

Malaysia

Part 1: Situation update in the country

The new Government Alliance of Hope (Pakatan Harapan) that came to power in Malaysia's landmark fourteenth general election on 9 May 2018 ushered in a series of unprecedented changes, altering the country's political and development landscapes. Following a peaceful and democratic transition of power, the new administration's reform manifesto focused on good governance, equity and human rights. These principles are reflected in the mid-term review of the 11th Malaysian Plan, which charts the way for the country to become a developed and inclusive nation offering a better future for all.

The Plan's six pillars and 19 priority areas are closely aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with their strong focus on equity, inclusive growth and environmental sustainability. The second pillar calls for enhancing inclusive development and the well-being of the population, and the fourth pillar seeks to empower human capital. UNICEF's programme is closely aligned to these two pillars. Together with the United Nations country team (UNCT), UNICEF is well-positioned to support the new Government in its vision and implementation of the SDGs.

Gender equality: The government commitment to promoting the rights and well-being of women and ending an era of race/ethnicity-based politics is demonstrated in the composition of the Cabinet and the appointment of a non-Malay attorney general for the first time. Although women only made up 18 per cent of Malaysia's Cabinet in 2018, this represented the largest number of female ministers to date: five ministers and four deputy ministers, as well as the first female deputy prime minister in the country's history. Moreover, 16 per cent of members of parliament (MPs) are women. While Malaysia now boasts the oldest prime minister (age 93), it also has its youngest member of parliament (age 22) who, together with other prominent members and the new minister of youth and sports (age 25), represent the interests and voice of youth within the Government.

Transparency: More stringent regulations to prevent graft and guarantee a free press and independent judiciary all point in the direction of establishing checks and balances, in a bid to fight corruption and promote democracy and transparency.

Poverty and well-being: Pro-poor policies were also put in place, such as abolishing the goods and services tax; stabilizing petrol prices; and reforming the cash transfer programme, formerly known as BRIM, to include children as a targeted demographic. In addition to the new grant for children, over US\$711 million was allocated in the 2019 education budget for cash assistance, food supplies and textbooks for the poor. In the area of human rights, welcome steps included the Government's announcement of its intention to ratify remaining United Nations conventions and abolish the death penalty, promote objective news coverage and repeal the sedition law.

Juvenile justice: Progress was also made on children's and women's rights. Steps taken include the establishment of an inter-ministerial task force reporting to the deputy prime minister to develop a 'child well-being roadmap', implementation of a pilot for alternatives to immigration detention for children and the planned implementation of alternatives to detention for children who have committed minor crimes.

Child marriage: Another welcome development was announcements by the prime minister and deputy prime minister establishing that the minimum age for marriage will be 18 years, without exception, which was approved by the Council of Malay Rulers and adopted in some states. The deputy prime minister's November statement about the need to teach comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education in schools, to safeguard children against unwanted pregnancies and grooming, was also encouraging. Alongside many other voices in Malaysia, UNICEF reiterated its call for institutionalizing the age of marriage at 18 years by amending the Child Act, the Law Reform (Marriage and Divorce) Act and the Islamic Family Law in each state in Malaysia. The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MoWFCD) began work on revising the Child Act and Sexual Offences against Children Act to better align them with international standards, and led discussions about the establishment of an independent children's commission to serve as an independent adviser and monitor the rights and well-being of children.

Adolescents and youth: The Government's focus on youth and vocational skills training is equally welcome and in line with the United Nations youth agenda and Generation Unlimited (GenU). The Ministry of Education (MoE) has demonstrated commitment to ensuring education for all. This includes recognizing the right to education for undocumented and stateless children and moving towards a more inclusive education system for disabled children. In October 2018 the House of Representatives passed the Children and Young Persons (Employment) (Amendment) Bill 2018 aimed at improving protection for children and young persons against exploitation and increasing penalties for offenders.

Child-friendly labour laws: The 2018 amendment also ensured that the country's labour laws are more aligned with international standards; e.g., International Labour Organization conventions. Following advocacy by UNICEF and other stakeholders, the Government is considering the establishment of a Children's Commissioner within the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia, following the latter's reform scheduled for 2019. Other positive policies, such as the introduction of pension facilities for housewives and the obligation for all government agencies and public sector offices to offer childcare facilities at workplaces by 2019, serve to promote women's rights and labour productivity.

Children on the move: Also in 2018, increased attention was focused on children affected by migration – including refugees and asylum seekers, migrant and stateless children and child victims of trafficking – who face numerous protection threats and risks, including lack of access to public schools and the health system. Government statistics provide limited data on their actual numbers or overall situation. Basic education is provided to some through alternative learning centres, although this is recognized as being far from adequate. As of October 2018 more than 1,000 children had been detained in 13 detention centres, according to immigration department figures; 315 were still in detention at end-2018.

To address these concerns, UNICEF Malaysia began talks with the Government about participation in a multi-country European Union (EU) project: 'Protecting children affected by

migration in Southeast, South, and Central Asia” (2018-2021) to ensure that children affected by migration are better protected through capacity-building, enhanced policies and procedures and strengthened child protection systems. This is a critical element defining UNICEF Malaysia’s support within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and new country programme, for which planning will start in 2019.

