

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Executive Summary

2015 marked the celebration of Lao PDR's 40th anniversary with several of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) either achieved or on track such as halving the poverty rate; education; health; and water and sanitation. However, a few MDG targets trailed behind: particularly under-nutrition and stunting among children under five. Lao PDR developed and finalised its 8th National Social Economic Development Plan (8th NSEDP) in 2015. UNICEF Lao PDR contributed significantly to the 8th NSEDP process resulting in children's issues being highly visible.

UNICEF Lao PDR provided strong technical support to the development of UN Partnership Framework (2017 – 2021) while carrying out its own process of developing the new Country Programme Document (CPD). This included a Strategic Moment of Reflection Meeting in October 2015, consultations with the Government and key stakeholders, and a Strategy Meeting hosted by the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) in November 2015 leading towards the development of the strategy notes and the CPD to be submitted in early 2016.

Key achievements in 2015 included:

- The first high level advocacy meeting between the National Assembly (NA) and UNICEF took place in 2015 where UNICEF provided clear advocacy messages on children's issues and offered a forum for exchange of views on realisation of the rights of the child. As a result, the National Assembly and UNICEF agreed to regularise this forum on an annual basis and its members participated in joint field visits to monitor the progress and challenges of programme implementation for children.
- The first ever National Nutrition Forum supported by UNICEF and European Union (EU), and chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister took place in 2015 where all key stakeholders – central Government ministries, all provincial governments, development partners, civil society organisations (CSOs) and the private sector - committed to reducing stunting and other forms of under-nutrition through multi-sectoral interventions. This is the result of sustained advocacy to position stunting high on the agenda of the Government, as well as Development Partners.
- Public financing for procurement of vaccines increased to around US\$1 million in 2015, and for the first time public funds (US\$240,000) were invested in nutrition commodities as a result of continuous advocacy by UNICEF.
- UNICEF established new partnerships for children in 2015 with the Lao Front for National Construction (LFNC), responsible for working with 49 ethnic groups, and the Lao Women's Union (LWU) to focus on equity and gender issues among ethnic groups and those in the most remote communities. This resulted in increased access to children and parents of ethnic groups and those in the remote communities during polio campaigns.

Despite achieving some MDG targets, significant disparities in social indicators for children remain along the wealth quintiles, geographical areas, ethnic groups and mother's education level. Some other challenges included:

- Low coverage of integrated outreach services for social development sector, due to limited implementation capacity at sub-national level;
- Lack of community awareness and demand for services compounded by the weak community empowerment and ownership.

Key lessons learned included:

- Due to Lao PDR's efforts to graduate from the Least Developing Country status, many development partners moved to upstream support while essential services still do not reach children, as demonstrated by the outbreaks of diphtheria and polio during the second half of 2015.
- Whilst Official Development Assistance (ODA) for Lao PDR is not decreasing, it has been channelled through various mechanisms which resulted in a very limited pool of resources for fund-raising.

The most recent polio outbreak of circulating Vaccine Derived Polio Virus (cVDPD) in October raised national as well as international concerns. UNICEF Lao PDR immediately deployed staff, reallocated budget and requested additional technical and financial support from the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, UNICEF Headquarters (HQ) and the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO). UNICEF and the World Health Organisation (WHO) contributed to the design and implementation of the National Polio Outbreak Response Plan covering from October 2015 to March 2016. In addition to technical support, UNICEF Lao PDR received financial contribution of more than US\$ 700,000 from UNICEF HQ and US\$ 95,000 from UNICEF EAPRO in 2015.

Humanitarian Assistance

UNICEF Lao PDR continued to lead Nutrition and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) clusters and co-lead in Education and Protection. Lao PDR experienced three humanitarian situations in 2015: diphtheria outbreak in July, floods in August, and outbreak of circulating vaccine derived polio virus (cVDPV) in October.

During the flood emergency response, UNICEF led the rapid assessment in eight most affected villages of Borikhamxay Province. The rapid assessment team consisted of staff from the central, provincial and district levels of the Ministry of Health (MoH), UNICEF, Oxfam, and the World Vision. With UNICEF support, around 5,700 people including 2,700 children benefitted from access to safe water through disinfection of 95 dug wells in four districts of the affected province. The Government and UNICEF also supported 8,400 people, including 4,000 children, with life saving WASH items in Borikhamxay and Khamouane provinces. UNICEF also supported the translation of SPHERE Handbook into Lao language to enhance partners' capacity to follow the standards set in responding to humanitarian situations. Additionally, WASH equipment and supplies were prepositioned in four provinces (centrally at the National Centre for Environmental Sanitation and Water Supply (Nam Saat), MoH of Vientiane capital; Luangprabang; Savannakhet; and Champasak) to enhance faster response in future humanitarian situations.

UNICEF provided financial and technical support to the MoH which supported the control of diphtheria outbreak within three months of its onset. There were 414 suspected cases identified in five provinces (Vientiane, Khoummaune, Savannakhet, Vientiane capital, and Huaphan) and five deaths reported. The majority of the cases were from the Hmong ethnic group who had low immunisation coverage. The spread was contained in September, due to concerted efforts of the MoH, with support from UNICEF and WHO through supplementary immunisation activities

(SIAs) in those affected provinces. UNICEF technical staff accompanied the MoH monitoring teams to the affected villages, district and provincial hospitals. UNICEF delivered 70,000 doses of diphtheria and tetanus vaccines for the outbreak response, and procured 100 vials of diphtheria anti-toxin for treatment of diphtheria cases. UNICEF seized the opportunity to advocate for strengthening timeliness, reach and quality of integrated health outreach services – the main delivery channel for immunisation in Lao PDR during the organised national and subnational level meetings.

On 6 October 2015, the National Institute of Infectious Diseases from Japan confirmed the first case of cVDPV in an 8-year old boy from Bolikhamxay Province, who had died on 11 September 2015 with symptoms of acute flaccid paralysis. As of 18 December 2015, five confirmed cVDPV cases were reported. To support the polio outbreak response, UNICEF Lao PDR deployed staff, reallocated available budget and requested additional technical and financial support from the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, UNICEF HQ and RO. UNICEF Lao PDR team contributed to advocacy, communication and preparatory work for Polio SIAs. UNICEF staff participated in daily emergency coordination meetings organised by the MoH and contributed to design and implementation of the National Polio Outbreak Response Plan covering from October 2015 to March 2016 with planned six rounds of Polio SIAs.

UNICEF facilitated the procurement of polio vaccines and finger markers for SIAs. UNICEF also took the lead in development and implementation of the Communication and Social Mobilisation Plan for polio outbreak response. UNICEF HQs and EAPRO colleagues were instrumental in providing technical support through weekly conference calls, deployment of a Communication for Development (C4D) Specialist from UNICEF HQs (Team A), a C4D consultant (Team B), supporting external monitoring of the 2nd and 3rd round of SIAs in three provinces (supported by the immunisation specialists from EAPRO, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, and Vietnam Offices), and financial contribution of more than US\$700,000 from UNICEF HQ and US\$95,000 from EAPRO.

As a significant proportion of the cases in both outbreaks were from the ethnic groups who are difficult to reach with routine immunisation services, UNICEF Lao PDR focused on those in the most remote areas and underserved populations with communication and social mobilisation activities through mass media and interpersonal communication. UNICEF carried out media briefings for social mobilisation, and worked with mass organisations such as LFNC to reach the ethnic communities with key messages.

To prevent future outbreaks, a major emphasis of the UNICEF programme will focus on supporting the MoH to strengthen its routine immunisation activities. In particular, Lao PDR will promote integrated delivery of services during outreach activities, including immunisation in the most remote areas and currently underserved populations. UNICEF will support the implementation of the communication strategy, strengthening supply and logistics management, and cold chain improvement.

Summary Notes and Acronyms

AEC – ASEAN Economic Community
ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AWP - Annual Work Plan
C4D - Communication for Development
CATS – Community Approach to Total Sanitation
CPD - Country Programme Document

CLTS – Community Led Total Sanitation
 CMT - Country Management Team
 CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child
 cVDPV – Circulating Vaccine Derived Polio Virus
 DCT – Direct Cash Transfer
 DESB - District Education and Sports Bureau
 DHSS - District Health System Strengthening
 DIC – Department of International Cooperation
 DPPE - Department of Pre- and Primary Education
 EAPRO – UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office
 ECD - Early Childhood Development
 ECE - Early Childhood Education
 EMIS - Education Management Information System
 EPI – Expanded Programme of Immunisation
 EQS - Education Quality Standards
 EU - European Union
 GAVI - Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation
 GFS – Gravity Fed System
 GPE - Global Partnership for Education
 HACT - Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers
 HQ – UNICEF Headquarters
 ICT – Information and Communication Technology
 IIEP - International Institute for Education Planning (of UNESCO)
 IFEAD – Institute for Educational Administration Development
 IMEP - Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
 IP – Internet Protocol
 IYCF - Infant & Young Child Feeding
 Lao PDR - The Lao People’s Democratic Republic
 LFNC – Lao Front for National Construction
 LTA - Long Term Agreement
 LWU – Lao Women Union
 MCH - Maternal & Child Health
 MDG – Millennium Development Goals
 MoES – Ministry of Education and Sports
 MMG - Minerals and Metals Group
 MNCH – Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
 MNPs - Micronutrient powders
 MODA - Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis
 MoES - Ministry of Education and Sport
 MoH – Ministry of Health
 MP – Member of Parliament
 MPI - Ministry of Planning and Investment
 NA – National Assembly
 Nam Saat - National Centre for Environmental Sanitation and Water Supply, Ministry of Health
 NCMC - National Commission for Women and Children
 NERI – National Economic Research Institute
 NNC - National Nutrition Committee
 NSEDP – National Social Economic Development Plan
 ODF - Open defecation free
 PABX - Private Automated Branch Exchange
 RAMP - Rolling Annual Management Plan

SIA – Supplementary Immunisation Activities
WASH – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB – World Bank
WinS – WASH in Schools
WHO – World Health Organisation
UK - United Kingdom
UN - United Nations
UNDAF - United Nations Development Assistance framework
UNDSS – United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund
UNJP - United Nations Joint Programme
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
VAC – Violence against Children
WFP - World Food Programme
WSP – World Bank’s Water and Sanitation Programme

Capacity Development

UNICEF Lao PDR provided technical and financial support to the Provincial Health Department to implement community approach to total sanitation (CATS) interventions in Saravane Province. The staff from Provincial Health Department, LWU, and other partners were trained on CATS interventions in two target districts using the district-wide approach to eliminate open defecation and promote hygiene. The programme also supported capacity building of Nam Saat to deliver CATS approach in Borikhamxay Province. With UNICEF support, Nam Saat expanded the approach to priority provinces of National Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan.

The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), UNICEF and the UNESCO/International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) jointly supported the capacity building of central and provincial staff in education planning and management as part of the Institute for Educational Administration Development (IFEAD) regional initiative. In 2015, UNICEF continued to support primary school management to achieve national Education Quality Standards (EQS) through a package of support to four educationally disadvantaged districts in four provinces. This package included strengthening the capacity of district education staff and school directors in education planning and management, provision of district and school block grants, and technical support to district early childhood and primary education officers.

UNICEF Lao PDR strengthened the capacity of district and health facility management teams for evidence-based planning, implementation and monitoring of inputs and outputs on maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) service delivery. Specific activities included: annual update and support for implementation of micro plans by all 39 health centres in Luangnamtha and 14 out of 29 health centres in Phongsaly (78 per cent of the total health facilities in two UNICEF focus provinces); provision of technical and financial support to quarterly monitoring and supervision meetings, management reviews on MNCH service delivery indicators and systemic bottlenecks, and; introduction of District Health System Strengthening.

Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

To strengthen the evidence base around childhood deprivations, in 2015, UNICEF supported the National Economic Research Institute (NERI) to finalise and disseminate the National Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis, using the Laos Social Indicator Survey. The analysis also contributed to the process of developing the 8th NSEDP, helping to position children at the centre of the national development plan.

SaravaneInfo, the sub-national database, was developed in 2015 to strengthen the capacity of the statistics staff through enhancement of database management, and the development of visualisation tool for raising awareness, planning and monitoring of the National and Provincial Social Economic Development Plans. The SaravaneInfo is now ready for use at local level for planning, monitoring and informed decision making.

The finalisation of a study on Violence against Children (VAC) was linked with the campaign “ending violence against children” launched in 2015 to raise awareness among high level policy decision makers on issues related to VAC in Lao PDR. The findings of the VAC study will be disseminated in 2016 to generate policy dialogue on multi-sectoral efforts in prevention and mitigation of its impact among children.

