**Acronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3RP</td>
<td>Regional Refugee Response Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>AAP</td>
<td>Accountability to Affected Populations</td>
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<tr>
<td>AWD</td>
<td>Acute Watery Diarrhea</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOS</td>
<td>Business Operations Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>C4D</td>
<td>Communication for Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAAC</td>
<td>Children Affected by Armed Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Country Program Document</td>
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<td>CPIE</td>
<td>Child Protection in Emergencies</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECCD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Care and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFWA</td>
<td>E-Learning, Face-to-Face Learning, Web based learning and Action learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESCWA</td>
<td>Economic and Social Commission for West Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGMC</td>
<td>Female Genital Mutilation / Cutting</td>
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<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender Based Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Council</td>
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<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographic Information Systems</td>
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<td>HAC</td>
<td>Humanitarian Action for Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRBA</td>
<td>Human Rights Based Approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Response Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information, Communication and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMCI</td>
<td>Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPV</td>
<td>Inactivated Polio Vaccine</td>
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<tr>
<td>IYCF</td>
<td>Infant and Young Child Feeding</td>
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<td>JGC</td>
<td>Joint General Comment</td>
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<td>LAS</td>
<td>League of Arab States</td>
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<td>LSCE</td>
<td>Life Skills and Citizenship Education</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>mOPV2</td>
<td>monovalent Oral Polio Vaccine Type 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>MRM</td>
<td>Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Government Organization</td>
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<td>NLG</td>
<td>No Lost Generation</td>
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<td>NRW</td>
<td>Non Revenue Water</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCV</td>
<td>Oral Cholera Vaccine</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>RBM</td>
<td>Results Based Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROMP</td>
<td>Regional Office Management Plan</td>
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<td>ROMT</td>
<td>Regional Office Management Team</td>
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<td>SAM</td>
<td>Severe Acute Malnutrition</td>
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<td>SIA</td>
<td>Supplementary Immunization Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOWC</td>
<td>State of the World’s Children reports</td>
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SP - Strategic Plan
T4D - Technology for Development
UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund
UNGA – United Nations General Assembly
VDPV2 - Vaccine Derived Polio Virus Type 2
VAC - Violence Against Children
WASH – Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO – World Health Organization
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Part 1: Overview
1.1 Executive Summary

Large-scale and protracted crises continued to take their toll on children in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) throughout 2017. The MENA region has the greatest concentration of humanitarian needs in the world, hosting 57 per cent of all people and 52 per cent of all children covered by UNICEF’s global emergency response programming. Of the children in humanitarian need in the MENA region, 71 per cent live in countries undergoing active conflict.

In 2017, UNICEF continued to play a major role in providing life-saving assistance and safeguarding basic services - such as immunization and nutrition support - for vulnerable children across the region. The UNICEF Middle East Regional Office (MENARO) advanced new programming frameworks to respond to immediate humanitarian needs, and linked responses to longer-term development needs by building the resilience of families, communities and systems. Through robust advocacy efforts, UNICEF MENARO called on all parties to conflicts in the region to end the six grave violations on children, and emphasized the need for children to be at the centre of recovery, reconstruction and social cohesion programming.

2017 marked the near complete collapse of ISIS’s control of large swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria. While this opened new opportunities for children to gain access to basic services and humanitarian aid, it also presented new challenges in the application of the universal principles of child rights in both ISIS-predominant countries, refugee-hosting countries and countries of origins. Children emerging from under ISIS control and refugee children fleeing violent conflict face bleak realities. With an estimated 8.7 million internally displaced children and thousands more who are on the move along the main migration routes crossing MENA, UNICEF MENARO has continually had to adapt its intervention approaches and responses across borders and sectors.

Seven years after the beginning of the Arab Springs, there is now growing recognition that the root causes of these movements - ever-growing inequalities and the limited social and economic opportunities for adolescents and youths - remain largely unaddressed. Therefore, in 2017 UNICEF MENARO accelerated its systematic response to adolescent needs, with a strong emphasis on community engagement and the acquisition of essential skills. For example, UNICEF MENARO partnered with national governments to launch a new Life Skills and Civic Education Initiative that is now shaping education reforms and is poised to generate broad improvements in children and adolescents’ learning across the region.

In all settings, UNICEF MENARO has sought to increase its contributions to social policy to better influence MENA governments’ reforms and resource allocations to address poverty, prevent conflict, and support social cohesion and reconstruction. UNICEF MENARO continued to invest in the creation of data and strategic information, building on the first-ever Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report launched in 2017. Partnerships, such as those within the No Lost Generation Initiative, have been crucial for leveraging results for children in 2017. Across the region, UNICEF MENARO played a key facilitating role in helping UNICEF Country Offices expand collaboration...
with the World Bank. This built on a successful partnership between UNICEF and the World Bank in Yemen to deliver cash transfers, health, nutrition, and WASH sector programming. Already, 13 out of 16 UNICEF country offices have established strategic financial or leveraging partnerships with the World Bank to drive systems-level results for children.

In 2017, UNICEF MENARO developed a new Regional Office Management Plan (ROMP) 2018-2021. The new ROMP guides UNICEF MENARO to refrain from imposing regional priorities on UNICEF Country Offices; instead UNICEF MENARO will concentrate on its core accountabilities: providing oversight and support to UNICEF Country Offices’ own accountabilities to deliver results for children. The new ROMP puts greater emphasis on promoting synergies and integrating interventions across technical sectors, humanitarian, and development responses, and building up robust advocacy based on evidence and supported by strategic partnerships. Through this alignment of accountabilities, UNICEF MENARO believes it can most effectively respond to the region’s challenges and seize upon opportunities to improve children’s lives in an increasingly complex environment.

1.2 Trends and Progress in the Region, as Affecting Children and Women

In 2017, large-scale protracted crises continued to generate significant humanitarian needs in the MENA region. The region’s complex conflicts and emergencies largely defined 2017, as in previous years.

Economic and Political Developments

Despite an upswing in global economic activity in 2017, economic performance in the Middle East and North Africa was subdued due to the low price of oil and on-going regional conflicts. In oil exporting countries, economic growth was suppressed because of low oil prices and the required fiscal adjustment, as well as by decision by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to reduce oil production. Oil importing countries have begun to recover due to increasing domestic demand and the cyclical recovery of the global economy. Yet, austerity measures have not enabled much-needed investments in social services and human capital to bring brighter prospects for the young and greater stability.

Still, with economic growth estimated at 2.6% in 2017\(^1\) for the region (about half of the 2016 level), growth remains well below the level needed to meet the many human development challenges in the region – among them child poverty. In 2017, a first-ever Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report\(^2\) was released, which documented multidimensional poverty amongst children. In the 11 Arab countries studied, 29 million children (one in four) are facing acute poverty, whether measured at the household level or in terms child-specific poverty.\(^3\)

Geo-political complexities affecting the Middle East and North African region in 2017 directly and indirectly impacted children and UNICEF’s programming and advocacy. For example, polarization deepened between Iran, on the one hand, and the Gulf States, Israel and the United States on the

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\(^2\) The Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report was produced by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI).

other. This polarization continues to exacerbate conflicts in Yemen, Syria and Iraq, and is a destabilizing factor in Lebanon. The region faces considerable ongoing risk that existing conflicts could intensify, or new flash points could suddenly emerge. For example, a rift between Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members opened in June 2017, when Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut off diplomatic relations with Qatar and subsequently enacted an economic boycott. The United States Government’s shift on the Palestinian issue also increased social and political tension across the region in 2017. Severe funding shortfalls are looming for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in 2018, which will impact millions of Palestinian refugee children who rely on UNRWA for education, health and social protection.