Leaving no child behind: In Sabah State, which has the largest population of undocumented and stateless persons in the country, the new chief minister and his cabinet indicated their commitment to resolve this humanitarian issue from a rights perspective, rather than a security perspective. The United Nations country team is conducting a mapping of undocumented persons in Sabah to propose policy solutions. Sarawak State’s government continued to facilitate access to documentation to its constituents and to find means to improve access to education for marginalized and indigenous communities and address child marriage. This reform agenda offers enormous opportunity and hope for all children in Malaysia, and is an important opportunity for UNICEF to position itself as a partner of choice in support of the reforms, including joint testing of innovative approaches with the Government.

Equal rights and eliminating discrimination: Despite substantive progress, challenges remain, as demonstrated by political backlash regarding the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and the ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, leading the Government to renege on its stated intention to ratify this convention. The new Government’s need to secure the Malay vote and overcome pockets of passive resistance in the civil service has obliged it to move forward cautiously on certain human rights issues, including those pertaining to the rights of refugees and migrant workers. Reduced fiscal space and the budget deficit of more than US\$245 million inherited from the previous administration pose an additional challenge to the national social reform agenda and sustained economic growth.

Malnutrition: The study ‘Double burden of malnutrition in Malaysia: What’s next?’, a collaboration between UNICEF and the Ministry of Health, comprised of a landscape analysis of the country’s child nutrition system, revealed significant increases in the national prevalence of stunting: from 8.9 per cent in 2006 to 14 per cent in 2016; the figure for children aged 12-to-23 months increased from 8.9 per cent to 17 per cent. Among all children under the age of five, stunting prevalence increased from 17.5 per cent to 20.5 per cent. Yet wasting significantly decreased, from 14.4 per cent to 11.6 per cent, and for all children under five, prevalence decreased from 13.2 per cent to 11.9 per cent. Nevertheless, wasting is still a serious public health concern in Malaysia, according to World Health Organization (WHO) standards.

Based on evidence revealed by the study, low socio-demographic status, poor maternal nutrition and poor infant and young feeding practices were significant predictors for all parameters related to under-nutrition (stunting, wasting and underweight) for children under five. Despite improvements in healthcare provision and the near universal provision of water and sanitation, poverty and poor infant feeding practices remain contributing factors to malnutrition in Malaysia.

Part 2: Major results, including in humanitarian action and gender, against the results in the country programme document

During 2018 UNICEF Malaysia worked closely with its partners, the Government, civil society,

United Nations partners and the private sector to respond to the unique and complex challenges and opportunities presented. Aligned with the SDGs and 11th Malaysia Plan, UNICEF's commitments to the agenda for children fall under following key programme components: child and adolescent well-being, social inclusion and disparity reduction and partnership and engagement. The main focus is on the development of system-wide responses to such issues as inequity, children in contact with the law, child sexual abuse, children with disabilities, child marriage, education, protection of undocumented children and registration and the documentation of children born in Malaysia. UNICEF's work was supported by the design of flexible joint programming approaches tailored to the national context; innovative approaches to financing; and harmonized business processes, for greater efficiency and effectiveness in protecting and extending access to children at risk and children with disabilities.

Following the election of the new Government, UNICEF took the opportunity to influence the child protection agenda for positive change through: support for legislation to end child marriage, developing a Children's Commission to better protect children's rights and supporting legislation to professionalize the social welfare workforce, among others.

Significant efforts were made in partnership with the Government, concerned agencies and civil society organizations (CSOs) to raise awareness and increase advocacy on ending child marriage, which is also a key cross-cutting UNICEF programme strategy. In June 2018, at the second global meeting of 'Girls not brides' – a global partnership of hundreds of civil society organizations, United Nations agencies, advocates and activists – issued a joint statement calling on the Government to set the minimum age for marriage at 18 years without exception, including civil, Muslim and native customary law marriages. Furthermore, UNICEF supported child marriage forums in Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu, targeting key stakeholders and encouraging a change in social norms and attitudes that condone child marriage. UNICEF, together with the Malaysian Council for Child Welfare (MKKM) and the United Nations Population Fund, conducted a forum on comprehensive sexuality education, as an integral component of sexual and reproductive health and advocacy on child rights.

Advocacy conducted by UNICEF and partners led the prime minister to instruct states to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18, a measure supported by the deputy prime minister and other prominent cabinet members. This represented a very important and positive step, but while two states have acted accordingly (albeit with some exceptions), more work is required to gain wider support for implementation. To that end, UNICEF continued to expand its partnerships and advocacy, and prepared to support implementation of a roadmap that UNICEF Malaysia helped develop at the request of the MoWFCD to end child marriage over time. It also published a working paper on child marriage and conducted a U-report survey to assess attitudes and information and thus provide guidance for policy and advocacy. UNICEF continued its efforts in this regard, engaging with adolescents and others to sustain efforts on behaviour change for lasting solutions. In addition, UNICEF leveraged its influence to ensure that sexual and reproductive health is also prioritized in Ministry's agenda for children.

As part of its support for the child well-being agenda, in 2018 UNICEF Malaysia launched a major study, entitled 'Children without: A study of urban children poverty and deprivation in low-cost flats in Kuala Lumpur', which revealed hidden pockets of urban poverty in the capital. The study also revealed that despite the country's poverty rate being below 1 per cent, there are children who are stunted, underweight and overweight/obese, and there was a 100 per cent rate of relative poverty among the children in urban poor communities. The findings were

shared with the public and legislature and also received national and international media attention.

