

## Lao People's Democratic Republic

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### Executive Summary

During 2014, the Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) demonstrated its commitment to socio-economic development through high level policy discussions which focused on: a call to accelerate progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the impact of the transition to 'lower-middle' income country category, sustained high gross domestic product growth rates while tackling the fiscal deficit (as a result of high capital investment, increases in public sector wages and benefits, declining mining revenues), as well as preparations for Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) integration. These discussions provided a number of opportunities to advance equity focused issues for children and women.

UNICEF provided substantial technical support to the Government of Lao PDR for the National and Provincial Round Table Process which marked the remarkable achievement towards the MDGs, particularly in those areas relevant to women and children. The discussions took on particular significance this year and focused on the development of the 8th National Socio Economic Development Plan 2016-2020, the Macro Economic situation and Governance. UNICEF continued to lead and/or contribute to sector processes relevant to children, most notably in education, nutrition, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and make substantial contributions to national goals. Some key achievements included:

- The Lao PDR was validated as having eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus, an area of longstanding support from UNICEF. As part of the measles elimination efforts, UNICEF in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), supported the implementation of a nationwide Measles-Rubella immunization campaign which reached an estimated 1.66 million children between nine months and 10 years old (99 per cent). In addition, close to 690,000 children six to 59 months old received Vitamin A supplementation (94 per cent) and over 614,000 children 12-59 months old (95 per cent) benefitted from deworming.
- Through UNICEF assistance, over 390,000 grade one and two students received primary textbook sets for the 2014/15 academic year, provided alongside teacher guidebooks for these same grades. This has allowed the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to meet its standard of one textbook per student for these critical first grades of school.
- UNICEF supported the construction of 221 school latrines and 278 water sources in a total of 210 schools. More than 30,000 students directly benefit from the intervention including 16,500 girls. All facilities built with UNICEF support are gender sensitive and inclusive of all children. The country programme also supported the installation of water supply systems in 74 villages, directly benefiting 43,000 people.

The commemoration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC@25) was one of the most significant events of 2014. UNICEF partnered with the National Commission for Mothers and Children to organize a high level event, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. This high-level event reaffirmed political commitment to the Convention on the

Rights of the Child (CRC) and recognized this anniversary as an important milestone in the country's actions to promote children's rights to health, education, protection and equal opportunity.

UNICEF contributed to a number of critical policy and legislative reform processes, which resulted in new policies and legislation to better protect children from violence abuse, neglect and exploitation. Key results in 2014 with UNICEF support include the development of a new Law on Juvenile Criminal Procedures, which was promulgated by the President of Lao PDR in April 2014; finalisation and approval of a new Adoption Decree regulating both domestic and inter-country adoptions; development of a draft Child Mediation Decree; development and approval of a National Plan of Action on Violence against Women and Children 2014-2020, and; development of a new Law on Violence against Women and Children. UNICEF supported the revision of the current Education Law in Lao PDR, drawing on its expertise in legal reform from other social sectors, and in 2015 will assist with the development of an Impact Assessment of the draft Education law.

UNICEF strengthened a number of partnerships in 2014, one of the most significant being the partnership with the National Assembly. This resulted in two significant achievements. The first was the visit of Ms Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children, who was able to discuss the Law on Violence against Women and Children which is under development, with the National Assembly members. The second was an International Parliamentary Union session, hosted in Lao PDR, where Members of Parliament (MPs) from 10 countries in the region discussed how to address child malnutrition in Asia. The result was an Outcome document on child malnutrition that was endorsed by all participating MPs.

## Humanitarian Assistance

In 2014, Lao PDR experienced flooding in limited geographical areas. The Government of Lao PDR did not require external support. UNICEF continued to lead Nutrition and WASH and co-lead the Education and Protection clusters. All cluster response plans were updated.

**UNICEF Lao PDR's response to Ebola:** Whilst Lao PDR did not register any Ebola cases, UNICEF focused on preparedness by providing support to the Department of Communicable Disease Control, the Ministry of Health and supporting the preparation and printing of information, education and communication (IEC) materials. UNICEF, together with the Government and WHO, conducted a rapid review of available hygiene IEC materials, including packages of easily adaptable and reproducible messaging materials for radio, TV, print, digital, fax, and SMS distribution channels.

UNICEF provided technical and financial support to a central toll-free hotline that is used for communicable diseases, including Avian Influenza, Dengue, Cholera, and Ebola. The hotline was officially activated and advertised for Ebola at the end of July 2014.

UNICEF Lao PDR partnered with the World Health Organisation (WHO) to support Government on two initial communication-oriented workshops, conducted in November and December: (i) A review of Communication materials and Networks, which involved re-activating emergency communication and distribution networks, originally established for H5N1 and H1N1 and pandemic preparedness; (ii) An Ebola orientation workshop for local media. Follow-up actions are planned for the first quarter of 2015. All UNICEF staff were oriented on the Ebola country preparedness and response.

**UNICEF response to measles outbreak:** In 2014 there were 369 cases of measles identified and 12 deaths (all from Huaphan province). This included 10 cases under the age of five years. The majority of the cases (92 percent) were from the Hmong Ethnic group.

Jointly, the National Immunization Programme, WHO and UNICEF monitoring team visited the affected villages and supported the preparation of the outbreak response to vaccinate all children and the general population under 20 years of age. UNICEF and WHO provided support to the operational guidelines for outbreak response and investigation, and monitored the implementation.

To prevent any future outbreaks a major emphasis of the UNICEF programme will be to support the Ministry of Health in strengthening its routine immunization activities. In particular, UNICEF will focus on promoting integrated delivery of services during outreach activities, including immunization to the most remote and currently underserved populations. UNICEF will support the development of a communication strategy for ethnic groups. Strengthening supply and logistics management and cold chain improvement will continue to be an important part of UNICEF support.

**Strengthening disaster preparedness in WASH:** In addition to leading the WASH emergency cluster, the UNICEF strengthened the sub national government. In collaboration with the Red Cross, UNICEF worked with 67 units of the Village Disaster Preparedness Unit which were established in 67 villages in eight districts in the provinces of Borikhamxay and Khammouane. Funds were utilized to purchase and preposition emergency supplies in five provinces (Luangprabang, Oudomxay, Vientiane province, Khammouane, and Savannakhet).

## Equity Case Study

The 2010 Child Wellbeing and Disparities Study for Lao PDR was the first study that provided comprehensive and robust evidence on children to significantly shape discussions on equity in the country. The Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS), launched in 2013, was a combined Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4 and Demographic and Health Survey. This showed that disparities are rooted in geographic, social, ethnic and historic factors. The findings from the LSIS provided critical input for the Third MDG Progress Report, the Mid Term Review of the Seventh Five-Year National Social Economic Development Plan and for both the Education and Health Sector Plans. In 2014, UNICEF supported the National Economic Research Institute within the Ministry of Planning and Investment to conduct the National - Multiple Overlapping Analysis (N-MODA) using Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey data. The findings will inform discussions on the 8th National Socio Economic Development Plan.

The Government of Lao PDR have highlighted the need to continue to close the gap between rural and urban, as well as rich and poor, and urged local authorities to identify bottlenecks that prevent families from accessing basic services. The equity lens of the current country programme is contributing to achieving this. All programmes aim to identify disparities, key bottlenecks and determinants of these disparities and adopted equity focused approaches.

The 27 community-based school readiness centres supported by UNICEF since 2012/13 have continued to demonstrate the impact of quality early childhood education on disadvantaged children's learning and development. As a result, the Ministry of Education and Sports has formally endorsed the concept as one of three official forms of early childhood education services. The community based school readiness model is offered by the Government in remote

and rural communities where there is an insufficient number of students to warrant the opening of a formal pre-primary class. These communities are typically ones in which students' attendance and performance in primary school is far below the national average and where caregivers are less familiar with the support they should provide to maximize young children's development and success in school. Serving as a cost effective alternative to the expansion of formal pre-primary classes, the Community Based School Readiness Programme responds to the direct need of parents for safe child care whilst they are engaged in work, which is most often agriculture. In 2014, UNICEF was successful in advocating for the community-based school readiness centres to be eligible for receipt of funding from the national School Block Grants scheme.

Despite significant progress, the maternal and child mortality levels in Lao PDR remain among the highest in the region, and there are significant variations in health outcomes of children and women driven by geography and socio-economic factors. Relatively high levels of disparities in health outcomes are explained by inadequate, although growing, maternal and child health service coverage, with those more frequently excluded being children living in rural areas, from certain ethnic groups and those living in poor families.

A UNICEF Lao PDR supported equity and bottleneck analysis in 2013 identified key barriers to making immunization services available to underserved populations. The findings and recommendations of this analysis called for: (1) improving predictability and sustainability of financing for vaccines and health outreach; (2) strengthening management capacity in the area of micro-planning; (3) improving cold chain capacity and supply management, and; (4) addressing demand side barriers in certain ethnic groups. Follow-up support from UNICEF resulted in tangible improvements in the first two areas, outlined below.

1. Building on recommendations of the 2013 Financial Sustainability Assessment of immunization programme supported by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation/ UNICEF/WHO, UNICEF Lao PDR provided technical support to the Ministry of Health to estimate medium-term budget needs (2014-2017) and map available external resources for vaccines, other essential child survival commodities and operating costs for integrated health outreach. The resulting data, including a financial gap analysis, informed the annual budget preparation and mobilisation of external resources to cover the immediate and medium-term gaps. Subsequently, the Government of Lao PDR largely met its commitment for 2013 and 2014 and significantly increased the national budget allocation for the procurement of vaccines from US\$24,000 in 2012 to US\$640,000 in 2014.

2. In an effort to strengthen equity focused delivery of essential maternal and child health (MCH) services, UNICEF in cooperation with WHO supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) to develop and test new micro-planning guidelines. These guidelines were built on the Reaching Every Community principles. Their initial implementation in two UNICEF-focus provinces demonstrated positive effects on immunization outcomes through better targeting of high risk villages, improved predictability of service delivery and strengthened linkages between health providers and communities. At the outcome level, UNICEF focus provinces (Phongsaly and Luangnamtha) recorded improvements in immunization coverage, reduced drop-out rates and narrowing the gap between the best and worst performing districts. Building on this experience, UNICEF has been advocating with the Government to develop a new national standard for micro-planning.

UNICEF also provided focused technical and financial support to ensure that four rounds of integrated maternal, neonatal and child health (MNCH) health outreach was provided in two of

the most underserved provinces in the North Luangnamtha and Phongsaly. This served to strengthen the predictability of preventative services (immunization, antenatal and postnatal care, micronutrient supplementation, deworming and health promotion) in remote areas.

UNICEF provided support to the Ministry of Health to deliver technologically appropriate solutions to rural off-road communities. In 2014, support was provided to the MoH for the installation of water supply systems in 74 rural villages, directly benefiting 43,000 people. UNICEF worked with the MoES and MoH to develop nationally-accepted new and upgraded design for school latrines which are child-friendly, with separate toilets for girls, boys, have disability access, and with hand-washing stations). During the year, support was provided for the construction of 221 school latrines and 278 water sources in 210 schools. More than 30,000 students directly benefited, including 16,500 girls.

## Summary Notes and Acronyms

ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations  
AWP - Annual Work Plan  
C4D - Communication for Development  
CBDRR - Community based Disaster Risk Reduction  
CCCs - Core Commitments for Children  
CCIS - Cold Chain Information System  
CDC – US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention  
CEDAW - Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women  
CO - Country Office  
CPD - Country Programme Document  
CLTS – Community-Led Total Sanitation  
CMAM - Community Management of Acute Malnutrition  
CMT- Country Management Team  
CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child  
CRC@25 – 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child  
DFAT - Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
DRR- Disaster Risk Reduction  
EAPRO – UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office  
ECD - Early Childhood Development  
ECE - Early Childhood Education  
EENC - Early and Essential Newborn Care  
EFA – Education for All  
EMIS- Education Management Information System  
ESDP – Education Sector Development Plan  
ETF - Emergency Task Force  
EU - European Union  
EVM - Effective Vaccine Management  
EWS – Early Warning System  
GAVI- Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation  
GFS – Gravity Fed System  
HACT - Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers  
HAPiS - Hygiene Action led by Pupils in Schools  
HRBAP \_ - Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming  
HWTS - Household Water Treatment and Safe storage

IBFAN – International Baby Food Action Network  
 ICDC - International Code Documentation Centre  
 ICT – Information and Communication Technology  
 IEC – Information, Education and Communication  
 IFEAD - Institute for Education Administrator Development  
 IIEP - International Institute for Education Planning  
 IMEP - Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan  
 INGO – International Non-Governmental Organisation  
 IQAN - Internal Quality Assurance Network  
 IYCF- Infant & Young Child Feeding  
 Lao PDR - The Lao People’s Democratic Republic  
 LECS5 - Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey  
 LSIS - Lao Social Indicator Survey  
 MCH - Maternal & Child Health  
 MDG – Millennium Development Goals  
 MNCH – Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health  
 MNPs - micronutrient Powders  
 NCMC - National Commission for Women and Children  
 N-MODA - National – Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis  
 MMG - Minerals and Metals Group  
 MOES - Ministry of Education and Sport  
 MoH – Ministry of Health  
 MPs – Members of Parliament  
 NA – National Assembly  
 NERI - National Economic Research Institute  
 NNC – National Nutrition Committee  
 NSEDP - National Socio Economic Development Plan  
 OOSCI - Out-of-School Children Initiative  
 RAMP - Rolling Annual Management Plan  
 SUN – Scaling up Nutrition  
 WB – World Bank  
 WinS – Wash in Schools  
 WHO – World Health Organization  
 UK - United Kingdom  
 UN - United Nations  
 UNDAF- United Nations Development Assistance Framework  
 USAID – United States Agency for International Development  
 VAC – Violence against Children  
 WHO - World Health Organisation

## Capacity Development

Capacity development serves as the backbone of the UNICEF Lao PDR programme, aiming to strengthen national capacity to lead, coordinate and monitor sector developments in support of national priorities, human rights obligations and development strategies in line with the Paris and Accra Principles of Aid Effectiveness, the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Action Plan. Amongst the capacity development support undertaken in 2015 was the following:

- Building capacity to collect, analyse, and use data to promote equity focused planning in the Education sector, through a partnership with the International Institute for Education



Planning (IIEP), in the development and delivery of an accredited course on education planning and management for central and provincial education authorities. This initiative started with a review of the current capacity and skills within the Institute for Education Administrator Development IFEAD and building capacity of key staff who will serve as course coordinators over 2015.