2017 also saw the near complete collapse of ISIS control of territory in Iraq and Syria. This has allowed government and humanitarian organizations to reach children who were previously living in ISIS-controlled territory with humanitarian aid and service delivery. However, the conflict has not ended in Iraq and Syria, where new fracture lines have emerged. The risk of child recruitment into armed groups remains high, and the fate of children and families previously associated with ISIS must be prioritized.

**Increasing Proportion of Youth and Adolescents**
Countries from the MENA region are undergoing a demographic transition with increasing numbers of children, adolescents and youth. Between 2000 and 2005, the region experienced an average population growth rate of 2.0 per cent per year, and the current 1.7 per cent per year remains well above the world’s average of 1.3 per cent per year.

Analysis in 2017 found that the numbers of children, adolescents and youth in the region will reach 271 million in 2050, while over 33 million children and youth under the age of 24 will be added to the population between 2015 and 2030. Despite the increasing number of children and youth, the slowing of population growth presents a demographic window of opportunity to invest in human capital by improving access to health and education and enhancing prospects for productive employment. Countries in the region now need to capitalize on this demographic dividend as soon as possible via strategic and sustainable investments, something UNICEF strongly advocated for in 2017.

The current youth bulge in the region’s population also generates an array of range of challenges, including the lack of access to basic services. Although fewer children (2.3 million) were out of school as of 2015, down from 15 million in 2008, the region’s education systems are unable to deliver individual and social development. This is especially pertinent to the high levels of youth unemployment - both in the formal and informal sectors - and the socio-economic exclusion of

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4 For the purposes of this document, the term “adolescent” denotes individuals between the ages of 10 and 19, and “youth” denotes individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 and “young people” refers to all aged 10 to 24.
6 UNICEF (2017). Generation 2030 MENA
youth in the region. Youth unemployment in MENA has been high and stagnant for the last five years at 25% in the Middle East and 30% in North Africa.7

In addition, discrimination against young women and girls remains widespread across the region,8 with women and girls suffering from very limited access to decent work or tertiary education opportunities, especially when they are undocumented. Large numbers of boys participate in hazardous work and forms of child labour; refugee boys are particularly at risk.9 Yet despite feelings of frustration, young people polled by UNICEF remain hopeful that their reality will improve.10

In response to the large number of youth who are out of school and out work in the MENA countries, in 2017 UNICEF MENARO shifted its approach to learning and schooling to focus on the skills that new generations will need to navigate a changing world. The “Life Skills and Citizenship Education” (LSCE) agenda and partnership, launched in 2017, promotes a new learning agenda, not only in school but also in non-formal and informal settings, that is directly linked with psycho-social support, prevention of violence, and employability for all. The LSCE approach is a key contribution to shaping the future of MENA societies, and requires long-term vision and sustained support from UNICEF and other partners.

The Child Protection Agenda

The child protection agenda in the region is ever growing in both complexity and scale. The U.N. continued to document grave child rights violations throughout 2017 in conflict-affected countries. As highlighted in the latest Secretary General’s Report on Children and Armed Conflict (A/72/361-S/2017-821 of August 2017), the impact of conflict on children was especially high in countries such as Yemen, Syria and Iraq. Child casualties, the widespread recruitment and use of children by parties to conflict, the security detention of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access and besiegement were among the most frequently documented violations in 2017, and often were committed in total disregard of the laws of war. Grave violations against children’s rights were also documented in Libya, Palestine and Sudan.

Children’s exposure to violence, abuse and exploitation remains a concern beyond conflict and humanitarian settings. This includes:

- **High levels of violence at home and at school:** a UNICEF global report on child violence in 2017 found Egypt and Tunisia had the highest levels of violence overall, reporting over 90% of children aged 2-4 years had experienced of violent discipline in the past month (Morocco, Lebanon, Algeria, Syria all reported a staggering 80% of the same).11

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8 Save the Children, 2017; PAR, UNICEF 2017
9 Norwegian Refugee Council, 2016.
10 Participatory Action Research, UNICEF, 2017
• **Harmful social practices:** female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) remains prevalent in a few countries in the region (in Egypt, FGM/C prevalence among 15-19-year-old girls is 88%,\(^{12}\) one of the highest globally).

• **Persistent high rates of child marriage:** despite significant declines in rates of child marriage in the MENA region as a whole (19% of 20-24 year-old women have been married by the age of 18 years on average, compared to 25% globally\(^{13}\)), in Sudan and Yemen, as many as one third of all women aged 20-24 were married or engaged at the age of 18.\(^{14}\) Child marriage has increased sharply in humanitarian crisis settings such as Iraq, where the proportion of 20-24 year-old women who were married by the age of 18 increased from 17% pre-crisis to 24% currently.\(^{15}\)

• **Detention for children in contact with the law:** there has also been an alarming increase in security and immigration detention of children in the region. The juvenile death penalty is still practiced in four countries, while the minimum age of criminal responsibility is low on average: Lebanon has the lowest minimum age of criminal responsibility at 7 years old, followed by Iran at 9 years old and Algeria at 10 years. UNICEF MENARO has undertaken a new review of legislative frameworks for the minimum age of criminal responsibility in the MENA region in 2017.

• **Millions of children uprooted in MENA:** refugees, internally displaced persons (IDP) and migrants continued to face heightened protection risks in 2017, with the situation in Libya of special concern. In 2017 MENA countries hosted over 6.5 million refugees, including 1.5 million children, while and additional 13.9 million people including 6.7 million children were internally displaced.\(^{16}\) The year saw over 168,000 people of whom 18% were children, migrate from African countries to Europe through the Eastern (from Turkey), Central (from Libya) and Western (mainly from Morocco) routes.\(^{17}\)

Investing in strengthening national child protection systems and capacities, including within the justice sector, is a key priority for UNICEF in the region. Morocco, Egypt, and Jordan have each developed multi-sector national plans and strategies to address violence against children, and Djibouti developed a national strategic plan for the abandonment of FGM/C. While these are welcome developments, these plans and strategies now need to be implemented in full. Emerging progress has also been seen in efforts to professionalize the social services workforce in Iran, Morocco and the State of Palestine. Both Egypt and Jordan have made efforts to improve the quality of their social services for children and increase access to justice.

**Climate Change**

The MENA region is also facing increasing temperatures, more frequent and extreme climate events, and changes in precipitation at both the annual and season levels. The drought affecting the Middle East over the past decade is considered to be the worst in the region’s history in nearly a

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\(^{13}\) UNICEF (2017): SOWC: Children in a Digital World. MENA region referred to here includes Sudan and Djibouti and excludes Israel.


