

## India

### Update on the context and situation of children

India is home to one sixth of the world's population of 1.3 billion people living on just 2 per cent of its landmass. It also has the largest adolescent population – 253 million – constituting 21 per cent of the world's youth. The country has made impressive gains in improving many basic parameters of human development, but this progress is yet to find full reflection in the quality of life and wellbeing of its people. Despite aspiring to become a \$5 trillion economy by 2025, India currently faces declining GDP<sup>[1]</sup> and rising unemployment;<sup>[2]</sup> inflation is at a three-year high.<sup>[3]</sup> The year 2019 has added to the dynamics of renewed commitments, challenges and change. With preparations underway to present India's State Party report to the Convention of the Rights of the Child in June 2020, the government is taking stock of progress on child rights.

In 2019, India held the largest democratic exercise in the world in the form of general elections; faced unprecedented natural calamities including flooding in Kerala, cyclone in Odisha, and urban flash flooding in Maharashtra and Bihar; witnessed the abrogation of Article 370 with consequent re-organization of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories, and the passing of the Citizen's Amendment Act.<sup>[4]</sup> These developments, among others, influenced policies and programmes of the government to shape the future. The abrogation of Article 370 has reportedly resulted in an estimated 1.4 million children losing out on months of schooling and led to cases of child detention. On 24 December, the government announced preparations for the 2021 National Population Register and Census.

About one third of India's population lives in urban areas, with children and adolescents (0-19 years) comprising 36 per cent of urban dwellers (about 135.5 million). Children living in urban slums or peri-urban areas are equally deprived compared to those living in rural households in terms of health and survival, nutrition, education, access to a clean environment, protection from hazardous employment, and overall protection from domestic and sexual violence. With higher levels of deprivation, such children are at increased risk of intergenerational transmission of vulnerability.

Every fifth child in India is an internal 'migrant'<sup>[5]</sup> and, although child migrants do not form a homogenous group, those from vulnerable social groups – including scheduled castes / tribes and Muslim children – often suffer negative consequences, including dropping out of school, exploitative labour, poor nutrition, inadequate housing and limited access to social services.

The adverse impacts of climate change and air pollution continue to cause alarm. Some 77 per cent of India's population (around 517 million children) are exposed to fine particulate matter (PM 2.5 pollution)<sup>[6]</sup> and mortality due to air pollution remains disproportionately high. About 49 per cent of childhood pneumonia deaths are attributable to air pollution.<sup>[7]</sup> Extreme weather events such as the ones seen in Madhya Pradesh have resulted in over 650 deaths.

There are positive trends in the social sector. Current estimates for Newborn and child mortality<sup>[8]</sup> are declining, although low or unequal public expenditure in health remains a critical bottleneck. Government spending on health is less than 1.3 per cent of GDP (2017/2018),<sup>[9]</sup> against a target of 2.5 per cent.<sup>[10]</sup> Education had the highest share of expenditure between 2012/2013 and 2018/2019 for both years at the union and state level, ranging from 74 per cent to 94 per cent of the Total Child Expenditure (TCE) in 16 states. The second biggest share was spent on nutrition, which ranged from 5 per cent to 24 per cent of the TCE.<sup>[11]</sup>

The Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNNS),<sup>[12]</sup> released by the Government and supported by UNICEF, provides a wealth of evidence on the lives of millions of malnourished children in India. There are positive trends in the reduction of stunting, wasting and underweight – for instance, stunting among children 0-5 years fell between 2015/2016<sup>[13]</sup> and 2016/2018<sup>[14]</sup> from 38.4 per cent to 34.7 per cent. However, malnutrition levels remain alarmingly high: an estimated 40.7 million children under 5 years of age are chronically malnourished.

The educational status of children fluctuated in 2019, with reading ability of children at primary level slightly improved: an estimated 4 million more girls and boys achieved grade-appropriate reading proficiency.<sup>[15]</sup> But an estimated 6 million girls and boys remain out of school.<sup>[16]</sup> The government has released a new draft Education Policy which will create a new curriculum based on learning outcomes and integrated life skills.

The initial government report on India's implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was presented to the committee in early September 2019. Concluding observations included the need to ensure inclusion of all children with disabilities in education and other basic public services – this would require movement from a medical to a social model of disability in legislation including in early childhood.