- Developing communication for development strategies focused on the community-based promotion of exclusive breastfeeding, together with Infant & Young Child Feeding (IYCF)/WASH practices for young children, and the focused dissemination and promotion of micronutrient Powder supplements. The office also supported significant planning for the scale-up of good hygiene promotion in schools and the initiation of a social norms strategy on Violence against Children.
- Providing technical support to the MoH for estimating medium-term budget needs (2014-2017) and prospective mapping of external resources confirmed funding for essential child survival and nutrition commodities (vaccines, deworming tablets, micronutrients, ready-to-use therapeutic foods) and for outreach operating costs. The results of the budgeting and mapping were used to estimate financing gaps, to inform the allocation of domestic funds and to mobilise additional external resources to close critical gaps in service delivery for children and women. A new financing mechanism for vaccine and other child survival commodities in Lao PDR -- Vaccine Independence Initiative – was discussed with MoH to ensure predictable budgets and to avoid stock outs of essential commodities for major public health programmes.

### **Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy**

The lack of data and capacity to analyse and use data remains a key constraint for the country, as highlighted in the concluding observations from the 2nd Periodic Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2011, and is an area that the Government has requested support from UNICEF. In 2014, UNICEF played a significant role in supporting a range of evidence-generation processes and demonstrating the use of evidence to inform policy discussions.

A sub-national data presentation tool (Lao EduInfo) developed with UNICEF assistance in 2012/13 was utilised in the production of a national Education For All report and an equity based analysis within the MoES 2013/14 annual report. The capacity of four district offices in Education Management Information System (EMIS) data compilation and analysis was strengthened and an assessment undertaken of key bottlenecks in relation to the current EMIS system for schools and districts. UNICEF played a key role in assisting the MoES with the development of an 8th Education Sector Development Plan (2016-2020), using a Theory of Change approach.

By strengthening its support to the National Economic Research Institute (NERI), the Government think tank providing policy advice to develop the National Socio Economic Development Strategy, UNICEF was able to build capacity for Government to conduct two key strategic analyses. These are the National - Multiple Overlapping Analysis (N-MODA) using Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey (LECS5) data. The Survival Rate Study and Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI), will assist in the identification of strategies by which the Education Sector Development Plan can ensure all children complete a full cycle of basic education.

2014 also marked the first ever National Study on Violence against Children with the Lao

Statistics Bureau and the National Commission for Mothers and Children, with support from the United States Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The findings from the study will inform the revision of the National Plan of Action on Violence.

## Partnerships

In 2014, UNICEF Lao PDR continued to strengthen collaboration and expand its network, acting as catalyst for gender-sensitive, equity-centred policies, and for mobilizing and leveraging additional resources for children. Partnerships focused on developing the capacity of partners to reach the unreached.

As a 'Delivering as One' self-starter country, cooperation with UN agencies was strengthened and benefited from the lessons learned from the areas of joint programming. These include: Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) and the Multi-sectoral Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan; the WASH in Schools and School Feeding; the UN Joint Programme on MNCH.

Some of the achievements in this area include:

- UNICEF serving as the co-coordinating agency for the 2015-18 Global Partnership for Education Programme which will focus on strengthening school based management in disadvantaged areas.
- Expanded support to the National Assembly (NA) in 2014 resulted in two significant achievements; i) the visit of Ms Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children, where Ms Santos Pais was able to discuss the Law on Violence against Women and Children with the National Assembly members; ii) an International Parliamentary Union session, hosted in Lao PDR, with MPs from 10 countries in the region discussing how to address 'Child Malnutrition in Asia'. The result was the development of an Outcome document on child malnutrition which was endorsed by all participating MPs.
- UNICEF worked in partnership with WHO, the International Code Documentation Centre (ICDC), the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) and Save the Children, to support the review of the nutrition legal framework in Lao PDR and the monitoring of the violations of the International Code of Marketing of Breast milk Substitutes. This initiative resulted in the development of a policy and technical brief to the Minister of Health and the National Assembly on this issue. At the end of 2014, the Government requested UNICEF's technical support for the drafting of the Code legislation.
- UNICEF continued to act as the lead agency for nutrition and is serving as the co-convenor of the Development Partners Group on Nutrition with the European Union. This group promotes the coordination of support to nutrition and shared learning from studies, research and implementation experience.

## External Communication and Public Advocacy

In 2014, a variety of high-profile events were carried out with the backing of strategic planning and communication-supported messaging materials. Results were demonstrated by strong and prominent UNICEF messages, and stakeholder voices emerging at the forefront of media coverage and high-level Government and partner commitments, policies and action.

Under-nutrition, focused on stunting, poor dietary and hygiene practices and environmental sanitation among children under five years of age, was highlighted in a series of events. These included provincial and high-level roundtable Government and partner meetings; an International Parliamentary Union session held in Vientiane in November under the theme of



'Malnutrition in Asia'; a series of strategic meetings with Members of Parliament and various Government ministries focused on advocating for strengthened policy and implementation on the Code of Marketing on Breast milk Substitutes. UNICEF also continued to co-convene (with the European Union) quarterly nutrition meetings with development partners.

UNICEF's advocacy on immunization successfully protected and increased Government's own funding and political commitments, especially notable in a current highly-restricted and competitive fiscal space.

The issue of violence against children gained unprecedented media coverage, as well as in discussion and actions by Government. UNICEF played a key role in this process by successfully hosting a visit by Ms Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children, to members of Lao PDR's Parliament, as well as Ministers, and concerned development partners. Violence against children was in the forefront of the President's speech delivered on International Children's Day, and UNICEF is supporting the production of awareness messages via new and traditional media channels.

Toward the end of 2014, children's rights became an issue of ongoing national attention. With UNICEF's support, the National Commission for Mothers and Children marked the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by organizing high-visibility media coverage, messaging materials (banners, posters, stickers), and an event attended by high-ranking officials to remark on achievements made and outstanding issues and barriers that still impede the realisation of children's rights, such as growing inequities.

### **South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation**

South-South Cooperation is critical to Lao PDR with the upcoming ASEAN integration and as it continues to open up. UNICEF promoted South-South cooperation in a number of different ways, including the following:

- UNICEF was the main provider of technical advice to the Government on SUN-related issues, including technical, managerial and logistics support to the Government SUN focal point for preparing periodic conference calls with the global SUN secretariat, for the annual 2013-2014 SUN Review and M&E Report writing. These efforts contributed to improved understanding and increased application of SUN framework to Lao-specific policy and programme discussions on nutrition.
- UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Government of Lao PDR to host an International Parliamentary Union session, with MPs from 10 countries in the region discussing how to address 'Child Malnutrition in Asia'. The result was the development of an Outcome document on child malnutrition that was endorsed by all participating MPs.
- A WASH in Schools (WinS) International Learning Exchange Programme was held in November in Vientiane Capital. The Exchange was organised by MoES, MoH and UNICEF Lao PDR. The Exchange aimed to create a forum for sharing experiences and best practices of 14 countries on WinS. The learning exchange programme focused on different options for hygiene packages and on mass hand-washing with soap.
- UNICEF Lao PDR and WHO in collaboration with MoH hosted a regional workshop in November in Vientiane capital. The workshop focused on techniques for reaching the most vulnerable to improve household water treatment and safe storage (HWTS) to increase understanding of HWTS options, current practices, and effective approaches to monitoring and evaluation of correct and consistent use of HWTS.

- With extensive technical support from UNICEF and CDC, the Government initiated implementation of the first-ever National Study on Violence against Children. UNICEF provided support for key Government staff from the Lao Statistics Bureau and the National Commission for Mothers and Children to participate in the Global Workshop on Violence against Children in Swaziland. Data collection is complete and preliminary findings are expected mid-2015.

### Identification Promotion of Innovation

The main issues affecting the coverage and quality of immunization services in rural Laos are inadequate cold chain and vaccine availability at service delivery points. Lack of real time, action-oriented data on the functioning of refrigerators and vaccine stocks at health facilities prevents timely identification and appropriate response by managers at the district, provincial and central levels.

UNICEF along with MoH and PATH supported the Ministry of Health to design and test a SMS and Web based Cold Chain Information System (CCIS). The system aims to improve health workers' ability to monitor and manage fridge performance, bridge the gaps of information flowing along the supply chain and improve management decision making. It contributes towards improving storage capacities by pointing the most/least effective equipment in use within the country supporting argumentation and quantities for future procurement. The system also improves the interaction between authorities and enables supportive supervision.

A unique aspect of the CCIS is that it is very light on user input on data submission and uses the data to trigger action at various levels of the system. The system relies on the use of 30-day electronic temperature recorders which are automatically registering the 'heat' and 'cold' alarms in the functioning of refrigerators. Health workers send monthly SMS reports indicating alarms (or no alarms) with their fridges and stock balances of vaccines. If there is an emergency (for example stock-out of vaccine or fridge failure), an "emergency action" SMS is sent to people expected to take action.

With pilot testing in 35 facilities over a period of one year, the system was adapted to end user requirements with 100 percent submission of data from health centres directly by SMS now being achieved. The system is expected to be fully functional and implemented countrywide at the end of 2016 as the MoH decides to expand the system in a cautious and sequenced manner.

### Support to Integration and cross-sectoral linkages

One of the most significant cross-sectoral priorities for the UNICEF programme of cooperation in the Lao PDR is nutrition. Since the establishment of the National Nutrition Committee (NNC) in July 2013, UNICEF Lao PDR, largely building on the joint EU-UNICEF Maternal and Child Nutrition Security Initiative in Asia, has been providing technical and financial support to the NNC secretariat with view of strengthening multi-sectoral approaches to nutrition.

In 2014, UNICEF support contributed to the development of conceptual and practical linkages between different coordination structures for nutrition at the national level and between the Government and development Partners; it also helped clarify the contribution of the Government of Lao PDR and other partners in addressing under nutrition.

Collaboration with other UN agencies and the European Union was instrumental in supporting

the Government to operationalize multi-sectoral approaches, including costing, mapping and testing of the convergence approach at subnational level. Collaboration with ‘Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Programme’ helped develop the draft of the common results framework and the monitoring and evaluation framework for multi-sectoral approaches to nutrition.

UNICEF supported the Government to develop the methodology and data collection tools for a subnational nutrition survey. The survey is intended to provide comprehensive information on the maternal and child nutritional status, on access to various nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive interventions and to inform future impact evaluation of multi-sectoral approaches to nutrition in Lao PDR.

UNICEF supported the production of a training and educational material package on practices related to Infant and Young Child Feeding and WASH.

An analysis carried out by UNICEF Lao PDR informed the background documents for the Chief Executive Board of UN and World Bank (WB) Meeting in Washington DC, and the development of the new country strategies of the European Union, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and WB. Through advocacy and technical support, UNICEF contributed to a higher level of attention and commitment to scaling up nutrition specific interventions such as micronutrient supplementation and infant and young child feeding and the importance of addressing high levels of open defecation and inadequate hygiene practices.

## Service Delivery

Service Delivery is an important element of equity-based programming. UNICEF Lao PDR supports activities that accelerate progress towards government ownership, sustainability of services and increased coverage. It also attaches importance to demand creation, timely and responsive delivery, and quality services free from barriers to their utilization.

With UNICEF assistance, over 390,000 grade one and two students received primary textbook sets for the 2014/15 academic year. This allowed the MoES to meet its standard of one textbook per student for these critical first grades. UNICEF provided technical assistance in the designing of an information system for textbook production planning which was piloted in two provinces, and a communications strategy aimed at promoting textbook care and return and stimulating textbook demand among future potential recipients and teaching staff.

In WASH, 30,000 school children, including 16,500 girls, directly benefitted with newly constructed gender sensitive and inclusive WASH facilities in 210 primary schools in the rural communities. Similarly, 43,000 rural people benefitted with the water supply systems in 74 villages. The documentation of this initiative contributed to a number of advocacy documents, national guidelines and studies in the sector to strengthen the functionality and use of facilities.

As part of the measles elimination efforts, UNICEF Lao PDR in collaboration with WHO supported the Lao Government to implement a nationwide measles-rubella immunization campaign reaching estimated 1.66 million children between nine months and 10 years old (99 per cent of target population).

To address the high levels of micronutrient deficiencies in young children, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to develop and test two operational delivery models for home fortification of young children’s diets with micronutrient powders (MNPs). The country experience was

shared in the 2014 Micronutrient Forum in Ethiopia and in the Regional Workshop on Home Fortification with Micronutrient Powder in Vietnam. The operational delivery models for home fortification will be reviewed in 2015 to inform the development of the national policy and expansion of home fortification beyond pilot areas.

Further details are contained in the Results Assessment Module.

## Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation

The UNICEF country programme aims to support Government efforts in realizing the rights of all children in Lao PDR and is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). A human rights-based approach to programming has been adopted throughout the country programme cycle. The programme focuses on strengthening the capacities of those in positions of authority to understand and fulfil their obligations and making them more accountable for the realization of the rights of children and women whilst at the same time empowering and increasing the capacities of the most vulnerable and excluded (right holders) to claim their rights equitably, without discrimination.

The country programme also supports the UNDAF goal of promotion of human rights in conformity with the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. In July the UN Country Team submitted its report on the implementation of accepted recommendations from the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review by the Government of Lao PDR to the Human Rights Council. In November, UNICEF also submitted its written reports on the implementation of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and on the involvement of Children in Armed Conflict to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. These reports will be reviewed by the Committee in February 2015, followed by a dialogue with the Government in May/June 2015.

In commemoration of the CRC@25, UNICEF and the Government of Lao PDR organized a high level event, Chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of Lao PDR. This high-level event reaffirmed political commitment to the CRC and recognized its anniversary as an important milestone in the country's actions to promote children's rights to health, education, protection and equal opportunity.

## Gender Mainstreaming and Equality

### 1. Development of a new Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children.

UNICEF Lao PDR successfully advocated for a planned domestic violence law to be broadened to cover all forms of violence against women and children in all settings. UNICEF provided extensive technical assistance to support the drafting process to ensure compliance of the Law to the fullest extent possible with international standards. Support was also provided for broad consultations on the draft Law with national and sub-national stakeholders. The draft Law was submitted to the National Assembly for consideration. This Law supports the Government of Lao PDR's efforts to strengthen the legal and policy environment in response to the Concluding Recommendations of the CRC and CEDAW Committees.

### 2. Support to the development of the CEDAW Report:

2014 was the preparation year for the Government of Lao PDR's combined 8th and 9th Periodic CEDAW report. UNICEF engaged in providing background documents and reviewing early

drafts. In particular, UNICEF was tasked with reviewing sections related to violence against women and children, health and education, with a focus on girls from ethnic groups and issues related to rural women and girls, including early marriage. The draft has yet to be finalized and delays have been experienced due to leadership changes in the National Commission for the Advancement of Women.

## Environmental Sustainability

A key factor for sustainable development in the post 2015 agenda is clear environmental sustainability agenda. The three main pillars of Environmental Sustainability call for a balance relation between social, environmental and economic activities in order to create a system where humans (children), nature and economic progress have equal rights and representation in the broader local (and global) decision making process. These issues are increasingly being raised in policy forums in the Lao PDR, such as the Round Table Meetings, where there is a focus on the impact of the over exploitation of natural resources such as water, fisheries, forest and rivers leading to economic stress and food insecurity.

UNICEF Lao PDR is indirectly monitoring the environmental situation in the country and its impact on children. The current situation shows an imbalance between the exploitation of natural resources for economic gain over the welfare of people and children especially in rural areas. The continued high growth rates of the economy (Gross National Income jumped from US\$280 in 2000 to US\$1,460 in 2013) are partly based on the extractive sector which is exploiting the country's pool of natural resources: minerals, land, forestry and water resources. For Lao PDR, the planned economic expansion and projections are based on such finite resources.

UNICEF, with the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) support, is engaged in a three year plan to implement WASH facilities in 17 provinces, reaching 400 rural schools. Access to water in schools is crucial to promote hygiene practices that will improve health and education performance, and reverse open defecation trends. Water can also facilitate nutrition programs and help improve stunting levels. Cyanide from mining contaminates rivers and streams and the use of pesticides in mono-cultural plantations of rubber trees and banana also pollute water and deplete aquifers that provide water to schools and communities.

## Effective Leadership

A key focus in 2014 was a commitment to strengthen internal capacity in emergency preparedness. The key activities included: updating the Early Warning and Early Action and Business Continuity Plans, updating health, nutrition, WASH, education and protection cluster action plans, and; additional training for the office emergency focal point via participation in the regional emergency preparedness and response training.

UNICEF Lao PDR made several recommendations during the year to improve operations and programme management performance. One of the areas of weakness identified during the last audit report was micro-assessments for partners receiving US\$100,000 or more during the cycle. Twelve implementing partners have been micro-assessed and the rest are planned in January 2015. A senior staff member was selected as the Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) focal point.

Close follow-up was made to track management indicators, not only monthly during Country Management Team (CMT) meetings, but also weekly during section chief meetings. The office established non-statutory committees to ensure that analysis of all risk aspects are undertaken,

identified, mitigation and follow-up plans are established with responsibilities, prior to starting important programme and operational activities. This approach was undertaken during the year for WinS, violence against children, and textbook provision areas of programming.

The offices' business continuity plan was updated regularly to ensure that it was in accordance with new policies and updates received from UNICEF headquarters.

The risk mitigation practices in place have played an important role in the success of the purchase and timely distribution of textbooks in 147 districts all over the country, the ongoing WASH in School project and other important projects. Despite the success of some programme and operational activities, several challenges remain: high dependence of Lao PDR in terms of procurement of supplies and printing (only 20 percent of textbooks were printed locally), limited capacity of contractors and suppliers, poor quality of products).

### **Financial Resources Management**

The Performance Management tool was used to monitor funds management and utilisation, and key performance indicators. The CMT met monthly and played a monitoring and oversight role to improve contributions management, budget control and financial procedures, bank reconciliations (monthly bank reconciliations are undertaken and uploaded in share point), accounting and liquidation of cash assistance with appropriate supporting documents certified by concerned sections.

Scheduled audits and spot checks were also used to ensure that funds were utilised as planned, by checking detail documentation which, with HACT, are no longer received from the partners. The CMT reviewed progress against the regional Key Performance Indicators, and reported promptly with clear explanations when quarterly regional indicators were not met.

The CMT was responsible for developing and monitoring the implementation of the Rolling Annual Management Plan (RAMP). CMT meetings were used to review progress against plans and targets. The RAMP was updated early in 2014 and defined priority Programme and Management Objectives, as well as key office policies and procedures as developed by the CMT with the participation of all staff. An annual office management review was organised on 12th December 2014 with all staff participation.

UNICEF Lao PDR underwent an internal audit in 2012, with the final observation report received in March 2013. All the seven recommendations were identified as "medium priority" and were closed in May 2014.

The office carefully monitored Key Performance Indicators to have the most significant impact. For example, whilst the goal was 95 per cent expenditure of regular resources, the office intentionally used 80 per cent to allow for roll over of funds to 2015 for some priority unfunded programming. Similarly, 67 per cent of grants were used within the original duration of the grant life (the goal was 100 per cent). This was because one significant grant for publishing school text books was extended so that printing could be thoroughly managed.

### **Fund-raising and Donor Relations**

UNICEF Lao PDR set up social media platforms for advocacy and recognition of donor support. Digital engagement was widely intensified, raising Facebook likes to over 6,700, adding an average of 1000 blog visitors each month, tripling twitter followers, as well as increasing use of YouTube and Flickr channels. The website was launched in May. Links have been strengthened



with DOC Digital Engagement Unit resulting in Twitter coverage on the UNICEF main Twitter account (2.9 million followers).

UNICEF Lao PDR hosted a number of donor visits including visits from Japanese (two), New Zealand (two), UK, Hong Kong, US and Korean UNICEF Committees. A ceremony to launch the cooperation on promoting Nutrition with the mining group Minerals and Metals Group (MMG) and UNICEF Australia was supported in Savannakhet resulting in media coverage both nationally and internationally.

UNICEF Lao PDR has a standard operating procedure to outline the submission of donor reports within a timely manner and meeting the organisations quality benchmarks.

## Evaluation

The two-year Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) for 2014-15 was developed, endorsed by the CMT, and monitored on a quarterly basis. IMEP tracking sheets were modified to include information related to dissemination plans, strategies, modes of communication and products as well as implementation status. This is to ensure that data generated will be shared and used effectively.

Although no evaluation was conducted, one WASH programme evaluation is planned to be carried out in the first quarter of 2015. The findings from this evaluation will inform the development of the new country programme on WASH.

Following up on management response of Evaluation of the Community- based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) in Lao PDR, UNICEF has taken up the recommendations in the process of developing 2014-2015 work plans with the Government. In line with the recommendations of the CMAM evaluation, UNICEF boosted its work in the area of IYCF promotion, which became central part of its 2014-2015 work plans, and proceeded with the consolidation of the CMAM activities in the three southern provinces. A number of targeted advocacy meetings with the concerned Department in the Ministry of Health and Nutrition Centre were held to discuss financial sustainability plans for nutrition commodities and operating costs for screening.

## Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

UNICEF Lao PDR continued, as in 2013, to ensure that staff travel uses direct and cheap flights.

In 2014, UNICEF also coordination road trips by using only new vehicles with less maintenance costs and ensuring that different staff who were traveling during the same period and the same direction share the same vehicles. This served to drastically reduce fuel consumption, per diem and maintenance costs.

Joint micro-assessments of partners shared with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have helped UNICEF to make significant savings when compared to having to cover all costs by itself. There was also joint approach to the HACT Macro Assessment which reduce the cost of the institutional contract should UNICEF have had to conduct the assessment by itself. .

The UN agencies in Lao PD are finalizing a common Long Term Agreement for air travel which is anticipated to result in cost savings.

## Supply Management

In line with the six UNICEF Supply Strategies 2014-2017 (Service Delivery, Emergency, Product Innovation, Strengthening supply chains, Monitoring and Influencing Markets, UNICEF Lao PDR supported:

- (i) Service Delivery: Textbooks to the value of US\$1,624,124 were printed, transported and distributed to all primary schools on time. Eighty per cent of the textbooks were printed abroad.
- (ii) Support in the Water in Schools project amounting US\$3,400,952.97 with latrines, gravity-fed water systems (GFS) and boreholes in 400 schools and communities in seven provinces, resulting in increased ownership and capacity building of counterparts, strategic implementation plan, selection of experimented constructors and lower costs in comparison to previous years.
- (iii) Strengthening Supply Chains with Government: Lao PDR Government and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) in Procurement Service. The total value of supplies received via Procurement Services was US\$4,997,046.59: US\$859,073.06 for Government supplies and US\$4,137,973.53 for GAVI.

The support to the Government of the Lao PDR in Procurement Services also included assistance on reviewing solicitation documents, bid preparation and evaluation, contract implementation, transport and delivery. UNICEF also developed the capacity of partners in terms of supply and logistics, as the office does not have maintain a warehouse and all supplies are directly delivered to the partners. Specific training and support from UNICEF was provided, especially in provinces where construction and textbooks initiatives are taking place (Bokeo, Saravane, Luangnamtha, Vientiane Capital). Government staff were trained, including assistance on reviewing solicitation documents, bid opening and evaluation processes, transport, warehousing, distribution and/or follow-up, and monitoring.

In 2014, the UN Common Procurement Team made significant progress on joint procurement activities such as an initiative on arranging Long Term Agreements for supplies and services including travel and joint micro-assessments.

The value of supplies received in 2014 was:

Programme supplies: US\$2,633,900.62

Operational supplies: US\$288,197.13

Services: US\$1,039,112.99

Construction: US\$2,549,814.68

## Security for Staff and Premises

Although the security situation in Lao PDR is considered stable, UNICEF and other UN agencies remained concerned by the very low capacity of the security services provided by the local contractor, contracted for the past 13 years, for the office and international staff residences.

The United Nations Department of Safety and Security, in collaboration with all UN agencies, is planning to launch a new bid to select a new company, but due to the poor performance of security companies within the country, the selection might not solve the existing problem. Among the seven companies in Lao PDR, only one responded to the bid last year.

UNICEF has decided to procure new vehicles for field missions, as a security measure for staff, as all existing vehicles are more than 10 years old, increasing risks to travellers. All drivers participated in training to enhance their driving skills.

UNICEF Lao PDR has submitted a request to the UNICEF Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO) to improve the security measures in the office and parking lot. The measures concerned CCTV and alarm system. Installing new systems will reinforce the security in the office.

UNICEF Lao PDR undertook measures for staff safety due to the Ebola Virus. The office organized, with the support of WHO, an all-staff briefing session and presentation on Ebola. The office developed an action plan and produced relevant communication material.

## **Human Resources**

UNICEF Lao PDR continued to apply a results-based approach to its human resource management and development during the year.

The performance management cycle took place with the Performance Evaluation Review (PER) discussions in three phases between supervisors and supervisees: during the first phase at the beginning of the year, during mid-term reviews, and at the end of the year for final evaluations. All staff participated in the most recent Global Staff Survey with the results expected in early 2015. The office is fully committed to UN Cares, has implemented the 10 minimum standards on HIV in the workplace, and nominated a focal point coordinating with other UN agencies. Several sessions on HIV in the workplace and other related medical care were organized by the UN Clinics and WHO for all staff.

The office has assessed staffing gaps to ensure effective humanitarian / early recovery capacities in line with the Core Commitments for Children, and staff are trained on emergency risk management and response. Two well trained staff, selected by the others in the office, serve as Peer Support Volunteers.

The Human Resources Development Team was fully functional, assisting staff to build their knowledge and capacity in programmatic and operational areas, and organizing Friday Learning Sessions with the support from external and internal facilitators, on different topics. Priorities for office-wide learning identified through the Country Programme's Mid-Term Review were implemented. Two senior staff are receiving 'Coaching and Performance Management' organized by EAPRO Office, with the support of an external company.

The completion of the mid-year Performance Evaluation Reports by 31st December, 2014 is 100 per cent. The Joint Consultative Committee meetings between the staff association and management took place four times in 2014. The Human Resources Officer serves as JCC Secretary. The office organized an office retreat in September, focusing on team building. All staff members actively participated in the retreat.