In order to scale-up the 22 priority nutrition interventions, UNICEF supported the mapping of stakeholders and their interventions including available resources and funding gap. The findings were presented at the National Nutrition Forum. The Food and Nutrition Security Survey was also conducted in five provinces in 2015. The data showed between seven and 13 percentage point reduction in child stunting between 2011 and 2015 in four out of the five surveyed provinces. The findings will provide inputs into the development of Multi-sectoral Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan as well as advocacy for reduction of stunting in Lao PDR.

Partnerships

A strong partnership for MNCH established through the United Nations Joint Programme (UNJP) with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), WHO and the World Food Programme (WFP) to address high levels of maternal and child mortality and under-nutrition in Lao PDR. This programme, funded by the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, supported the operationalisation of the National Strategy and Planning Framework for Integrated Maternal Newborn and Child Health 2009 - 2015 in four target provinces. Based on the recommendations from the mid-term review of this current UNJP, UNICEF will play the role of convening agency as well as administrative agent, to support the effective implementation from 2016 onwards.

UNICEF Lao PDR signed an agreement with the LFNC that facilitated access to remote, hard-to-reach communities with key messages on nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, pre-school learning, child protection and specifically on immunisation related to the polio outbreak among Hmong community. The first year of this partnership saw the production of information materials, issue briefs and TV spots for social mobilisation. UNICEF conducted communication training for LFNC members in Bourikhamxay Province, a critical province of the polio outbreak, before the 3rd round polio immunisation campaign. UNICEF also established a formal partnership with LWU to reach its 800,000 members with key messages for mothers and children.

UNICEF received funding through the partnership with the private sector, Minerals and Metals Group (MMG) Limited, operating the Sepon Mine in Savannakhet province - to improve the nutritional status of children in Laos. Now entering the phase two of the 1,000 day project, the partnership resulted in better coverage and quality of infant and young child feeding practices among caregivers of 6-23 month old children in target areas.

External Communication and Public Advocacy

In 2015, UNICEF Lao PDR strategically positioned children’s issues at a number of high-profile events through the development and dissemination of advocacy materials and communication

messages. Communication packages on five key issues for children - nutrition, immunisation, early childhood learning, water, sanitation and hygiene, and violence against children - were developed and widely used for high level advocacy, as well as for community mobilisation and out-reach.

UNICEF created an advocacy space with Parliamentarians through a meeting held in Vang Vieng in November 2015. More than 100 participants attended the event, including five Deputy Ministers from Health, Education, Labour and Social Welfare, Information, and Environment and Natural Resources. The meeting provided clear advocacy messages on children issues and offered a forum for exchange of views on realisation of child rights.

The new 2016-2020 National Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan was launched at the first-ever National Nutrition Forum, to address under-nutrition with a focus on stunting. UNICEF and the EU supported the National Nutrition Committee (NNC) chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister to carry this out. Common messages were shared with all key stakeholders working for nutrition in Lao PDR to address stunting, poor dietary and hygiene practices, and environmental sanitation among children. Over 100 participants from the Government (Ministers and Provincial Governors), development partners, diplomatic missions, UN agencies, CSOs and the private sector attended the meeting.

The issue of violence against children gained unprecedented media coverage after UNICEF played a key role in launching of a communication campaign on “Violence against Children” in Vientiane on 1st June 2015, followed by regional launches in Luangprabang and Savannakhet.

UNICEF facilitated donor briefings, regular and coordinated communication on emerging issues, and joint field visits for key development partners including EU, Australia and US.

South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation

Study visits by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to Cambodia and Vietnam supported by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and UNICEF included key MoES departments such as the Department of Planning, Department of Finance, Department of Inspection, and Cabinet Office of MoES. The objective of the study visits was to benefit from lessons learned in other Asian GPE member countries on the content and process of education sector planning. In Vietnam, MoES officials learned about the process of development and the contents of the education sector plan, which is important given the similarities of ethnic composition of the population, political organisation and processes. In Cambodia, the MoES delegates studied the development and implementation of the policy planning matrix in the education sector plan. Based on those visits, the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) 2016-2020 planning process was taken into a more participatory approach. In addition, outcome-based planning was applied to the policy objective and outcomes statements. Key performance indicators were identified and included in the ESDP and sub-sector plans so that the financial requirements can be identified in details. Lastly, the detailed implementation arrangement and monitoring framework were included in ESDP.

In coordination with the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Planning & Investment (MPI), UNICEF supported a delegation of eight key Government officials from Lao PDR (from the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education & Sports, and Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare) for a study visit to Malaysia in 2015 to gain knowledge and understanding of Outcome-Based Planning and Budgeting. This study visit resulted in improved understanding by key decision makers on aligning public budget

allocations with the 8th NSEDP and other major sectoral plans. This visit also created an opportunity to dialogue on social budgeting for children.

Identification and Promotion of Innovation

To improve and protect WASH services from the negative impact of floods and other natural disasters, UNICEF Lao PDR tested a new design of hand pump in flood prone areas to bring a sustained flow of water to school. The raised hand pump was designed and built to tackle the two main issues affecting children and women in remote rural communities. Firstly, the children have to carry water for school sanitation facilities resulting some negative health impacts such as back pain and spinal injuries. Secondly, recurrent flooding contaminated the underground water sources in areas where boreholes are the main points of water sources. The new design of raised hand pump eliminates the need to carry water, by pumping water straight into a water tank and delivering the water to school WASH facilities by gravity. At the same time the elevated boreholes above the flood plain prevent the contamination of water during floods.

The outcome of the introduction of this innovation, at a fractional cost of the overall programme, indicated its great potential to protect and sustain the investments made in WASH services, and to provide adequate services to low resource rural school children and remote communities.

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to develop its first National eHealth Strategy and test information and communication technology (ICT) enabled communication approaches and platforms. This included real-time monitoring of health outreach services using mobile phones and interactive voice recording technology, and use of secure digital cards to facilitate the dissemination of critical information and support behaviour change communication at the community level. The ICT-based model for outreach monitoring was developed to fill the current data gap in the health outreach implementation monitoring, and provide timely and actionable data to health managers at all levels.

Support to Integration and cross-sectoral linkages

UNICEF Lao PDR continued to advocate and support new working mechanisms and partnerships for more coordinated sector-wide and systems-based approach to child protection. This included establishment of the Permanent Secretariat for the Juvenile Justice Coordination Committee and the Committee for Protection and Assistance of Children at the central level. Greater collaboration between the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the National University of Laos to strengthen the social work profession in Lao PDR led to development of a para-professional training course on social work for children and families and a review of social work practice to inform the development of a comprehensive social work system in Lao PDR.

UNICEF Lao PDR supported the Department of Pre- and Primary Education (DPPE) of MoES and its line departments at subnational level to assist the implementation of WASH interventions in schools, mainly for construction of WASH facilities and hygiene education. As planned, the programme monitoring took place jointly by Nam Saat of MoH and DPPE of MoES with the support of UNICEF Lao PDR, to ensure students have access to and use of WASH facilities in target provinces.

Service Delivery

UNICEF Lao PDR provided technical and financial support through implementing partners to ensure access to and use of improved source of water by 40,050 people in rural areas, including 19,300 children. Additionally, 6,000 rural people (including 2,900 children) also gained

access to and use of sanitation facilities through the demand responsive approach of CATS. As a result, two villages were declared open defecation free in 2015. Furthermore, 26,400 primary school children in 194 primary schools were provided with accessible and gender-sensitive sanitation facilities, water and handwashing facilities. More than 7,442 children from 68 primary schools reported access to and use of group hand-washing facilities through the Hygiene Action led by Pupils in Schools initiatives in Saravane Province.

Through UNICEF's assistance, textbooks for all 870,893 students of grades three to five (including 416,627 girls) are in the process of printing and will be distributed nationwide in early 2016. The appropriate utilisation is promoted through a wide range of communication channels. The textbooks were produced with improved print specifications for durability and cost-effectiveness. The textbook distribution will allow the MoES to meet its national standard of one textbook per student. An internet-based information system for textbook production planning is currently being rolled out by the MoES, to ensure an effective distribution and use of these textbooks.

UNICEF provided technical support to the MoH for estimating medium-term budget needs (2014-2017) and prospective mapping of confirmed external funding for essential child survival and nutrition commodities, and outreach operating costs. The results of the budgeting and mapping were used to inform the allocation of domestic funds (US\$975,346 for vaccines and US\$237,636 for nutrition commodities) and for additional resources to close critical gaps in health outreach in southern provinces.

Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation

UNICEF supported the Government through the National Commission for Mothers and Children (NCMC), to meet its reporting obligations on the Universal Periodic Review, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and two Optional Protocols to the CRC. NCMC committed to those processes and to work with civil society in regard to CRC reporting process. With UNICEF support, NCMC initiated preparations for the Government's third periodic State Party Report on the implementation of the CRC, due in December 2016. UNICEF supported NCMC to draft a review of the Government's implementation of the 2011 Concluding Recommendations of the CRC Committee. This review will feed into the development of the full State Party report and the draft will be available in early 2016.

UNICEF also provided technical support to the Government to meet reporting obligations on two Optional Protocols to the CRC, on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. UNICEF also provided support for follow-up national Government consultations on the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the two Optional Protocols, which Lao PDR received in early June 2015.

UNICEF supported the NCMC to participate in the 21st session of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group meeting on 20 January 2015.

Gender Mainstreaming and Equality

UNICEF established a formal partnership with the Lao Women's Union in 2015 which is a mass organisation of women at all levels of society. In August, UNICEF supported an orientation and consultative meeting with the LWU on UNICEF-supported programmes for Protecting the Rights of Children and Women. Discussions were made on the roles and responsibilities of LWU in promoting health, education and protection of mothers and children. The LWU is leading a multi-sectoral team to implement Community Approaches to Total Sanitation in one of the poorest

districts of Borikhamxay to ensure women's participation as well as decision-making on options based on informed choices for their sanitation facilities. This has resulted in the strong participation of women in WASH committees.

With support from UNICEF and UN Women, the Ministry of Justice developed a new Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Children, which was promulgated by the President of Lao PDR in January 2015. Initially, the law was planned to cover domestic violence only. However, UNICEF and the NCMC successfully advocated for the draft Law on Domestic Violence to be broadened to cover all forms of violence against women and children, in line with the recently approved National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children 2014-2020. Consequently, with extensive technical support by UNICEF, the law prohibits all forms of physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence against women and children, and addresses prevention, protection and assistance to women and children who have experienced violence, including free legal assistance and special protection measures. It also addresses the penalization of rape in marriage. The 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 Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Committees.

Environmental Sustainability

Based on the recommendations and technical analysis on the environmental sustainability, UNICEF Lao PDR has ensured a set of standard procedures is in place to prioritise the wellbeing of children in its development support. For example, to avoid possible contamination of the ground water sources, wherever possible, school latrines are constructed keeping the distance of 30 metres apart from boreholes if latrines are located at higher level, and at least 15 metres if located at lower level.

For Gravity Fed Systems (GFS), UNICEF provided technical assistance to provinces to ensure that the designs of the systems match the yield of water sources and the communities' demand. These parameters and modalities were closely followed for service delivery at schools and communities.

Lao PDR enjoys an abundance of water resources. Nonetheless, water is a finite resource that needs careful management to avoid depletion and over-exploitation. The current situation in Lao PDR showed some external influence with negative impact on preservation of its water resources due to construction of hydroelectric power plants, uncontrolled mining and mono cultural farming practices with high water demand. The other environmental impacts manifested in deforestation and climate change in the form of extreme weather patterns with seasonal impacts, floods during the heavy rains, and long spell of dry season. Data collected during site inspection revealed lower water yields at spring source for GFS systems, and ever deeper underground water levels for bore holes in southern provinces.

In order to safeguard investments, UNICEF has adopted different strategies to cope with the current environmental conditions, including installing hand pumps on raised platforms, and closed borehole systems where water tables are deeper and the soil is unstable.

Effective Leadership

In 2015 UNICEF Lao PDR, with the support of EAPRO, reinforced and strengthened its 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 with additional training of all emergency focal points, especially in resilience building.

UNICEF Lao PDR's harmonised approach to cash transfer (HACT) assurance plan for 2015 was developed and implemented. Quarterly progress was shared with the EAPRO HACT focal point. Joint micro-assessments were conducted for shared partners between the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF, resulting in a significant cost savings. A total number of 43 spot checks were also conducted in 2015 including three audits for partners receiving more than US\$500,000 and four micro-assessments for partners receiving more than US\$100,000.

The UNICEF Lao PDR used management indicators as key management tool for monitoring of office performance. The performance management reports were regularly shared, not only during country management team (CMT) meetings, but also weekly on every Friday and in discussions during heads of sections meetings every Monday morning.