\(^{16}\) Official UNHCR and IOM data, accessed through their websites in January 2018.

millennium.\textsuperscript{18} This is reducing freshwater availability, increasing food insecurity and disaster risks, contributing to displacement and tensions amongst host communities and the displaced, and negatively affecting key water dependent sectors economic sectors such as crop production and the quality of grazing rangelands. Water shortages are experienced most severely by vulnerable groups, and are stimulating even more urbanization in the region.\textsuperscript{19}

Several countries across the region are experiencing unprecedented public health problems with WASH related diseases. In July 2017, UNICEF-MENARO jointly with WHO-EMRO convened a sub-regional meeting for Yemen, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Jordan on Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD)/Cholera preparedness and response. The meeting developed recommendations to support countries suffering from and at risk of outbreaks, and established a regional AWD/Cholera response coordination mechanism to ensure treatment and prevention, along with improving WASH related services.

**UNICEF’s Positioning**

UNICEF continues to measure and address child poverty in the region, building on the interest generated by the Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report. In many countries in the region the need for fiscal consolidation has resulted in austerity measures, and UNICEF has played a key role in engaging with governments to protect important investments for children and support reforms that boost the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of public spending. UNICEF has worked to increase recognition of vulnerable and marginalized adolescents and youth, and promoted dialogue on the multi-faceted implications of austerity measures for societies in terms of human rights, social cohesion, economic opportunities, and security. The regional UN Interagency technical team on Adolescents and Youth (2018-2021) and the No Lost Generation (NLG) Advocacy Plan are working to advance key priorities to strengthen positive social norms in countries affected by violence against children, early marriage, FGM/C, and other risks for children. Investment in national protection systems remains a priority for UNICEF in 2018 and beyond.

UNICEF’s “Life Skills and Citizenship Education” (LSCE) framework and partnership, which promotes a new learning and skills agenda, will hopefully shape much-needed education reforms in the coming years. The concomitant development of meaningful instruments to measure children’s acquisition of foundational learning skills (including life-skills) will be key to measuring progress in education and in the efforts of societies to lay the foundation for their sustainable development. In the coming years, UNICEF will respond to MENA countries’ increased interest in support to expand Early Childhood Development (ECD) opportunities and pre-primary education. The first objective will be to build a common understanding and framework for the region with a wide group of stakeholders. In WASH, UNICEF continues to work on sector reforms, institutional strengthening, and tariffs, while also contributing to emergency response.

1.3 **Humanitarian Assistance**

MENA remains one of the most diverse and complex regions globally, including two Level 3 emergencies (Yemen and Syria) and one Level 2 (Iraq), while many other countries face protracted conflicts, civil unrest and/or political transition. Since 2011, the MENA region has undergone a

\textsuperscript{18} Ghassan Hasbani, presentation at the World Economic Forum, 2015.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
dramatic transformation. What was once a middle-income region, where UNICEF was focused mostly on upstream work, has now become the region with the greatest concentration of humanitarian needs in the world, hosting 57 per cent of people and 52 per cent of children covered by UNICEF’s global emergency response.

In 2017, 73.6 million people (including about 35.1 million children) were in need of humanitarian assistance across the region -- a decrease from 77.5 million total people in 2016, but an increase from 28.2 million children in the same year. In 2017, 71 per cent of the children in need across the region were living in countries suffering from conflict.

Multiple factors contribute to the large need for humanitarian response in the region, including ongoing violence, internal displacement, large refugee movements, risks of disease outbreaks, natural disasters, growing economic and gender inequality, high rates of youth unemployment and poverty.

Given the increasing scale and complexity of crises, UNICEF MENARO has provided both direct and remote humanitarian and resilience program support to all country offices in the region. Several emergencies required support at the sub-regional level, including cross-border programs into the Syrian Arab Republic, efforts to support people/children on the move, and operational support in high-risk environments such as Iraq, Libya and Yemen. UNICEF MENARO provided support through technical assistance and quality assurance, including on preparedness, emergency coordination, resource mobilization, contribution management, humanitarian planning, performance monitoring, analysis and advocacy. UNICEF MENARO also deployed technical experts when needed through regional technical personnel rosters.

UNICEF MENARO scaled up its support where needed, for example in response to the increase in AWD/suspected cholera cases in Iraq, Sudan and Yemen, the emergence of vaccine-derived polio cases in Syria, and the urgent humanitarian needs of vulnerable internally and externally displaced persons in newly accessible areas in Iraq and Syria. MENARO coordinated the operationalization of the Whole of Syria approach, which is implemented from Jordan, Syria and Turkey. UNICEF MENARO also supported key initiatives with a medium- to longer-term perspective such as the NLG initiative in the Syrian Arab Republic, countries hosting Syrian refugees and Iraq. UNICEF MENARO’s regional humanitarian learning strategy provided training and support to Country Offices on operating in high-threat environments, bridging humanitarian and development responses and promoting human rights and international legal obligations in humanitarian contexts.

UNICEF MENARO developed and disseminated best practices and lessons learned to improve humanitarian response and preparedness. With its established humanitarian analysis capabilities, UNICEF MENARO provided systematic documentation, humanitarian analytics, and knowledge management services for humanitarian situations across the region, including sharing humanitarian best practices and lessons learned. UNICEF MENARO provided oversight and quality assurance for Country Office preparedness planning through the online Early Warning Early Action system, and documented and disseminated best practices on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) in humanitarian action – an essential component of ensuring appropriate, timely humanitarian response. Finally, UNICEF MENARO provided support for internal and external communications
on crises across MENA through press releases, talking points, statements and briefs for senior management at the country, regional, and UNICEF Head Quarter (HQ) levels.

In 2017, UNICEF MENARO represented 60 per cent of the UNICEF’s Global Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) budget. As of December 2017, MENARO HAC countries had received 79 per cent of funding (US$1.603 billion) out of the US$2.04 billion appeal.  

UNICEF-supported key results against HAC targets for 2017:

- Over 2 million children\(^{21}\) (75 per cent of target) were vaccinated against measles
- About 440,000 children\(^{22}\) (75 per cent of target) with Severe Acute Malnutrition received treatment
- About 11.5 million people\(^{23}\) (95 per cent of target) had sustainable and improved access to safe water
- Over 3.2 million children\(^{24}\) (88 per cent of target) were supported to enrol in formal education
- About 1.8 million people\(^{25}\) (exceeding target by 9 per cent) had access to structured, sustained child protection or psychosocial support programmes

In 2018, the UNICEF MENARO HAC appeals for $1.9 billion out of the total $3.6 billion requested globally. UNICEF is seeking almost US$1.3 billion to support 6.9 million Syrian children inside Syria and those living as refugees in neighbouring countries.