Capitalizing on the new national political landscape, particularly the new Government's manifesto and 100-days pledge, the results of the 'children without' study and drawing on positive momentum in public opinion, UNICEF Malaysia engaged in strategic advocacy targeting ministers in the new Government and on the Council of Eminent Persons in charge of socio-economic reform initiatives.

By end-2018, UNICEF had been appointed to an advisory role on the task force of the new national children's well-being roadmap chaired by the deputy prime minister, who on her first day in office cited the study as the impetus for the roadmap.

Advocacy on the need for child-sensitive social protection, in particular a universal child grant, led to restructuring of the cost-of-living cash transfer programme (formerly known as BR1M) to include children as a targeted group. Another advocacy achievement was the establishment of a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages. The Minister of Finance announced both initiatives in his speech on the 2019 national budget. Evidence from the study and collaboration between UNICEF Malaysia and the Ministry of Health, prior to a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) featuring a workshop on fiscal measures for taxing sugar-sweetened beverages, helped to gain support for this tax.

UNICEF Malaysia also successfully secured endorsement for studies on Malaysian and non-Malaysian out-of-school children by the Government, through high-level engagements on education for non-citizens and the submission of draft reports to the deputy prime minister and the minister and deputy minister of education, at both federal and Sabah state levels. This resulted in informing both policy changes and interventions and pilots at the Ministry, to support the reintegration of students at risk of dropping out or who had dropped out into mainstream schools. UNICEF's advocacy further contributed to the introduction of a 'zero reject policy', for undocumented children and children with disabilities. The policy, which is being rolled out in stages, aims to ensure that all children in the country, including those with disabilities and who are undocumented, have access to education.

In terms of cross-sectoral initiatives to engage the corporate sector on UNICEF Malaysia's flagship disability programme, UNICEF Malaysia successfully engaged the largest property developer in the country to build Malaysia's first inclusive playground. Through UNICEF's engagement and advocacy with Sime Darby Property, the company made a public pledge to ensure that all playgrounds built by the company will be user-friendly for children with disabilities. UNICEF has invested in documenting this initiative for further scaling-up, with the aim of making inclusive playgrounds an industry standard.

UNICEF also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Jeffrey Sachs Center for Sustainable Development at Sunway University to deliver Children's Rights and Business Principles modules at a first-of-its-kind, masters of sustainable development course in Malaysia. This private sector partnership seeks to ensure that future business leaders take children into account in their business operations.

Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

A booming economy and rising income growth has led to significant lifestyle changes among

Malaysians. Physical inactivity, an increase in the number of women and mothers entering the workforce, poor dietary intake in terms of both quality and quantity and disease have left Malaysian children facing the risk of malnutrition from both sides of the health spectrum – under-nourishment and overweight. Also called the ‘double burden of malnutrition’, this trend shows the contradictory coexistence of under-nutrition with overweight and obesity within the same population, district, community, household and even in the same child. The double burden of malnutrition is a troubling public health issue because while under-nutrition is a leading contributing factor to child illness, disability and death, over-nutrition in childhood can lead to diet-related non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease later in life.

During the last decade Malaysia’s malnutrition situation was stagnant, showing no significant improvement in reduction child stunting or the high prevalence of wasting, suggesting that the nation has diverted from its trajectory to meet World Health Assembly targets by 2025.

The 2015 national health morbidity survey found the prevalence of stunting in children 0-to-5 years of age to be 17.7 per cent, wasting 8 per cent and obesity 7.1 per cent. While stunting prevalence is below the 20 per cent threshold pointing to a public health concern, it has been static, with little to no progress towards the World Health Assembly target of 10.3 per cent by 2020. The prevalence of wasting is elevated in Malaysia, at 8 per cent, and falls within the World Health Organization’s public health concern category.

Malaysia double burden means that in addition to stunting and wasting, 7 per cent of children under five years of age are overweight. Overweight prevalence continues to increase as children age: 15 per cent of children aged 5-to-9 years are overweight. The increasing prevalence of obesity among Malaysia children, adolescents and adults and the corresponding increase in the prevalence of non-communicable diseases is a national concern demanding focused programming promoting the importance of a healthy diet and sound lifestyle habits in young children.

As Malaysia is an upper-middle-income country with an efficient and well-performing health system, UNICEF offered support to the Malaysian Government to gain further understanding about the country’s nutrition situation through a secondary data analysis of available datasets. The study, entitled ‘Double burden of malnutrition in Malaysia: what’s next?: landscape analysis of the nutrition situation among children under 5 years in Malaysia’, was a collaboration between UNICEF and the Ministry of Health’s nutrition division and the Institute of Public Health and was finalized in first quarter of 2018.

The landscape analysis was performed using secondary data from the national health and morbidity survey. The findings indicate that national stunting prevalence has risen significantly – from 8.9 per cent in 2006 to 14 per cent in 2016 –especially among children aged 12-to-23, which increased from 8.9 per cent to 17 per cent. Among all children under five, stunting prevalence rose from 17.5 per cent to 20.5 per cent. Wasting, however, had significantly decreased during the same time period (from 14.4 per cent to 11.6 per cent). Nevertheless, wasting is still a serious public health concern in Malaysia based on WHO standards.