The Annual Management Plan for 2015 was submitted on time and the annual review, with participation of all staff, took place on 11 December 2015 to assess the progress against planned targets and results of the office, programme and operation priorities. The review also came up with proposed priorities for 2016, which will be reviewed by the CMT at the beginning of 2016.

The UNICEF Lao PDR continued to use the Risk and Control Library to mitigate risks, as defined in the Annual Management Plan. In-house work processes were updated in UNICEF Lao PDR including the recruitment of consultants and the use of petty cash.

Financial Resources Management

UNICEF Lao PDR continued to implement the internal finance policy. The office took the decision in 2015 to lower the Contract Review Committee ceiling limit from US\$50,000 to US\$40,000, in order to strengthen the internal control process.

The VISION Performance Management was monitored regularly to ensure the segregation of duties, and to take immediate and appropriate actions. The VISION role mapping that allocated to posts across the office was reviewed regularly and the Table of Authority was updated timely when needed. The changes were made with the approval of the Representative and processed through Approva. The release strategy for financial limits for officers approving third party commitments are: R2: US\$1-US\$50,000, R3: US\$50,000 - US\$100,000 and R4: >US\$100,000. The signatory panel is in place and was updated on timely basis. The monthly bank reconciliation was satisfactorily undertaken.

Internal audit recommendations were closed in 2014. UNICEF Lao PDR has put in place a mechanism for close follow-up to ensure sustainability: all partners are regularly assessed (spot checks, micro-assessments, audits) according to the level of risks, all supporting documents were now attached in VISION and checked by finance unit before processing any payment. Three financial training for all Government partners were organised in 2015 to improve their financial management and reporting skills.

The VISION Performance Management served as tool to monitor the key indicators and share with all programmes on weekly basis for actions, and on monthly basis with regional office: such as grants expiring, donor report, utilization rates, direct cash transfer (DCT), and contributions.

For two consecutive years, UNICEF Lao PDR has had no outstanding DCT over nine months. Regular Resources, Other Resources, and Other Resources Emergency fund utilisation was monitored weekly and shared for follow-up actions.

Fund-raising and Donor Relations

Social media platforms for advocacy, information and donor visibility were set up by UNICEF Lao PDR. The Facebook page in 2015 had more than 7,500 likes, while the YouTube channel had around 70 videos and over 150,000 views. Twitter was targeted towards international audience including the media, donors and other UN agencies.

Human interest stories, photo essays and videos covering a wide range of programmes were produced for donor reports, proposals, and for visibility and promotion of UNICEF brand in social media. UNICEF hosted a number of donor visits including UNICEF Australia and MMG, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and Aeon. The donor visits also included the ambassadors of the EU delegation, the Australian and US Embassies to observe and discuss their funded activities.

UNICEF Lao PDR also conducted regular briefings with current and potential donors on programme interventions; reached out to current and potential donors based outside of Lao PDR; updated programme concept notes on thematic areas of mutual interest for supporting children, and regularly updated the donor tool kits for the education programme.

A media field trip was organised in Saravan province to promote the 1,000 day project - improving the nutritional status of children in Lao PDR - and to acknowledge the support received in this sector from European Union and MMG.

UNICEF Lao PDR followed the standard operating procedure that outlines the submission of donor reports. In 2015, all donor reports were submitted on time maintaining the quality standard of reporting. UNICEF monitored the utilisation of other resources on a regular basis with programme sections and identified any follow up actions as required. There was additional oversight by the CMT on fund utilisation status, utilisation of unspent funds from expiring grants and timely and quality donor reporting.

Evaluation

The Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) 2015 -2016 was developed and endorsed by the CMT. It was then uploaded into the plan for research, impact monitoring and evaluation (PRIME) database, which is an updated electronic version of the IMEP tool used by UNICEF country, regional offices and headquarters to share information about future and on-going evaluations, research, studies and monitoring and evaluation capacity-development activities. The research/evaluation activities recorded in PRIME have been updated periodically.

In the first quarter of 2015, the WASH Programme Evaluation was conducted to generate evidence-based knowledge and learning to influence the Government's policies, strategies and funding priorities in order to improve water, sanitation and hygiene situation in Lao PDR. Those findings contributed to the development of UNICEF Lao PDR WASH programme plan for the new country programme (2017-2021). In addition, the findings will inform advocacy efforts for leveraging additional resources.

The primary audience for this evaluation was UNICEF Lao PDR with the secondary audience identified as the Government, and donors in country and abroad. The evaluation was conducted

by an external evaluation team, with different measures were taken to ensure that the evaluation report met UNICEF adapted UN Evaluation Group standards. Terms of Reference, inception report, evaluation plan, and final draft reports were shared with the technical teams, HQ and EAPRO WASH and Evaluation Advisors, who provided extensive inputs and advice throughout the whole process of evaluation. The final report was completed in October 2015. The management response was drafted and reviewed by the CMT in December 2015.

Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

During 2015, one common Long Term Agreement (LTA) was signed between UN agencies and a travel agency for common ticketing. This common LTA not only gained in terms of money for UNICEF but also in terms of timing. Preferential prices with economical routes on air tickets also contributed to cost savings.

The use of coupons for fuel introduced with the fuel company resulted in efficiency gain and cost savings of more than 30 per cent from the market price. Despite the basic cooperation agreement signed with the Government, UN agencies are not considered for tax exemption in terms of fuel.

Another LTA for all UN agencies using the same ICT provider is under finalisation and will bring quality and better pricing compared to current usage. The Hyper-V host platform holding multiple virtual servers for ICT functions was a main cost effectiveness solution. The Internet Protocol (IP) Telephony system built on the Elastic open source unified communications server was the in-house manageable telephony system and a low cost turning over from the ordinary Private Automated Branch Exchange (PABX) system.

For HACT micro-assessment and audits, three UN agencies (UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF) signed a joint LTA for US\$2,500 per assessment or audit, which was 50 per cent less than the previous cost per partner.

UNICEF Lao PDR also signed an LTA for one year with transport companies in all the provinces. The costs for staff were significantly reduced, with the LTA having lower prices than what had previously existed.

Supply Management

Supply Unit continued to maintain effective support to the supply needs of the Country Programme, and Procurement Services to the Government. The annual supply plan was developed in the first quarter, and updated quarterly. Useful information such as supply timeframe for each procurement method, technical specifications, and a list of LTAs was made available to all staff, and saved on shared drive.

Supply Unit provided support to the office on procurement and institutional contracts, and extended the support to Implementing Partners on procurement through the Government, including: (i) assistance on reviewing solicitation documents, (ii) participation to bid opening and evaluation, (iii) technical support and monitoring during contract implementation, and (vi) on-job training.

UNICEF continued to play a key role in the Common Procurement Team within the UN. In 2015, the Common Procurement Team made significant progress on joint procurement, through the LTA for travel services.

The total amount for programme and operation supplies including procurement services, equipment and services for 2015 was US\$7,719,669, with a with a large proportion on construction.

UNICEF Lao People's Democratic Republic 2015	Value in US\$
Programme supplies – including programme & procurement services	6,518,261
Operation supplies	60,645
Services – including construction works	1,140,763
Total	7,719,669

UNICEF continued to build on existing good procurement practices, including: (i) concerned sections providing detailed inputs for technical requirements and joining good inspections; (ii) conducting public bid openings, enabling suppliers to participate and observe and enhancing transparency; (iii) informing unsuccessful bidders in writing, to keep suppliers informed on the tender results and build trust in the efficiency and transparency of the procurement process; (iv) continuing market surveys at central and provincial levels to ensure the existence of and access to sufficient, appropriate and qualified suppliers and contractors, and; (vi) end-user monitoring activities.

Security for Staff and Premises

Whilst Lao PDR is considered a stable country, UNICEF and other UN agencies were concerned by the low capacity of security services provided by the local contractors for the office and residences of international staff members.

For the selection of a new security company by UN Department of Security and Safety (UNDSS), only two companies were available, with low security standard. A daily routine check was in place by UNDSS and also regular visits at international residences to ensure all security measures were in place, including security guards were present and ensured that all houses were compliant of minimum operating residential security standards.

All drivers participated in refresher training to enhance their driving skills, and underwent regular medical check-ups. All field vehicles and essential staff were equipped with satellite phones and VHF radios, and all staff travelling were requested to have approved security clearances.

For the effectiveness of minimum operating security standards for UNICEF, the office was equipped with 12 cameras closed circuit television surrounding the office, and an alarm system in each office to reinforce security measures in and around the office. The system functions 24 hours a days and the Operations Manager and ICT Officer are the two focal points. A total amount of US\$15,000 was received from HQ and invested to acquire and install these equipment.

In addition, a system of duty driver during the week-ends and holidays was instituted and UNICEF drivers were also nominated to drive the UN ambulance in case of any emergency.

Security measures were also taken for the staff parking lot, situated a few meters from the office, including proper lighting, and presence of security guards until the last car has departed.

Human Resources

A good human resource performance was noted for UNICEF as the recruitment of four positions (Deputy Representative, Education Chief, WASH monitoring officer and Junior Professional Officer for Health and Nutrition) took less than 90 days lead time. The office continued to organise a successful programme of Friday Learning Sessions, which are one-hour sessions designed to provide key hands-on skills with focus on improvement of staff performance.

UNICEF Lao PDR organised in 2015 two office-wide trainings with the participation of all staff: Programme, Policy and Procedures (PPP) training and Ethics and Integrity Training. Both were conducted by external facilitators.

UNICEF tried to maintain the gender ratio between female and male, however the number of female applicants for vacant posts are still few compared to male. The Performance Appraisal system functioned well with good compliance on completion rate by the deadlines in 2015 of 100 per cent for the performance planning, mid-year review and final evaluation. The Joint Consultative Committee had four meetings between the staff association and management in 2015.

The office established a working group to follow up the findings of the most recent Global Staff Survey. The CMT monitored the follow up to the Global Staff Survey.

UNICEF facilitated a Friday morning session with the UN Clinic for all staff, comprising a presentation, questions answers between staff and UN clinic staff. To ensure effective humanitarian and early recovery in line with Core Commitments for Children, UNICEF established a core team representing each section for emergency: the team is also part of the regional emergency staff roster to assist other countries in the region.

Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

UNICEF Lao PDR has a compliant ICT infrastructure, which allowed 70 per cent of desktops/laptops with hardware capability to be loaded with the latest Windows 8.1 Image, providing new features of office automation tools and systems. The Universal WiFi equipment is in place to provide a rapid process of connecting UNICEF computers to the network wirelessly and reducing costs of wiring. 5KVA uninterrupted power supply secures 24/7 power redundancy for servers and critical ICT equipment is in place.

The Hyper-V host platform holding multiple virtual servers for ICT functions was a main cost effectiveness solution. The IP Telephony system built on the Elastic open source unified communications server was the in-house manageable telephony system, and a low cost turning over from the ordinary PABX system.

RapidPro – an open source communication platform - was introduced in the office as a tool that could be customised to connect citizens and critical services to benefit the most disadvantaged children.

Digital and social media continued to reach out for the benefit of children and women, through Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Beside the broadcast of Early Childhood Development programme “My Village” on public televisions, the advocacy of “My Village” in the form of Secure Digital card reached out to the most remote children and women.

UNICEF is leading UN agency in ICT group, and is working to establish a joint LTA with at least two companies for all ICT services to reduce costs, starting January 2016.

Programme Components from Results Assessment Module

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 By end 2016, 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 continued to support systematic, evidence-based approaches to communication in order to address political, social, and behavioural issues across all sectors.

In 2015, UNICEF supported two high-profile events in 2015 for strategically positioning children's issues through advocacy materials and communication messages. UNICEF messages for children, echoed by the key stakeholders, received distinctive media coverage including the commitments made by the high-level Government and partners towards joint action for children. An advocacy meeting with the Social and Cultural Affairs Committee of the National Assembly and first ever National Nutrition Forum to address under-nutrition with a focus on stunting were notable high level advocacy events, where UNICEF developed and shared key messages for children with all key stakeholders to lay the foundation for joint action towards results for children.

UNICEF merged support to Youth Radio/Youth TV initiatives together with social platform networks, due to the growing importance of "Youth Media" in Lao PDR. Even though the reach is still limited to a few young people in the country, it has great potential in the near future.

Financial and technical support continued for the creation of a third series of the Early Childhood Development television programme "My Village". This show for preschool children, also 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. Eight new episodes were produced in 2015, to be broadcast in early 2016. The programme was 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 Lao PDR created an advocacy space for children with the National Assembly and mass organisations such as Lao Front for National Construction to promote child rights and conduct outreach activities for community mobilisation.

The issue of violence against children received wide media coverage in print as well as mass media after UNICEF played a key role in launching the communication campaign on "Violence against Children" in Vientiane on 1st June 2015, followed by regional launches in Luangprabang and Savannakhet.