1.4 Strategic Plan 2018-2021

The new Regional Office Management Plan (ROMP 2018-2021) has been formulated in line with the principles and priorities of the UNICEF Strategic Plan (SP 2018-2021). The strategic role and accountabilities defined in the ROMP are aligned to Strategic Plan (SP) results and ensure the alignment of country office programs with the SP goals. Given the increasing socio-economic disparities in the region, the youth dividend, and the many protracted crises, UNICEF Country Offices will continue programming to respond to immediate humanitarian needs while also addressing structural bottlenecks for equitable development. Across all SP sectors, investments will focus on systems strengthening while cross-sector program approaches will be stepped up. Key programs around Early Childhood Development (ECD) and migration/children on the move will provide outreach to the most vulnerable children and invest in sustainable responses. In specific sectors, key opportunities and challenges in implementing the SP are summarized as follows:

**Health and Nutrition**

Despite great progress during the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) era in reducing under-five mortality in the region, newborn mortality reduction efforts have not kept pace. Some countries

\(^{20}\) MENA regional office appeal data is as of 31 October 2017. The 2017 aggregated MENA funding includes funds carried from the previous year.

\(^{21}\) In Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq (3RP & HRP responses), Yemen, Libya and Sudan.

\(^{22}\) In Syria, Yemen, Sudan and Djibouti.

\(^{23}\) In Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq (3RP response), State of Palestine, Yemen, Libya, and Sudan.

\(^{24}\) In Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq (3RP response), Djibouti and Turkey (as part of the response to the Syrian refugee crisis).

\(^{25}\) In Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, State of Palestine, Iraq (3RP and HRP responses), Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Djibouti and Turkey (as part of the response to the Syrian refugee crisis).
in the region will need ongoing support to accelerate reductions in mortality and stunting, while others will need support to ensure the quality of care within national programmes for child health and nutrition. All countries will need to ensure a holistic approach that addresses survival and development outcomes during the first 1,000 days from conception.

**WASH**
Water and environment are core pillars of the SP 2018-2021 relevant for MENA, as the region is the world’s most water-scarce region and is heavily impacted by climate change. Against this backdrop, in 2017 UNICEF MENARO joined a regional UN and the League of Arab States (LAS) initiative on water scarcity and, together with partners, established a regional working group on water under the Regional Cooperation Mechanism/Regional UNDG. This offers an opportunity to advocate and engage with the Arab Ministerial Council on Water/LAS and other UN organizations on pursuing pro-survival strategies for water allocations and ensuring drinking water supplies for children are safeguarded. UNICEF MENARO together with the Country Offices will also invest in water safety programming to improve drinking water in 2018 and 2019. UNICEF MENARO will support the Country Offices to conduct water sector bottleneck analyses and improve sector governance to support reforms in the sector and strengthen accountability.

The region’s protracted crises have also offered some windows of opportunity related to the WASH Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Previously, advocacy or programming around water issues did not receive much attention or budget in the region. Now, large budgets for WASH-related emergency responses are available and newly established partnerships with multilateral institutions have been launched on water issues. UNICEF MENARO will continue supporting the Country Offices to engage with major funding institutions for WASH resource mobilization or to leverage these resources for children.

**Education**
The SP 2018-2021 recognizes the challenges that education systems around the world are facing in providing quality and relevant education that fosters resilience, shares responsibility to eschew conflict, discrimination and violence, and is prepared students for positive engagement in lifelong learning and work. Building on MENA’s work around the Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) initiative, the new SP 2018-2021 puts 21st century skills at the core of reconstructing and reforming education systems and learning processes. In the coming years, the UNICEF MENARO Education Section will focus on providing technical support to Country Offices to implement key reforms and monitor progress at the country level. In addition, the Education Section will develop a learning assessment instrument that will allow for future measuring of life skills. Attention will be given to establishing a common approach to cross-border recognition, accreditation and certification of learning outside formal schooling, to support children who are displaced in or outside their countries.

**Child Protection**
Given the centrality of the Violence Against Children (VAC) agenda in the SP 2018-2021 and in MENA, in 2017 UNICEF MENARO sought to systematize, at the regional level, the available child protection data on violence against children against the core SP 2018-2021 impact and outcome indicators. This will facilitate tracking progress at country level and allow for more meaningful
data aggregation and analysis in the coming years. The Regional Office’s investment over the years on the Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) and Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC) agendas in MENA is also generating important knowledge. Concrete examples include Gender Based Violence (GBV) programming, advocacy and programmatic response to child recruitment and use, evidence generation through the UN’s Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) and other major research projects.

UNICEF MENARO’s support for the Justice for Children agenda, which has generated tangible results, will continue in the upcoming ROMP with a focus on accelerating work around alternative measures to detention, legislative reforms and strengthening collaboration between the judicial and social sectors to address the needs of all children in contact with the law.

Growing global attention to the refugee and migration agenda presents an important opportunity for UNICEF in MENA to further advocate and support non-discriminatory access to services for all children regardless of their legal status and to promote, at the regional level, cross-country and cross-regional responses along key migratory routes. This work will grow in importance in 2018 through the planned launch of the final global migration Compact in Morocco in December 2018. The CP 2018-2021 will operationalize the new Joint General Comment (JGC) on the rights of children in international migration, issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families at the end 2017, through advocacy and programming efforts in the region.

Gender
The SP 2018-2021 will guide UNICEF MENARO’s technical support to UNICEF Country Offices to roll out the new Gender Action Plan to work towards girl’s empowerment and wellbeing. In 2017, UNICEF MENARO mapped country level experiences and conducted consultations across various sectors to identify examples of good practices in gender programming and further refine efforts to improve the gender balance and increase girls’ empowerment.

Communication for Development
As one of the main programme Change Strategies cutting across sectors, UNICEF MENARO will utilize C4D as an entry point to integrated programming. In particular, efforts will emphasize promoting positive care-giving and social norms changes that benefit multiple result areas through work with Country Offices. C4D efforts will also leverage community engagement programming for increased resilience in and better response to emergencies.

Part 2: Analysis of Programme Strategies and Results: Development Effectiveness
The many protracted crises in the MENA region shape UNICEF MENARO’s support to Country Offices and the ability of Country Offices to achieve results. Each UNICEF MENARO sector team has been involved in generating results and responding to urgent humanitarian needs, such as the cholera outbreak in Yemen and polio prevention and support in Syria. Commitments to the humanitarian clusters and the MRM continue, and efforts to link humanitarian response interventions with wider system strengthening development have deepened. Nevertheless, given the fast-changing context and great humanitarian needs, longer-term programming that addresses
structural causes for exclusion and deprivations remains challenging. Implementation challenges extend to effective monitoring, including Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP).

**Nutrition**

UNICEF MENARO continues to focus on supporting national governments to strengthen and integrate nutrition programs in health facilities through the promotion of growth monitoring, ensuring more hospitals become baby friendly, and integrating treatment of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) into health systems. However, the various conflicts in the region have necessitated a large share of nutrition services be delivered through communities, which can undermine longer-term systems strengthening. Overall, a challenge to moving the nutrition agenda forward is the limited technical capacity of many MENA governments in nutrition programming. UNICEF MENARO addressed this through direct engagement in capacity building and advocacy to improve national government programmes and stewardship of nutrition issues through national trainings on nutrition, both in emergency and non-emergency settings. For example, UNICEF together with WHO delivered trainings on the Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes that reviewed countries’ current code status and monitoring systems.