Limited data on violence against children beyond National Crime Records Bureau continued to be a challenge. Cases of sexual abuse and rape against women and girls have continued to be reported, including some highly publicized cases that led to public demand for better laws to protect children and a faster justice system. The Protection of Children Against

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Sexual Offences Bill was amended to include the death penalty for child rape amidst concerns from child rights groups. Many children continued to live in institutions, and a recent study carried out by the Ministry of Women and Child Development identified 1,575 child victims of sexual abuse (1,286 girls and 286 boys) in institutions. [\[17\]](#)

The government continued the Clean India / Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) beyond its programmed end in October 2019 and launched the ODF-Sustainability and ODF+ programmes with a budgetary allocation request of US\$ 12.5 billion for rural sanitation by 2024. The Jal Jeevan Mission was launched to provide tap water to more than 730 million people by 2024. An innovative multi-sectoral water conservation campaign was coordinated in 257 districts across India.

[\[1\]](#) IMF reduced its growth forecast in October 2019 from 6.1 per cent to just 5.0 per cent.

[\[2\]](#) India's unemployment rate hit a 3-year-high of 8.4 per cent in August 2019, according to data released by the think-tank Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

[\[3\]](#) Retail inflation is at a three-year high of 5.54 per cent.

[\[4\]](#) The Citizen Amendment Act grants Indian citizenship to non-Muslim persons belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who migrated to India before 31 December 2014, after facing persecution on grounds of religion in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, if they fulfil conditions for grant of citizenship.

[\[5\]](#) Indian census figures from 1991, 2001 and 2011.

[\[6\]](#) Risk Factors for Pneumonia: The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) - Global Burden of Disease 2017.

[\[7\]](#) Risk Factors for Pneumonia: The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) - Global Burden of Disease 2017.

[\[8\]](#) <https://childmortality.org/data/India>

[\[9\]](#) Government of India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, National Health Profile 2019, 14th Issue.

[\[10\]](#) <https://mohfw.gov.in/sites/default/files/9147562941489753121.pdf>

[\[11\]](#) Source: UNICEF/CBPS Public Expenditure on Children 2019

[\[12\]](#) <https://nutritionindia.info/dashboard/nutritionINDIA#/?section=8>

[\[13\]](#) National Family Health Survey 4 -2015/16

[\[14\]](#) Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey, 2016-2018

[\[15\]](#) National Achievement Survey 2017

[\[16\]](#) Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) survey (IMRB-SRI, 2014)

[\[17\]](#) The Report of the Committee for analyzing data of mapping review exercise of CCI under JJ (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and other Homes. Volume - I: Main Report 7 India NFHS 2015-16, UNICEF Global Database and UN DESA Population Division, World Population Prospects: The 2017 revision.

### Major contributions and drivers of results

The Programme of Cooperation (2018–2022) between UNICEF and the Government of India, aligned to the National Priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF), aims to ensure that every girl and boy in India achieves their full potential. In this second year, some 450 UNICEF staff members worked in 17 states and two union territories, making UNICEF the UN agency with the largest field presence, reaching an estimated 450 million children and young people.

To mark 30 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and 70 years of UNICEF in India, public attention was drawn to child rights. The first 'National Summit for Every Child' in the Parliament of India, plus similar efforts in state assemblies, emphasized recommitment to the CRC. The government released stamps (designed by children) on child rights, and iconic landmarks throughout India turned blue to mark World Children's Day. Over 50,000 young

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people were engaged as child rights advocates, and UNICEF's voice contributed a third of the national child rights discourse. Online support for children is a major new initiative and 40,000 supporters signed up in the first month. Our digital presence drove over a billion impressions, 100 million video views and engaged 24 million users. Media engagement consistently reached audiences in the hundreds of millions through UNICEF mention in over 4,000 articles.

Convergent programming, a strong focus on refining change strategies and concerted efforts to increase reach and voice have been crucial in improving child rights in 2019. Overall progress is mostly on track although nutrition faces constraints. Addressing equity concerns remains a challenge, and UNICEF continued to work with partners to reach the most marginalized people.