UNICEF Lao PDR took the lead in development and implementation of a Communication and Social Mobilisation Plan for the polio outbreak response. As the polio outbreak affected mainly ethnic groups who are difficult to reach with routine immunisation services, UNICEF focused on those in the most remote areas and underserved populations with communication and social

mobilisation activities through mass media and interpersonal communication. UNICEF carried out media briefings for social mobilisation, as well as working with mass organisations such as LFNC to reach the ethnic communities with key messages.

As part of the resource mobilisation efforts, UNICEF Lao PDR took extra steps in 2015 to arrange donor briefings, regular and coordinated communication on emerging issues, and joint field visits for key development partners including EU, Australia, US and Minerals and Metals Group.

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

Analytical Statement of Progress:

More than ten years since its inception, UNICEF Lao PDR continued to support Youth Radio, which is broadcasted in four languages in many provinces. Despite limited funding, Lao National Radio (LNR) organised a training of trainers for young reporters in eleven provinces (out of eighteen). LNR also organised training on “Violence against Children” – a global priority for UNICEF - for 11 provincial youth radios and their social media platforms.

This use of youth media for programme advocacy is mutually beneficial, as the Youth Radio Fan Page has now more than 3,500 “likes”. Based on the demand, LNR will organise youth media training for provincial young reporters in late December 2015. This combination of youth radio/ youth media 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. However, some activities were hindered by a lack of funding, especially for items such as local travel expenses.

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:

The polio emergency affected the country in late 2015, making it essential to engage with the media and guide them in their reporting by providing clear information on the disease, ahead of a nationwide immunization campaign. Dozens of journalists attended the event in Vientiane in December 2015. The session showed the importance of various entities working together towards a common goal, and created a sense of urgency. Of particular interest was the emphasis placed on addressing ethnic groups through their own communication platforms, such as radio and television.

Recognising that some provinces received more attention than others, an orientation and training for journalists to report on children’s related issues was organised in Saysomboun province for information staff from Anouvong, Longsan, Thatom, Home and Longvheng districts. A media field trip was organized in Saravan province in November to promote the 1,000 day project - Improving the nutritional status of children in Laos - and acknowledge the support received in this sector from European Union and MMG.

“My Village” a television programme for young children which started in 2013, is now reaching the age of its target audience. This Early Childhood Development initiative is entering its third season in late 2015, with the production of eight new episodes. The “Claymation” technique (animation using clay characters) is steadily improving and the latest series took on board the new curriculum recommended by the Ministry of Education and Sports. It is interesting to note

that books aimed at young children were created from the existing episodes of “My Village”, showing the reach and potential of this unique show financially supported by the Swedish company “H&M”. One issue is the dissemination of the programme, especially in areas with limited television access; the partners are exploring the use of secure digital memory cards to reach a wider audience.

OUTPUT 3 Programme Support. 1. Staff are secure with salary and other entitlements from 2012 to 2015. 2. Periodic and timely field visits are conducted to monitor project activities, organize National Committee visits, and attend workshops and trainings. 3. 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 resource support, with funds utilised as intended, to contribute to the achievement of communication and advocacy objectives identified across the programme as described in the country programme of cooperation.

OUTCOME 2 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:

UNICEF continued to contribute towards universal primary education nationwide. With a Net Enrolment Rate of 98.7 per cent, Lao PDR has now officially met the MDG target of Universal Primary Education. Impressive gains have also been made in increasing the enrolment in early childhood education: from 16.1 per cent in 2007 to 60.7 per cent in 2015.

Despite improvements in the survival rate of children completing the full five years of primary education, at 76 per cent this is the lowest in the region, and Lao PDR will not be able to meet the MDG 2 goal by 2015. The transition into lower secondary schools currently stands at 91.7 per cent, and the national target of 75 per cent of lower secondary gross enrolment rate has been achieved by 2015. In collaboration with UNICEF and other development partners, the Ministry of Education and Sports developed an Education Sector Development Plan 2016-20 in line with the 8th National Social Economic Development Plan. The Out of School Children Study conducted jointly by UNICEF, the MoES and the Ministry of Planning and Investment will be completed in 2016. It will be further analysed to develop a national MoES policy to enrol out-of-school children and retain students at risk of dropping out of school, as well as inform the development of UNICEF Laos country programme (2017-2021).

Through UNICEF assistance, textbooks for all 870,893 grades three to five students (including 416,627 girls) are in the process of printing, and these will be distributed nationwide in early 2016. The appropriate utilisation of these materials is promoted through a wide range of communication channels. The textbooks, produced with improved print specifications, are durable and cost-effective. The textbook distribution will allow the MoES to meet its national standard of one textbook per student. An internet-based information system for textbook production planning, is currently being rolled out by the MoES to ensure their effective distribution and use.

In 2015, UNICEF continued to support primary school management in the achievement of the national Education Quality Standards, with a focus on four educationally disadvantaged districts in four provinces. Support 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 capacity development of district early childhood and primary education officers. UNICEF continued to bring technical expertise and substantive prior experience in school planning and management to the second Global Partnership for Education programme (2015-18) which focuses on strengthening school based management in disadvantaged areas. The lessons learned from UNICEF-provided support to school based management in four districts has contributed to the finalization of the School Development Planning manual and tools which will be used nationally from 2016 onwards. The production of EQS implementation guidelines, finalised with inputs from UNICEF technical staff, has further strengthened the quality of this document, indirectly contributing to the MoES efforts to roll-out an EQS accreditation system for all primary schools.

In addition to the 27 community-based school readiness centres supported by UNICEF since 2012/13, UNICEF targeted another 18 centres in 2015, demonstrating the impact of quality early childhood education on children's learning and development in the educationally-most disadvantaged districts in Lao PDR. Whilst community-based school readiness programmes are formally recognised by the MoES as one of the three official types of early childhood education, there continues to be insufficient budget allocation within the Ministry towards this approach, especially in the rural-based kindergarten facilities. In 2016, UNICEF will analyse the results of the community-based school readiness programme and use the information to advocate for increased MoES budget allocation for Early Childhood Education (ECE). In addition, UNICEF will provide support for the revision of the pre-primary curriculum to smoothen the transition from pre-primary to primary schools. In addition, the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools programme will support that children have access to WASH facilities and the skills to use and maintain them properly.

In 2015 UNICEF continued to work in partnership with UNESCO/ 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 for a selected group of staff. The Institute for Education Administration Development is the key structure within the MoES accountable for capacity building of schools and education authorities on 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 the GPE and Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR.

OUTPUT 1 Effective and efficient management of the Education programme.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF provided human resource support through this output to contribute to the achievement of programme results in the country programme of cooperation.

UNICEF Lao PDR efficiently mobilised the necessary technical expertise through staff and partnerships to provide effective strategic technical advice, strengthen partner's capacity, engage in partnerships, and effectively manage the implementation of the education programme.

OUTPUT 2 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:

The partnership between the MoES, UNICEF and UNESCO/International Institute for Education Planning continued to strengthen the institutional capacity of the central and provincial MoES in education planning and management. The internationally accredited course was delivered to a group of 30 senior specialists from MoES and the National University of Laos. The current capacity within the Institute for Educational Administration Development and MoES is limited, and the financial space remains a challenge to ensure sustainable implementation of this initiative. To mitigate this, IFEAD, supported by IIEP, developed a MoES capacity development plan with a financial projection, aligned to the Education Sector Development Plan 2016-2020.

A web-based educational databank, Lao EduInfo which was 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 2015 Education for All report and 2014/2015 MoES annual report. The capacity of four District Education and Sports Bureaus (DESBs) in education information management system (EMIS) data compilation and analysis was strengthened through on-the-job support. As a result, a bottleneck analysis in relation to the use of the EMIS system by schools and districts was completed. To further strengthen quality technical outreach by district education offices to schools, a second annual district planning and budgeting process was completed. These same four districts received block grants from UNICEF to meet their annual district targets.

In 2015, UNICEF served as the supervising entity for the national ESDP grant received on behalf of the Government from the Global Partnership for Education. UNICEF played a key role in assisting the MoES and the Education Sector Working Group with the development of an ESDP (2016-2020), through sub-national consultations. ESDP part one (national key objectives) and part two (sub-sector strategies and interventions) were endorsed at the high level Education Sector Working Group meeting in November 2015. Key to the success of ESDP will be the operationalising from 2016 of newly developed annual processes including monitoring and evaluation at the national and sub-national levels.

MoES, UNICEF and other development partners conducted an annual education joint sector review mission in 2015, which focused on education sector planning and management especially at the sub-national level. During this process, UNICEF shared experiences, lessons learned, documentation and tools on district planning and management and the result of the joint mission informed the final ESDP 2016-2020 draft on education sector management.

OUTPUT 3 Innovative models for ensuring pre-school aged (4 and 5 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 2016.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Community-based school readiness programmes is formally recognised by the Ministry of Education and Sports. UNICEF provided technical and financial support for establishing 18 centres in the educationally most disadvantaged districts, aiming to encourage MoES to invest in CBSR and to inform national policy and practices.

The curriculum and facilitator's guide books for community-based school readiness programme have been finalized and printed under the leadership of MoES. The capacity of 15 provincial and district education officials has been built to support 37 village caregivers, who received in-service professional support by attending training and through regular monitoring and supervision. In addition, early childhood education kits were procured and distributed to the 18

community-based early childhood education centres and 13 pre-primary classes benefitting 1,884 children, including 758 girls.

The construction of 10 pre-primary facilities in educationally disadvantaged districts was initiated. These facilities were constructed in line with the MoES ECE construction standards benefitting 189 children, including 96 girls. In 2016, the results will be shared during an ECE technical working group meeting to influence MoES design, in particular the toilet facilities.

The monitoring and supervision tools for pre-primary and community-based school readiness project was revised and the ECE Environment Rating Scale developed. Training for provincial and district ECE technical team on the use of these tools was completed to enhance the quality of ECE services and environments.

UNICEF supported the participation of the MoES Vice-Minister and Deputy Director of Department of Pre-school and Primary Education in the Asia- Pacific ECD Conference in Beijing. This was part of the advocacy approach to increase awareness on the importance of early childhood development and education across all concerned Ministries, and in support of the ECE Technical Working Group to further strengthen sub-sector development partner coordination and cooperation.

OUTPUT 4 District educational structures in four educationally disadvantaged provinces have the technical capacity to deliver primary education services which meet national quality standards by December 2016.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and the Australian Embassy, printed textbooks for grade three, four and five students in 2015, benefitting more than 875,000 students (416,627 girls). It is expected that the textbooks will reach the students by early 2016. Building on the lessons learned from a textbook initiative in 2014, UNICEF provided substantial technical inputs for the improvement of the national textbook policy. In strengthening the textbook procurement planning and monitoring, UNICEF also supported the introduction of a web-based Textbook Information Management System initiated by the MoES to ensure an effective distribution and use of these textbooks.

One of the key results of UNICEF support in 2015 was that capacity of District Education and Sports) staff of the four UNICEF-targeted districts in school based management has been strengthened. This allowed DESB officials to provide face-to-face support to all 227 school committees to finalise their school development plans (SDPs). DESB support resulted in quality SDPs with interventions focusing on student learning outcomes. In addition, DESB ensured that the school block grants were used in line with MoES guidelines. The lessons learned from this has contributed to the finalisation of the School Development Planning manual and tools, which will be used nationally from 2016.

UNICEF also provided support for the district pedagogical advisors to conduct at least two field visits per school annually. Before undertaking school visits, they received intensive coaching from the central and provincial staff on how to provide quality school-based pedagogical outreach. As a result, the pedagogical advisors have progressively changed their supervision skills from provision of verbal advice to hands-on coaching and mentoring, and all teachers (nearly 1,000) in the four targeted districts have gradually improved their teaching practices, benefitting around 20,000 children.

The primary-equivalency approach has been implemented through non-formal education by using a mobile teacher approach. During the 2014-2015 school year, 3,829 children (1,854 girls) benefitted from primary education programme services provided by 85 mobile teachers and 168 teaching assistants across 168 villages in Savannkhet, Khammuan and Sekong provinces.

More than 1,970 children (1,005 girls) passed the final examination and completed primary education equivalency 3-year program course. The first two years have been supported by the Fast Track Initiative, and UNICEF supported the third year of implementation.

OUTCOME 3 By 2016, 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:

Lao PDR made a significant progress in maternal and child mortality reduction, as well as improvements in the nutritional status of children and women in Lao PDR. UN data showed that maternal mortality ratio declined from 1,100 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 220 in 2013. UN interagency estimates also showed a 59 per cent decline in under-five mortality rate from 162 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 67 in 2015. Although this decline was insufficient to meet global MDG4 target for child mortality (54/1,000), it surpassed the national target of 80 deaths/per 1,000 live births.