With UNICEF MENARO support, several countries such as Syria, Iraq and Jordan are now finalizing their national nutrition strategies to ensure an integrated approach to addressing malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies and obesity. UNICEF MENARO also supported several conflict-affected countries to scale up and improve the quality of their nutrition response through reviewing national guidelines and delivering trainings at the country level. More than 414,000 children were treated for SAM across the region (in Sudan, Yemen, Syria, Djibouti and Iraq) and more than 2 million mothers and caregivers were counselled on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF).

**Health**

To advance UNICEF’s core goal of ensuring equitable access to health and nutrition services, and to be prepared to provide high quality upstream support to national governments in the MENA region, UNICEF MENARO initiated a multi-sector capacity building exercise to equip UNICEF Country Office staff and relevant counterparts with expertise in equity-based planning for health and nutrition. This initiative has created a pool of trained human resources within UNICEF and Ministries of Health across the region that are able to contribute to strengthening health systems within their respective countries with a special focus on vulnerable populations. UNICEF MENARO also provided support to most countries in developing their National Newborn Action Plans for the reduction of newborn mortality, although challenges remain in getting these fully costed and implemented.

Working jointly with WHO and in line with the SDGs, UNICEF MENARO contributed to the redesign of UNICEF’s child health programming across the region, and the development of an implementation framework for promoting newborn and child and adolescent health and development. This redesign factors in the latest evidence from reviews of implementing the Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) framework and the growing need for integrated programming that addresses ECD outcomes, including interventions during the first 1,000 days from conception.
UNICEF MENARO continued to focus on polio outbreak preparedness and response during 2017, and supported several high-risk countries (Syria, Iraq, Sudan and Yemen) to conduct polio Supplementary Immunization Activities (SIA) with communications and vaccines assistance. In collaboration with WHO, UNICEF MENARO responded to the Vaccine Derived Polio Virus Type 2 (VDPV2) outbreak in Syria by implementing three rounds of a monovalent Oral Polio Vaccine Type 2 (mOPV2) campaigns in two phases and two rounds of Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) campaigns. UNICEF MENARO’s support provided high quality C4D plans for these campaigns, mOPV2 procurement, development of the overall response strategy, and surveillance and reporting. UNICEF MENARO also provided technical support for oversight and quality assurance of GAVI investments in Sudan, Djibouti and Yemen, and received direct GAVI support for Whole of Syria for procurement of vaccines and cold chain equipment, thereby ensuring the timely availability of vaccines for all children in Syria. However, access, security and human resources constraints resulted in some delays in campaigns planned inside Syria.

UNICEF MENARO also introduced the E-Learning, Face-to-Face Learning, Web based learning and Action learning Project (EFWA) initiative to strengthen national government immunization programmes in the region. This consists of a blended learning approach with a focus on supply chain management and additional capacity building efforts focused on equity-informed micro-planning and data quality and availability for special populations. Immunization financing in middle-income countries is an emerging area of engagement for UNICEF in MENA, and will be an area of focus in 2018.

UNICEF MENARO, in collaboration with WHO, supported all at-risk MENA countries (Yemen, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan) to update their AWD/cholera preparedness and response plans and checklists, and supported a risk assessment in Yemen and Sudan in preparation for Oral Cholera Vaccine (OCV) campaigns in 2018. Challenges included the timely availability of actionable data regarding the AWD/cholera outbreak given the active conflict and collapsed health system in Yemen. UNICEF MENARO also supported affected countries through allocating Diarrhoeal Disease Kits from prepositioned contingency supplies, providing technical visits and virtual support through technical calls and materials.

WASH
Throughout the year UNICEF MENARO advocated with UNICEF Country Offices to better map WASH inequities and pursue more strategic approaches to programs that take into account the humanitarian-development continuum, improve urban WASH programming, and advocate for more investments to address water scarcity and climate change. Although all UNICEF Country Offices were in full agreement with this shift in programming, it was challenging to apply this in countries affected by large humanitarian crises.

UNICEF MENARO supported efforts to improve UNICEF Country Office’s capacities in emergency WASH response, contracting for WASH service delivery and tariffing for services. The UNICEF MENARO WASH section provided support the countries affected by Level 3 emergencies (Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen). The WASH section also supported Yemen on the cholera WASH response, as well as countries with emergency needs such as Jordan, Djibouti, Sudan, Libya, and Palestine.
As part of capacity building efforts and cross-country learning, the regional WASH network was strengthened, which facilitated strategic programming that may have the potential for future replication. Some examples of initiatives with this potential include the establishment of an online billing system and complaint mechanism, the introduction of ArcGIS systems for monitoring Non-Revenue Water (NRW) and Geographic Information System (GIS) platforms for prioritizing support based on vulnerability indicators.

**Gender**

In 2017, UNICEF MENARO continued its efforts in gender mainstreaming across all program areas and technical sectors. Through cross-sector collaboration in Gender, Child Protection and C4D, UNICEF MENARO provided technical assistance to programming that addresses child marriage and FGM/C in countries with high prevalence, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). In order to build on evidence and share knowledge, UNICEF MENARO supported a study on social protection programmes and documented best ‘Examples of Gender Mainstreaming’ in the region. Despite growing awareness of the importance of gender-sensitive programming, the region still struggles to formulate gender equality programs at scale and implement a transformative gender vision. In the context of the new ROMP 2018-2021 and GAP, UNICEF MENARO will focus its assistance to UNICEF Country Offices on identifying strategic programme opportunities in 2018.

**HIV/AIDS**

Implementing the Global Plan to eliminate new HIV infections in children and keeping their mothers alive is progressing. Most countries in the MENA region have adopted the most optimal HIV treatment regimens, and the percentage of children received antiretroviral treatment has reached 62 per cent. There is a critical need for more reliable and robust data, disaggregated by age and sex from multiple sectors, to strengthen the region’s HIV response for adolescents and youth.

**Education**

The focus of the SP 2014-2017 was on ensuring equitable access to and completion of basic education for all children and youth, particularly those affected by humanitarian situations. In MENA, progress has been made in primary and secondary completion rates, as well as increasing gender parity, but this progress has been undermined by conflict and war in many countries. Rapidly shifting priorities and changing needs triggered by crises in the MENA region has impacted education programming in Country Offices. This has limited UNICEF MENARO’s ability to engage in upstream work or promote a more systematic approach given the focus on Education in Emergencies. To mitigate this, UNICEF MENARO built on solid partnerships with UNHCR, Save the Children, UNESCO and UNRWA and provided direct technical support to Country Offices facing crisis and transition.

To prevent children and youth affected by the Syria crises from becoming a lost generation, UNICEF MENARO supported the development of Self Learning Materials to be used in non-formal education settings by refugee and displaced children and youth, and supported a similar process for Yemen. UNICEF MENARO also spearheaded research on why certain children and youth are out of school in the region (identifying numbers and barriers), contributing to designing strategies and policies that include those out of school children in learning opportunities.
Another main area of focus was the mismatch between skills supply and demand which many young people experience. UNICEF MENARO developed the Life Skills and Civic Education framework that focuses on 21st century skills, through a consultative and participatory process involving key partners and national governments. The official launch in October 2017 has provided an excellent starting point for fundamental changes in the learning agenda. Continued active engagement of children and youth is crucial to move this agenda forward.