### Key results for children

In line with the National Health Policy, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UNSDF, UNICEF supported efforts towards **Universal Health Coverage** and strengthening primary health care. The focus was on promoting fair access to quality, comprehensive Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A) interventions in 23 states and in 39 Aspirational Districts. This rights-based, holistic approach to health used systems-strengthening, catalytic evidence for change and multisectoral partnerships to achieve results.

Routine data and unpublished reports show improvement in all indicators along the continuum of care for RMNCH+A. At community level, key behaviours and practices were promoted through building the communication skills of more than 1 million frontline workers, and by designing and scaling-up home-based young child care (HBYC): 40 per cent of infants who had been in sick newborn care units (SNCUs) were followed up. At facility level, support focused on initiatives such as LaQshya<sup>[1]</sup> in over 600 high load facilities: 15 per cent achieved certification and 53 per cent gained full WASH compliance. Newborn care in SNCUs improved – admissions crossed the 1 million mark and case fatality declined by about 10 per cent. UNICEF also contributed to the goal of achieving 90 per cent immunization coverage in India by promoting the introduction of new vaccines and sustaining key government initiatives such as the Measles Rubella campaign which reached over 116 million children aged 9 months to 15 years.

The long-awaited CNNS results showed that an accelerated reduction of malnutrition and anaemia is required to achieve planned nutrition results of POSHAN Abhiyaan, the UN India flagship programme on **Reduction of Stunting**. UNICEF, as lead of the UN Group on Nutrition and Food Security, supports convergent actions across Education, Health, WASH and Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes besides nutrition-specific actions. Goodwill Ambassador Sachin Tendulkar's messages on ECD and sanitation reached a billion people during the World Cup.

UNICEF continued to focus on strengthening government systems under POSHAN Abhiyaan to better reach children and women with nutrition interventions, and 12 out of 14 supported states now have Convergent Nutrition Action Plans. The number of Anganwadi Centres (rural childcare centres) organizing monthly group-counselling sessions on nutrition increased from about 427,000 to over half a million. During the POSHAN Month in September, 36 million nutrition awareness activities were conducted. Four states now have large-scale programmes for community-based care for children with severe acute malnutrition while eight others have started planning or small-scale implementation. During the April–September period there was higher iron/folate supplementation coverage than during the same period in 2018 for both in-school (31 per cent versus 18 per cent) and out-of-school (21 per cent versus 8 per cent) adolescent girls.

Within the Health Result Group of UNSDF, UNICEF is the lead technical partner in **WASH**, having a catalytic role in informing national policy across four sectors (WASH, Health, Education and Rural Development). UNICEF also provides hands-on support to government efforts in 15 most-populated states and in about 200 backward districts.

UNICEF's key policy-level contributions include the National 10-year Rural Sanitation Strategy; the evidence-informed extension of Clean India Mission to 2024 (budget US\$ 12.5 billion); the development of guidelines for the Jal Jeevan Mission (a US\$ 50 billion programme to supply tap water to 730 million Indians by 2024); and a unique national campaign for water conservation/environmental sustainability reaching 65 million people in the 257 most water-stressed districts.

In 2019, the roll out of Clean India continued. This government led, UNICEF supported initiative, provided toilets to 105 million households for the first time, achieved 603,175 self-declared open-defecation-free (ODF) communities- 75 per cent to 99 per cent of which are verified/certified. UNICEF now supports capacity building in 250,000 gram panchayats (33,000 reached in 2019) to drive the WASH agenda in communities. US\$ 33.3 million of private- and public-sector funding was leveraged to deliver a WASH package reaching about 70,000 schools (13.8 million children) plus US\$ 10 million towards menstrual hygiene management for 600,000 adolescent girls.

UNICEF is gradually increasing its WASH support for the urban poor. Initiatives include the provision of faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs) in Kerala as part of the emergency response; system strengthening to connect urban FSTP services to peri-urban and rural populations in Orissa; and capacity development for the operation and maintenance of

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community toilets in Mumbai slums.

In line with government priorities and UNSDF results of **improving learning outcomes**, UNICEF provided technical support under the Samagra Shiksha programme to enhance child-centred teaching, benefiting 34 million children. Institutional capacity to conduct learning assessments was also strengthened in 15 states, contributing to better analysis and improved learning outcomes for 44 million children. A key aspect of the draft National Education Policy and UNICEF's early childhood development strategy was boosted through capacity development and technical support for quality early childhood education, reaching 22 million children (49.5 per cent girls) in 1 million Anganwadi Centres across 14 states.