Based on the evidence gathered, low socio-demographic status, poor maternal nutrition and poor infant and young feeding practices were significant predictors for all under-nutrition parameters -- stunting, wasting and underweight -- for children under five. These findings highlighted a need to review existing programmes on maternal and child nutrition and

legislation on the sale, provision and marketing of unhealthy foods and sugar-sweetened beverages.

To understand the link between sugar and obesity, UNICEF was asked to support the Ministry of Health in the establishment of an ASEAN framework for a fiscal measure at a workshop on sugar-sweetened beverages in May 2018, where a pre-workshop gathering with key Malaysian stakeholders was conducted for buy-in and positioning. UNICEF, with WHO Malaysia, also collaborated in the issuance of a joint statement to advocate for the implementation of a tax on sugary drinks as a solution that will provide both fiscal and health benefits.

As a result of this work and advocacy on nutrition with the new Government, the latter announced that child nutrition will become a key target under the new national children well-being roadmap. In the 2019 budget speech presented to Parliament, the Minister of Finance announced the implementation of the sugar-sweetened beverage tax. In his speech he stated that as of 1 April 2019, an excise duty of \$0.10 will be applied to beverages containing more than 5g of sugar per 100ml, and to juices that contain more than 12g of sugar per 100ml.

The advocacy effort also paved the way for an initial discussion on implementation of the code of ethics for marketing of infant food and related products, as a step toward legislation, and banning television advertising of foods/beverage high in fat and/or sugar that appeal to children. UNICEF headquarters' legal advisor for nutrition participated in discussions at the Ministry of Health on this matter. To further strengthen government capacity and UNICEF's upstream work on nutrition, UNICEF plans to recruit a nutrition specialist.

Further recognizing the importance of the first 1,000 days of a child's life, UNICEF Malaysia has used its best business practice circular on establishing childcare centres at workplaces, along with a complementary toolkit, as a partnership tool to seek cooperation from both private and Government actors for establishing such spaces.

In late 2018 UNICEF Malaysia was working with the local council of Pengerang (the newest township in Malaysia), providing technical support based on the best business practice circular to establish a model centre, which will later be replicated throughout the Johor Corporation, a conglomerate with businesses ranging from healthcare to plantations. This initiative exemplifies how an early childhood intervention can be brought to scale.

UNICEF also sought private-sector cooperation –in particular with property developers, who are responsible for building townships across Malaysia –to construct Malaysia's first inclusive playground space, for subsequent use as a best business practice. As a result, UNICEF signed a memorandum of understanding with Sime Darby Property, one of Malaysia's largest private property developers, to design and build a model inclusive playground space in the new townships of Elmina, Shah Alam, Selangor.

As part of this initiative, UNICEF secured a team of inclusive playground technical experts who are leading development of the design. The team will also draft an open source best business practice circular and guidance toolkit on how to build an inclusive space, as a means to encourage and guide other private sector developers, government bodies and other stakeholders to do the same.

Goal 2: Every child learns

Significant progress has been made by the Government on inclusive and equitable quality education and learning opportunities involving education for non-citizens, children with disabilities and indigenous children. UNICEF Malaysia's multi-pronged strategic and sustained approach to advocacy, research and programming contributed to a compelling case for increased, multilevel engagement by the Government and other stakeholders.

The completion and endorsement of a main and side study of Malaysian and non-Malaysian out-of-school children that identified their barriers and bottlenecks to accessing education resulted in high-level technical engagement with the Government on education for non-citizens. This resulted in the inclusion of education for non-citizens as part of the new Government's inter-ministerial taskforce and an invitation for UNICEF to provide technical input on education for non-citizens through the national children well-being roadmap, and on Rohingya refugee education for the Qatar Development Fund.

Success was achieved with the introduction of the 'zero-reject policy' by the MoE, allowing undocumented and stateless children to gain admission to government schools as of January 2019. However, implementation challenges related to the provision of infrastructure and resources in schools are ongoing. UNICEF, alongside its partners, will continue to provide technical support to the Government to address the risks and challenges to successful implementation of this 'zero-reject policy'.

The introduction of the 'zero-reject policy' also marked significant progress towards inclusive education for children with disabilities, as the policy will enable them to enrol in the inclusive education programme as of 2019. UNICEF provided technical assistance during a national lab on transforming special education, and began discussions with the MoE's special education division on strategies for strengthening the quality of inclusive education. UNICEF also co-organized a national early childhood intervention conference on inclusive education, with the National Early Childhood Intervention Council, in August 2018. Following the conference, a multi-stakeholder call for action was to be submitted to the minister of education.

UNICEF Malaysia also explored innovative approaches for improving and strengthening alternative learning pathways and skills development for undocumented out-of-school children and youth, through a process of human-centred design, and successfully completed a pilot project on digital literacy and skills development in Sabah. Various stakeholder consultations and focus group discussions with teachers and students were carried out, which resulted in the design and development of a model for education and skills development for children in alternative learning centres in Sabah with new partners, including the corporate sector, promoting scalability and sustainability.