The 2015 Food and Nutrition Security Survey indicated between seven and 13 percentage point decline in child stunting from 2011 in four out of the five surveyed provinces, which are the EU/UNICEF MYCNSIA focus provinces. The survey also showed 4.4 percentage point decline in anaemia among children from 2011 to 2015.

Despite the strong progress, maternal and child mortality levels in Lao PDR remain among the highest in the region. There are significant variations in health and nutrition outcomes and utilisation of essential services with children living in rural areas without roads, from certain ethnic groups, and those living in poor families being affected the most.

Building on the national policy development processes, UNICEF successfully advocated for integration of priority child health and nutrition issues and evidence-based actions into the 2016-2020 National Socio-economic Development Plan, Health Strategic Plan, and National Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) Strategy and Plan of Action.

A partnership with the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the global SUN movement resulted in the update of the National Nutrition Strategy to 2015 and the costed Plan of Action 2016-2020. Other strategies developed in 2015 with UNICEF support include the National eHealth Strategy and the National Communication Strategy and Plan of Action on Immunization.

UNICEF continued to advocate for securing sufficient and predictable resource for core service delivery inputs such as essential commodities and operational costs for integrated health outreach, the main delivery platform for health and nutrition interventions to children and families living in remote, hard-to-reach areas. Sufficient resources for vaccines and nutrition commodities were mobilised for 2015 and 2016, including increasing domestic budget disbursement for vaccines (US\$975,346) and nutrition commodities (US\$237,636).

Partnerships with Lao Women Union, Lao Front for National Construction and the National Assembly were further capitalized upon to disseminate critical information on polio outbreak response and nutrition, and to stimulate positive health and nutrition-related social and behaviour change. A new partnership with the WB and the EU was established for the development and implementation of a National Communication Strategy and a Plan of Action on Nutrition 2016-2020.

UNICEF strategic and technical inputs shaped the national policy dialogue on primary health care and integrated MNCH/Nutrition service delivery at the community level through health outreach and community-based health workers. Furthermore, UNICEF introduced to the MoH District Health Systems Strengthening (DHSS) approach with an aim to build district and health facility management teams' capacity for evidence-based and equity-focussed planning, implementation and monitoring. It was agreed with MoH that in 2016, UNICEF will support the update of the existing Primary Health Care Policy (2000), harmonization of operational guidance on outreach and community health agents, and DHSS approach adaptation in two UNICEF focus districts. This work will be undertaken jointly with WHO and UNFPA in the framework of one-year costed extension of the UN Joint Programme on MNCH. Building on the comparative advantage of UN agencies, the second phase of the UN Joint Programme for 2017-2021 involving UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO, will be supported by the Government of Luxembourg. UNICEF will act as a convening and administrative agent for the current and new phase of the UNJP.

UNICEF continued to invest in strengthening the capacity of new nutrition institutions, such as the National Nutrition Committee and its Secretariat, the Nutrition Centre of the Ministry of Health in the area of nutrition data analysis/use, planning, budgeting, communication, monitoring and evaluation. In the framework of the joint EU-UNICEF nutrition security initiative and with inputs from WFP, SDC and SUN Civil Society Alliance, UNICEF supported the Government to implement the Nutrition Stakeholder and Action Mapping, the National Anthropometrics Survey and sub-national Food and Nutrition Security Survey in five provinces. These UNICEF-supported inputs improved the use of nutrition data for policy development and programming, and helped maintain the Government and development partners' attention and funding to nutrition specific interventions such as micronutrient supplementation, infant and young child feeding, as well as the management of acute malnutrition.

MMG/UNICEF Australia and EU support was instrumental for developing operational delivery models for home fortification of young children's diets with micronutrient powders and the integrated, community-based Infant and Young Child Feeding package. The latter was rolled out to 26 districts in six provinces.

EU and UNICEF, as co-conveners of Informal Development Partners Group on Nutrition continued to co-convene quarterly meetings and supported the NNC secretariat to organize the first National Nutrition Forum. UN organizations in Lao PDR agreed on the establishment of a SUN network at the country level, and proposed UNICEF to chair the group in the framework of UN outcome group on food and nutrition security.

OUTPUT 1 Effective and efficient management of the Health and Nutrition programme

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF efficiently mobilised the necessary technical expertise through staff and partnerships to provide effective strategic technical advice, strengthen partner's capacity, manage partnerships

and effectively and efficiently manage the implementation of UNICEF country programme of cooperation.

Ongoing and new partnerships in 2015 with UN agencies (WHO, UNFPA, WFP, FAO), EU, USAID, World Bank, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) and MMG (through UNICEF Australia) helped advance nutrition and MNCH/immunization advocacy agenda and mobilise critical resources to support the delivery of priority services and information.

OUTPUT 2 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 2015, there were no out stock of vaccines at the central level due to improvements in supply forecasting and budgeting. Lao PDR further increased domestic disbursements for vaccines to US\$ 975,346 in 2015: 66 per cent more than in 2014 (US\$ 639,512) and seven times more than in 2013. For the first time the country disbursed national budget (US\$ 237,636) to nutrition commodities procurement, including iron folic acid, mebendazole and Vitamin A. UNICEF-supported advocacy and technical advice for supply forecasting, financial gap monitoring and resource mobilisation were instrumental to these achievements.

Other UNICEF-supported 2015 achievements include: development of the 2016-2020 Vaccine Forecast; formalization of the Vaccine Independence Initiative Memorandum of Understanding and Action Plan; endorsement of the costed Vaccine Improvement Plan 2015-2020; approval of the OPV switch plan and IPV introduction in October 2015 and the development of the 2016-2020 National Communication Strategy for Immunization.

National and subnational capacity for cold chain maintenance and vaccine management was further augmented with 85 per cent of health facilities reported using the 2nd generation of 30-day monitoring fridge tags provided by UNICEF, at least one health worker per health facility received orientation on using fridge tags; and only nine per cent of refrigerators were non-operational compared to 22 per cent in 2013.

Lao PDR successfully implemented the first round of Vitamin A and deworming, reaching 91 per cent of targeted children.

Significant geographical disparities in immunization coverage represent a major challenge. This has led to substantial immunity gaps, as manifested by a diphtheria outbreak in mid-2015 and a polio outbreak in October which necessitated immediate supplementary immunization activities. The polio outbreak response promptly started in October 2015 within the Global Polio Eradication Initiative framework, with UNICEF taking the lead in supporting MoH with vaccine/supply management and communication/social mobilisation.

Among the causes of persistent disparities in immunization and MNCH services utilization are lack of harmonized guidance on integrated health outreach; uncertainty in disbursement of operational budgets for service delivery; financial disincentive to reach the most remote communities; and immunization hesitancy among certain population groups.

Additional challenges towards the achievement of annual planned results included significant unanticipated demands on UNICEF staff time to support the process related to GAVI

programming, including the review of Health System Strengthening proposal, design of the National Immunization Coverage Survey, and the Joint Appraisal mission.

OUTPUT 3 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:

UNICEF financed four rounds of integrated MNCH outreach in two UNICEF focus provinces (Luangnamtha and Phongsaly) as a critical input to secure the delivery of preventive and promotive services to children and women, including immunisation, antenatal and postnatal care, micronutrient supplementation, deworming, and health promotion.

The 2015 microplanning and implementation of integrated health outreach activities by all 39 health centres in Luangnamtha and 14 out of 29 health centres in Phongsaly (78 per cent total health facilities) were guided by the Microplanning Guidelines developed and tested with UNICEF and WHO support in 2014 based on the Reaching Every Community principles. The implementation experience in the two provinces informed the review of the national Microplanning Guidelines to strengthen the MoH operational guidance on equity-focused and integrated RMNCH service delivery.

The management capacity of provincial and district health teams in Luangnamtha province was further consolidated through the provision of technical and financial support to the quarterly monitoring and supervision meetings, as well as management reviews on MNCH service delivery indicators and systemic bottlenecks. These review meetings enabled the province to identify and respond to identified programme implementation bottlenecks.

UNICEF's work on the development of ICT-supported models and platforms for monitoring and service delivery at the community level in Luangnamtha province enabled a more effective process for development of the first National eHealth Strategy.

With technical support from UNICEF HQs and EAPRO, UNICEF introduced the MoH District Health System Strengthening which aims to improve evidence-based equity focussed planning, implementation and monitoring capacity of district and health facility level managers. It was agreed that DHSS package will be first tested in two UNICEF-focus districts in 2016 and, after the assessment, used to inform a national DHSS model.

Discontinuation of financial support from some external development partners and introduction of new health outreach financing guidelines by the Ministry of Health led to a funding gap for delivery of MNCH services in southern provinces of Lao PDR. To respond to this challenge, UNICEF mobilised ad-hoc financial support for health outreach operating costs in Saravane, Savannakhet and Attapeu. Targeted advocacy meetings with MoH and external development partners were organized to secure medium term funding commitments for health outreach in 2016 and beyond.

OUTPUT 4 Improved organizational and systemic capacity of the Government for multisectoral nutrition coordination, planning, monitoring and evaluation, including coordination with development partners such as UN, donors, civil society.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF supported the National Nutrition Committee and its secretariat at the national level, as well as of the Provincial Nutrition Coordination Committees in three priority provinces, Luangnamtha, Oudomxay and Saravane. In 2015, the NNC met twice to review progress, set priorities for 2015, and endorse the National Nutrition Strategy to 2025 and Plan of Action 2016-2020. UNICEF provided strategic and technical inputs during the planning process with focus on nutrition governance, nutrition specific interventions, WASH, development of the common results framework and costing of the Plan. UNICEF, EU and the Lao SUN Civil Society Alliance supported the NNC secretariat to undertake a comprehensive Nutrition Mapping Exercise to inform the strategic and annual planning and budgeting for nutrition.

The EU and UNICEF co-convened quarterly meetings with donors, UN and SUN Civil Society Alliance which contributed to improved information sharing, harmonization of approaches, coordination and alignment of external support to the national priorities.

UNICEF provided technical inputs and actively participated in the periodic SUN country calls, the annual 2014-2015 SUN Review and M&E report writing, provision of Lao specific data the 2014 SUN Annual Report and participation in the 2015 Global SUN Gathering. In November, UN organizations in Lao PDR established the SUN UN Network, with UNICEF as a chair.

The First National Nutrition Forum, organised by the National Nutrition Committee, was held in November with the Deputy Prime Minister chairing the meeting. High ranking officials from the health, education, agriculture, and planning and investment ministries were present alongside leaders from the provincial governments, mass organizations, UN, donors and SUN civil society. UNICEF and EU supported the planning and led the development of the Nutrition Advocacy Package, containing easy-to-read Lao nutrition profiles and policy briefs on undernutrition in Lao PDR, as well as priority nutrition actions. During the Forum, commitment to scaling-up of nutrition actions using the multi-sectoral and convergence approach was articulated by the Government and high level participants.

UNICEF advocated and provided technical support for the integration of nutrition objectives into the 2016-2020 National Socio-Economic Development Plan as well as sectoral plans (e.g. Health, WASH, Education) and subsectoral development plans (e.g. MNCH Strategy and Plan of Action). Nutrition orientation was provided for the members of the National Assembly, the Lao Front for National Construction, the Lao Women's Union and provincial multisectoral teams in Luangnamtha, Oudomxay and Saravane. The World Bank, EU and UNICEF have partnered to help the Government develop a multisectoral National Nutrition Communication Plan.

OUTPUT 5 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:

A key achievement in 2015 was the finalization and expansion of the Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) promotion and counselling package at the community level. Its implementation involves a mix of mutually reinforcing communication approaches: interpersonal communication through health providers and LWU volunteers; sustained nationwide media campaign using radio, TV spots and talk shows; and mobilisation of national and local authorities and opinion leaders. With UNICEF support, national IYCF training and monitoring capacities were

established and the package was implemented in 26 districts in six provinces with the highest undernutrition rates, mobilising 41 provincial and district authorities and building the capacity of 191 health workers and 1,302 LWUs to promote positive nutrition practices and care-seeking during pregnancy, postpartum and in the first years of a child's life. The IYCF package implementation was reinforced through the nationwide dissemination of 3,000 copies of the National IYCF Guidelines.

UNICEF efforts to strengthen the legal framework on the Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and the Universal Salt Iodization quality assurance and monitoring system saw only modest impact, due to overstretched capacity of relevant staff at the national level. These will be continued in 2016 in partnership with WHO, Alive and Thrive and Save the Children.