Technical support to the Ministry of Human Resources Development to review and validate a composite performance grading index (PGI) and disaggregated analysis indicators was critical in the preparation of evidence-based education sector plans to ensure equitable quality education across all 36 states and union territories.

Career portals were established in five states reaching over 1 million secondary school students (52 per cent girls). The world's first life-skills measurement tool was developed to assess the impact of life skills education, which could influence the development of the new curriculum framework in 2020 through strengthened partnership with National Council of Educational Research and Training.

UNICEF contributed to **improved equity and access to education** of the most marginalized, 623,000 out-of-school boys and girls joined schools or special training programmes – an increase from 165,000 in 2018. In Kashmir, 5,700 (51 per cent girls) crisis-affected children had access to 305 community learning centres. More than US\$ 9 million was leveraged to this end.

Strengthening of the National Programme on **Child Protection Services** with a focus on 17 states continued, and statutory child protection structures were consolidated in over half of districts: 350,000 vulnerable girls and boys were reached with specialized services. National partnerships, notably with Childline, were expanded to boost child protection across India. The capacity of 10,000 workers was strengthened, leading to improved assistance to 2 million calls and support services to over 170,000 children in distress. Nineteen thousand children (65 per cent girls and 35 per cent boys) benefited from psychosocial support in 108 UNICEF-supported child-friendly spaces and adolescent resource centres in the Kashmir Valley.

**Childcare reform** achieved a higher profile, facilitated by UNICEF advocacy and the engagement of the judiciary. There was progress away from systemic reliance on institutional care: the expansion of alternative care models, psychosocial support services and evidence-generation efforts benefited over 250,000 children in childcare institutions. A convergent approach towards ending child marriage (ECM) strengthened linkages with the national flagship programme Beti Bahcao Beti Padhaow, expanded ECM initiatives from 16 to 80 districts, and led to the development of six gender-responsive costed state plans of action for adolescent empowerment. As a result, 5.4 million girls and 2.4 million boys gained access to information, gender-responsive services and life-skills programmes. Strengthening the links with social protection schemes is now a key strategy to prevent family separation and child marriage.

The government of India led by NITI Aayog, has started to develop its VISION for 2035 – 'Paradigm for a New India' – to accelerate equitable economic growth. UNICEF contributed to this discourse by creating a policy platform and providing evidence to inform the new architecture for **integrated social protection systems and public finance policy for children**. A study on public expenditure on children over seven years in 16 states proposed a universal child grant for under-five children and equalization grants for low-income states to the 15th Finance Commission. A review of the unified registry in Madhya Pradesh and a vulnerability analysis in Jharkhand supported the policy shift towards inclusive integrated social protection systems.

SDG monitoring in India is moving to address data gaps in child and adolescent-centric SDG indicators. The National Statistics Office made a decision to carry out a special household survey every three years. The states of Assam, Rajasthan, Odisha, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh finalized their SDG framework with UNICEF support.

The introduction of a child-friendly Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) in national guidelines was strengthened by a Ministry of Panchayati Raj announcement to incentivize the response and accountability for child-centric local plans through national awards. Rajasthan and Maharashtra made children's participation mandatory in responding to children's needs in GPDPs.

Continuing with efforts to build pathways for adolescents, UNICEF and partners launched **YuWaah (GenU in India)**, a national partnership for young people to encompass enhanced access to learning, improved economic opportunities and active citizenship. Over 30 partners signed statements of intent and 120 youth-led organizations created national and state collectives to enhance adolescents' participation skills and to establish district platforms for adolescents. In four states, partnerships with the National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nehru Yuwan Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) facilitated 300,000

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youth volunteers to engage with community members to prevent violence against children and child marriage.

### Change strategies and enablers

**Capacity building for improved service delivery:** Efforts to strengthen social-sector systems, build institutional capacity and improve frontline worker skills were critical to driving change in 2019. Nutrition Centres of Excellence at national and state level housed in academic institutions, engaged in policy and programme development, training and monitoring. This resulted in intensified community management of acute malnutrition services in 12 states, and expansion of Anaemia Mukh Bharat to reach 55 million girls a month with four critical interventions. Investments were made in national and state public and parastatal institutions to provide WASH capacity-building for sanitation, water treatment and water-quality monitoring.