With indigenous and multilingual education featuring prominently in the new Government's manifesto, UNICEF Malaysia became involved in various consultations and discussions with key government and civil society partners. A remapping/review of education for indigenous children was ongoing in late 2018, to achieve a more effective and strategic approach to advocacy in this area, especially for seeking opportunities to expand partnerships to include academia, for long-term sustainability. Strengthening the capacity of indigenous teachers and the quality of the mother tongue-based multilingual education curriculum through Ethno-Arts teacher training was another key feature of UNICEF's work on indigenous education. UNICEF continued to provide leadership and technical support related to SDG 4 to the MoE and other key stakeholders of the Education 2030 Agenda through ongoing work to map the curriculum for global citizenship education and education for sustainable development. UNICEF

also successfully partnered with civil society organizations, the corporate sector and the MoE to secure participation by schools nationwide in promoting positive behaviours around kindness and bullying.

In conjunction with the first 'National Kindness Week' in April, the MoE, a local non-governmental organization (NGO), WOMEN:girls, and UNICEF initiated the #MYkindness 2018 school outreach programme, prompting 1,030 children aged 8-to-16-years-old from 30 primary and secondary schools in Kelantan, Pahang, Terengganu, Sabah and Sarawak states to examine their attitudes and behaviours as victim, bystander or bully, and to develop ideas for promoting kindness and respect in their schools. The initiative enabled children to be their own advocates for the change they want to see, by providing them with the video platform to share their experience and personal solutions to end bullying. An estimated 5,000 children from 36 schools subsequently participated in 'Kidstakeover' events on world children's day.

In August 2018 50 students representing different background from across the country jointly developed a national youth manifesto for #EndViolence and #SafeToLearn through a town hall meeting called 'youth talk', in partnership with Digi, a leading mobile service provider in Malaysia. Students presented their manifesto to members of parliament, UNICEF goodwill ambassadors and industry experts. The national youth manifesto was incorporated into the global youth manifesto for #EndViolence, which will be presented to education ministers from across the world during the Global Education Forum 2019.

Goal area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

Although Malaysia's legislative frameworks provide adequate protection for children (through, e.g., the 2017 Sexual Offences Against Children Act and the 2001 Child Act (with 2016 amendments), gaps in policy and effective implementation continue to leave children vulnerable. In recent years, delays in revision of the national child protection policy and action plan, which expired in 2015, and limited progress toward implementation of the action plan for child protection in the cyber-world have presented obstacles.

Following the election of a new administration in May 2018, new opportunities emerged to strengthen child protection, including through support for legislation to end child marriage; efforts to create the post of Children's Commissioner, to better protect children's rights; and support for legislation professionalizing the social welfare workforce. These were some of the signs signalling increased progress in 2018 and beyond.

The new Government adopted a pre-election manifesto that included changes in the political, economic, and social institutions of public administration and the private sector. Although implementing as many of these promises as possible presented a challenge, the new Government has openly declared its commitment to human rights and international human rights conventions. There is broad optimism that Malaysia's reservations with respect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will be removed at the earliest opportunity.

During 2018 UNICEF made significant progress, in partnership with Government, civil society organizations, United Nations agencies, advocates and activists, toward raising awareness and increasing advocacy on ending child marriage. In addition to publishing a working paper on child marriage and conducting a U-report to assess attitudes and the available information,

UNICEF also supported child marriage forums in Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu, targeting key stakeholders and encouraging a change in social norms and attitudes and the introduction of new legislation.

The establishment of an inter-ministerial taskforce reporting to the deputy prime minister (who also heads the MoWFCD), to develop a national roadmap on children's well-being helped UNICEF to further advance the children's agenda in Malaysia, including child marriage. Invited as an advisor to the taskforce, UNICEF was able to provide technical support for defining the guiding principles, setting strategic objectives and formulating programmes for the roadmap.

Furthermore, UNICEF supported the Freedom Film Festival special session on teen pregnancy hosted by the Federation of Reproductive Health Associations of Malaysia. The programme engaged 275 students, teachers and NGO representatives in conversations around teen pregnancy, using 'edu-tainment' (a documentary called 'Ask the sexpert' and a short Malaysian indie film, 'Kantoi', about a schoolgirl who finds out she is pregnant). UNICEF, the Malaysian Council for Child Welfare and the United Nations Population Fund conducted a forum on comprehensive sexuality education as part of an integral component of sexual and reproductive health and rights advocacy efforts.

A week of child marriage and sexual grooming messaging and awareness-raising on social media – following a marriage-related incident involving an 11-year old girl– resulted in 442,464 impressions on Twitter with 12,053 engagements, 2,921 retweets and 13,661 video views.

Violence against children was addressed through a survey of stakeholder knowledge on this theme conducted in 2018, with UNICEF support and in partnership with the MoWFCD. The results helped to guide capacity-building within the ministry to strengthen its efforts to end violence. UNICEF also partnered with the WHO to bring a Malaysian Government delegation to Cambodia for regional learning on ending violence against children and implementing the SDGs on violence through use of the multi-sectoral tool/resource INSPIRE.

Parenting-support interventions are recognized as a key strategy for reducing violence; to that end UNICEF partnered with the National Population and Family Development Board, an agency under the MoWFCD, to review and update the board's parenting modules and delivery mechanisms for prevention and response to violence against children. Strengthening these modules will help to improve parenting practices by educating parents on child development, and improving their skills in and knowledge about positive disciplinary practices to manage their children's behaviours and ensure their children's safety online and offline.

