-being.

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

Efforts at the national level to implement the SDGs paved the way for renewed interest in and commitment to improved data systems, particularly as they relate to children. Therefore, developing and endorsing a nationally agreed set of child rights indicators for monitoring child well-being is in the planning process or ongoing.

In the United Arab Emirates, the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021), which was facilitated by the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and its main partners (the SCMC and the General Women's Union), was officially launched in 2017. The strategy helps to focus priorities facing children to be addressed by line ministries and partners, with the fifth outcome emphasizing the need to 'strengthen evidence-based planning and knowledge development to ensure the rights of the child'.

Under this framework, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, the SCMC and the General Women's Union, organized a roundtable that included all statistics authorities at federal and local Emirate levels as well as line ministries to review current data practices and to propose an action plan for designing an effective child data system in the United Arab Emirates. The meeting also included UNICEF Headquarters in New York, which presented the organization's Data for Children Strategic Framework, and UNICEF Egypt and UNICEF Morocco, which presented their experiences in supporting governments to routinely gather data on children and the ways in which this data is shared.

The representatives from line ministries and statistics bodies agreed to support a national diagnostic exercise that would determine what data is currently being gathered in various sectors, assess the alignment of current indicators with international best practice and propose measures for addressing gaps. In addition, the counterparts agreed to jointly develop a strategic action plan for strengthening the collection of data and its use for priority indicators and, with the UNICEF Gulf Area Office's support, to address capacity development needs. With the recruitment of technical expertise to support this exercise, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office is working with a national technical committee on both the diagnostic exercise and a strategic action plan.

In Saudi Arabia, a national consultation in preparation for the next area programme has elevated commitment to improving current data practices, with a focus on children. Through this

consultation, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and its main partner, the Family Affairs Council, have agreed to work towards supporting a national set of targets in contribution to the SDGs as well as assessing current available data for related indicators, while determining a plan for how to address information gaps in line with international best practice.

OUTPUT 2 By 2017, policymakers have access to an equity focused situation analysis on children in Saudi Arabia is available to guide national policies and programmes.

Analytical statement of progress

The 'Situation Analysis Report on Children in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia' presents a multiyear effort to gather and consolidate available information and was jointly launched by the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and the National Commission on Childhood. Participants represented all relevant line ministries and United Nations partners. Given the social and economic changes outlined in the country's national development plan, Vision 2030, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office presented a background paper that drew linkages between the report findings and the aspirations of the national plan.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office and its newly designated counterpart, the Family Affairs Council, have since used the report recommendations to review priorities facing children and agree on areas for joint action leading up to and during the next area programme. This includes efforts to address the persistent gaps in data and available information on children across all sectors, strengthening the child protection system with a focus on preventing violence against children and supporting a national programme to scale up ECD. These were further re-affirmed during a national consultation that focused on presenting the situation analysis report to the members of the Family Affairs Council and reviewed possible results within each domain, implementation arrangements and key partners needed for further discussion.

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

Given the high-income status of the Gulf countries, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office's programmatic approach has been to support the generation of evidence for piloting or scaling up promising programme practice. This allowed the UNICEF Gulf Area Office to draw a number of lessons during the current programme cycle. This included utilizing the results of the many activities pursued to date as well as the improved understanding of UNICEF's comparative advantage to focus on a limited number of priorities that align with national strategies and development plans and can be addressed comprehensively and at scale.

In the United Arab Emirates, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and partners' programme on anti-bullying results show that rates of bullying decreased significantly among girls but not among boys, while approximately 14 per cent of boys and 8 per cent of girls reporting that they never felt safe at school. Lessons from the bullying prevention programme will be used to consider a robust set of interventions that would address mental well-being, facilitate the participation of children and adolescents in school management and identify ways for better including parents and communities in school decision-making, among other components. This effort will be informed by a recent mapping to better understand the platforms and tools for creating a culture of child participation in decision-making in the home, school and community as called for in the national 2016 Child Rights (Wadeema) Law.

Similarly, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and its work with partners in the United Arab Emirates successfully elevated the national discourse around child development and well-being with the formal launching of the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021) and the Strategic Plan for Children Living with Disabilities (2017–2021). Given the endorsement of these strategies by the Prime Minister’s Office as well as the establishment of technical and high-level oversight bodies, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will be shifting from pursuing a varied number of activities to focusing substantially on key priorities as outlined in the strategies.