School-based learning assessments were enhanced to promote 21st century skills and grade-appropriate learning outcomes. Nine states have established learning assessment cells which will contribute to improved learning outcomes for approximately 44 million children (51 per cent girls). Support was provided to 17 state governments to develop child protection capacity-building plans and initiate in-service training (including mentoring, inter-state learning, supportive supervision and e-learning).

Capacity building was also supported through the orientation and training of frontline workers to improve service delivery. Highlights include an early childhood education e-learning course and capacity building of over 1 million Anganwadi Centres reaching 22 million children (50 per cent girls); training 15,000 child protection service-providers (on case handling, reporting, coordination and counselling benefiting 350,500 vulnerable children); the orientation of 4.2 million elementary school teachers to recognize and report child sexual abuse; training 1,300 master trainers to build the capacities of 250,000 gram panchayat representatives on sustainable, gender-inclusive and equitable programming to reduce open defecation; and building capacity in frontline workers to roll out home-based care for young children.

**Partnerships:** 2019 saw enhanced partnerships with professional associations, the private sector, volunteer groups, academia, civil society organizations, UN agencies, parliamentarians, and faith and community leaders. These links strengthen the capacities of social systems and create programme convergence, with the aim of improving the access, reach and quality of services, and widening the discourse around child rights issues.

Partnership with UN agencies towards UNSDF outcomes was coordinated through the UN Result Groups (UNRGs), two of which (Education and Nutrition) were led by UNICEF. The WASH National Development Group (including the World Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, WaterAid and Tata Trusts) has enabled strategic alignment of sectoral investment and fostered strategic partnerships, notably with corporates (e.g. Unilever, J&J) to support scaling-up and monitoring and evaluation. The Nutrition Partners Network of 23 organizations (including the World Bank, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Tata Trusts) has contributed to better coordination, harmonization and complementarity of interventions and geographical coverage, and to the division of roles and responsibilities for POSHAN Abhiyaan implementation.

Dialogue has begun with various actors including GAVI (the Vaccine Alliance), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, JSI, JHPIEGO, USAID, the International Clinical Epidemiology Network and the National Cold Chain and Vaccine Management Resource Centre to advocate for change in reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (RMNCH+A) including in immunization. Engagement with private-sector actors such as the Rockefeller Foundation, Accenture and Piramal Swasthya promoted joint actions towards improving maternal and newborn health interventions.

UNICEF was able to reduce costs and increase coverage of interventions aimed at reducing child marriage by building multi-state technical partnerships with civil society organizations. Partnership with national volunteer organizations NSS and NYKS has facilitated 300,000 youth volunteers' engagement with community members, girls and boys to prevent child marriage and violence against children.

**Gender responsive programming:** Investment in capacity building for all staff on gender equality and gender-responsive programming led to improvements in 2019 reporting (e.g. gender-disaggregated output data) and in 2020 workplans (four out of 13 state offices have developed gender action plans). 2020 workplans also include gender training for implementing partners, including senior government officials.

The Theory of Change for ending child marriage was analysed and given a gender-transformative framing. Applying a strong gender lens to social and behaviour change communication is also yielding positive results. For example, national guidelines for elected village leadership on healthy diets for pregnant women and young children recommend that men should engage in household care work. Master trainers engaged to train adolescents, girls and boys and community group facilitators were trained on gender equality and positive masculinity. Plans were designed to train male teachers in Rajasthan and adolescent boys in Assam on positive masculinity. Our technical support to government in Haryana has led

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to the state focusing on women's and girls' safety in its 2019–2020 plans.

To address the fact that India is the only country with excess female under-five mortality,<sup>[1]</sup> a comprehensive analysis was undertaken on gender-based discrimination and neglect of children aged 0–6. Findings from the study will inform government response moving forward.

**Social and behaviour change communication (SBCC):** in 2019 all six approaches of the SBCC Gender Strategy (targeted campaigns; building social capital; capacity development; system strengthening; evidence generation and mega partnerships) were implemented across. New media techniques such as social networking and artificial intelligence, together with the conventional mass media and social mobilization, are gradually being included.