The office used regular resources funds from Country Programmes to temporarily bridge the funding gap for two international staff on Other Resources (OR) funded posts.

## **Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology**

UNICEF Lao PDR continued to benefit from efficient information and communication technology (ICT) service delivery through the strengthened infrastructure and secured connectivity with fail-

over capacity. The cloud-based Office Automation tools such as Office365, MS Outlook, MS Lync, OneDrive and SharePoint were successfully migration. Immediately after the migration, two training sessions were conducted for all users to efficiently use the office automation tools in the work place and remotely, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of programme and operations implementation.

For strong communication and advocacy to reach different audiences, UNICEF maintains a wide range of digital and social media

- Website: <http://www.unicef.org/laos>
- Photography: <http://www.unicef.org/photography>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/uniceflaos>
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/UNICEFLaoPDR>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UNICEFLaos>
- Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/uniceflaos>
- Blogging: <http://uniceflaos.blogspot.com>

he use of a hyper-v hosts holding multiple virtual servers has significantly reduced ICT infrastructure costs. With the cloud-based office automation tools and the remote assistance features, the office ICT operational services noticeably improved during the year. UNICEF Lao PDR also provided ICT supports to the office in Papua New Guinea.

## Programme Components from RAM

### ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

**OUTCOME 1** By end 2015, families and communities, especially in areas that are remote, poor and populated by underserved ethnic groups, have increased demand for, and better access to, quality social services, within a supportive public and media environment.

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF Lao PDR continues to support a systematic, evidence-based approaches to Communication in order to address political, social, and behavioural issues across all sectors. In 2014, UNICEF continued to work closely with the various Government partners to support communication actions.

UNICEF continued its support of Youth Radio and Youth TV at provincial and national levels, and begun broadening its vision to reflect the increasing use of new, social media platforms, reflected in the recommendation to re-brand such programming as ‘Youth Media’, thus providing a platform for young people to express their views.

UNICEF also continued financial and technical support for the creation of a second series of the Early Childhood Development television programme – “My Village”. This show for preschool children has “dual audience” messages for caregivers, based on international experience and research showing that children often learn best when co-viewing with a caregiver and that adults often learn from positive modelling presented. A new eight-episode series is being produced in cooperation with the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao National Television and the private television station, Lao Star Channel.

UNICEF continued to strengthen its partnership with the National Assembly to promote child

rights via outreach activities. In September, UNICEF highlighted work done on the ECD television programme, supporting NA outreach visits to Luangprabang, Oudomxay, and Vientiane provinces. The office also worked extensively with National Assembly members in October and November to support:

- i) The visit of Ms Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children. Ms Santos Pais was able to discuss the Law on Violence against Women and Children with the National Assembly members;
- ii) An International Parliamentary Union session, hosted in Lao PDR, with MPs from 10 countries in the region discussing how to address 'Child Malnutrition in Asia'. The result was the development of an Outcome document on child malnutrition that was endorsed by all participating MPs.

**OUTPUT 1** Adolescents and young people (boys and girls) have increased opportunities, confidence to participate in advocacy for their rights through radio and television.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

A decade since its inception, UNICEF continues to support Youth Radio, which is broadcast in four languages in a dozen provinces. With UNICEF support in 2014, more than 250 young reporters, over one half were girls, improved their capacities to produce radio material and are now able to broadcast their contributions. Despite funding constraints, the level of enthusiasm remains high. New issues in 2014 have featured UNICEF's Early Childhood Development TV programme, awareness on messages related to Violence against Children, and the celebration on the 25th anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. In 2014, all stations developed their own Facebook pages and promoted the topics mentioned above, in addition to the regular pieces on health and education. It was proposed to rename and rebrand 'Youth Radio' as 'Youth Media'.

Youth Radio remains one of the rare and popular spaces where young people can express their views, and young communicators have the opportunity to engage in dialogue with officials and visitors from abroad. UNICEF continues to regularly invite UNICEF National Committees and donors to visit stations. Recognizing its importance as a conduit for youth participation, and discussion between UNICEF and partners, the end-of year review recommended that UNICEF should continue to find means of providing financial and/or technical support, with special emphasis in 2015 on highlighting/documenting success stories and expanding the scope of media, especially new/digital outlets.

While UNICEF-supported training were successfully completed, activities scheduled by some stations were hindered by a lack of funding, especially for items such as local travel expenses. These costs are not considered excessive by the Government or UNICEF standards, and it is proposed that UNICEF advocate more strongly to broaden support where such gaps are identified. Nonetheless, provincial authorities continued to demonstrate increased interest and participation, providing technical and some limited financial support. Some provincial stations have also received limited funding from private sector and/or NGOs (ETL phone company, Big Brother Mouse publishers, and Plan International). This private sector engagement may provide the opportunity for suitability of these interventions and approaches.

The sectoral programmes continued to explore how the Youth Media activities can benefit programmes and their project targets, immediate/minor funding gaps could be closed and stronger collaboration and content added to programming.

**OUTPUT 2** Capacity of Lao national and provincial journalists in reporting on children issues improved through orientation, training and field visits to UNICEF-supported programmes.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Following UNICEF's successful support for the development and launch of the Early Childhood Development initiative in 2013, which resulted in the broadcast of the TV programme 'My Village', the first 15 episodes were re-broadcast in early 2014. The programme continues to be widely popular, indicated by all television channels showing episodes well into the beginning of 2014.

In early 2014, reviews, planning and training were conducted, with an emphasis on improved production skills. As a result, an expanded team started production of eight new episodes to be broadcast in early 2015. As preparations are made for the next season, the team is ensuring children from ethnic groups and children with disabilities are represented and programming is gender sensitive (with a continued focus on main female character).

New production funding was received from H&M (clothing retailer). Whilst the original proposal was for 15 new episodes in 2014-15, it was decided to afford extra attention and quality to an initial eight productions. Based on a mid-year review meeting, partners suggested programming become more systematic, detailing long-term responsibilities including increased involvement of related partners.

Because of the initial popularity, UNICEF and partners have highlighted the need for a long-term creative-support strategy that includes incentives for talent (such as fixed teams of script writers) and that funding be put toward local capacity wherever possible.

Suggestions from the annual review meeting supported the expansion of the future range of topics and for existing episodes to be translated/dubbed into Hmong and Khmu ethnic languages to expand viewership and ensure equity.

UNICEF maintained its work plan with the National Assembly to promote child rights via outreach activities. In September, the communication section highlighted work done on ECD TV, supporting National Assembly outreach visits to Luangprabang, Oudomxay, and Vientiane provinces.

**OUTPUT 3.** Periodic and timely field visits are conducted to monitor project activities, organize National Committee visits, attend workshops and trainings. Consultants are contracted to support graphic design, photography, translation, artwork, editing, video and radio production, story writing and data analysis to support project implementation.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF provided human resources support through this Output to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other results across the country programme of cooperation.

**OUTCOME 2** By 2015, the most disadvantaged children will be developmentally prepared for right-age entry into school, survive through last primary grade and make the transition into lower secondary education.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

In 2014, there was continued progress in the number of children accessing and enrolling within basic education nationwide and with a Net Enrolment Rate of 98.7 per cent, Lao PDR has now



officially met the MDG target of Universal Primary Education. There have been impressive increases in enrolment within both early childhood education and secondary education sub-sectors in particular over the past year.

Improvements in the percentage of children completing a full five years of primary education continued, but this indicator remains at less than 80 per cent, so Lao PDR will not fully meet the MDG 2 goal by 2015.

In collaboration with development partners including UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and Sports reviewed its education sector targets for the next Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP 2016-20) and has drawn on analytical reports and studies supported by UNICEF in 2014 (National Education for All/EFA Report, Study on Functionality of Village Education Development Committee's) to identify priorities aligned with the national socio-economic strategy. The Out of School Children Study being conducted jointly by UNICEF, the MoES and the Ministry of Planning and Investment and which will be completed in 2015 will provide the analysis required to develop strategies for consideration within the ESDP (2016-20) to ensure that all children complete a full cycle of basic education.

Through UNICEF assistance, over 390,000 grade one and two students received primary textbook sets for the 2014/15 academic year provided alongside teacher guidebooks for these same grades. The textbooks were produced with improved print specifications, most notably the use of polyurethane binding, which will improve their durability and therein cost-effectiveness. This has allowed the MoES to meet its national standard of one textbook per student for these critical first grades of school, although there remains a shortage in textbook availability for students in grades three to five. UNICEF also provided technical assistance in the designing of an internet-based information system for textbook production planning which following a brief trial in two provinces, is being rolled out by the Ministry nationwide. In 2015, support to textbook production and distribution will be continued alongside the production of additional early readers for children from pre-primary to grade three.

In recognition of the critical importance of primary school management in the achievement of the national Education Quality Standards, UNICEF provided a package of support to four educationally disadvantaged districts. This included strengthening the capacity of district education staff and school directors in education planning and management, the provision of district and school block grants and technical support to district early childhood and primary education officers. UNICEF will continue to bring technical expertise and substantive prior experience in school planning and management within the upcoming 2015-18 Global Partnership for Education programme (and for which UNICEF serves as co-coordinating agency) which will focus on strengthening school based management in disadvantaged areas. The production of Implementation Guidelines for the national School Quality Standards undertaken with UNICEF assistance in 2014 have also contributed to the Ministry's efforts to roll-out an accreditation system on the Quality Standards for all primary schools.

The twenty-seven community-based school readiness centres supported by UNICEF since 2012/13 have continued to demonstrate the impact of quality early childhood education on children's learning and development. As a result, the Ministry formally endorsed this model within their early childhood education (ECE) service strategy. The development of a curriculum for community-based ECE programmes has also served as an opportunity to improve the capacity of the Research Institute for Educational Sciences in pre-primary curriculum development. Whilst community-based school readiness programmes are formally recognized by the MoES as one of three official types of early childhood education, there continues to be

insufficient budget allocation within the Ministry towards this approach, with greater funding towards more urban based kindergarten facilities. In 2015, UNICEF will provide greater support to the expansion of community based early childhood education services to communities in disadvantaged districts as well as strengthening of the pre-primary curriculum.

In 2014 UNICEF embarked on a new partnership with the International Institute for Education Planning in the development and delivery of an accredited course on education planning and management for central and provincial education authorities. This initiative started with a review of the current capacity and skills within the IIEP and building capacity of key staff who will serve as course coordinators over 2015. IIEP is the key structure within the MoES recently made accountable for capacity building of schools and education authorities on education administration, planning and management. As such, it is expected that UNICEF's support will positively contribute to the implementation of several large education programmes investing in school management- notably those of BEQUAL and the GPE.

#### **OUTPUT 4** Effective and efficient management of the Education programme

##### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF provided human resources support through this Output to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other results across the country programme of cooperation.

**OUTPUT 5** The Ministry of Education and Sports has the capacity to plan, implement, and monitor the delivery of education sector targets, in line with decentralization policy goals.

##### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

A partnership between the MoES, UNICEF and the International Institute for Education Planning was launched in June 2014 and a two year process initiated to strengthen the institutional capacity of the central and provincial MoES (and the Institute for Education Administrators in particular) in education planning and management. This will be delivered through technical support to IFEAD and the delivery of an in-country accredited course to start in March 2015. Current capacity within IFEAD and the Ministry's limited financial space remain challenges to ensure the sustainable implementation of this initiative.

A sub-national data presentation tool (Lao EduInfo) developed with UNICEF assistance in 2012/13 has continued to be utilised for equity based analysis in the production of national sector reports, notably the 2014 national EFA report and the MoES 2013/14 annual report. The capacity of four District Education and Sports Bureaus in EMIS data compilation and analysis was strengthened and an analysis undertaken of key bottlenecks in relation to the use of the EMIS system by schools and districts.

UNICEF played a key role in assisting the MoES with the development of an 8<sup>th</sup> Education Sector Development Plan (2016-2020), using a Theory of Change approach and serves as the Supervising Entity for the Sector Development Plan grant received on behalf of the Government from the Global Partnership for Education. The Education Sector Working Group has taken a lead role in drafting the ESDP (2016-2020) which included sub-national consultations. The overall goal for the ESDP aligns with the Ministry's focus on ensuring all learners are able to benefit from and contribute to Lao PDR's integration within the ASEAN economic community.

In line with the Government's commitment to strengthen decentralised administration of social services and as a means of improving the timeliness and quality of technical outreach by district education offices to schools, a second annual district planning process was completed in four

districts with UNICEF support. These same four districts received block grants from UNICEF to meet annual targets from within their annual plans, in relation to early childhood education and primary education. It has been recognised by the Ministry and UNICEF that the limited analytical skills of district education staff have a significant impact on the setting of the district plan targets.

UNICEF, alongside other development partners, supported the revision of the current Education Law in Lao PDR, drawing on its expertise in legal reform from other social sectors, and in 2015 will assist with the development of an Impact Assessment of the draft Education Law.

**OUTPUT 6** Innovative models for ensuring pre-school aged (four and five year old) girls and boys are better prepared for school, are tested and validated in four educationally disadvantaged districts, to inform national policy and practices by 2015.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The Community-Based School Readiness model, supported by UNICEF since 2012/13, moved from serving as a pilot to being an officially mandated form of early childhood education by the Government. A sign of success in 2014 was the high transition rate of these community based non-formal structures into formal pre-primary facilities, due to strong demand from within communities and support from district education offices. In 2015, UNICEF will support the further expansion of community-based early childhood education programmes as a means of demonstrating at greater scale the impact of such investment.

