Executive Summary

The economic and socio-political situation of Maldives was more stable in 2016 than in the years before. UNICEF Maldives began implementing its new Country Programme (CP) 2016 – 2020. Basic services such as free and compulsory education and universal free health care to all continued during the year. In 2016, with support from UN agencies, the Government developed a National Human Rights Framework under the auspices of the Attorney General's office. The framework is aimed at addressing recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review, concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. UNICEF worked closely with the Government to ensure all concluding observations are duly reflected.

The Maldives Government has now guaranteed 14 years of free and compulsory education, including early childhood education, for all children. UNICEF Maldives played a pivotal role in advocating for the importance of early childhood education and the transition to secondary education. Higher secondary education, which was not previously accessible in all the islands across the country, will now be made accessible to all adolescents, especially on remote islands.

The country is experiencing an increased awareness of and commitment to addressing disparities and inclusion through social protection mechanisms. With UNICEF Maldivé’s support, a review of the social protection framework was undertaken and the targeting mechanism was strengthened to include vulnerable children as well as people with disabilities, thereby increasing coverage of children with disabilities.

Key achievements for UNICEF Maldives in 2016 included development of an e-learning platform for continuous professional development of teachers, especially those in far and hard-to-reach islands, for improved classroom instruction aimed at improving learning achievements of children. A policy framework for provision of alternative education programmes was developed, providing opportunities for vocational training for out-of-school children and those at risk of dropping out.

Timely reporting and response to violence against children (VAC), especially from far and hard-to-reach islands, was enhanced through development of a mobile application with a call centre. This was further strengthened by the multisectoral ‘Community Social Groups’ (CSGs) established at island level to respond to vulnerabilities, including cases of violence against children. The call-centre mobile application was a key milestone in data generation at island community levels, informing programs at national level.

The endorsement in 2016 of the five year child health strategy and action plan now provides strategic direction for quality, equitable child health services in the country.

Challenges in 2016 included the continuous changes in political appointments, which required continuous advocacy and repeated briefings for the new appointees. The Child Rights Bill and the Juvenile Justice Bill are still pending submission to the Parliament, despite several high-level advocacy efforts. The high cost of implementation and monitoring
of programs at island levels, especially the far and difficult-to-reach islands, continued to be a great challenge. There is low capacity of staff both at national and island levels, and low presence of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the country, more so at the island community levels.

UNICEF Maldives continued to foster partnerships with agencies supporting delivery of results for children. This included partnerships with UN agencies for various initiatives, including the development of the National Human Rights Framework under the Attorney General’s Office, and development of the UN Inter-Agency Contingency Plan and preparedness plans. The One-UN Low Emissions Climate Resilient Development Programme continued to be implemented. UNICEF Maldives supported building capacities of island communities in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. In collaboration with WHO, UNICEF Maldives ensured the global polio switch was successfully implemented in the country, contributing to the global polio eradication plan. UNICEF Maldives supported development of a behaviour change communication strategy to promote inclusion of children with disabilities in education, developed in partnership with the NGO Care Society.

Notably, UNICEF within its upstream strategy worked closely with government at national and island community levels, focusing on those islands with high disparities as compared to the capital Male, to increase results for children, especially the most disadvantaged.

**Emerging Areas of Importance**

**Climate and children.** Maldives is highly vulnerable to natural hazards, particularly coastal flooding, storm surges and tsunamis. UNICEF Maldives, within its new country programme, promotes child- and gender-sensitive resilience and climate change adaptation by supporting the integration of child-centred, multi-hazard risk assessments into development plans at national and local levels. In 2016, UNICEF supported the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) to draft standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the establishment of the community emergency response teams (CERTs), the primary responders in all island settings to climate hazards and emergencies. The operating procedures allow the management centre to institutionalize training regimes and equipment for the community emergency response teams under the national budget and ensure that the missing component of real-time disaster monitoring (at times of climate and man-made hazards) is done through the teams. These will feed into the national Emergency Operations Centre and other relevant databases.

Under community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM), UNICEF Maldives supported work in 11 inhabited islands in the Laamu Atoll (South Central region) on community-led learning and data collection to understand island-specific climate and man-made hazards and how to prepare a community-led response. Community members, most importantly children, youth and women, were engaged to internalize preparedness and response actions to ensure safety, while building resilience to climate change.

**Greater focus on second decade.** UNICEF Maldives prioritized programme interventions for the second decade of children’s lives. Education programmes focused on improving transition rates to higher secondary education, which are quite low compared to the enrolment rates at the primary and lower secondary levels. A study carried out in 2016 on vulnerabilities that pre-dispose adolescents to drop out of school recommended the following be prioritized as program interventions: access to psychosocial support programs; tackling bullying and rewarding a culture of caring in schools; and providing flexible and alternative forms of education to at-risk children. Based on those recommendations, UNICEF Maldives
supported the Ministry of Education (MoE) to develop a school-based psychosocial support programme, especially for those migrating to Male. This program will be implemented in 2017.

UNICEF Maldives supported development of a draft framework for alternative learning programmes, with a focus on adolescents who are at risk of dropping out of school or those who are currently out of school, now being reviewed by the Ministry of Education. UNICEF Maldives also provided support for institutionalization of life skills into the curriculum. The curriculum is now being implemented in all schools across the country.