**Child Protection**

In humanitarian contexts, UNICEF succeeded in significantly scaling up access to quality child protection services. By November 2017, close to 700,000 children and adults received structured and sustained child protection and psychosocial support services as part of UNICEF MENARO’s response to the Syria crisis. In countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, UNICEF MENARO strategically guided humanitarian funding to strengthen national and sub-national service delivery systems, an investment that has also generated important learning outcomes for UNICEF in the humanitarian-development nexus.

UNICEF MENARO made important contributions to strengthening monitoring practices across countries, thus ensuring more rigorous aggregation and analysis of results against a common set of indicators, as well as nurturing a common narrative and set of strategic priorities around the child protection agenda for children affected by conflict and displacement. UNICEF MENARO promoted and supported key opportunities for learning and knowledge generation around specific child protection thematic areas through the NLG initiative, such as a first regional Psychosocial Summit on psychosocial support programming for children and youth in Amman in November 2017, which was attended by over 150 participants from across the region.

UNICEF MENARO developed a regional strategic framework on child labour programming in refugee contexts jointly with UNHCR and ILO, which made important contributions to strengthening inter-agency and cross-sector programming around the child protection agenda. UNICEF MENARO’s renewed engagement around the harmful social norms and practices agenda in 2017 resulted in greater visibility on the issues, a stronger partnership with UNFPA around implementing Joint Programs on FGM/C and child marriage, and the development of a regional accountability framework building on evidence generated through a regional study on child marriage.

The main challenges in implementing child protection programmes at the regional and country level were due to a gradual but significant reduction in the “advocacy space” across the region, which limited UNICEF’s ability to raise child protection concerns related to conflicts in the region, the detention of children due to respective national security agendas, and to the overall issue of children’s rights. Due to limited funding availability, particularly for work on systems strengthening, several studies on formal/informal justice and social service work forces were postponed to 2018.

**Communication for Development**

As part of efforts to mainstream C4D across the region, UNICEF MENARO focused its efforts on promoting country programmes and sector initiatives that sought convergence between work on policies, systems and services, and on social and individual behaviour change. UNICEF MENARO
supported countries to identify social barriers to change and design strategies to overcome these barriers, with a particular focus on ECD, Violence against Children, Harmful Traditional Practices, and Psychosocial Support.

Challenges include allocating sufficient resources to C4D programmes, measurement of results, and addressing deeply entrenched social norms around gender inequity, power relationships, decision-making authorities, and socialization. Further work is also needed to enforce minimum standards for C4D in emergency responses.

Part 3: Analysis of Programme Strategies and Results: Global and Regional Programme

3.1 Influencing Global/Regional Discourse and Policy

UNICEF significantly advanced the discourse on child poverty in the MENA region in 2017. Under the auspices of the LAS and in close collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, the UNICEF MENARO produced the first ever Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report. This landmark report marks an important change for LAS and its member states as they explicitly consider the reality of multi-dimensional poverty in the region, especially as it affects children. The report was validated by all member states, launched in the margins of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), and discussed in detail by the Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers with considerable media interest. This directly increased both public and governmental recognition that multidimensional poverty is a reality in the MENA region, and that it affects children. This has led to growing commitments from stakeholders to enact policy measures to reduce poverty. UNICEF MENARO will build on this momentum to support governments, through UNICEF Country Offices, to further institutionalize child poverty assessments and provide assistance to governments as they formulate, implement and evaluate policy measures to reduce child poverty.

In 2017 UNICEF MENARO launched new knowledge management systems (document repository, directory, webinars) on in response to requests from partners. Partners also used these systems to support thematic events covering Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), psychosocial support, and the evidence base on adolescents and youth in the region, convening practitioners and policy makers to share evidence, promote good practice and identify gaps. Finally, in 2017 UNICEF MENARO launched a new work stream to engage technology sector actors to support NLG programming. This included a two-day Education & Technology (EdTech) Summit, followed by a monthly webinar series, a symposium with Silicon Valley tech companies supported by UNICEF’s ‘Private Sector Guide to Supporting No Lost Generation’, and finally the establishment of four tech-humanitarian project-based collaborations to address challenges identified by young people in NLG countries.

Over the years, a consensus has developed that education systems in the region are broadly failing to deliver the outcomes needed to advance individual and social development, and thus to translate into economic growth. In response, UNICEF MENARO launched a new Life Skills Citizenship Education initiative for the region that was keenly received by many stakeholders, including governments. The initiative will support the countries of the region to improve learning and to better invest in individual, social and economic development. It provides a conceptual and programmatic framework for life skills and citizenship education to improve the quality of learning
in the region, and it mobilizes technical support for countries on planning and implementation. Based on two years of consultations and engaging more than 600 stakeholders, the framework builds on the findings of the Analytical Mapping of Life Skills and Citizenship Education in MENA, which took stock of the major programs and initiatives related to life skills and citizenship education in the region. Through this initiative, UNICEF MENARO is leading a substantive shift in the education system in the region.

**Humanitarian Advocacy**

In a context of a highly-politicized environment and media fatigue around the ongoing conflicts and crises around the region, UNICEF MENARO’s communications team worked to position UNICEF as a neutral and leading advocate for children’s rights through multi-tiered engagement with regional and international audiences.

In 2017, the communications team rolled out the first phase of “moving digital” through the producing state-of-the-art packages. They launched the #ChildrenUnderAttack campaign in March 2017, which enabled UNICEF MENARO and the Syria Country Office to bring back international media attention to the plight of Syria’s children through the “Hitting Rock Bottom” package. The in-house UNICEF-produced Heartbeat song, which featured a displaced girl from Syria, was viewed by 200 million people and has contributed to significant fundraising for the Syria crisis. The song was the most viewed item on the UNICEF global Facebook page, which has over 6 million users.

The Children under Attack campaign has continued to mark conflicts in other areas across the region including in Iraq and Yemen. The campaign underscored the grave violations occurring against children, and the collapse of systems that provide basic services for children in health and education. All campaigns were accompanied by strong advocacy asks that focused on the protection of children and calls to put an end to the war on children. These packages continue to have a ripple effect within the media and the general public, including through media citations of the data and the voices of children we amplified in these initiatives.

### 3.2 Evaluation, Research and Data

The survey and studies conducted by UNICEF MENARO in 2017 are listed below. All reports are available in the UNCEF Global Evaluation and Research Database.

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2017/001</td>
<td><strong>Progress for Children with Equity in the Middle East and North Africa</strong></td>
<td>Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2017/002</td>
<td><strong>Water, Crises and Conflict in MENA, Strengthening the Resilience of Water Service Providers</strong></td>
<td>Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2017/004</td>
<td><strong>Child Poverty in the Arab States</strong></td>
<td>Study</td>
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3.3 Implementation Strategies

In 2017, UNICEF MENARO generated significant new knowledge and actively shared and applied emerging evidence to substantiate dialogues and accelerate advocacy at the regional and country level, to further realize children’s rights. At the forefront was a regional flagship statistical publication “Progress for Children with Equity in MENA”. This document reflected early dialogues around setting national SDG child-related targets, and aimed to enhance the equity focus of subsequent discussions.