A curriculum framework for the community based school readiness programme was finalized in 2014, under the leadership of the Research Institute for Educational Sciences and supported by UNICEF. The curriculum framework and its accompanying eight teachers' modules places an emphasis on holistic child development outcomes which are clearly identified within the progression across the curriculum. Early childhood education kits were procured and distributed to 27 community-based early childhood education centres (benefitting 842 children) and have served as a model for materials provided by the Ministry and other Development Partners to early childhood education structures. Samples of these ECE kits were also provided to District and Provincial Education offices to be used within their training for ECE teachers.

In collaboration with the Department of Education Construction and Design Management within the MoES, site plans and architectural drawings for pre-primary classes were drafted as the basis for construction and renovation of early childhood education facilities in four Districts. In recognition of the variation between communities in relation to local economy, environment, the availability of resources and specific needs, a 'menu' of facility design features have been elaborated from which communities can chose.

The ECE sub-sector was better represented as a priority within the 2013/14 Education Plans of four Districts, along with a recognition by these and their Provincial Education authorities of the need for more targeted approaches for disadvantaged communities.

**OUTPUT 7** District educational structures in four educationally disadvantaged provinces have the technical capacity to deliver primary education services which meet national quality standards by December 2015.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

In 2014, UNICEF supported the MoES in the provision of textbooks to all primary year one and two students nationwide, equating to 391,515 students, as well as 67,500 accompanying teachers' guidebooks. The textbooks used improved print and binding technology and will be

monitored over 2015 to determine durability and shelf-life. In strengthening the textbook procurement planning system, a 'Return Book Record' pilot was initiated in two provinces; the results of which will inform a roll-out in other provinces over 2015-2016. Construction of 24 district storage facilities for textbooks furthered assisted with more efficient distribution in Attapeu and Bokeo Provinces.

One result of UNICEF's support to a school based management package in four educationally disadvantaged districts was the production and use of costed annual school plans by 100 per cent of primary schools in these (227 primary schools). This package recognises the critical role of school management in improving education quality and included the provision of complementary school block grants for expending on teaching/learning materials, teacher development and minor rehabilitation of facilities. Lessons learned from this initiative are contributing to discussions on institutionalizing decentralized management (including planning, monitoring and quality assurance) to ensure the national Education Quality Standards are gradually met. A study on the Functionality of the Village Education Development Committee Structure was undertaken jointly by the MoES, Plan International, Child Fund and UNICEF as a means of better understanding how these community structures can be strengthened to ensure their engagement in school based management.

UNICEF supported the MoES to develop an implementation package for the national Education Quality Standards which includes: 1) Guidelines for district education offices and schools; 2) A manual for the school self-assessment process and associated tools, and; 3) A manual of school quality standards assessment and accreditation, which was formally endorsed by the MoES in late 2014. UNICEF was asked to provide further assistance in 2015 for developing the accreditation system for schools.

A Hygiene Action led by Pupils in Schools (HAPiS) initiative was launched by UNICEF and the MoES in 2014, with the aim of directly introducing four key hygiene behaviours /routines in 100 primary schools of Saravane Province alongside the integration of these within the primary curriculum. The National School Health Task Force and the local non-profit organisation PADECT were key partners in piloting the initiative in 10 primary schools and in undertaking formative research on menstrual hygiene management and latrine use/comfort by students as a means of informing the design of the initiative.

UNICEF's financial assistance to a Primary Equivalency Programme in Savannakhet, Khammouane and Sekong Provinces resulted in 3,600 students who are unable to access primary schools in their localities enrolled in the third year of a non-formal programme.

**OUTCOME 3** By 2015, the programme will achieve an enhanced policy environment, increased coverage of quality services (MNCH, Nutrition, HIV), and improved practices by individuals, families and communities, with particular emphasis on the most remote and vulnerable populations, resulting in healthier children and mothers.

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The UN Interagency Estimates released in 2014 suggest that Lao PDR is on track for MDG5 and is likely to achieve MDG4. Impressive declines in maternal and child mortality in Lao PDR are attributable to overall improvements in socio-economic conditions and steady increases in coverage of high-impact maternal and child health interventions. Improvements in immunization coverage and exclusive breastfeeding practices are particularly noteworthy.

Since 2000 Lao PDR has maintained a polio free status and in 2014 the Ministry of Health with UNICEF support developed the Inactivated Polio Vaccine Introduction Plan.

After a decade of work supported by UNICEF Lao PDR, the country received WHO certification for having eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus in 2014. As part of the measles elimination efforts, in November, Lao PDR implemented a nationwide measles-rubella immunization campaign reaching estimated 1.66 million children (99 per cent of the target) between nine months and 10 years old, with support from UNICEF and WHO. Additionally, 94 per cent children 6-59 month old received Vitamin A supplementation and 95 per cent children 12-59 month old benefitted from deworming.

Despite significant progress, the maternal and child mortality levels in Lao PDR remain among the highest in the region and there are significant variations in health outcomes of children and women driven by geography and socio-economic factors. Furthermore, coverage with many essential MNCH services remains inadequate, with children living in rural areas without roads, from certain ethnic groups and those living in poor families being frequently excluded.

In an effort to strengthen equity focused delivery of immunization and other essential MCH services, UNICEF in cooperation with WHO, supported the MoH to develop and test new micro-planning guidelines. The initial implementation experience using new Guidelines, built on the Reaching Every Community principles, demonstrated their positive effects on immunization coverage through better targeting of high risk villages, improved predictability of service delivery and better linkages between health providers and communities.

Progress towards the nutrition-related targets of MDG1 in Lao PDR has been slow, and with the current pace the country is unlikely to meet the 2015 targets for under-nutrition.

The recent Lao PDR transition from 'low' into 'lower-middle' income country category was associated with progressive declines in official development assistance to core health service delivery inputs, reducing the eligibility for grant funding and increased requirements for co-financing, including for GAVI and Global Fund assistance. This transition coincided with significant declines in the domestic fiscal space for non-wage recurrent budgets in social sectors, primarily caused by a new Government policy on increases in civil servants' remuneration. As a result of these combined factors and despite a significant effort to sustain the delivery of essential MCH services, the health sector saw interruptions of some services due to stock outs of essential commodities (e.g. micronutrient supplementation of pregnant women) and declining operating budgets for health outreach services.

Within this broader context, UNICEF provided technical support to the Ministry of Health to estimate medium-term budget needs (2014-2017) and map confirmed resources for essential child survival and nutrition commodities (vaccines, deworming tables, micronutrients, ready-to-use therapeutic foods) and for outreach operating costs. The costing and mapping results were used to estimate financing gaps, to inform the allocation of domestic funds and to mobilise additional external resources for 2015-2016 to close critical gaps in MCH service delivery.

UNICEF support to the secretariat of the National Nutrition Committee, built on the joint EU/UNICEF Maternal and Child Nutrition Security Initiative in Asia, contributed to the development of conceptual and practical linkages between different coordination structures for nutrition at the national level and between the Government and development partners. It also helped to promote regular meetings at the technical and policy levels to discuss the development of multi-sectoral response to high levels of undernutrition in Lao PDR.

UNICEF collaboration with Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Programme resulted in the development of a draft Common Results Framework, the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Multi-sectoral Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan, including a draft design and data collection tools for Nutrition surveys. Surveys to be conducted in 2015 are intended to provide comprehensive information on maternal and child nutritional status, access to various nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions and inform future impact evaluation of multi-sectoral approaches to nutrition in Lao PDR.

In efforts to address high levels of iron deficient anaemia and other micronutrient deficiencies in young children in Lao PDR, UNICEF supported the development of a multi-stakeholder partnership, involving the Ministry of Health, Population Services International, University of British Columbia and Mines and Minerals Group. In 2014, the partnership tested two operational delivery models – public and private - for home fortification of children’s diets with micronutrient powders.

In cooperation with WHO, ICDC/IBFAN and Save the Children, UNICEF supported the review of the nutrition legal framework in Lao PDR and the monitoring of the violations of the International Code of Marketing of Breast milk Substitutes. The findings and recommendations of these reviews informed the development of a policy and technical brief to the Minister of Health and the National Assembly and featured on the agenda of the Regional Inter-Parliamentary Union Session on Child Nutrition Security in Asia in Vientiane in November. UNICEF-supported activities led to improved awareness by the Government on the need for stronger nutrition legislation (also reflected in the Inter-Parliamentary Union outcome document) and a follow-up request to UNICEF for support with drafting the Code legislation and capacity development of the National Assembly members on child nutrition security.

#### **OUTPUT 5** Effective & Efficient management of the Health and Nutrition programme

##### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF provided human resources support through this Output to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other results across the country programme of cooperation.

**OUTPUT 7** Strengthened organizational and systemic capacity in health sector to deliver immunization & other high-impact child survival interventions for hard-to-reach children and their families as part of integrated MNCH services.

##### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

In 2014, Lao PDR was validated as having eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus, an area of longstanding support from UNICEF.

As part of the measles elimination efforts, UNICEF in collaboration with WHO supported the Lao Government to implement a nationwide measles-rubella immunization campaign reaching an estimated 1.66 million children aged between nine months and 10 years old (99 per cent of target). Additionally, almost 690,000 children 6-59 month old received Vitamin A supplementation (94 per cent) and over 614,000 children 12-59 month old (95 per cent) benefitted from deworming.

Building on recommendations of the 2013 Financial Sustainability Assessment of immunization programme, UNICEF provided technical support to estimate medium-term budget needs (2014-2017) and map available external resources for vaccines, other essential child survival



commodities and operating costs for integrated health outreach. The resulting data, including financial gap analysis, informed the annual budget preparation and mobilisation of external resources to cover the immediate and medium-term gaps. Subsequently, the Government of Lao PDR largely met its commitment for 2014 by disbursing US\$639,512 for the procurement of vaccines through UNICEF Supply Division. Aiming to further strengthen vaccine supply and avoid any potential stock-outs due to delays in domestic budget disbursements, UNICEF and the MoH discussed the introduction in 2015 of the Vaccine Independence Initiative.

To inform the preparation of GAVI Health Sector Strengthening Proposal for 2016-2020, UNICEF supported the development of a bottleneck analysis of immunization in Lao PDR. UNICEF's technical advice was instrumental for the preparation of the Lao PDR Inactivated Polio Vaccine Introduction Plan and the related application for GAVI financial support.

In 2014, with GAVI finances, UNICEF contributed to strengthening of cold chain and vaccine management systems in Lao PDR. In collaboration with WHO, UNICEF supported the Effective Vaccine Management (EVM) Assessment, the drafting of the EVM Improvement Plan and the testing of cold chain and logistics management information system. The SMS-reporting and cloud-based management information system was tried in the national medical store, in all provincial vaccine stores and in 20 health facilities of three (out of 18 total) focus provinces. The initial implementation experience showed promising results in terms of triggering required management and technical action to reported cold chain and vaccine management issues.

In the area of newborn health, as a member of the Early and Essential Newborn Care (EENC) stakeholder group, UNICEF provided technical support for situation analysis, action planning, and the development of operational guidelines and periodic updates on the Lao Benchmarks for Scaling Up EENC.

**OUTPUT 8:** Strengthened individual, organizational and systemic capacity in UNICEF focus provinces and districts to deliver immunization and other high-impact child survival interventions for hard-to-reach children and their families as part of integrated MNCH services.

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Building on the findings of the bottleneck analysis for immunization, UNICEF adopted a more focused approach to capacity development in two UNICEF focus provinces – Luangnamtha and Phongsaly. In an effort to close the financing gap for MNCH service delivery in these areas, UNICEF ensured quarterly disbursement of funds for four rounds of integrated MNCH health outreach; the main delivery platform for preventative services, including immunization, antenatal and postnatal care, micronutrient supplementation, deworming, health promotion. In addition, UNICEF contributed to improved availability of quality immunization services by boosting the cold chain capacity of health facilities through the provision of 50 refrigerators and strengthening the availability of transportation for reaching remote areas through the donation of 10 motorcycles.

The management capacity of provincial and district health teams in Luangnamtha province was further consolidated through provision of technical and financial support to the quarterly management review meetings focused on systematic analysis of key MCH indicators and systemic bottlenecks.

In an effort to strengthen equity focused delivery of immunization and other essential MCH services, UNICEF in cooperation with WHO supported the MoH to develop and test new Micro-planning Guidelines. These Guidelines, built on the Reaching Every Community principles, were

first tested in UNICEF focus provinces. The initial implementation experience in all 39 health centres of Luangnamtha and 14 out of 29 health centres of Phongsaly demonstrated positive institutional changes. These included a greater commitment of subnational managers and health providers to reaching underserved villages, the systematic involvement of communities in planning service delivery sessions. The result was overall positive effects on immunization coverage, with an improved ranking of UNICEF-focus provinces by DPT3 coverage, declining drop-out rate and disparities between the best- and worst-performing district.

UNICEF support to 15 health staff from Luangnamtha province to attend a two-year direct entry community midwife training programme (2013-2014) contributed to increasing the proportion of health facilities with an accredited skilled birth attendant to 85 per cent at the end of 2014.

Beyond the UNICEF focus provinces, at least one provincial level health management staff in all the provinces and one district level health management staff in 14 districts from three provinces (Vientiane, Bolikhamxay, Xiangkhouang) improved their knowledge and skills on Effective Vaccine Management as a result of UNICEF-supported training and supervision.

Following the identification of a critical funding gap for delivery of essential MNCH services, including immunization, in four provinces - Saravane, Sekong, Attapeu and Champasack – UNICEF mobilised the needed financial support for health outreach operating costs.