A recently strengthened partnership with the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission resulted in a research symposium on child online protection, to which technical experts from UNICEF's Office of Research/Innocenti Centre in Florence were invited to share their experience and offer guidance on the Global Kids Online survey and the 'Weprotect' initiative. The purpose was to better understand how Malaysia can be part of research and advocacy efforts to reduce protection threats online. This initiative was undertaken, with continued support from UNICEF Malaysia, to better guide the formation of policy and programme design in the country. UNICEF anticipates engagement with other countries that have carried out the survey, such as the Philippines, to learn in more detail about survey outcomes in other countries, and expects these countries to continue their support to Malaysia.

Subsequent to advocacy by UNICEF and other stakeholders, the Government began in 2018

to consider the establishment of a children's commission within Malaysia's Human Rights Commission once the commission's reform, scheduled for 2019, is completed. The children's commission will act as an independent body to monitor the rights and well-being of children across the board and promote their best interests in law and public policy.

The proposed EU-UNICEF initiative 'Protecting children affected by migration in Southeast, South, and Central Asia' (2018-2021) sought to strengthen and increase the capacity of the child protection system, find alternatives to immigration detention, increase access to basic services and improve cross-border information-sharing, including tracing and reunification, among others. It also sought to support efforts to identify undocumented Malaysian children and increase awareness and access to birth registration, as is taking place in Sabah.

The welcome November announcement by the Minister for Women, Family and Community Development concerning the launch of a diversion pilot in 2019 came after sustained advocacy and capacity-building efforts by UNICEF and other stakeholders. The pilot would be implemented to keep children involved in minor crimes out of the existing justice system. The intervention module will be introduced as an alternative rehabilitation method, and encompass counselling sessions, community service and payment of damages or repair. Inter-agency discussions on implementation were underway at end-2018.

A UNICEF-supported pilot to strengthen department of social welfare probation services, to reduce child recidivism and strengthen reintegration support services for released children, was launched in May 2018 in three locations. The pilots resulted in improved probation reports and non-custodial sentences for 54 out of 58 child offenders as of 7 December 2018. Capacity-building for probation officers was carried out as part of the pilot.

Goal area 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

In November 2018 the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Water and Sanitation visited Malaysia, and commended its achievement of near-universal water and sanitation access, especially in urban areas. In addition, according to a UNICEF Malaysia report ('Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2017 update and SDG baselines'), the country recorded 99 per cent access to safe drinking water in urban areas and national estimates for sanitation were 100 per cent. Thus water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is not a priority in Malaysia's 2018 country programme.

In recognition of the importance of child-centred disaster preparedness, UNICEF Malaysia entered into a two-year partnership with the Natural Disaster Research Centre of the Malaysia Sabah University and the Sabah education department. The earthquake education programme will prepare and develop disaster resilience in over 4,000 children at 114 primary and 21 secondary schools in earthquake-affected areas of Ranau and Lahad Datu in Sabah. At the time of writing, three training sessions had been conducted in Ranau. Through this partnership, child-friendly resources, comprising an earthquake education booklet and a video, were produced and shared with the Malaysia's deputy prime minister.

In early 2018 UNICEF presented a working paper to the Economic Council, entitled 'Malaysia 2050: economically productive and socially inclusive'. The paper presented findings from the 2015 review of *World Population Prospects*, published by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs' population division, to highlight demographic shifts in Malaysia. Over the past few decades, Malaysia enjoyed a relatively favourable demographic

environment, characterized by a working-age population that is growing at a faster rate than the overall population. Malaysia was very successful in translating this demographic window of opportunity into a path of sustained economic growth, poverty reduction and achievements in non-income dimensions. According to projections, however, this upward curve is not a long-term phenomenon as Malaysia is deemed to be few years away from the end of its demographic window of opportunity.

The finding that Malaysia's population is rapidly changing in size, distribution and location, backed by top economists in the country and supported by evidence and analysis from the Department of Statistics, prompted the Government to formulate a development programme focused on meeting the specific needs of the aging population. In her speech in December 2018, the deputy prime minister announced that Malaysia would soon invest in the development of an 'age-friendly city' concept as part of its approach to a more targeted population policy for the elderly.

The main goal of this initiative is to encourage the elderly to participate in local and urban planning, while also creating a friendly environment for them. In light of this announcement, the UNCT plans to expand its joint programming in 2019 to support the Government in this area through a life-cycle approach, which includes the young and children. UNICEF will work with related agencies and local councils to make city planning child-responsive and strengthen the evidence base on equity gaps among children.

Goal area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life

Malaysia has experienced rapid socioeconomic progress, a significant marker of which is the near eradication of poverty. Poverty had been reduced to less than 0.4 per cent in 2016, from 51 per cent in 1957. Inequality, life expectancy and other social and economic indicators, while presenting new challenges, also registered tremendous improvements during the same period. Nevertheless, challenges remain; for example, demographically children are disproportionately affected by poverty. In 2014 the child poverty level was 1.7 per cent compared to 0.6 per cent of overall poverty. However, as many as 15 per cent of children live in households with incomes that are more than 50 per cent below the poverty line (UNICEF 2016).