Another notable achievement in 2017 was the “Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report”, as described above. The report was tabled at a LAS meeting of Ministers of Social Affairs in December 2017 to ensure relevant decision makers were informed about the key findings of the publication. This publication marks a successful collaboration with the LAS that resulted in the establishment of an Arab Poverty Centre under LAS that will serve as a centre of expertise on poverty measurement, development of poverty reduction policies, and the evaluation of poverty-focused public policies for the region. In addition, an analytical report of 11 countries, “Child Poverty in the Arab States” with an accompanying summary report and policy briefs on health and education, were completed and are about to be published.

Over 100 young people, policymakers, donors, academics and representatives of UN, non-government organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) gathered in November 2017 in Amman to sharing evidence and recommendations on key priorities for the 124 million young people living in the region. Over one-third of the participants were adolescents and youth
researchers, advocates, activists and reporters, and the symposium provided an opportunity for these voices to engage in policy discussions and be heard.

UNICEF MENARO completed an analytical mapping of life skills and citizenship education in 2017, that informed the development of a holistic conceptual and programmatic framework for strengthening advocacy for the life skills and citizenship education agenda in the region. This will be followed up with specific guidance and efforts to roll out and apply the framework in 2018.

Finally, UNICEF MENARO developed concrete guidance and tools for Social and Behaviour Change in response to region-wide demand, in particular from the child protection sector, where social expectations and norms play a significant role in perpetuating negative practices which hinder the realization of women and children’s rights. These pragmatic tools on how to measure and change social norms can now fill a critical gap in the region, and will be rolled out in 2018.

**Wider Public Engagement**

UNICEF’s position as one of the leading advocates for children’s rights in the region has been crucial to giving a voice to children and to communicating UNICEF’s mandate and programs. Through the development of compelling visual material and strategic use of media, UNICEF’s circle of audience expanded in 2017. As described above, UNICEF MENARO used all forms of media to call attention to the plight of children in conflict situations. The #ChildrenUnderAttack campaign launched has now gone global due to the impact and reach it generated.

Beyond countries in active conflict, UNICEF MENARO also supported outreach around non-emergency themes including support to the first child poverty conference for MENA, and HQ-led initiatives on ECD, World Children’s Day, State of the World’s Children reports (SOWC) and migration. UNICEF MENARO supported and amplified communications efforts on global cause framework themes around the region, including on global activations of the ECD ‘Super Dads’ campaign, world children’s day and #ChildrenUprooted.

**Partnerships**

Over the last year, the NLG framework has shaped both advocacy and programming and is by now a strong feature in the discourse on children and adolescents affected by the Syrian crisis. The results of a survey on NLG confirmed that NLG now offers a regional level platform for joint advocacy and cross-sector strategic thinking among the partnership members. In 2017, the NLG platform was instrumental in developing strategic sub-regional frameworks on Child Protection and Child Labour. UNICEF MENARO leads the NLG interagency group, which comprises 30 UN and NGO partners. A dedicated coordinator seated within UNICEF, together with three NGO co-leads, manages the coordination functions. At the country level, NLG continued to provide an overarching conceptual framework for responses while generating useful new operational tools. For example, improvements to the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and Regional Refugee Response Plan (3RP) tracking systems were attained through collaborative work under the NLG initiative, which improved the visibility of adolescents and youth in the planning, budgeting and reporting for these joint plans.

The Syrian crisis response involved numerous partnerships with governments, private sector, civil society and the public to advance efforts to fulfil to humanitarian needs. With the war now in its
6th year, UNICEF’s partners remained engaged in supporting Syrian children and their families. While the needs of children increased in 2017, there was a 27% reduction in funding received against the HRP and 3RP compared to 2016. In addition, 2017 saw an increasing trend of donor conditionalities on funding, with key donors earmarking and posing restrictions on the use of their funds. These restrictions affected UNICEF’s Implementing Partners, and include clauses on anti-terrorism and restrictions on the locations where funds can be used. In addition, certain donors requested additional reporting requirements for Syria. Despite these challenges, through multiple partnerships, cross-border life-saving interventions have reached vulnerable populations in Syria.

As previously noted, 2017 saw UNICEF MENARO’s partnership with the World Bank intensify considerably. To leverage resources for children, especially in fragile settings, UNICEF and the World Bank have been able to advance on the agendas of social protection, health and nutrition across the region. Most notable has been the partnership around the Emergency Cash Transfer in Yemen, where 1.3 million families have been reached through a cash transfer program implemented by UNICEF and funded by the World Bank. In Djibouti, this partnership has been strategic because UNICEF’s engagement has leveraged additional funding for nutrition programmes. Because UNICEF and the World Bank complement each other in many of the MENA countries, this partnership has much potential for 2018 and beyond.

Collaboration with UNRWA continued in 2017, and potential opportunities in Child Protection emerged for 2018. Yet due to recent developments affecting UNWRA’s funding outlook, progress has slowed. UNICEF Regional Office remains active in various regional fora concerning development in general and SDGs in particular.

3.4 Normative Principles

**Human Rights Based Approach**

UNICEF MENARO continued to place strong emphasis on a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), putting this at the core of program design, capacity development and reviews of regional and UNICEF Country Office defining documents. The situation analysis and other analyses that feed into UNICEF Country Program Documents (CPD) focus on multiple deprivations and identify vulnerable groups. Capacity building on Results Based Management (RBM) has been steady, including in UNICEF Country Offices dealing with protracted crisis, and over 375 staff across the region have benefitted from RBM training. The added value of these training sessions has become evident as new CPDs have a stronger focus on key equity issues and the deprivations of hard-to-reach populations.

**Gender Equality**

In 2017, efforts to promote gender equality aligned with UNICEF’s global Gender Action Plan and focused on both programmatic results and institutional results. UNICEF MENARO contributed to the continuous increase in capacity in gender programming, and built capacity in the gender network in the region. UNICEF MENARO facilitated the global Gender Pro pilot in Sudan, Iran and Egypt, whose lessons learned will benefit the entire region. UNICEF MENARO will continue to invest in gender sensitive programming in 2018, since MENA has many deprivations and opportunities for women and men that need to be addressed in a dedicated manner.
Environment Sustainability

Environment sustainability in the Middle East and North Africa is embodied in the multifaceted challenges with water: the region is the most water scarce in the world, with water resources per capita equal to just one-sixth of the global average. Without immediate and sustained action, the region will face ever-greater crises triggered by water scarcity in the years to come. UNICEF MENARO has done significant advocacy on water issues with relevant institutions and decision makers across the region in previous years. Because of this record, UNICEF MENARO is now actively participating in a regional UN-LAS initiative on water scarcity and a working group established under the Regional Cooperation Mechanism under the Regional UNDG for working on adaptation measures to climate change, with special focus on water scarcity. Moreover, UNICEF MENARO continues to provide guidance to Country Offices on how to incorporate environmental sustainability into their WASH programming. UNICEF continued it longstanding work in water sector reforms, institutional strengthening, and tariffs, in addition to providing technical support through local and international partners.