Another important achievement was the completion of two operational delivery models for home fortification of young children's meals with micronutrient powders (MNPs). External assessment led by the University of British Columbia showed that the public health distribution model through the health facilities and LWU achieved significant coverage (between 70 per cent and 99 per cent of target population for subsequent rounds) and is more equity-focussed reaching children and their caregivers from rural remote areas. This model is also associated with stronger complementary feeding promotion and dietary diversification advice. The market-based distribution of MNPs for children 6-59 month-old through private sector outlets (i.e. pharmacies, shops) achieved <5 per cent coverage, which is to be expected during the first year of implementation, predominantly in urban and more easy to access settings. The findings and recommendations of the review informed the next phase of UNICEF support to MNPs-related programme scale-up and policy development. IYCF/MNP related work supported by UNICEF was documented in a case study submitted for inclusion in the ASEAN regional nutrition report. 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 2016, 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:

In close collaboration with the Government and development partners, including the Child Protection Working Group and the Disability Sector Network, UNICEF continued its efforts to strengthen the child protection system in Lao PDR and integrate child protection into the broader child welfare and justice systems.

In 2015, a key focus of UNICEF remained the strengthening of child protection laws and policies, particularly in the areas of child justice and protecting children from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Key results with UNICEF technical expertise included the finalization of a new Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children, which was promulgated in January 2015, the development of a Prime Minister's Agreement on Child Mediation, development of implementation guidelines for the new Law on Juvenile Criminal Procedures, and development of an Adoption Manual to support implementation of the 2014 Adoption Decree.

UNICEF continued to advocate and support new working mechanisms and partnerships, which emphasize a more coordinated sector-wide and systems-based approach to child protection.

This included establishment of the Permanent Secretariat for the Juvenile Justice Coordination Committee and the Committee for Protection and Assistance of Children at central level. Stronger collaboration between the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the National University of Laos to strengthen the social work profession in Lao PDR led to development of a para-professional training course on social work for children and families and a review of social work practice, which will inform the development of a comprehensive social work system in Lao PDR.

UNICEF has also strengthened capacity and engaged in institution building to make the child protection system more responsive. In 2015, the capacity of Government counterparts from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Security, the National Commission for Mothers and Children and Lao Statistics Bureau was strengthened in areas such as child-sensitive and gender-appropriate investigation and court procedures, processing and analysing sensitive data on violence against children, and drafting of the new Juvenile Criminal Procedures Law.

In addition, UNICEF continued to provide technical expertise to key Government institutions to enhance evidence generation to inform the future direction and development of the child protection system in Lao PDR and to influence child protection policy and practice. Key achievements include finalization of comprehensive assessments of the child and family welfare and justice systems, an ICT Landscape Survey for Digital Birth Registration in Lao PDR, and data analysis for the national study on violence against children. All of these demonstrated the increased commitment of the Government of Lao PDR to ensure that children's rights to protection are realised. The Government has prioritised violence against children, and launched a national communication initiative on 31 May 2015 as part of the global #ENDviolence initiative, to raise awareness about the different forms of violence and their impact on the health and wellbeing of children.

While these efforts demonstrate the significant political will of the Government of Lao PDR to improve the situation of vulnerable children and families, there is still a great deal that needs to be done to translate policies and laws that protect children into practice at the community level through effective enforcement and implementation. Service care standards and guidelines need to be developed, standard operating procedures put in place for effective referral and case management, and intensive capacity building of social workers and other child protection professionals needs to take place. Adequate budget allocation needs to be prioritized within the framework of a comprehensive national strategy, and the policy on child protection system development. The Government has demonstrated commitment to expand and improve the delivery of and access to quality services for children and families, which will be a key focus for child protection in the next country programme. As a result of UNICEF's advocacy efforts, child protection priorities have been incorporated for the first time into the 8th NSEDP and M&E Framework, including the expansion of the existing 496 Child Protection Networks to all villages nationwide (target 8000 Child Protection Networks) and the establishment of the social work profession.

In 2016, UNICEF will continue to strengthen the child protection system in Lao PDR by supporting the Government to disseminate newly approved laws and policies and build the capacity of child protection professionals and institutions to effectively implement these laws and policies in practice. UNICEF will continue to focus on moving from research into action by ensuring continuity and follow up to key studies and assessments and expanding advocacy and communication activities to increase public awareness and strengthen political commitment on

violence against children. UNICEF will also lay the groundwork for improving delivery of and access to quality family support and community-based child protection services, which will be a key focus for child protection in the next country programme.

OUTPUT 1 By 2016, 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:

Following enactment of the 2014 Law on Juvenile Criminal Procedures, UNICEF provided extensive technical assistance to develop a package of user-friendly guidelines for investigating agencies, public prosecutors, judges, lawyers, social workers, Village Child Mediation Committees, supervisors and re-educators, child offenders and their parents and child victims/witnesses to ensure its effective implementation. The guidelines will be finalized early 2016.

With UNICEF support, a comprehensive Analysis of the Justice System as it relates to Children in Contact with the Law was finalised and is pending approval by the People's Supreme Prosecutor. The analysis makes specific recommendations on how to improve the justice system for children.

A new Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Children was promulgated by the President of Lao PDR in January 2015. As a result of substantial technical support from UNICEF, the law includes the prohibition of physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence against women and children, and addresses prevention, protection and assistance to women and children who have experienced violence.

With UNICEF support, a Prime Minister's Agreement on Child Mediation was developed to ensure that the rights of children are protected throughout the mediation process and that mediation is conducted in a child-friendly and gender-sensitive manner.

A training needs assessment of child justice professionals was also completed, with technical assistance from UNICEF, and will inform the development of child justice training modules to be integrated into the curriculum of the Police Academy and the Research and Training Institutes for Prosecutors and Judges.

Key constraints/bottlenecks remain the limited availability of funds allocated to child justice by the Government, limited community-based diversion options and services for children in contact with the law and a lack of professionals specifically trained to handle cases involving children. In 2016, UNICEF will continue to focus on strengthening the different components of the child justice system, including institutional and human resources capacity development and dissemination of new child protection laws and policies across all sectors and levels of society.

Based on existing research and studies, the programme will support two pilot initiatives to provide legal and social assistance to child offenders, victims and witnesses, and community-based diversion options offering quality alternatives to detention for children in conflict with the law: both a first for Lao PDR.

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:

Following approval of the Adoption Decree in 2014, an adoption manual was developed, with UNICEF technical and financial support, providing a step-by-step guide of the adoption process. Using the manual, a training of trainers was completed for the central adoption team, established under the Decree. Training for provincial and district level is ongoing and will be completed in 2016.

A Child and Family Welfare System Assessment was completed 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 intensive technical assistance from UNICEF and the US Government's Centres for Disease Control, the Government's capacity to process and analyse data from the national Study on Violence against Children was considerably strengthened. Preliminary findings are available and report writing is underway. To complement the study, the Government officially launched the #ENDviolence initiative on 31 May 2015 to raise awareness on violence against children and set the stage for a long-term social mobilization and behaviour change initiative to reduce violence and its acceptability. A range of digital, social and traditional communication materials were produced and disseminated, including posters, TV/radio spots, a song and social media.

With UNICEF support, the Government begun a review of social work practice in Lao PDR to suggest ways in which the Government can strengthen social work functions at different levels of the child protection system and within the social welfare sector over the short and long-term. A para-professional training manual on social work for children and families has been drafted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the National University of Laos, with UNICEF support. The manual complies with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and international standards and best practices on social work for children and their families.

A major challenge in child welfare remains translation of laws and policies into practice, largely due to limitations in budget, services and human capacities to protect and assist children who are 'at risk' of or experiencing harm. Significant work remains to be done to build the institutional and human capacities of Government to deliver family support and community-based child protection services and to establish the social work profession. In 2016, UNICEF will focus on finalizing and disseminating the VAC study and related Government action plan; expanding advocacy and communication activities on VAC; disseminating the Child and Family Welfare System Assessment; and delivering para-professional training to key child protection stakeholders and service providers.

OUTPUT 3 Effective and efficient management of the Child Protection Programme.**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF Lao PDR efficiently mobilized the necessary technical expertise through staff and partnerships to provide effective strategic technical advice, strengthen partner's capacity, engage in partnerships and effectively managed the implementation of this programme component.

OUTCOME 5 By 2016, 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:

According to the UNICEF/WHO JMP 2015 updates, Lao PDR met the MDG (7c) target on Water and Sanitation. 76 per cent of the population (86 per cent urban and 69 per cent rural) people have access to improved source of water, and 71 per cent (94 per cent Urban and 56 per cent rural) have access to improved sanitation. Over the past 15 years, the Government of Lao PDR (GOL) has made impressive strides to improve the water and sanitation situation.

In 2015, UNICEF supported 40,050 rural people, including 19,300 children, to access and use of improved water source. Additional, 6,000 rural population (including 2,900 children) have access to and use of sanitation facilities through demand responsive approach of community led total sanitation (CLTS). Two villages have been declared free of open defecation. A total of 26,400 primary school children now have access to and use of accessible and gender-sensitive sanitary latrines, drinking water and handwashing facilities. More than 7,442 children from 68 primary schools now have access to and use of group hand-washing facilities through the Hygiene Action led by Pupils in Schools initiatives in Saravane Province. Pupils practice daily group hand-washing with soap and water before school meal or afternoon break, use and clean toilets, filtered water to drink, and clean classrooms and schools compound.

In early August, seven provinces were affected by floods. The Government and UNICEF responded to 8,400 people including 4,000 children with lifesaving WASH items in Borikhamxay and Khamouane Provinces. UNICEF led the cluster, and conducted a rapid assessment and accordingly total 95 community dug wells in 19 villages of four districts of Borikhamxay Province have been disinfected using chlorine, benefiting around 5,700 people including 2,700 children.

With UNICEF technical and financial support, the MoH in collaboration with other line ministries, organised the first WASH Joint Sector Review in Lao PDR. Thirteen “golden indicators” were agreed upon and seven proposed for the inclusion in the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan of Lao PDR. The draft WASH Policy and Strategy (urban and rural) is available for discussion at sub-national and national level. The Joint Sector Review and WASH Policy are two of the six key commitments that Lao PDR committed to in the Sanitation and Water for All High Level Meeting in April, 2014. With these two initiatives, greater synergy has been created among the different ministries overseeing WASH. UNICEF is also a key player in the WASH technical working group, where Government line ministries, departments, agencies, UN organizations and I/NGOS meet bimonthly.

UNICEF contracted Emory University in 2014 to conduct a three-year longitudinal study using a Randomised Control Trial covering 100 schools (50 intervention and 50 comparison schools) on measuring the impact of WASH in Schools (WinS) on reducing absenteeism in Saravane Province. Preliminary findings showed that cultural practices have a significant impact on children's access to education, and there is high absenteeism during plantation and harvesting periods in both intervention and control schools.

UNICEF adjusted the design of WinS facilities in simple but innovative ways. For example, electric pumps have been introduced in schools to provide water to the school lavatory, and platforms of hand pumps were raised in some areas prone to floods. This serves a dual purpose: a flood proof water point and water supply by gravity to the water tank. In 2015, UNICEF organised three donor visits raising the visibility of WASH in the country.

UNICEF provided technical support to build capacity at national and local level, conducted training of trainers and trainings for facilitators for operation and management, for sanitation and hygiene promotion in schools and communities. Ninety one WASH committees were established and trained through community dialogue process. UNICEF also provided support to Government ministries and departments to participate in the national and international learning exchange and workshops. Lao PDR was well represented in a WinS International Learning Experience in Sri Lanka, bi-regional meeting on Water Quality Surveillance and Post-2015 WASH Monitoring in Bangkok, and SWA Partnership meeting in Hague in November 2015. UNICEF took the lead and used the global platforms, including World Water Day, Global Handwashing Day, and World Toilet Day as opportunities for advocacy.

Whilst the country has achieved the WASH MDG, 7 million people (48 per cent of whom are children under 18 from mostly rural communities) lack access to improved sources of water; two million people (981,000 children) lack basic sanitation and hygiene, and 1.6 million defecate in the open. There is a huge disparity amongst urban and rural children. Diarrhoeal disease prevalence in rural areas is twice that of urban areas. Low capacity (institutional and individual) of Government line departments at different level, high level of turnover of already trained staff, and lack of community ownership are some major challenges in the sector.

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 fulfil sector commitments of the SWA high level meeting. A significant achievement was the organisation of the first Joint Sector Review on WASH (Rural and Urban). Thirteen “golden indicators” were agreed upon and seven proposed for inclusion in 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan of Lao PDR (2016-2020). The draft WASH Policy and Strategy (urban and rural) is available for discussion at sub-national and national level. The overarching WASH Policy and Strategy (for urban and rural) has been drafted. Consultative meetings among the sector stakeholders on the WASH policy conducted at national and regional levels.

The WASH sector profile was raised through the celebration of global events namely World Water Day, Global Handwashing Day, and World Toilet Day. A focus was on using social media, TV and newspapers to advocate for increased support to address the WASH-related issues in the country.