In addition to work at the policy level, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office has collaborated with the Emirate of Sharjah to practically demonstrate how initiatives that address a child’s life cycle, social equity and inclusion can be implemented. The most recent effort to declare Sharjah, the United Arab Emirates, a candidate city for the CFCI facilitated action to promote child participation in urbanizing areas, improve social services based on the findings of social protection mapping and encourage the public to become child rights advocates through a dedicated communication campaign. The multi-stakeholder approach to addressing the rights of all children will be a strong example for the UNICEF Gulf Area Office’s programme approach in the next area programme.

In Saudi Arabia, programme implementation was delayed by a government restructuring that resulted in the UNICEF Gulf Area Office having a new lead counterpart, the Family Affairs Council under the remit of the Ministry of Labor and Social Development. Despite these implementation challenges, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office used this period to build a strong partnership with the new entity. Beginning with a mission by the UNICEF MENARO director, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office was able to engage with high-level officials from a number of ministries to discuss programme opportunities with line ministries and the Family Affairs Council.

This was preceded by the launching of the ‘Situation Analysis Report on Children in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’, which identified key priorities for the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and partners to address in the next area programme. In addition, the findings were used to frame a technical consultation with the Family Affairs Council to re-affirm these priorities and discuss operational activities to pursue immediately, such as supporting families with a nurturing care framework to address ECD, working with multiple stakeholders to address the dearth of data for assessing the well-being of children particularly in the context of the SDGs and supporting efforts to professionalize and systematize the child protection system – all areas highlighted in the country’s development plans (Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Programme).

OUTPUT 1 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, the SCMC and the General Women’s Union worked with the MOE and the Abu Dhabi Education Council in the United Arab Emirates to advance multiyear efforts to develop anti-bullying programmes in schools.

Previously, 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 to 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 (that is, among 11–15 year olds), in line with global experience. This informed the design of a relevant programme and the development of two manuals, an anti-bullying manual and a social activities manual, that were used to increase knowledge about bullying among students and school staff. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office cooperated with education authorities (MOE and the Abu Dhabi Education Council) to pilot a programme using the manuals in 20 schools across different Emirates. An assessment of the pilot programme was conducted through quantitative and qualitative methods (pre- and post-assessments using surveys and focus group discussions).

During the reporting year, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and partners continued to use the results of the assessment to support the scale-up of the programme and strengthened the capacity of 161 school staff (72 men and 89 women) on bullying and intervention methods in 62 schools across the United Arab Emirates. In total, the programme targeted more than 5,000 students by improving their understanding of bullying and strengthening their ability to prevent and respond to incidents of bullying more effectively. The results of the assessment were presented in the World Anti-Bullying Forum 2017 hosted by Sweden.

The results show that being bullied and bullying others decreased significantly among girls but not among boys, while feeling safe at school was an issue for many students, with approximately 14 per cent of boys and 8 per cent of girls reporting that they never felt safe. Given the Government's focus on education within its national development plan, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and the SCMC as well as the General Women's Union will be considering ways to make schools more child-friendly. In preparation for the next area programme, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and partners will consider how to promote the mental health and social-emotional wellness of students, enable student participation in school management and develop models for strengthening family and community engagement in schools.

OUTPUT 2 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 National Commission for Childhood, facilitated the development of a 'National Guide on Child Protection Procedures in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia' focusing on responding to violence against and abuse of 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, outlines needed amendments in existing rules and regulations and recommends improved referral mechanisms.

The guide has been finalized and is being used by the newly constituted Family Affairs Council, which has identified violence in families as one of four areas of focus as outlined in the national development plan (Vision 2030 and the related National Transformation Plan). During a technical consultation to outline the framework for the next area programme, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and the Family Affairs Council re-affirmed violence against children as a priority area for joint collaboration, particularly in working towards a strong referral system among child protection actors. Saudi Arabia expressed an increasing commitment to child protection.