**OUTPUT 9** Improved organizational and systemic capacity of the Government for multi-sectoral nutrition coordination, planning, monitoring and evaluation, including coordination with development partners such as UN, donors, civil society.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Since the establishment of the National Nutrition Committee in July 2013, UNICEF – largely building on the joint EU/UNICEF Maternal and Child Nutrition Security Initiative in Asia – has been providing technical and financial support to its secretariat with view of strengthening multisectoral approaches to nutrition. In 2014 UNICEF support contributed to:

- The development of conceptual and practical linkages between different coordination structures for nutrition at the national level and between the Government and development partners;
- Physical establishment of the NNC secretariat, clarification of its key functions and the development of the 2014 annual workplan;
- The development in collaboration with other development partners of multi-sectoral approaches to nutrition, including costing, mapping and testing of the convergence approach at subnational level, with emphasis on nutrition specific interventions;
- The design, in collaboration with Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Programme of the draft common results framework and the monitoring and evaluation framework for nutrition;
- The design of the methodology and data collection tools for subnational nutrition survey intended to provide comprehensive information on the maternal and child nutritional status, on access to various nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive interventions and to inform future impact evaluation of multi-sectoral approaches to nutrition in Lao PDR.

As a key promoter of the Scaling Up Nutrition movement at the country level, UNICEF supported the Government's SUN focal point with preparing updates for the periodic SUN conference calls, the preparation of the annual 2013-2014 Lao SUN Progress Review and the review of Lao specific data in the 2013 Global SUN Annual Report. These efforts contributed to

improved understanding and increased application of the SUN framework to Lao-specific policy and to programme discussions on nutrition.

UNICEF in partnership with the European Union, who are the SUN donor convenor in Lao PDR, set up a nutrition coordination mechanism for external development partners, involving the UN, donors and SUN civil society. This aims to improve information sharing, coordinate financial and technical support and promote better alignment of development assistance to priority nutrition areas.

The findings and recommendations of UNICEF-supported analyses in the area of nutrition have been utilized in various national and international forums including the 2014 Round Table Meetings at the provincial and national levels, the Regional Inter-parliamentary Union Session on Child Nutrition Security in Asia in Lao PDR, the Chief Executive Board of UN and WB Meeting in Washington DC. These helped bring a higher level of attention and support to scaling up nutrition specific interventions, such as micronutrient supplementation, infant and young child feeding, and hygiene promotion.

**OUTPUT 10** Strengthened individual, organizational and systemic capacity of the Ministry of Health to plan, deliver and monitor the implementation of nutrition specific interventions, such as Infant and Young Child Feeding and Micronutrients, in the most effective, efficient and equitable way.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

In 2014, the Lao health sector experienced interruptions in provision of some nutrition services due to stock-outs of essential commodities such as iron folic acid tablets and ready-to-use therapeutic foods. In an effort to strengthen national capacities to manage nutrition commodities, UNICEF worked with the Nutrition Centre to improve the quantification, costing, budgeting and distribution of micronutrients and deworming tablets.

Advocacy and resource mobilization meetings with the Government and donors resulted in closing of the financing gap for nutrition commodities from domestic budgets (allocated for the first time for this purpose), as well as allocation of USAID funding through UNICEF. UNICEF continues working with the MoH to complete financial sustainability plans for nutrition commodities.

To address the high levels of micronutrient deficiencies in young children, UNICEF supported the development of a multi-stakeholder partnership involving the Ministry of Health, Population Services International, the University of British Columbia and Mines and Minerals Group to develop sustainable ways to deliver home fortification with micronutrient powders for young children. Formative research undertaken within this partnership informed the development of operational delivery models through the public and private sectors, branding, MNP/ IYCF/WASH training package and job aids, along with monitoring and reporting tools for healthcare providers at facility level and for Lao Women's Union volunteers at the community level.

A logical model and framework, with a corresponding monitoring and evaluation plan, facilitated the capturing of learning and timely adjustments to the operational delivery model for MNPs. A risk assessment analysis undertaken at the start of the MNP operations pilot proved useful in timely identification of and dealing with the risks that materialized during the implementation phase. Progress and challenges of developing operational delivery models for home fortification in Lao PDR were documented and shared in various national and international forums such as

the SUN conference calls, the Global Micronutrient Forum in Addis Ababa in June and the Regional Home Fortification workshop in Hanoi in December.

In cooperation with WHO, ICDC/IBFAN and Save the Children, UNICEF supported the review of the Nutrition legal framework in Lao PDR and the monitoring of the violations of the International Code of Marketing of Breast milk Substitutes. The recommendations of the legal review and the Code implementation monitoring informed UNICEF's support to the Government of Lao PDR for the strengthening of the legal framework for the Code.

One of the immediate UNICEF priorities is to support the Government of Lao PDR to complete its strategic and operational planning for expanding Infant and Young Child Feeding promotion and counselling nationwide. IYCF implementation and practices in Lao PDR remain very poor, which is one of the key contributors to a slow pace of progress in the area of under-nutrition.

As a cluster lead for Nutrition, UNICEF coordinated the update of the related preparedness and response plan and convened Nutrition cluster meetings in the framework of the UN Interagency Contingency Plan.

**OUTCOME 4** By 2015, children in the Lao PDR are protected against abuse, exploitation, violence, neglect and discrimination through the development of a legal, regulatory and social welfare system.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF and the Government of Lao PDR, in close partnership with Save the Children, the Child Protection Working Group, and the Disability Sector Network, continued a strategic shift in 2014 towards a more comprehensive systems-based approach to child protection, focusing on integrating child protection into the broader child welfare and justice systems.

UNICEF's direct contribution was to advocate for and support new working mechanisms and partnerships, which emphasize a more coordinated sector-wide and systems-based approach to child protection. This included greater collaboration between the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the National University of Lao PDR to strengthen the social work profession in Lao PDR through an official three year partnership agreement. Actively pursuing new partnerships around child protection resulted in joint advocacy initiatives and increased funding opportunities for child protection, especially for violence against children.

In 2014, UNICEF actively co-chaired the Child Protection Cluster for Emergencies, alongside the Government's Department of Disaster Management and Climate Change and Save the Children. During this time, a terms of reference for the Protection Cluster was finalised, as well as a Protection Cluster Response Plan, which identifies preparedness and response activities, and additional personnel, material and financial requirements.

UNICEF also provided technical and financial support to the National Commission for Mothers and Children to affirm their role to lead and coordinate inter-ministerial, INGO and civil society engagement and participation to plan and report on the progress of the Government to meet its national and international commitments to children's rights.

In 2014, UNICEF focused on establishing a strong evidence-base through the collection of baseline data to inform the future direction and development of the child protection system in Lao PDR and to influence child protection policy. Key achievements with extensive technical support from UNICEF included: completion of an Assessment of Existing Mediation Practices

involving Children; completion of the first comprehensive Assessment of the Child and Family Welfare System and an Analysis of the Justice System as it Relates to Children; and data collection for a National Study on Violence against Children, demonstrating increased political commitment of the Government of Lao PDR to addressing violence against children.

UNICEF also advocated for, and significantly contributed to, critical policy and legislative reform processes, which have resulted in new policies and legislation to better protect children from violence abuse, neglect and exploitation. Key results in 2014 with UNICEF support include the development of a new Law on Juvenile Criminal Procedures, which was promulgated by the President of Lao PDR in April 2014; finalisation and approval of a new Adoption Decree regulating both domestic and inter-country adoptions; development of a draft Child Mediation Decree; development and approval of a National Plan of Action on Violence against Women and Children 2014-2020, and development of a new Law on Violence against Women and Children, which passed by the National Assembly on 23 December.

Key challenges continue to be the lack of a comprehensive national strategy and policy on child protection system development, inadequate coordination and monitoring among concerned ministries, limited budget allocation by the Government to child protection, the lack of reliable data to inform policy development and monitor progress, and slow policy and law development processes, all of which continue to hinder progress in child protection. This situation is further compounded by the limited dissemination and understanding of existing laws, standards and procedures for service providers, ill equipped technical and human resources to understand and address complex issues of child protection (especially a lack of social work professionals), few service providers equipped with the skills to provide relevant and effective services for children and families in need of support, and inadequate accountability structures and effective law enforcement. Children and families also often lack access to clear information on their legal entitlements and on available services and support, which often perpetuates ad hoc responses and the administration of traditional justice measures that are not in accordance with child rights principles and standards.

Underlying these factors are the sensitivities of acknowledging child vulnerability and risk, leading to continued silence on many child protection issues. Deep rooted factors such as gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic location and poverty further increase the vulnerability of boys and girls and limit their access to services.

Within this context, in 2015 UNICEF will continue to strengthen the child protection system in Lao PDR by supporting the Government to finalise key child protection laws and policies, test and document implementation of new laws and policies, such as piloting of legal and social assistance to children in the justice system, including offenders, victims, and witnesses. A focus will be on moving from research into action by ensuring continuity and follow up to key studies and assessments, expanding advocacy and communication activities to increase public awareness and strengthen political commitment on violence against children, and strengthening new partnerships in areas such as Civil Registration and Vital Statistics.

**OUTPUT 1** By 2015, a child sensitive and gender appropriate child justice system established in line with international standards better protecting children in conflict with the law, victims and witnesses of crime.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The Law on Juvenile Criminal Procedures was enacted by the President of Lao PDR on 28 April 2014. As a result of substantial technical support from UNICEF, the law largely complies with

international standards on justice for children, including child-friendly and gender-appropriate provisions on children in contact with the law (offenders, victims and witnesses) and the right to have a parent/guardian/social worker/psychologist/lawyer present during the legal process. UNICEF is providing international technical assistance to support the development of implementation guidelines for this new law.

With UNICEF support, an Analysis of the Justice System as it relates to Children in Lao PDR was completed, establishing for the first time a solid evidence-base for the development of a comprehensive child justice system in the country. This will be used to inform and shape new policies and laws for children in contact with the law and to develop appropriate community-based services. The analysis report was finalized following from stakeholders, and is now pending final approval by the Government.

Following the recommendations of the 2013 Assessment of Existing Mediation Practices involving Children (supported by UNICEF), the Ministry of Justice, with UNICEF support, has taken the lead in developing a new Child Mediation Decree, which will cover mediation of cases involving children by the Village Child Mediation Units, police and prosecutor. An inter-ministerial team was established to draft the new Decree and an international expert was recruited by UNICEF to support the process. A first draft of the Child Mediation Decree was discussed with the Government and UNICEF provided initial detailed comments. The Child Mediation Decree is expected to be finalized by June 2015.

Key constraints/bottlenecks remain the limited availability of community-based diversion options and services for children in contact with the law and the lack of professionals (police, lawyers, social workers, prosecutors, and judges) specifically trained to handle cases involving children. In 2015, the programme will focus on: strengthening the capacities of justice professionals to apply child-sensitive and gender appropriate investigation and court procedures, including a training needs assessment for justice sector officials; the development of a training strategy and training modules for the police academy and research and training institutes for prosecutors and judges; the conceptualization of a pilot community-based diversion programme for children in conflict with the law, and; piloting mobile legal and social defence teams for children in contact with the law.

**OUTPUT 2** By 2015, the most vulnerable and marginalized children and their families are better protected by a child and family welfare system.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The Adoption Decree was signed by the Prime Minister in June 2014. Due to intensive UNICEF support, the decree complies with substantive provisions of the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption. It is expected to enter into force in early 2015. A moratorium on inter-country adoptions from Lao PDR remains in force.

The Child and Family Welfare System Assessment is complete and pending Government approval. It establishes a solid evidence-base for developing a comprehensive child welfare system in Lao PDR and will inform new policies and laws on child welfare.

With extensive technical support from UNICEF and CDC, the Government initiated the first ever National Study on Violence against Children. Data collection is complete and preliminary findings are expected early 2015.

With UNICEF support, the National Plan of Action on Violence against Women and Children

was approved by the Government in March. UNICEF is providing technical assistance to draft a Law on Violence against Women and Children, which UNICEF successfully advocated to cover all forms of violence in all settings (it originally focused on domestic violence).

UNICEF's advocacy efforts led to increased political commitment on violence against children (VAC) with the Prime Minister delivering a national speech on preventing VAC on International Children's Day. Efforts also led to a joint #ENDviolence communication initiative with Government, UN agencies and civil society to raise awareness about VAC. These efforts were supported by the high-level visit of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children in October, Ms Marta Santos Pais, galvanizing further high level support, including the National Assembly, to prevent and respond to VAC.

UNICEF's advocacy efforts resulted in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the National University of Laos initiating steps to develop the social work profession in Lao PDR. Terms of reference to review opportunities and establish a conceptual framework have been drafted. Meanwhile, the para-social work training course was revised, with UNICEF support.

UNICEF established a new partnership with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Plan International on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics and a draft National Strategy and Plan was developed.

In 2015, the programme will focus on: finalizing/disseminating the VAC study; expanding advocacy and communication activities on VAC; disseminating the Child and Family Welfare System Assessment; developing a conceptual framework and strategy on child welfare, including family support and community-based services; and providing policy and technical guidance to establish the social work profession in Lao PDR.

### **OUTPUT 3** Effective and efficient management of the Child Protection Programme

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF provided human resources support through this Output to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other results across the country programme of cooperation.

**OUTCOME 5** By 2015, children's health and development will benefit from equitable and sustainable access to, and use of, safe water and basic sanitation, with particular emphasis on reaching rural remote areas

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

In 2014, 30,000 school children, including 16,500 girls, directly benefitted from the construction of WASH facilities in 221 primary schools. The facilities were designed considering the need of girls and boys with disabilities. Some 43,000 rural people have now access to improved source of water through the UNICEF-supported construction of 63 hand pump boreholes and 39 Gravity Fed Systems in 74 rural communities.