Two School Health Taskforce focal points from the Ministry of Education and Sports participated in the WinS International Learning Exchange in Sri Lanka. The “Raising Clean Hands” booklet (English version) has been translated into Lao language. The booklet highlights key priorities, successes and challenges for hygiene behaviour promotion in schools.

UNICEF with support from Emory University conducted an impact assessment of WinS using a Randomized Control Trial in Saravane Province covering 100 schools (50 intervention and 50 comparison schools). Preliminary findings showed cultural practices have significant impact on children’s access to education; and there is high absenteeism during plantation and harvesting periods in both intervention and control schools. Some of the challenges under this activity relate to accessibility in the most remote areas.

UNICEF continued to work with partners to support scaling-up rural sanitation. Findings from the joint study on supply chains (Sanitation Marketing) and the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Programme's (WSP) funded study on demand for sanitation products has led to co-funding for the development of Behaviour Change Communication tools and capacity building to promote rural sanitation. UNICEF and other partners organized a learning exchange workshop on CLTS for Government partners across the country. UNICEF's efforts in advocating for planning beyond individual open defecation free (ODF) villages to a district wide approach is gaining momentum as more provincial partners have started to plan for achieving ODF districts in the long term. A WASH Programme evaluation was conducted by external consultants, and the recommendations are being used for new Country Programme Development.

OUTPUT 2 WASH partners' use strengthened coordination mechanisms to better plan, budget, implement and monitor activities related to humanitarian situations and Disaster Risk Reduction.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

In 2015, through the Government mechanisms, UNICEF responded to 8,400 people, including 4,000 children, affected by floods who received life-saving WASH materials. UNICEF played a lead role in coordinating WASH cluster activities, organized meetings on a quarterly basis, and developed and updated the WASH preparedness and response plan to respond to humanitarian situations.

In order to respond to the floods in early August 2015 (affecting seven provinces in Lao PDR) UNICEF led the cluster and conducted a Rapid Assessment using the agreed tools on 2-3 September 2015 in the eight most affected villages in two districts: Paksan and Bolikhanh of Bolikhamxai Province. The Rapid Assessment team was divided into groups consisting of representatives from Government, Department of Disaster Management and Climate Change (DDMCC), Central Namsaat/ Ministry of Health, Provincial Department of Health, Provincial Namsaat, District Namsaat of two districts, UNICEF, Oxfam, and World Vision. In response to the findings, 95 community-dug wells in 19 villages of four districts (Paksan, Bolikhan, Thaphabath and Pakkading) of Borikhamxay Province were disinfected using chlorine. Around 5,700 people, including 2,700 children, benefited from this activity.

WASH equipment and items have been repositioned in four main regions: Central Nam Saat office in Vientiane Capital, Luang Prabang City for the northern region, Savannakhet City for the central region, and Pakse (capital of Champasak Province) for the southern region. This will help provide faster response capability to humanitarian disaster situations right after the onset of disasters.

UNICEF provided support to translate the WASH Component of the SPHERE Handbook into Lao Language. This will enhance the capacity of partners to follow the standards while responding to humanitarian disaster situations in the country.

OUTPUT 3 Effective and efficient management of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programme.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Lao PDR efficiently mobilized the necessary technical expertise through staff and partnerships to provide effective strategic technical advice, strengthen partners' capacity, engage in partnerships and effectively and efficiently manage the implementation of this programme component of UNICEF country programme of cooperation.

OUTPUT 4 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 2015, additional 40,050 rural people, including 19,300 children, gained access to and use of improved sources of water in their communities in Luangprabang, Xiengkoung, Saravan and Attapeu provinces. In 91 selected communities, construction has been completed for 185 water systems in communities [157 boreholes and 28 Gravity Flow Water Systems). An additional 6,000 rural population (including 2,900 children) now have access to and use of sanitation facilities through the building of 507 new latrines. Two villages have reached and celebrated ODF status. 26,400 primary school children have access to and use of accessible and gender-sensitive school latrine, water and hand washing facilities in 194 primary schools in the provinces of Saravane, Savannakhet, Oudomxay, Bokeo and Khamouanne. Through the Hygiene Action led by Pupils in Schools activities in Saravane more than 7,442 children from 68 primary schools have access to and use of group hand-washing facilities. More than 36 provincial and district education and Nam Saat officers from eight districts of Saravane were trained to build their capacity in implementing hygiene activities in schools. UNICEF conducted a learning exchange for Saravan District and provincial officers in Sissatanak District of Vientiane Capital.

UNICEF conducted Training of Trainers for O&M of WASH facilities in schools and communities. Around 154 provincial and district officers were trained in the target provinces and over 654 school management committee members from 218 schools of selected provinces were trained on O&M. Some 2,000 copies of the O&M manual were printed and distributed to the school management committees, and front line staff⁸ of respective provincial education and health departments.

91 WASHCOMs were established and received training and Community Dialogue Kits during the training.

UNICEF provided non-local materials and WASHCOMs provided local materials (sand, gravel, etc. and voluntary labour for pipe trench excavation and other works which is around 40 per cent of the total project cost for GFS systems. Provincial and District Nam Saat staff provided technical expertise to install the facilities.

Provincial and district Nam Saat, Health Departments, Lao Women Union members were key partners for sanitation interventions through CLTS. In Saravane, out of 70 villages, 34 villages in 1st phase were triggered followed by post-triggering activities leading to newly built 507 latrines. Borikhamxay Province with UNICEF support introduced CLTS in three districts as district wide approach of elimination of open defecation.

OUTCOME 6 By 2016, children, young people and women have their rights fulfilled through a strengthened knowledge, policy, legislative and budgetary environment.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF continued to raise the profile of children and women in Lao PDR through strengthened engagement with the National Assembly, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Investment and other line ministries. To promote child rights through high level advocacy, a structured partnership was established with the Social-Cultural Affairs Committee of National

Assembly. An advocacy workshop was organised by UNICEF Lao PDR with more than 100 National Assembly members, including 40 parliamentarians and five vice ministers, focusing on “Strengthening Parliamentarians Involvement on Better Actions for Children”. The meeting provided clear recommendations on children issues with focus on the needs to invest in children and addressing those challenges related to the well-being of children in particular off-track MDG indicators - stunted and underweight children, the low immunisation coverage, survival rates from 1 -5 grade, low coverage of early childhood education services, high open defecation and violence against children issues.

Strategic partnerships were strengthened with traditional partners and four new partnerships were established with Lao Front for National Construction and Lao Women’s Union and National Assembly and Ministry of Planning and Investment. UNICEF ensured that children are at the centre of development through 8th National Socio-Economic Development and UN partnership framework development processes through providing comments and feedback to include children issues and indicators. The partnership with the Ministry of planning and Investment (MPI) enhanced the availability and accessibility of the disaggregated data through surveys and research and use of findings for policy dialogue, supporting the development of the 8th NSEDP including National M&E framework. In addition, the partnership with the Lao Front for National Construction and Lao Women’s Union contributed to reaching ethnic groups in remote areas to address inequity and gender issues through outreach activities.

Policy briefs on children related to immunisation, nutrition, hand washing practices, healthy sanitation practices, ending violence against children, and early childhood education were developed and used for advocacy with policy and decision-makers at national and subnational levels. Simplified versions of briefs were printed and distributed at district levels for orientation and outreach activities to raise awareness on child issues.

With the strategic engagement with the Ministry of Finance and MPI, UNICEF organized a study visit to Malaysia for key Government officials to gain practical knowledge and understanding on Outcome-Based Planning and Budgeting.

UNICEF and National Economic Research finalised and disseminated the National Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis of children under five. A case study of Out of School Children has been initiated and is expected to be finalized in 2016. The process to develop the National Social Economic Research Framework has started through a consultative workshop with line ministries, development partners and academia. The National Social Economic Research Framework will support the overall National M&E framework of the 8th NSEDP and the Strategy 2025.

In 2015, UNICEF supported the Lao Statistics Bureau to develop and launch the provincial database in Saravane province (<http://www.devinfo.org/saravaneinfo/>) for planning and monitoring of the National and Provincial Social Economic Development Plan at sub-national and decentralized levels. UNICEF also completed the sub-national nutrition survey, the violence against children study, WASH evaluation and WASH policy formulation. In addition, the preparation for upcoming Lao Social Indicator Survey II was initiated and discussed among key stakeholders in aiming for field data collection at the end of 2016. The sector analysis focusing on socio-economic situation was also conducted to inform the development of new country programme.

To monitor the progress and understand the challenges of programme implementation and follow-up on the Inter Parliamentarians Union meeting recommendations, three joint field

monitoring visits were conducted by the National Assembly with UNICEF Lao PDR's technical and financial support. The Ministry of Planning and Investment – as an inter-sectoral ministry - also conducted two joint visits with UNICEF to review the progress, HACT assurance and general programme implementation coordination.

Main constraints faced during this period were the workload of the Government staff to handle multiple demands from development partners and the Government's priorities at the same time, which country office dealt through close follow up with line ministries. 2015 was a busy year for the Lao Government due to key milestones, including celebration of its 40 years of Independence, the finalization of 8th NSEDP 2016-20, the finalization of Population and Household Census and reporting on MDGs progress. In addition, in 2015, partnerships with four new implementing agencies were established, which required more attention and support to accelerate the planned activities in timely manner.

In 2016, the focus will be on completing those activities initiated in 2015 with implementing partners and consolidate the programme. UNICEF will also explore opportunities for more collaboration with the Department of Planning in MPI and the Department of Fiscal Policy, Ministry of Finance to strengthen the planning and budgeting for children. The preparation and implementation of Lao Social Indicators Survey II (combined survey within MICS and DHS) in late 2016 will be the highest priority. Another key priority is to develop the new Country Programme 2017-2021, with a costed evaluation plan.

OUTPUT 1 Programme Support - social policy programme.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Lao PDR efficiently mobilized the necessary technical expertise through staff and partnerships to provide effective strategic technical advice, strengthen partner's capacity, engage in partnerships and effectively and efficiently manage the implementation of this programme component of UNICEF country programme of cooperation.

OUTPUT 2 By 2016, disaggregated data from surveys are available and accessible for evidence-based sub-national planning.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

The main achievement in 2015 was the support to the Government to develop and launch the provincial database–SaravaneInfo - which has socio-economic data for planning and monitoring of the National and Provincial Social Economic Development Plan. After 10 years of customization of LaoInfo in Lao PDR since 2004, this was an important breakthrough. The SaravaneInfo has been developed and is used at decentralized level. Some 208 selected socio-economic indicators were identified through several consultative processes and workshops and capacity building for more than 30 key staff from central – LSB and provincial staff – the provincial statistical office, and key line departments such as health, education and sport, and agriculture and forestry, and the district statistical office was conducted on database management and utilization of LaoInfo enhanced through the on job and face to face training at provincial level. As a result the SaravaneInfo Database in both languages Lao and English– the desktop and online searchable database containing data from key selected provincial socio-economic development plan (<http://www.devinform.org/saravaneinfo/>) <http://dataforall.org/dashboard/saravaneinfo/>. The official launching event –SaravaneInfo, profile and dashboard in aiming to enhance the monitoring system of the provincial SEDP organised with more than 100 participants from central LSB, provincial authorities, line departments, and district authorities, and both provincial and district statistics office.

In 2015, two major surveys; the sub-national nutrition survey and the violence against children study were completed. The 2015 Food and Nutrition Security Survey aimed to provide estimates of nutritional status, determinants and multisectoral programme coverage in five provinces: Oudomxay, Saravane, Luangnamtha, Attapeu, and Sekong. The data has been collected and currently under analysis. Furthermore, the analysis from the Violence against Children study - a national household survey to retrospectively assess violence against children, which includes physical, emotional and sexual violence - was completed and the report is being prepared.

The preparation process of upcoming Lao Social Indicators Survey II has been initiated and discussed among key stakeholders in aiming for field data collection in late 2016. UNICEF played an important role together with development partners to complete the population and housing survey in 2015, and the Lao Government has issued a certificate of appreciation to four major partners, including UNICEF, for this strategic support.

OUTPUT 3 By 2016, 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:

To deepen the understanding of deprivations and disparities across multiple dimensions of well-being, a Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis was carried out by the National Economic Research Institute, with technical support from the Economic Policy Research Institute and UNICEF's Office of Research. The MODA analysis focused on the specific deprivations of infants in areas such as health, nutrition, child care, housing, violence, water and sanitation, and the relations between these areas. This analysis provided a very useful way to look at child poverty and child deprivation, as it considers several dimensions simultaneously. The first dissemination workshop was organized for key development partners and line ministries and second dissemination was done at the Annual Research Forum Meeting. The findings have been used to inform the National Development Plan, the new Lao PDR-UNICEF Country Programme, and developing issue/policy briefs for advocacy.