UNICEF was able to institutionalize the 'Accountability to Affected Population' initiative within Kerala's state government. Feedback mechanisms from marginalized populations are gradually informing state policies and implementation right down to the community level.

Millions of parents and community members were reached in 80 districts to generate awareness on child marriage, parenting skills and adolescence. Almost 8,000 master trainers and more than 1 million frontline workers were trained on interpersonal communication skills to enhance community engagement. School Management Committee training was supported to strengthen community participation across all states.

Advocacy for leveraging government budgets to scale up proven behaviour-change strategies resulted in over US\$ 23 million being spent to improve maternal, child and adolescent health in 11 states. UNICEF has been recognized by government as the key technical SBCC partner contributing to Swachh Bharat Mission, the largest sustained behaviour change communication campaign in the world.

**Business for results:** UNICEF continued to engage with business stakeholders to deliver results for children across all our programme areas. Collaboration focuses on leveraging financial and non-financial resources for key programme results. For example, the IMPAct4Nutrition platform was created to enhance private-sector action to integrate responsible practices and deliver positive nutrition outcomes for women and children. The platform has enabled a growing list of 30 businesses to develop and exchange ideas to implement nutrition-centric corporate social responsibility programmes with enhanced spending on nutrition, effective utilization of their core business assets, such as marketing opportunities for nutrition and enhanced workforce nutrition (leading to less absenteeism and increased employee retention).

**Strategic operations:** To embed the five pillars of strategic operations into work planning, the India Country Office launched results-based management for operations. In the spirit of valuing people, money, risk and systems, several streamlining and simplification initiatives were spearheaded. Procure2Pay has reduced invoice numbers by about 35 per cent and saved more than 2,500 hours of staff time. Robust lease negotiation and office thriftiness reduced spending by more than US\$ 100,000. Automation tools such as Intend for electronic tendering, electronic Contract Review Committee and Interactive Voice Response for Business Continuity Plan using the RapidPro platform were also rolled out leading to more transparency and accessibility, improved monitoring and reporting, quicker turn-around times and greener processes.

UNICEF worked closely with the government on vaccine procurement and the management of in-country logistics under procurement services; we also undertook an assessment of cold chain management and training. Overall some US\$ 35 million of goods and services were procured to support the country programme in 2019.

Improving the workforce experience of staff through simplifying and streamlining processes enabled UNICEF to attract and retain an agile, diverse and motivated workforce. Most (92 per cent) of established posts were filled within two months and the gender ratio remained at 50:50. All group learning and 95 per cent of mandatory training was completed; 99 per cent of staff completed training on the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse of authority. The India Country Office is the first to have delivered training-of-trainers for career management and career conversation workshops, thereby strengthening a culture of effective performance and career management.

In support of UN Reform, the Country Office held key roles – chairing the Operations Management Team and (co-) leading the Finance, ICT, HR and Protocol working groups. The finance department has led ongoing efforts to implement and streamline the Goods and Services Tax (GST) process with government, clearing significant tax refund backlogs. As a resident of UN House in Delhi, the Country Office has, on behalf of all UN agencies resident in UN House, advanced mutual recognition with UNDP through common approaches to travel and security.

[1] 'LaQshya' programme of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare aims at improving quality of care in labour room and maternity operation theatre.

[2] UNIGME (The United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation) 2019.

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### Lessons Learned and Innovations

Three critical points were noted in 2019:

#### **1. Evidence and monitoring frameworks are vital for results-based programming**

In order to enhance efficiency and impact of existing cash transfer programmes for girls, it is important to invest in systems to operationalize and improve access to complementary services. UNICEF has provided technical support to state governments to build monitoring information systems to ensure that no child falls through the cracks. On evidence generation, consistent and multidimensional efforts are required to convince policy makers about the importance of the right data at the right time.

Several health and nutrition programmes (e.g. POSHAN Abhiyaan, home-based care for young children, Anemia Mukht Bharat) were strengthened through taking a more result-based approach. This included a focus on improving the 'building blocks' (supplies, financing, demand generation, governance, M&E, service delivery) of systems by government and development partners. This is changing the mindset of government partners at all levels to focus on improving coverage and quality. Continued advocacy and leadership, including a much stronger focus on programme-convergent target setting and monitoring, will be needed to guide implementation.