Some of the major policy development achievements in 2014 include supporting MoH, MoES, Ministry of Public Works and Transport and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to prepare for and develop the six key commitments (finance, policy and plans, visibility, coordination, capacity and services). These commitments were presented by the Minister of Health at the Sanitation and Water for All High Level Meeting in Washington D.C, April 2014.

One of the commitments presented by the Minister at the Sanitation and Water for All meeting was the development of a new WASH Policy. The MoH is taking the lead to develop the WASH



Policy and incorporating rural and urban WASH priorities. UNICEF is providing the lead technical support to the Government in this process. Consultation meetings have been organized and discussions are ongoing within the Technical Team to have the first draft of the policy and implementation strategy by September 2015. The Policy will help respond to one of the core challenges for the sector, which is that the responsibility for the WASH sector has historically been split across different line ministries; the MoH for rural WASH, Ministry of Public Works and Transport for urban water supply, Ministry of Education and Sports for school WASH, and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment for water resources and licensing. It is expected that the proposed policy will raise the profile and importance of WASH in the country and help to clarify accountabilities within the sector.

The preparations for the meeting also highlighted the need to improve cross sectoral collaboration and sharing of knowledge between the WASH, health and nutrition, and education sectors (Government agencies and supporting partners). Example initiatives to address this include; the inclusion of education representatives on to the WASH Technical Working Group, and the inclusion of relevant sector partners in an inter-agency technical team for the development of WASH sector policy.

UNICEF Lao PDR took the initiative to improve the WASH sector coordination by gaining commitment to conduct the first joint sector review which is planned in early 2015. This will provide a step towards greater alignment by sector partners to the National WASH sector goals. UNICEF also supported coordination by working with the MoH to finalise the terms of reference for the WASH Technical Working Group, which is chaired by the MoH and supported the Department of Hygiene and Health Promotion to collate the work plans of sector partners and use them to strengthen sector planning. To further enhance coordination with other partners that relate to the achievement of WASH sector goals, and to increase advocacy for sector improvements, UNICEF has also become a member of the Water Resources and Disaster Sub-Sector Group Working at Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

Open defecation in the rural communities in Lao PDR remains a challenge to achieve nutritional outcomes. The information provided by the 2014 study of sanitation marketing (supply chain) conducted jointly by UNICEF, the World Bank, Plan Laos and the NGO SNV is crucial to complement the demand of latrines.

The UNICEF strategic partnership with DFAT, World Food Programme (WFP), MoH and MoES to implement WASH in Schools (WinS) activities in educationally disadvantaged districts is progressing as planned. The project has four pillars: i) construction of 400 schools with nationally-accepted new design for school latrines (that are child-friendly, gender segregated with disability access, and incorporate hand-washing stations), ii) Water supply in school-hosting communities, iii) Hygiene Action Led by Pupils in Schools in 100 primary schools in Saravan Province, which is the province with the highest open defecation rates (77 per cent, LSIS 2011-2013) and; iv) evidence generation. A number of formative research studies are being implemented together with the UNICEF Education Programme and a longitudinal study is ongoing to measure the impact of WASH in Schools in Lao PDR on absenteeism rates.

The WASH in Schools programme in Lao PDR is unique in terms of the scale and the investment in the component in evidence generation. It is expected that the programme's experience should contribute to the evidence base for WASH in Schools in the region. In recognition of this, a WASH in Schools (WinS) International Learning Exchange Programme was held in November in Vientiane Capital with Government WASH partners from 14 countries and UNICEF WASH teams participating together. The exchange was organised by MoES, MoH

with support from UNICEF. It aimed to create a forum for sharing experiences and best practices between countries promoting WinS. The global exchange programme had a particular focus on evidence generation on WinS specifically on the promotion of mass hand washing in schools named as “3 Star Approach”.

UNICEF and WHO worked together to support the MoH host a workshop on Household Water Treatment and Safe Storage. This resulted in strengthening the linkages between HWTS and Water Safety Plans and to establish water quality monitoring systems in the country.

**OUTPUT 1** National and Subnational line ministries and departments have strengthened political commitment, accountability and capacity to develop and adopt evidence based equitable and gender-sensitive policies, budgeted plans for scaling up of WASH interventions to promote safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and good hygiene practices.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF provided technical support to MoH to draft sector commitments for the Sanitation and Water for All high level meeting in April 2014 in Washington, D.C. During this process the need for an overarching WASH policy to guide the sector was identified. This process is underway, with the MoH taking the lead for developing a WASH policy for the sector incorporating rural and urban WASH. UNICEF is providing the lead technical support to the MoH. Consultation meetings have been organized and discussions are ongoing within the Technical Team to have the first draft of policy and implementation strategy by September 2015. The policy responds to one of the core challenges for the sector, which is that the responsibility for the WASH sector has historically been split across different line ministries. It is expected that the proposed policy will raise the profile and importance of WASH in the country and help to clarify accountabilities within the sector.

The profile of the WASH sector was raised through the celebration of global events including World Water Day, the Global Hand washing Day and the World Toilet Day. These events created the platforms at political level to discuss and address the water and sanitation issue in the country.

The WASH in Schools International Learning Exchange (ILE) hosted jointly by MoH, MoES and UNICEF also created an international forum to promote the mass hand washing which is named “three star approach” and other child friendly WASH interventions in schools. Senior Government Officers from 14 countries, INGOS and UNICEF attended the exchange programme to share the experiences, lesson learnt and best practices on WinS. The country teams prepared their respective country (including Lao PDR) action plans as well as agreed on the take home messages. A “Raising Clean Hands” booklet adapted to the Lao context was launched during the exchange programme. UNICEF prepared the booklet to capture the successful programme experiences of WinS in the country and it can now be used by partners to promote hygiene behaviour in schools.

MoH/UNICEF/WHO jointly hosted a regional workshop in November in Vientiane. The workshop focused on techniques for reaching the most vulnerable to improve household water treatment and safe storage) to increase understanding of HWTS options, current practices, and effective approaches to monitoring and evaluation of correct and consistent use of HWTS. Partners had opportunity to share the experiences and lesson learnt. It has provided new dimension to link HWTS with Water Safety Plan in Lao PDR and other participating countries.

Lao Social Indicator Survey SIS data (2011-2012) indicates a high association between under-

nutrition and WASH outcomes. To promote better understanding of the linkages between nutrition and WASH, the UNICEF programme teams came together, with the regional Nutrition Advisor and WASH Advisor to develop a Theory of Change for WASH. This will help promote greater focus for the UNICEF WASH programme in defining its contribution to achieving nutritional outcomes under Lao Multi-Sectoral Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan (2014-2020). The next step is to undertake a similar exercise with sectoral partners.

The UNICEF WASH programme strengthened its partnerships in 2014; UNICEF worked together with the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Programme, Plan International Laos and SNV to jointly conduct a study on sanitation supply chains (sanitation marketing) which is crucial to complement the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS). In addition, UNICEF and WASH partners have developed an operational Programme Guideline on CLTS to standardize its implementation in Lao PDR.

In 2014, UNICEF promoted different technology options for water supply. Some hand pumps in schools were replaced by electric motor pumps where electricity is available. This reduces the burden of children and women carrying water from the borehole to the reservoir tank to supply water to the latrines.

**OUTPUT 2** WASH partners use strengthened coordination mechanisms to better plan, budget, implement and monitor activities related to Humanitarian Situation and DRR.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The UNICEF is the lead for WASH Cluster/Sector in Lao PDR. The WASH Contingency Plan was updated and aligned with the Government of Lao PDR's emergency preparedness and response plan. UNICEF supported the Government with the provision of WASH lifesaving items such as jerry cans, buckets (with attention to the appropriateness of the designs for children and women) soap, water purification sachets, submersible pumps, tarpaulin sheets and information, education and communications materials for pre-positioning at national and sub national level. Some of the WASH supplies were used to respond those affected by flooding in southern provinces.

As Cluster lead for WASH, UNICEF organised a mapping of the capacity of WASH cluster partners using a simple "3W" matrix who is doing what and where. This provided a clear agreement of the partners' accountabilities during an emergency and helped identify capacity gaps in the sector in responding to emergency situations.

In collaboration with Lao Red Cross, UNICEF strengthened the sub-national government and communities' capacity for disaster preparedness. The programme worked with 67 units of the Village Disaster Preparedness Unit, established in 67 villages in eight districts in two provinces of Borikmaxay and Khammouane. Funds were utilized to purchase and preposition emergency supplies in five provinces of Luangprabang, Oudomxay, Vientiane province, Khammouane and Savannakhet and training was provided. UNICEF was successful in promoting the inclusion of women in the Village Disaster Preparedness Units. Nearly 50,000 people in two provinces benefited from the initiatives.

To contribute to the goal of ensuring that minimum standards are achieved by WASH sector partners in responding to a humanitarian situation, UNICEF also provided support to MoH to translate the WASH Chapter of the Sphere Handbook into Lao language.

**OUTPUT 5** Effective and efficient management of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programme

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF provided human resources support through this Output to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other results across the country programme of cooperation.

**OUTPUT 6** Focus Provinces/ Districts have increased capacity and deliver child friendly, gender-sensitive WASH services in schools and communities including Primary Health Institutions.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

In 2014, UNICEF supported the construction of 221 school latrines and 278 water sources in 221 primary schools, benefitting more than 30,000 school children. All facilities built with UNICEF support are gender sensitive and inclusive of all children, meaning that girls and boys with disabilities have access to secure and adequate WASH facilities within the school compound.

The sustainability of WASH facilities is a recurring challenge for many sector partners and was discussed in sector meetings with partners working in rural communities. In order to contribute to strengthening the Government's ability to support operation and maintenance of the facilities, an Operation and Maintenance manual was developed for local government staff and communities to use. This was anchored in the post-construction activities in order to build local capacity to operate and maintain their systems.

The hygiene component, Hygiene Action led by Pupils in Schools of the WASH in Schools programme started in 2014. This component aims to introduce basic hygiene in 100 primary schools in Saravan Province and introduces four main hygiene activities at 10 pilot schools in four districts in Saravane province. The manual for HAPiS was developed together with MoES and MOH partners, and distributed to implementing partners at provincial, district and school level to sustain the hygiene behaviour among the children in schools.

With UNICEF direct support to the MoH, 43,000 rural people accessed improved source of water through the construction of 63 boreholes and 39 gravity fed systems) in 74 selected communities, 35 of which are in school hosting communities. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Committees were formed and were oriented during preconstruction phase using the national community dialogues process. In addition, 200 Community Dialogue Kits were printed and distributed to support the community engagement in all five target provinces.

Approximately 43, 000 people received basic hygiene education information. The communities, through WASH committees, provided voluntary labour to install the gravity fed systems. UNICEF provided pipes, cement, reinforced bars etc. Provincial and District Nam Saat staff provided technical expertise to install the facilities, which contributed to building ownership for the programme.

Selected villages in two districts of Saravan have been 'triggered' to eliminate open defecation. Seventeen core trainers on Community Led Total Sanitation from five provinces were trained. A kick-off workshop with provincial Nam Saat and Plan International to introduce the sanitation interventions in communities was organized in Saravan. Training on low cost latrine options was conducted and reinforced by follow up training of 27 provincial and district trainers and facilitators.

**OUTCOME 6** By 2015, children, young people and women have their rights fulfilled through a strengthened knowledge, policy, legislative and budgetary environment.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The main achievement in 2014 was the support to the Government to enhance the capacity of core technical staff in the Lao Statistics Bureau and Provincial Statistics Offices in three targeted provinces (Luangnamtha, Vientiane Capital, and Saravan). As a result of these capacity building workshops the LaoInfo - Lao Social Indicator Survey database was revised by the Government in order to meet the required standard. The LaoInfo v.6.0 is now available online on [www.devinform.org/lis](http://www.devinform.org/lis) or <http://www.laoinfo.gov.la/index.php/en> as a user-friendly common indicator database system which provides a key statistical tool for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals and a data source for the National Socio Economic Development Plan and for other national development frameworks in the Lao PDR.

Another key achievement was the completion of the village listing, in coordination with the Lao Statistics Bureau. This directly contributed to the preparation for the Population Census in Lao PDR due to take place in 2015. This will provide much needed data for the country and enable more analysis of service coverage and impact on key populations to be conducted.

In 2014, the strategic partnership was strengthened with the National Economic Research Institute (NERI), which builds on its mandate as a think tank in the Government to provide macro-level policy advice on long-term development goals of graduation from Least Developed Country status, development of the National Development Strategy 2016-25 and Vision 2030. As a result, the key strategic analyses, studies and research in raising the profile of children's issues have been initiated such as the National - Multiple Overlapping Analysis, using Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey data. Another combined study is the Survival Rate Study and Out-of School Children initiative. These studies are progressing towards finalization and will be used for advocacy and policy dialogue. The concept note for the National Social Economic Research Framework is under review by NERI and UNICEF. The National Social Economic Research Framework will support the 8th NSEDP and the Strategy 2025.

In addition, decision-makers, especially National Assembly Members and provincial directors of key line departments were made aware through dissemination events, of the emerging issues and current situation of children and women. The off-track MDG indicators have been highlighted especially the high stunting prevalence of children under-five. Furthermore, NERI has presented this issue during the Regional Parliamentary Seminar on Promoting Child Nutrition in East and South Asia that was hosted by Lao's National Assembly in November 2014.