In the United Arab Emirates, a child rights law issued in 2016 outlined a new child protection system, though the delay of bylaws hinders its enforcement. However, many authorities already plan to strengthen the system and there is high-level commitment to protecting children from all forms of violence and abuse, including participation in the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office, with support from UNICEF MENARO, will continue to provide technical support for the development of comprehensive national plans to strengthen national child protection systems.

OUTPUT 3 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

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 inclusion at the educational and recreational levels. A UNICEF Gulf Area Office-supported assessment of the situation of children with disabilities found a lack of unified definitions, classification systems, quality standards and a comprehensive database for children with disabilities as well as the lack of an overall umbrella body that represents the main stakeholders and is responsible for coordination, monitoring and evaluation and for aligning policies and plans with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, the assessment noted that minimal human and financial resources were allocated to provide quality services to cover all children with disabilities and that they and their families and organizations did not participate in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities or in making choices and exercising control of support and services.

To address these gaps, the Strategic Plan for Children Living with Disabilities (2017–2021) was approved by the Prime Minister’s Office and is fully aligned with the United Arab Emirates National Development Plan (2017–2021). The strategy was launched in an official ceremony held by the SCMC; it was announced that 15 March will be marked every year as ‘Emirati Children’s Day’ to promote the well-being of children and to provide all children, including those with disabilities, the opportunity to exercise their rights and to engage with policymakers at the highest levels. It has also been mandated that annual reports on the status of implementation will be provided to the Prime Minister’s Office, for which the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will continue to provide technical support.

OUTPUT 4 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

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office supported its partners to update the national childhood strategy and to facilitate its submission to the Prime Minister’s Office. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office, the SCMC and the General Women’s Union 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' Vision 2021 and with the United Arab Emirates Child Rights Law (Wadeema) Law).

The process included 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) as well as related outputs and indicators.

During the reporting period, the United Arab Emirates launched the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021) in July 2017, after the United Arab Emirates Cabinet Office approved it in March 2017. During the launching ceremony, SCMC announced two decisions: first, the formation of a national team to monitor the implementation of the strategy with technical and high-level representation from all relevant line ministries and authorities, and second, recognizing 15 March as a national day for children to commemorate the day the United Arab Emirates ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The first meeting of the national team is currently being prepared and will focus on the process for developing a detailed action plan for each outcome area that will form the basis for annual reporting to the Prime Minister's Office. The national strategy and its accountability mechanisms present a strong opportunity to advocate for children's issues at the national level and will form a strong foundation for the development of the next area programme.

OUTPUT 5 The aim is to strengthen media for child rights through:- A study on childhood topics in the Saudi press- A seminar for the media to launch a study- Establish the working group to set up media charter on child rights.

Analytical statement of progress

In Saudi Arabia, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and its earlier counterpart, the National Commission for Childhood, held a Child Friendly Media Forum in collaboration with the Arab Gulf Programme for Development and the Arab Council for Childhood and Development as supported by the League of Arab States. The forum was opened by the Minister of Education and attended by a wide range of representatives from the media, representatives from line ministries and members of academia. The forum focused on the situation of children in the media, the role of the media in bringing children's issues to the national consciousness and the ways in which the media can serve as strong advocates for child rights.

A training workshop was held at the side-lines of the Forum to train journalists on an ethical code of conduct that considers the best interests of the child when reporting. At the conclusion of the training, the participants signed on to the 'Riyadh Declaration' with recommendations from the training and the forum on how to adhere to and promote children's rights when reporting.

OUTPUT 6 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 SBFO to support the preparatory steps for the Emirate of Sharjah to be classified as a child-friendly city.

In 2015, Sharjah, the United Arab Emirates, was accredited by UNICEF and WHO as a Baby-Friendly City, which covers the first two years of childhood. In 2016, the Government of Sharjah aimed to scale-up their work by implementing the CFCI, which covers all aspects of child rights for all children under 18 years of age. Hence, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office collaborated with SBFO to conduct a preliminary assessment on the current situation in Sharjah based on the building blocks outlined in the CFCI.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office developed checklists, a set of indicators, discussion guides and surveys to obtain comprehensive data that reflects all aspects of children's rights. Then cross-sectoral discussions and assessments were conducted with several national and federal authorities from various sectors, including health, education, protection, participation, leisure, development, culture and media. Further, 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 other UNICEF country offices with the implementation of CFCI to further review the data and documents obtained and verify the findings through field visits and meetings. Preliminary findings revealed the current strengths, weaknesses, gaps and constraints, which helped in prioritizing the actions required to transform Sharjah into a child-friendly city.