The rural and urban divide also reflects child poverty. While on average urban children are consistently better off in national statistics compared to their rural peers, the heterogeneous composition of urban communities means that these statistical averages mask inequities and severe deprivations, especially when indicators are compared to those of neighbouring richer urban communities.

In response, UNICEF commissioned DM Analytics to contextualize urban poverty by looking at well-selected poor urban communities and to vertically analyse deprivation levels, fulfilment to rights and children's integration into broader urban society and its opportunities. This effort resulted in a child-focused urban poverty study, entitled 'Children without: A study of urban child poverty and deprivation in low-cost flats'. The study was presented to the Government and the Parliament, and favourably received by a number of MPs from both sides.

After the recent general elections, the study was used as the basis for establishing the national roadmap for child well-being. The results, particularly the universal child grant, were also used to advocate for child-sensitive social protection, and presented to the Council of Eminent Persons and the economic council. Positive outcomes included changes in the cost-of-living

cash transfer programme and the decision to impose a sugar-sweetened beverage tax announced by the Minister of Finance in his 2019 budget speech. The programme now includes children as a targeted demographic within the bottom 40 per cent of the population. A submission was also made to the social protection reform taskforce, headed by the employment provision fund, to consider the 1,000 days child grant.

UNICEF also supported several events during 2018 to promote inclusivity and increase visibility and awareness of childhood disability. These events contributed to the increasing inclusion of children with disabilities in public events and society as a whole. Children with disabilities and their families gained greater confidence to come out of isolation and felt more accepted when they participated in these inclusive events. Children without disabilities also feel more confident to play and learn with children with disabilities the more often they have meaningful opportunities to interact on equal terms. This allowed UNICEF to develop a partnership with the Sabah state ministry of health and people's well-being to promote an inclusive environment for all children to play, learn and engage together. As such, the first-ever 'We are all special: A carnival for all' was collaboratively organized in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, involving more than 500 children, both with and without disabilities, as well as parents, teachers, caretakers, CSOs and the general public. In addition, UNICEF supported the inclusive Borneo Marathon as part of the #StandTogether campaign. The event promoted anti-bullying strategies and continued to raise awareness on inclusion. This joint initiative by Palliative Care and UNICEF offered a child-friendly, inclusive 3 km route alongside the marathon, allowing children with and without disabilities, their families and friends, to participate together.

An inclusive learning zone was a key feature of the event, which involved an 'electrifying' science workshop, a reading corner with Braille books and a children's play area. The carnival's activity partners included Government bodies from the Ministry of Culture and Arts, Ministry of Education and Innovation, CSOs working on disability and private sector entities such as Petrosains and the Jesselton Philharmonic Orchestra.

Prior to the Carnival, UNICEF held a training for the carnival's organizing partners to create better understanding of inclusion and allow the partners, who were new to working with **children living with** disabilities, to explore approaches to ensure greater inclusion in their work. The carnival followed the theme of the international day of persons with disabilities: "empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality", and was the first in a series of activities celebrating this important day. Starting in December 2018, UNICEF plans to launch a multifaceted campaign using mass media, social media activation and face-to-face engagement via UNICEF's street fundraisers.

The #lettertoMyPM campaign that followed the 2018 general elections gave children and youth in Malaysia the opportunity to speak and be heard by the new prime minister, and also by other new leaders. Close to 400 letters were received— including from children living with disabilities, migrant and refugee children – that touched on what children and young people want: education and development, safety, national unity, equality, the eradication of poverty and hunger and protection of the environment. A selection of the letters was compiled into a booklet to be shared with policy-makers and lawmakers in the country and also published by the media.

A post-election arts and activism bazaar, Art for Grabs, provided young people in Malaysia with three youth-friendly platforms in which to participate and exchange views, including a member of parliament and leading human rights activists in the country. The bazaar included

presentation of 'I am not the only one – youth manifestos for a more inclusive Malaysia' by eight marginalized youths, including a disabled, indigenous, LGBT and refugee youth and a youth at risk of statelessness. Youths from five NGOs (Childline, Girl Guides, Rumah Solehah, Talisman Project, Women's Aid Organization and WOMEN:girls) were provided with free booths to promote their causes, relating to child rights, bullying, child marriage and gender equality.

Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

The mid-term review of UNICEF Malaysia's country programme, conducted from May to August of 2018, provided an opportunity to assess progress made, identify winning strategies and address weaknesses to maximize results. Three main lessons emerged from the analysis, notably the effectiveness of a multi-sectoral programming approach and integrated campaigns, and the need to strengthen private-sector engagement to reach results at scale. Evidence-based advocacy is at the core of UNICEF's work in middle- to high-income countries such as Malaysia. Drawing on lessons from the past, UNICEF broadened its partnership and constituent base to expand its reach and voice around issues affecting children, making effective use of influencers and social media to maximize reach across the country and sustain the debate to effect policy change. Shaping the message to address the evidence resulting from its research, and proposing policy recommendations based on global good practice from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries resonated with the Malaysian public and Government.