Towards achieving the planned results, UNICEF faced some challenges, including:

- The limited sharing of raw data by the Law Statistic Bureau. As per the current Statistics Law, only 60 per cent of complete data can be shared with partners, which hinders the analysis and use of data, as was the case with the Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis;
- The workload of the Lao Statistics Bureau to handle multiple demands from development partners at the same time, especially when the population census is the priority for the Government, led to the postponement of some of the planned surveys.

In 2015-16, the focus will be on completing those activities initiated in 2014 with the National Economic Research Institute and the Law Statistic Bureau. UNICEF will also explore opportunities for more collaboration with the National Assembly, the Ministry of Home Affairs

and the Ministry of Finance. Through these partnerships, UNICEF will ensure the use of disaggregated data for key research that informs inclusive social and economic development strategies benefitting children. The findings of major planned studies will be crucial in supporting the development of 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan and development of the new UNICEF Country Programme 2017-2021.

## **OUTPUT 2** Programme Support - social policy programme

### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF provided human resources support through this Output to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other results across the country programme of cooperation.

**OUTPUT 3** By 2015, disaggregated data from surveys are available and accessible for evidence-based sub-national planning.

### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

In order to build the capacity of LaoInfo for disaggregated data, a key initiative was taken in order to improve the accessibility of available data in particular Lao Social Indicator Survey. The technical knowledge and understanding of core staff (15 people from Social Statistics Division and IT, Lao Statistics Bureau) on database management, and standardization was enhanced through a database management workshop conducted by UNICEF in June 2014. In addition, the initial LaoInfo provincial assessment was carried out before the provincial training within three target provinces – Luangnamtha, Vientiane Capital, and Saravan. The aim was to assess the local capacity at sub national level for LaoInfo and subsequently support the needs for provincial database development and data collection system. Furthermore, the technical knowledge and understanding of provincial core staff from the same three provinces plus Attapeu, in total 16 people, on database development, and management was enhanced through a database management workshop in September 2014. Key selected indicators to use for monitoring of the Provincial Social Economic Development Plan were identified and discussed for further development of the provincial database, which is being used for planning and monitoring by decision makers.

The Lao Early Warning System (Lao EWS) was established to provide on-going data collection and help decision-making in times of crisis. This was the first early warning system to be implemented in Lao PDR for real-time monitoring of child wellbeing, as well as processes that impact on child wellbeing (e.g. service delivery). During the first half of 2014, after the pilot phase in Saravan province, a workshop was organized to finalize the 'EWS Manual' in Lao language. Based on positive learning and experience, the EWS tool was adopted by the MoHA (under project support of UNDP) to use for the District Service Delivery Monitoring System.

The preparation to conduct the population and housing census 2015 is ongoing. UNICEF Lao PDR contributed funds for the village listing exercise in five targeted provinces (Luangnamtha, Oudomxay, Saravan, Sekong and Attapeu), which is a pre-requisite for the census.

**OUTPUT 4** Disaggregated data from key selected equity-focused research and studies are available to inform advocacy, social inclusive, and economic development strategy that benefit children and women.

### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Strategic analyses, studies, and research aiming at raising the profile of children's issues have been initiated including the National - Multiple Overlapping Analysis using Lao Expenditure and

Consumption Survey 5 data, and the Survival Rate Study combined with Out-of School Children Initiative.

The capacity of NERI staff (10 people) on social research methodologies has benefited from on-the-job training with the on-going research and studies as well as STATA software training. The analytical framework and approach was developed by the Economic Policy Research Institute to enhance NERI's research capacity to focus on identifying key indicators and dimensions for the deprivation analysis.

With support from UNICEF Lao PDR, NERI organized dissemination workshops and seminars at a high-level, including with the National Assembly Members and provincial level decision makers. These dissemination workshops were attended by about 100 key decision and policy makers. The purpose of the workshops was to create awareness on the status of children and women and socio economic development in Lao PDR.

The close collaboration between NERI and the Lao Statistics Bureau in using the data was strengthened through the planned research and studies for generating evidence. One of the main challenges was accessing the data, as due to the new law on data, the Lao Statistics Bureau can share only 60 per cent of data, which constrains the possible disparity analysis at provincial level. However, as the results of series of advocacy meetings and efforts, UNICEF was able to access the Lao expenditure and consumption survey raw data - (60 per cent of the raw data has been granted for the National Multiple Overlapping Deprivations Analysis. Further negotiation is required in 2015 to access 100 per cent of the data for better deprivation analyses.

The initial draft of the National Social Economic Research Framework has been initiated by NERI. Due to the time constraints, the planned cost benefit analysis on nutrition interventions was postponed to 2015.

**OUTCOME 7** By 2015, strengthened subnational capacity for evidence-based and integrated planning, budgeting and monitoring to enhance delivery of social services.

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

During 2014, decentralization has played an important central role in public sector reform, as the Government's Three Builds (Sam Sang) Directive of 2012 defines specific roles of decentralization. This directive spells out how provinces are to be built up as strategy-making units, how districts are to be strengthened in all regards, and how villages are to become development units. Fifty-one pilot districts and 105 villages were piloting the Three Builds Directive in 2014. Ideally, district government have the authority and resources to implement policies and to take full ownership of local development and public service delivery. In practice, however, district capacities in planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring need to be strengthened, so that they are able to fulfil their roles of reaching the most vulnerable children and women with the required interventions.

UNICEF continued to document the experience of the health and education sectors in supporting decentralized planning and budgeting processes and how they link to local government processes. Key bottlenecks persist including the lack of capacity for basic planning, particularly at district level, the lack of clarity related to budget envelopes, and limited coordination mechanisms.

In Luangnamtha province, UNICEF was the designated lead agency to support provincial and district Government planning processes for Maternal and Neonatal Child Health as part of the



five-year MNCH United Nations Joint Programme involving WFP, WHO, and UNFPA. The aim was to link these existing MNCH initiatives to the decentralization pilot engaging the district governor's office and to learn more about functional accountabilities. However, the support to Health sector planning proved challenging due to changes in the responsibilities for this function in the MoH and the number of other development partners funding different approaches to planning. The MoH is developing a national framework for health sector planning and this will provide new opportunities for UNICEF to strengthen institutional planning capacity based on its considerable implementation experience especially with micro planning for immunization and other outreach activities.

UNICEF supported a number of encouraging initiatives to address capacity development in decentralized planning in education. In education, UNICEF has developed an innovative model for building capacity for district planning and budgeting and bringing together facilitation skills with technical education administrative and management skills in four districts in four provinces. UNICEF was able to link these capacity development efforts to the Education Sector Development Plan Mid Term Review. The education district planning and budgeting pilot will contribute to building knowledge in this area to further learn and these experiences are being documented and will be shared with sector partners.

**OUTPUT 1** By 2013, children, young people and women, especially those most vulnerable, have their rights fulfilled through strengthened sub- national capacity to use data and existing planning mechanisms as well as discretionary budget to deliver social services to the remote areas.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

There have been several challenges towards achievement of the result in terms of allocation of budget and operationalization of process for broader engagement in decentralization. Internally within UNICEF, the social policy programme continue to work with the education and health programme teams to strengthen the documentation of the sub-national planning and budgeting process at district level and link these to the overall national discussions on the Government's Three Builds' pilot.

**OUTCOME 8** Effective and efficient programme performance

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

In 2014 the UN supported the Government of Lao PDR in both the National and Provincial Round Table Process. Together with sector partners, UNICEF contributed to the technical briefings, presentations, field visits. The Round Table discussions focused on the process of the 7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP, the development of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP, the macro economic situation, governance and the off track MDGs. These forums provided a constructive platform for strengthening partnerships aligned around Government priorities.

In addition to participating in the Sectoral and Technical Working Groups for Education, Health, Nutrition and WASH, UNICEF also participated in the Macroeconomic working Group and the Governance Sector Group. This helps to strengthen the linkages between the sectoral ministries and broader socio economic development discussions. Discussions were dominated by the increased fiscal deficit, as a result of high capital investment, increases in public sector wages and benefits, and a decline in grants and mining revenues. Discussions in these Government – development partner forums highlighted the need for Government to minimize the impact of the fiscal situation on the delivery of core services for women and children. Despite limited resources, the Government continued to allocated increased national budgets for the national

immunization programme and nutrition commodities. There is continued Government commitment to School Based Management and School Block Grants.

In 2014, the UN agreed to extend the UNDAF programme cycle from 2012-2015 to 2012- 2016 to bring it in line with the Government's Planning Cycle and the Eight National Socio Economic Development Plan 2012-2016. UNICEF submitted a request to extend its Country Programme to align with the Government of Lao PDR and the UNDAF planning cycles.

## **OUTPUT 1** Strengthen Programme Coordination

### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

To respond to UNICEF's new Strategic Plan 2014-2017, the new Gender Action Plan 2014-2017 and Global Communications and Public Advocacy Strategy 2014-2017, the office revised its planning and reporting inputs to align with new global indicators.

There was a focus on promoting more risk informed programming processes by strengthening the programme management capacity for more risk informed complex and innovative programmes and research that contribute to the Government of Lao DPR priorities.

The cross sectoral linkages between programme outputs was strengthened developing four inter sectoral Theory of Change maps and narratives that focus on Government of Lao PDR priorities: Wash in Schools, Early Childhood Education, Violence and an initial mapping of the linkages for Nutrition and WASH.

## **OUTPUT 2** Media and External Relations.

### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

In 2014, a variety of high-profile events were carried out with the backing of strategic planning and communication-supported messaging materials. Results were demonstrated by UNICEF messages and stakeholder voices emerging at the forefront of media coverage and high-level Government and partner commitments, policies and action.

Under-nutrition was highlighted in a series of events. These included: high-level roundtable Government and partner meetings; an International Parliamentary Union session held in Vientiane under the theme of 'Malnutrition in Asia', and; a series of strategic meetings with MPs and government officials, focused on advocating for strengthened policy and implementation on the Code of Marketing on Breast milk Substitutes.

UNICEF's advocacy on immunization successfully protected and increased Government's own funding and political commitments, especially notable in a current highly-restricted and competitive fiscal space.

The issue of violence against children gained unprecedented media coverage as well as in discussion and actions by Government. UNICEF played a key role in this process by hosting a visit by Ms Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children, to members of Lao PDR's parliament and high-level ministers. UNICEF also successfully advocated for the issue to be in the forefront of the President's speech delivered on International Children's Day.

With UNICEF's support, the National Commission for Mothers and Children marked the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by organizing an event attended by

high-ranking officials to remark on achievements made and outstanding issues and barriers that still impede the realisation of children's rights.

### **External Relations**

Digital engagement was widely intensified, raising Facebook "likes" to over 6,700, adding an average of 1000 blog visitors each month, tripling twitter followers, as well as increasing the use of YouTube and Flickr channels. The website was launched in May.

Several donor visits took place in 2014, notably from the Japanese, New Zealand, UK, Hong Kong, US and Korean Committees for UNICEF. A launch ceremony in cooperation with mining group MMG and UNICEF Australia was also supported in Savannakhet resulting in national and international media coverage.

### **OUTPUT 3** Effective and Efficient management of the Programme Coordination Unit.

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF provided human resources support through this Output to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other results across the country programme of cooperation.

### **OUTPUT 4** Governance and Systems

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The office worked on all audit recommendations which are now all closed, and put in place a close follow-up system for sustainability of the closed recommendations. Twelve partners were micro-assessed and assurance plan elaborated, indicating the risk level of each partners and what measures to take with each partners to minimize the risk when transferring funds and which type of payment and/or reimbursement to apply. Nine additional partners receiving US\$100,000 or more are to be assessed jointly with UNDP and UNFPA by early January 2015.

With the support of the HACT Task Force, the office undertook regular spot checks for partners. The key programme and management results take into account actions to address the areas that were identified as high risk in the office Risk Assessment exercise, which correspond to the areas covered by the internal audit report. The Business Continuity Plan, updated in the beginning of the year, will be updated again to take in account new systems (use of cloud, outlook). With new systems (cloud, outlook), the office is updating progressively the system, as required by the organization.

### **OUTPUT 5** Financial Resources and Stewardship

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF Lao PDR has continued to work on improving its cash transfer processes, after starting the micro-assessment of some partners and noticing the level of risks, the mitigation plan is in place. The HACT activities were implemented as per plan (micro-assessments, scheduled audit, spot checks, monitoring field visits). The UN HACT Task Force with UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP planned joint micro-assessments for 29 different partners, nine of them UNICEF partners. In addition, the office key performance indicators were monitored, reviewed and followed up regularly.

### **OUTPUT 6** Staff Costs

### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The office continued to institute a successful programme of Friday Learning Sessions, which are One-Hour classes designed to provide key hands-on skills with focus on improvement of staff performance. The office will continue to support improved setting of individual work and development objectives, building on the trainings and materials provided. The office ran a Competency Based Interview training, with the participation of 18 staff. The Ethics training for all staff was postponed to 2015. An office retreat was organized in September 2014 with an external facilitator and with the participation of all staff.

The Performance Appraisal system functioned well with good compliance on completion by the deadlines in 2014: 100 per cent completion for the Performance Planning and mid-term review.

The Joint Consultative Committee had four meetings between the staff association and management in 2014.

## **Document Centre**

### **Other Publication**

| <b>Title</b>  |
|---|
| Child Rights Pamphlet   |
| History of International Children's Day - pamphlet                  |
| Law book on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children  |
| Raising Clean Hands in Lao PDR                                      |
| Ministry of Education and Sports 2013/14 Annual Report              |
| CRC@25 Advocacy & Celebration Package                               |
| Child-Friendly booklet on the Convention of the Rights of the Child |
| Violence Against Children in Lao PDR- Factsheet                     |