#### **2. Importance of Continued Advocacy as an enabler for results**

Although the number of out-of-school children in states is under-reported, experience has shown that continuous advocacy at different levels will eventually bear fruit. In the states with the most out-of-school children (Uttar Pradesh and Bihar), UNICEF's advocacy has led to the state governments placing greater focus on this issue, resulting in more out-of-school children being identified and mainstreamed into schools and special training programmes than previously. In Uttar Pradesh, the state government has established the SHARDA programme; in Bihar, the government's own community workers are now playing a more active role in identifying, mainstreaming and tracking out-of-school children.

In the WASH sector, our continued advocacy contributed to leveraging substantial resources for children and adolescent girls. For example, in menstrual hygiene management (MHM) programming, advocacy efforts through three consecutive national consultations with four nodal ministries, 12 state governments and NGOs have borne results: INR 746 million (some US\$ 10.5 million) was mobilized for MHM interventions; a state-level MHM strategy was launched in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh; and state action plans were rolled out in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

High quality evidence on sanitation programming supported advocacy efforts, resulting in significant resources (e.g. US\$ 12.5 billion to extend the efforts to end open defecation to December 2024 and INR 2.33 billion (US\$ 32.3 million) for school WASH from state governments) being leveraged.

These examples highlight the importance of strategic evidence generation and advocacy, including through partners, which remains an area of focus in 2020.

#### **3. Innovation and technology platforms as an Enabler for Results**

In 2019, UNICEF consolidated its technology for development (T4D) portfolio across programmes to map the most common technology interventions. It was found that 25 per cent of all 70 projects use real-time monitoring of interventions. Such monitoring facilitates better data collection and decision-making for both UNICEF and government counterparts. UNICEF has invested in creating in-house real-time monitoring capability using RapidPro and ODK platforms to address this priority. UNICEF is also committed to using open-source technologies for its T4D projects and adhering to the metadata and data standards defined by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to facilitate efficient data exchange and information sharing.

Through U-Report India, adolescent and youth were engaged to provide feedback and data on cyberbullying and career aspirations; chatbots were used to create awareness and build knowledge of air pollution, disaster preparedness, child marriage/child rights, menstrual hygiene and breastfeeding. A total of 57,550 U-Reporter engagements were generated with 25 per cent female participation. India now has more than 328,000 U-Reporters, almost twice as many in December 2018 (163,000). The four states with the highest number of U-reports are Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Chhattisgarh; 80 per cent of U-Reporters are aged 15–30. India Country Office is part of the 11-country U-Report scale-up effort to reach 28 million young people globally by 2021. U-Report India, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, has begun engagement with India's largest student volunteer organization – the National Service Scheme,

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which has a network of 4.1 million student volunteers.

In the education sector, under the Diksha programme of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, UNICEF supported the review of textbooks, suggested enrichment of material and the use of codes. This would enable teachers to enhance the school teaching-learning experience by having digital access to enriched material linked to curricular content in textbooks. The career portal is another example of an online innovation that strengthens career guidance to better inform the transition from school to work. To date, 790,000 students (58 per cent girls) have actively engaged through support from 59,000 teachers trained how to use the portal. Online efforts are supported by offline engagement to facilitate holistic career guidance for students.

UNICEF piloted a social accountability monitoring system in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh through RapidPro, an open-source technology platform that collects direct feedback from rural respondents to inform district and state administrations on the sustainability of open-defecation-free initiatives. In partnership with Water.org, UNICEF promoted alternative credit models in Maharashtra through women's self-help groups: 15,000 affordable WASH loans (amounting to INR 225 million – some US\$ 3 million) were given with 95 per cent repayment rate, and the scheme is to be expanded to Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.

Given the ambitious nature of the government flagship water supply programme (Jal Jeevan Mission), UNICEF advocated a monitoring system based on the internet-of-things with a focus on quality, equity, sustainability, and documenting innovations for better transparency and accountability. All states have conducted GIS mapping of water supply schemes, which will serve as a baseline for the JJM roll out.

Innovative approaches such as app-based water sample collection and automatic SMS-based feedback on water quality parameters were scaled up in West Bengal, which in turn is used for social mobilization activities in arsenic- and fluoride-affected areas of West Bengal.