Part 4: Management

4.1 Management and Operations

Throughout 2017, UNICEF MENARO’s Regional Office Management Team (ROMT) continued to review and monitor Country Office performance. The ROMT held monthly meetings to discuss major management and programme issues in the region and identify operational solutions. The ROMT assisted Country Offices to quickly resolve emerging management challenges, such as when funding for Syria Cross Border interventions was delayed. By providing strong management support for the region, UNICEF MENARO met all of its 2017 output level programme targets. The ROMT also reviewed Key Performance Indicator scorecards, and provided oversight and followed-up when Country Office responded to red flags. As a result, performance against key management indicators improved across the region, including for countries in protracted crisis. Finally, the ROMT provided a forum to advocate for and discuss issues of strategic importance for MENA countries. In 2017, two RMT meetings were organized focusing on issues of strategic importance.

The Deputy Representative and Operation Chiefs’ meetings provided an important platform for in-depth management discussions that improved programme quality. In particular, this forum was key to addressing Risk Management, Audit & Donor Assessments during 2017. These discussions strengthened Country Office understandings about how to realign activities when needed to effectively respond to evolving dynamics in the region. They also helped UNICEF MENARO identify key challenges and opportunities for delivering results with transparency and accountability, within the changing operational space and demands of various donors.

During 2017, risk management continued to be a high priority for operations in the MENA region. During the Humanitarian Team Network Meeting, UNICEF MENARO provided staff from across the region with specific skills-building sessions on Risk Analysis, Operating in High Threat Environments, remote programming and monitoring modalities. UNICEF MENARO conducted regular humanitarian and security analyses of events and their operational implications for management. When specific risks emerged in Level 3 contexts, such as in Libya and Sudan, they were carefully monitored and followed up with Emergency Management Meetings, technical calls and action trackers. In the past year, UNICEF MENARO also provided key technical advice on third party monitoring for Country Office operations in emergency settings.
Key management risks in 2017 included ranged from unpredictable funding to decreased access to affected populations. UNICEF MENARO used multiple strategies to mitigate these risks. To maintain predictable funding streams, UNICEF MENARO made significant investments in donor relations to explain the impact of donor funding, while also providing UNICEF HQ with evidence and arguments to advocate for funding for the region at the global level.

UNICEF MENARO provided critical support to Country Offices on audit preparation activities and to close audit recommendations during 2017. As a result, almost all Country Offices managed to close audit recommendations during the reporting period, and UNICEF MENARO was able to close all outstanding recommendations from the 2016 audit.

Staffing gaps in Country Offices posed a significant challenge to program implementation, particularly in Level 3 emergency countries. UNICEF MENARO used various modalities to get staff in place and ensure service continuity and program delivery in 2017. This included onsite assignment to the Syria Country Office, and daily online support to Yemen and Libya. The Country Offices were also supported with online orientation sessions for newly recruited staff. This year, UNICEF MENARO managed to reduce the time needed for recruitment from 78 days down to 57 days on average. Yet key human resources challenges in 2017 included attracting talent to work in hardship duty stations, and ensuring a gender balance in staff within hardship countries.

UNICEF and other UN agencies have identified the standardized Business Operations Strategy (BOS) as one of the solutions to simplify business processes across the UN system, and in 2017 UNICEF MENARO supported Country Offices to implement key elements of this approach. For example, Jordan, Iraq and Syria launched a light BOS process covering six common service areas including Procurement, Human Resources, Finance, Logistics, Premises and Information, Communication and Technology (ICT).

To improve eco-efficiency and ensure inclusive access to UNICEF premises, UNICEF MENARO made greening a management priority in 2017. This led to the installation of solar panels, energy savings, reductions in paper and water consumption, and increases in recycling. The regional Greening Team received one proposal that requested funding for office greening initiatives, and Greening teams were formed in Country Offices across the region to ensure the initiative is widely adopted.

In 2017, the regional ICT work plan was aligned with the three pillars of UNICEF’s global ICT strategy. For Pillar 1 (Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency), critical ICT systems across the region were maintained at over 99%. LIGHT infrastructure implementation and stabilization for the Maghreb was completed, creating an agile environment while reducing the hardware footprint. Windows 10 was deployed in a timely manner, extending the benefits of an improved user interface and data protection features across the region. UNICEF MENARO established an oversight mechanism to monitor connectivity quality via a Regional key performance indicator dashboard, ensuring compliance regional ICT infrastructure services complied with UNICEF’s global policy on information security, and updating web-based Office Profiles and ICT-DR plans. Results for Pillar 2 (Program Effectiveness) focused on ICT support in key program areas. UNICEF MENARO supported Country Offices to leverage UNICEF’s enterprise cloud platform for the secure hosting of new applications. To strengthen ICT capacity for emergency response, the region also hosted the global Emergency Telecoms Training in Lebanon. One third of all UNICEF participants were from MENA, of whom over 80 per cent achieved the “Basic” responder award or higher.

Initial work on Pillar 3 (Innovative Use of Technology) focused on supporting select countries in RapidPro Scale-Up using the EXD’s seven per cent set-aside funds. UNICEF MENARO conducted a mapping survey to establish the scope and maturity level of existing Technology for Development
T4D initiatives and to build a Regional portfolio of T4D initiatives to be leveraged in mainstreaming best practices across the region. To help migrate Country Offices to next-gen operating systems, the Regional ICT team organized a joint event in October for a Windows Server 2016 training and the annual Regional ICT Network meeting. The major challenge in ICT included constrained funding, as well as telecom restrictions in some of our operating locations.

Rapid scale-up of country programs in high risk and highly volatile environments challenged the supply side ROMP targets. Procurement of goods through LTAs reached 79.4 per cent in 2017 from a baseline of 39 per cent in 2013. Impressively, the average lead time for local procurement has been cut in half from the 2013 baseline of 197, days to 98 days at the end of 2017. Targets for inventory variance and single source service contracting were also met. These successes are attributed to the excellent Country Office supply teams and close collaboration with the UNICEF MENARO supply team. The overall supply volume (without Procurement Services) in MENA for 2017 was US$647.8 Million, up from US$180 Million in 2013.

All-staff meetings were held to discuss the Global Staff Survey results and to select the three priority areas that will be addressed out of the 14 areas identified from the survey findings. UNICEF MENRO has developed a work plan to address these issues, and an office improvement plan has been drafted with a budget for submission to senior management at the February 2018 ROMT meeting for final approval. In addition, a suggestion/complaint box is now provided at all staff meetings and staff association meetings to ensure staff have the opportunity to voice their concerns and provide suggestions. Various team-building exercises and wellness options are in place, including staff outings and yoga sessions. In 2018, attention will be given to further improving work-live balance and increasing a ‘speak-up’ work environment. A new staff shadowing program enables experience-sharing for career and professional development.