In 2017, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office formally announced Sharjah as candidate city under the CFCI, the first of its kind in the region. A plan of action was then developed based on the previously carried out assessment, which was refined through roundtable discussions with relevant stakeholders to discuss the objectives, target groups, partners and budget for each objective of the plan of action.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office and SBFO worked together in the implementation of the plan of action towards accreditation of Sharjah under the CFCI by facilitating and organizing several meetings and discussions with relevant stakeholders and children to address crucial issues relevant to the CFCI such as child rights, child participation, equity and non-discrimination. Further, a steering committee was established to monitor the implementation of the CFCI in Sharjah and ensure cooperation between the concerned authorities and institutions in implementing the CFCI plan of action and obtaining CFCI accreditation.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office is currently facilitating two related processes: the development of a communications strategy for key messages on child rights and the CFCI for the public as well as an equity mapping of existing social protection services to determine areas for improvement. These activities will continue in 2018 until the accreditation event to announce Sharjah as a child-friendly city during the first quarter of 2018. Collectively, lessons from various programme initiatives in Sharjah, including the CFCI efforts, will inform how inclusive programmes and policies can be effectively pursued in the next area programme.

OUTPUT 7 An increased number of children and adolescents engaged meaningfully in matters affecting them through local and national platforms.

Analytical statement of progress

Despite some progress, efforts to identify and utilize key platforms for institutionalizing the participation of children and adolescents remains constrained due to the delay of the bylaws to enforce the creation of such platforms.

After the passing of the national Child Rights (Wadeema) Law in 2016, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and the SCMC, its lead partner, were tasked with supporting the Government's efforts to enhance the participation of children and adolescents in all aspects of decision-making in the family, community and society.

During the reporting year, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office and partners assessed opportunities on several fronts. First, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office worked with the Emirate of Sharjah to review current mechanisms for supporting child participation and engagement in civic and cultural life through the CFCI. To gain the official designation, the Emirate of Sharjah embarked on a series of short- and long-term actions in a number of domains, including the participation and inclusion of children.

The UNICEF Gulf Area Office and the SCMC also mapped existing platforms for facilitating child participation, including through culture and youth centres maintained by the Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development, as well as through a sample of community schools under the guidance of education authorities. The UNICEF Gulf Area Office, the SCMC and the Abu Dhabi Education Council will work specifically through these community schools to implement activities related to manuals and tools developed by the UNICEF Gulf Area Office.

Finally, the launching of the National Motherhood and Childhood Strategy (2017–2021) also called for a newly instituted national day for children, which will involve a series of activities organized by children themselves to profile the role and future potential of children in the Emirates.

Moving forward, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office will consolidate these various efforts, drawing lessons learned, in preparation for the next Area Programme with a pillar focused on comprehensively strengthening the participation of children, primarily through the school system.

OUTPUT 8 To increase the awareness of parents on how to prevent children and young people from unintentional injuries

Analytical statement of progress

Numerous incidents of unintentional injuries (falling, poisoning, drowning, road accidents and burning) have been reported among children and adolescents in the United Arab Emirates, especially among younger children. Despite the scope of the problem, limited web-based resources, specifically in the Arabic language, about the prevention of injuries among children and young people are available to parents in the United Arab Emirates. Information available on websites and applications provides a low-cost, accessible means to reach a wide range of families across all of the Emirates. Information, however, is often provided in the form of leaflets or brochures that contain dense text which may be very long and unappealing to readers.

Hence, the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, in cooperation with SCMC and the General Women's Union, developed evidence-based materials to raise the awareness of parents about such injuries. These materials provide practical advice to parents on how these accidents can be prevented using evidence-based approaches. The tools promote safety and sensible

precautions relevant to the various stages of a child's development. The materials have been developed in both English and Arabic and are currently being used to produce user-friendly materials offering illustrations, short videos and comic prints for wide dissemination.

This information will be made available on the SCMC and General Women's Union websites, easily accessible by parents who want to learn more about how to prevent child injuries.