In addition, the case study on out of school children and its impact of economic losses started in 2015 with key stakeholders in finalising the concept and plan. The development of the National Social Research Framework was initiated in November which will provide a significant platform for strengthening the overall National M& E system. In particular this will support the implementation of the 8th NSEDP and Strategy 2025, as well as enhancing the research network among key research communities, academic institutions and key line ministries.

An advocacy workshop was organized by UNICEF in November 2015 with more than 100 National Assembly members including 40 parliamentarians and five vice ministers. The meeting provided clear recommendations which was endorsed by the Social-Cultural Affairs Committee of the National Assembly. This meeting highlighted for the needs to invest in children and addressing those challenges related to the well-being of children in particular off-track MDG indicators - stunted and underweight children, low immunization coverage, education system survival rates from 1 -5 grade, low coverage of early childhood education services, high open defecation and violence against children issues.

The new partnerships with the UK Department of International Cooperation, LFNC, LWU and National Assembly have been strengthened through the signed workplan. The policy briefs on children related to immunisation, nutrition, hand washing, open defecation, violence against

children, and early childhood education were developed through the close consultations with LFNC, and key line ministries, and used for advocacy with policy decision makers at national and subnational level and programme implementers at districts and village level for orientation and outreach activities. To monitor the progress and understanding the challenges of programme implementation and follow-up on the Inter Parliamentarians Union meeting recommendations, three joint field monitoring visits were conducted by the National Assembly with UNICEF's technical and financial support.

OUTPUT 4 By 2016, partners are better able to support the programme planning, coordinate the implementation, review of progress and facilitate the country programme cooperation between Government of Lao PDR and UNICEF.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

A strategic partnership was established with MPI to support the programme planning, coordinate the implementation, review of progress and facilitate the country programme cooperation between Government of Lao PDR and UNICEF Lao PDR. The Department of International Coordination played key role in coordinating with different implementation, annual progress review and planning meeting and also strengthening the HACT.

DIC, with support from UNICEF conducted four trainings for participants from four regional provinces on Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT) with special focus on financial management. More than 100 staff members from different implementing partners were trained to enhance their understanding and knowledge on Financial Management, HACT procedures including spot checks. UNICEF Lao PDR also facilitated micro-assessments and audits of implementing partners. The DIC also conducted two joint visits with UNICEF to review the progress, HACT assurance and general programme implementation coordination in northern and southern province.

In coordination with the Ministry of Finance and MPI, UNICEF organized a study visit to Malaysia for key Government officials to gain practical knowledge and understanding on Outcome-Based Planning and Budgeting. The eight key Government officials were from Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning & Investment, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education & Sports, and Ministry of Labour & Social Welfare. This visit aimed to support the alignment of public budget allocations with the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan and promote dialogue on social budgeting for children in Lao PDR.

OUTCOME 7 Effective and efficient programme performance.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF provided strong technical support to the development of UN Partnership Framework (2017-2021) through the UN Interagency Coordination Mechanism in 2015. UNICEF participated in outcome groups on Governance; Education (Chair); Health/HIV and WASH; Food Security and Nutrition; Natural Resource Management/Climate Change and Natural Disasters; Gender; Communication and Monitoring & Evaluation.

UNICEF carried out the process of developing the new Country Programme Document through extensive consultations and internal meetings, including a Programme, Policy and Procedures workshop in August; Sectoral Analysis in September; Strategic Moment of Reflection Meeting in October 2015, consultations with the Government and key stakeholders, Strategy Meeting hosted by the Ministry of Planning and Investment in November 2015, leading towards development of the strategy note and CPD to be submitted in early 2016.

UNICEF continued to strengthen its preparedness and response capacity to emergency response as a cross-cutting development function of all programmes for the implementation of emergency interventions, as well as the Business Continuity Plan which was updated during the year.

Regular programme coordination was undertaken through monthly meetings, as well as Monday morning heads of sections meetings to coordinate programme work, and to ensure efficient and effective programme implementation.

The most recent polio outbreak of circulating Vaccine Derived Polio Virus (cVDPV) in October raised national as well as international concern. UNICEF Lao PDR immediately deployed staff, reallocated budget and requested additional technical and financial support from the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, UNICEF HQ and RO. UNICEF and WHO contributed to the design and implementation of National Polio Outbreak Response Plan covering from October 2015 to March 2016. UNICEF Lao PDR received financial contribution of more than US\$ 700,000 from UNICEF HQ and US\$ 95,000 from EAPRO.

In order to attract more funding, UNICEF Lao PDR took extra steps in 2015 to arrange donor briefings, regular and coordinated communication on emerging issues, and joint field visits for key development partners including EU, Australia and US.

UNICEF Lao PDR utilised 100 per cent of funds from expiring grants in 2015 as well as from Non-Grant (GC) with high level of utilisation rate at the year end. Donor reports submitted on time. DCTs were closely monitored: there was no outstanding DCT more than nine months at the end of 2015 despite a large amount of disbursement during the second half of 2015 due to emergencies, including floods, diphtheria and polio outbreaks.

OUTPUT 1 Strengthen Programme Coordination.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Regular programme coordination was undertaken through monthly meetings, as well as Monday morning heads of sections meeting to coordinate programme work, and to ensure efficient and effective programme implementation.

As part of the cross sectoral linkages, Health and Nutrition and WASH programmes worked closely in ensuring that WASH interventions contribute to reduction of diarrhoeal cases as well as stunting. Integrated programming of Nutrition and WASH was initiated in 2015 by identifying target province/district for convergence of activities as well as joint proposal development. This has resulted in development and testing of a 'convergence' approach in selected districts and provinces of Lao PDR by the National Nutrition Centre with close engagement of health, water and sanitation (agriculture and education sectors). WASH interventions also focused on districts/provinces where WASH and nutrition indicators are performing poorly.

Internally, UNICEF established a WASH in School in-house working group between WASH and Education Sections, from which joint plans were developed. The regular meetings resulted in joint advocacy and monitoring efforts between Nam Saat of Ministry of Health and Department of Pre and Primary Education of Ministry of Education and Sports to monitor and report back on WinS interventions with recommendations to improve WASH services in schools.

OUTPUT 2 Media and External Relations.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF continued to support a systematic, evidence-based approaches to Communication in order to address political, social, and behavioural issues across all sectors. In 2015, UNICEF continued to work closely with the various Government, development partners and NGOs to support communication actions.

In 2015, UNICEF supported a number of high-profile events to strategically positioning children's issues. UNICEF messages for children, echoed by the key stakeholders, received distinctive media coverage including the commitments made by the high-level Government and partners towards joint action for children. An advocacy meeting with the Social and Cultural Affairs Committee of the National Assembly and the first National Nutrition Forum to address under-nutrition with a focus on stunting were notable high level advocacy events where key messages for children were shared with all key stakeholders to lay the foundation for joint action towards results for children.

UNICEF produced human interest stories, photo essays and videos covering a wide range of UNICEF's work for donor reports, proposals, for visibility and promotion of UNICEF brand in social media. In 2015, UNICEF Lao PDR hosted a number of donor visits including UNICEF Australia and mining company MMG, USAID, Aeon. The donor visit included the ambassadors of the EU delegation and the Australian Embassy to observe their funded activities.

A media field trip was organized in Saravan province in November 2015 to promote the 1,000 day project - improving the nutritional status of children in Laos and acknowledge the support received in this sector from European Union and Minerals and Metals Group).

OUTPUT 3 Effective and efficient management of the Programme Coordination Unit.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF efficiently mobilised the necessary technical expertise through staff and partnerships to provide effective strategic technical advice, strengthen partner's capacity, engage in partnerships and effectively and efficiently manage the implementation of this programme component.

OUTCOME 8 Effective and efficient programme management and operations support.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

For 2015, UNICEF Lao PDR had defined three Operational Management Priorities: (i) Effective and efficient governance and systems; (ii) Effective and efficient management and stewardship of financial resources and risk management; and (iii) Effective and efficient management and stewardship of human resources. All the three outputs were achieved.

To prepare UNICEF Lao PDR to join the GSSC next year, supporting documents for all payments are attached in Vision, and the number of payments is being reduced from daily to bi-weekly. UNICEF Lao PDR made a great contribution as Operations Management Team member and also UN Clinic member, with recommendations to UN Country Team Capacity building of partners in finances to improve the quality of documents and reporting, during spot checks and/or separated trainings. Joint long term agreements were signed between UN agencies and travel agent (for air transport), and a joint LTA signed between UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP with an audit company for joint micro-assessments. The LTAs had a large impact in terms of saving funds with preferential rates obtained. UNICEF Lao PDR has invested to

support staff development, with external trainings, online trainings and group trainings, such as Programme Policy and Procedures, and Ethics and Integrity trainings. The Human Resource Development Team organized Friday learning sessions on different subjects.

The results from the Global Staff Survey were taken seriously by the office management. Recommendations submitted by the ad-hoc committee to the Country Management Team and approved by the Representative were implemented. The Joint Consultative Committee was functional with quarterly meetings conducted between the Management and the Staff Association, discussing issues related to the staff and the office.

UNICEF Lao PDR made excellent performance regarding recruitments by finalizing all recruitments before the lead time which is 90 days. Also for consultant recruitments, UNICEF continued to follow the process approved last year, starting from advertisement, interview, reference check before signing contracts.

There is close follow-up on the HACT Assurance Plan, with quarterly reports sent to the EAPRO. An effort needs to ensure the quality assurance to improve follow-up on recommendations from programme visits, micro-assessments, audits and spot checks.

OUTPUT 1 Governance and Systems

Analytical Statement of Progress:

In 2015, the UNICEF Lao PDR focus was to ensure close follow-up on the implementation of the responses given to closed audit recommendation from 2014. The HACT assurance plan was established taking in account all recommendations from previous spot checks, scheduled audits and micro-assessments. Using the global LTA signed, four partners receiving more than US\$100,000 were micro-assessed and three partners receiving more than US\$500,000 were audited. The assurance plan for all these partners, mostly significant and moderate risks will be elaborated, indicating the risk level of each partner and what measures to take with each partner 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 were assessed jointly with UNDP and UNFPA with cost sharing basis, resulting in saving resources. The remaining three scheduled audits for partners receiving more than US\$500,000 and four micro-assessments for partners receiving more than US\$100,000 were also conducted by external audit company to complete 2015 plan.

Based on the office assurance plan, 41 spot checks were conducted with recommendations to address the areas that have been identified at risks. Three rounds of training were conducted covering all Government partner staff from across the country. The Business Continuity Plan was updated taking in account new systems (use of cloud, Outlook). The office is updating progressively its ICT system, as required by the organization.

OUTPUT 2 Financial Resources and Stewardship

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Lao PDR started preparing to join the Global Shared Service Centre (GSSC) in July 2016 and continued to work on improving its Cash Transfer processes and payment processes. Supporting documents for all payments are attached in Vision and processing payments is moving from daily basis to two times a week. Bank reconciliations are performed monthly with success. Most of the partners in Lao PDR, including Government, have staff with limited financial backgrounds managing the finances. The results of micro-assessments and spot-

checks conducted showed that the level of risks of most of them is low and moderate. UNICEF Lao PDR is investing a lot in capacity building by organizing formal trainings all over the country, and on-job trainings during spot-checks and micro-assessments. The risk mitigation plans are in place to ensure that the funds disbursed are used as planned, by selecting payment methods according to the risks and close field monitoring visits. The office key performance indicators are monitored, reviewed and followed up regularly. The Performance Management Report is the tool used for monitoring all indicators: timely DCT liquidation (less than six months ages, open TAs for more than 15 days, open commitments (POs), and segregation of duties. The UN HACT Task Force with UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP is functional with the participation of UN Division, Department of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Planning and Investment for all joint HACT related activities. There is also HACT taskforce meeting every month to review the HACT related issues. A training was also organized on HACT for all UNICEF Lao PDR staff.

OUTPUT 3 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, and also encouraging and sharing with staff all on-line trainings. Ethics training for all staff was organized in September 2015 which was a good opportunity for all staff not only to learn, but also to share their own experiences. UNICEF Lao PDR also organized for all staff Ethics and Integrity training for all staff, and PPP training for key staff in programme and operations.

The Performance Appraisal system functioned well with good compliance on completion by the deadlines in 2015: 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 2015, to discuss issues related to staff and proposed solutions. With the Global Staff Survey results, UNICEF Lao PDR together all recommendations from the ad-hoc group, for close follow-up by the CMT.

UNICEF Lao PDR performed very well on staff recruitments. All recruitments for national and international staff in 2015 were completed before the lead time.