Consultations and the involvement of the private sector, top academics and economists, members of parliament and civil society prior to and immediately after the launch of UNICEF Malaysia's urban poverty study validated the findings and amplified the call for Government to address them. Malaysia's adoption of the multi-dimensional poverty index as a measure of poverty, and the focus on children's well-being and addressing malnutrition described above can in large part be attributed to this approach. Similarly, approaches used to promote inclusive education, ending child marriage and on- and-offline bullying are bringing about incremental change.

The initiation of integrated campaigns this year, in line with UNICEF's global supporter engagement strategy, proved effective in simultaneously supporting its programmatic and fundraising goals. For example, initiatives undertaken in support of the global #EndViolence campaign were integral to UNICEF Malaysia's advocacy strategy to end child marriage and bullying. Collaboration between the communication, innovation and private sector fundraising programmes and the partnership unit led to innovations such as the use of U-Report to poll donors on issues and use of social marketers to engage the public provided a more personalized approach.

Collaboration also strengthened UNICEF's message and voice. Amplification through social media, driven by the marketing and communication teams, enhanced brand recognition and visibility. Drawing on lessons learned from 2018 experience, forward planning and a call for action from the public, with guidance on concrete things they can do on an individual basis to effect change, will strengthen UNICEF Malaysia's campaigns in 2019.

The multi-sectoral approach, initiated around disability through the 'flagship' concept, has proven its effectiveness in maximizing results. Promoting joint ownership for the results, it has helped mainstream disability, invested an inclusive ethos into our work and externally led to a

more inclusive education system initiated by the announcement of the 'zero-reject policy' by the Ministry of Education, which marks a very welcomed policy shift for children with disabilities. The recommendations of the forward-looking evaluation on disability due in Q2 2019 will help strengthen the approach and support its adoption across results areas.

The integration of UNICEF's strategic approach was enhanced by the decision to create a separate unit for behaviour change communication reporting directly to the head of programmes, to strengthen office capacity to create an enabling environment for policy implementation and change. Another lesson learned was the need for an adolescent and youth engagement strategy to ensure a coordinated approach and to support Malaysia's engagement in 'Generation Unlimited', launched by the United Nations Secretary-General at the General Assembly in September.

Malaysia offers substantive opportunities to engage the private sector in sustained interventions for children, beyond one-off events or projects on child rights, and to leverage existing opportunities for social impact investment, including financing from Islamic sources. UNICEF Malaysia's capacity to tap into this will require a strategic shift and internal capacity-building to better understand industry players and how to engage to scale up results for children.

This will require UNICEF Malaysia to research and draw on the expertise of its private sector fundraising team to market development and rights-based language into shared-value propositions with industry and individual corporations. As a first step to strengthen this important pillar of cooperation, UNICEF Malaysia has created a private sector engagement unit and will integrate its corporate social responsibility and fundraising initiatives when approaching the private sector with the children's agenda.

At the national level, the lack of a coherent policy to address the issue of undocumented, stateless, refugee and migrant populations from a human security, human development and humanitarian perspective, is perhaps Malaysia's biggest challenge to achieving the SDGs. Policy recommendations to address the findings of the UNICEF Sabah urban child poverty study and the UNCT mapping of undocumented, stateless and migrant populations in Sabah in 2019 will provide best practice solutions that can be tested both with United Nations support and through the EU-UNICEF multi-country project on protecting children affected by migration in Southeast, South, and Central Asia. Opposing views in Government about how to move forward in relation to this demographic trend have significantly delayed implementation of this project in Malaysia, although growing recognition and willingness to move forward, notably by the Sabah State government, is encouraging.

A Malaysia case study— conducted as part of a regional review on national evaluation systems and capacities to achieve the SDGs— identified political will and commitment as essential to the formulation of a national evaluation system to support achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 'leave no-one behind' principle. The case study noted a prevailing negative association with evaluation, which tends to be perceived as a form of interrogation, with failure seen as grounds for punitive action rather than a pathway for learning and improvement. As a result, poor performance is hidden.

The case study highlighted the specific issue of data overload associated with capturing and tracking progress on the SDGs. In response, UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme will support the Government's department of statistics and economic planning unit

to streamline and integrate data sources with a solid database on the SDGs to monitor, report and evaluate progress. There is also a need to increase the country's statistical capacity, improve the quality of disaggregated data and tap into administrative data, geospatial information and real-time environmental data, in addition to implementing routine censuses and surveys. UNICEF Malaysia will continue to support country-led evaluations focusing on governance, equity and human rights in order to harness the power of evidence, making it more inclusive and transparent, and vastly increasing the reach and impact of evaluative information for the betterment of all.

UNICEF Malaysia aims to achieve results at scale for children through policy and legislative change and partnerships. Its capacity to do so will be enhanced by the structural and strategic changes adopted at the mid-term review of the country programme in response to: lessons learned over the last two years of programme implementation, findings of ongoing research and the three formative evaluations on our approach to disability, innovation and private sector engagement. An advocacy strategy and calendar will guide UNICEF's integrated campaigns and advocacy work and facilitate forward planning. This will be further facilitated by a 'supporter engagement strategy' comprising a volunteer engagement component to enhance UNICEF's brand recognition. Adolescent and youth engagement will be supported by technical assistance for developing and coordinating strategy, and the private sector engagement strategy outlined above will be tested in an iterative manner to benefit all children in Malaysia.

END/