UNICEF Maldives, under the child protection programme, aimed to reduce offensive behaviours among adolescents and young people, and advocated for removal of punitive punishments for adolescents in conflict with the law. UNICEF Maldives supported the Government to establish a model for community-based diversion programmes for these children. The community-based programme emphasizes community-level correctional interventions and monitoring with a strong angle of reintegration into the society. Nineteen adolescents with criminal records are now under the diversion programme, while also engaged in an internship programme, building vocational skills for future employability.

Urbanization and children. Maldives has one of the highest urban populations in South Asia, and a significant proportion of its population are children. The country is gearing itself to address the urbanization trend through the population consolidation policy. The policy identified three cities and two other potential communities that will soon attain the city status. Internal migration is mainly from islands to the capital city and other urban settings by people in search of opportunities, quality education and health services. The rapid urbanization means a highly-congested capital island housing more than one-third of the population, resulting in overcrowding, high demand for space, increased pollution and service constraints. At times, it has also led to threats to controlling of communicable diseases, especially the vector-borne diseases such as Dengue and viral fever. These issues are exacerbated by the complexities of climate change, such as flooding.

Social issues such as juvenile delinquency, drug abuse and crime also have accelerated in the urban settings, and pose risks for children to violence against them. UNICEF Maldives addresses this risk through programmes for out-of-school children, with development of alternative and flexible learning programmes. UNICEF targeted interventions for children in conflict with the law, with a focus on diversion programmes. UNICEF Maldives also supported strengthening the institutional capacity of the National Drug Agency.

**Summary Notes and Acronyms**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMP</td>
<td>Annual Management Plan</td>
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<td>APLS</td>
<td>Advanced Paediatric Life Support</td>
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<td>ARC</td>
<td>Advocating the Rights of Children</td>
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<td>AWP</td>
<td>Annual Work Plan</td>
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<td>BCP</td>
<td>Business Continuity Plan</td>
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<td>C4D</td>
<td>Communication for Development</td>
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<td>CCC</td>
<td>(UNICEF’s) Core Commitments for Children</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<td>CMT</td>
<td>Country Management Team</td>
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<td>CO</td>
<td>Country Office</td>
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<td>CPD</td>
<td>Country Programme Document</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>CSG</td>
<td>Community Social Groups</td>
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DCT  Direct Cash Transfer
DFID  Department of Foreign Investment and Development (UK)
DRR  Disaster Risk Reduction
ECD  Early Childhood Development
EPI  Expanded Programme on Immunization
ERM  Enterprise Risk Management
FCSC  Family and Children Service Centre
FPA  Family Protection Authority
GBV  Gender-Based Violence
GSSC  Global Shared Services Centre
HACT  Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer
HIES  Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HIV  Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRBA  Human Rights-Based Approach
HRDT  Human Resource Development Team
HQ  Headquarters (UNICEF)
ICT  Information Communication and Telecommunication
IEC  Information, Education and Communication
IMEP  Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
IPV  Inactivated Polio Vaccine
IYCF  Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices
KPI  Key Performance Indicators
LSE  Life Skills Education
MCPD  Maldives Child Protection Database
MODA  Multidimensional Overlapping Deprivations Analysis
MoE  Ministry of Education
MoGF  Ministry of Gender and Family
MoH  Ministry of Health
MoRES  Monitoring Results for Equity System
MOSS  Minimum Operating Security Standards
MRC  Maldivian Red Crescent
MTR  Midterm Review
NBS  National Bureau of Statistics
NDMC  National Disaster Management Centre
NGO  Non-Governmental Organization
NIE  National Institute for Education
OR  Other Resources
PAS  Performance Appraisal System
POG  Programme and Operations Group
ROSA  Regional Office for South Asia
RR  Regular Resources
SDGs  Sustainable Development Goals
SEN  Special Education Needs
SitAn  Situation Analysis
SMR  Strategic Moment of Reflection
SMT  Senior Management Team
SP  Strategic Plan
ToT  Training of Trainers
UN  United Nations
UNDAF  United Nations Development Assistance Framework  
UNDSS  United Nations Department of Safety and Security  
UNESCAP  United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific  
UNFPA  United Nations Population Fund  
UNICEF  United Nations Children's Fund  
UNOCHA  United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  
UPR  Universal Periodic Review  
VAC  Violence against Children  
VCA  Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment  
VSSM  Vaccine Supply and Stock Management  
WASH  Water, Sanitation and Hygiene  
WHO  World Health Organization  
WinS  WASH in School

**Capacity Development**

Through the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (UNICEF ROSA), the capacity of the National Bureau of Statistics in profiling and reporting on equity and deprivations facing children was strengthened. Using Census 2014, equity profiles were generated in key areas and are now being used for advocacy for increased investments for children.

UNICEF Maldives, working with the Ministry of Gender and Family and the Police Service, trained police officers on advanced child interviewing techniques, child sex tourism and combatting online exploitation of children. The training was aimed at child-sensitive procedures in addressing and handling child abuse cases.

Officials from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Finance participated in a SUN/UNICEF EAPRO regional workshop on ‘Public Finance for Nutrition in Asia’. This enhanced participants’ capacities in multisectoral nutrition budgeting and costing of nutrition plans, largely contributing to the investment case for nutrition, costing of multisectoral nutrition plans and mobilization of resources for nutrition.

At the island levels, healthcare workers from four selected atolls with high prevalence of stunting, were trained in infant and young child feeding practices, breastfeeding counselling, and maternal and child nutrition, and are now closely supporting families through the growth monitoring platform.

Capacity of members of the newly formed ‘Community Social Groups’ at the island community levels in 14 communities was developed for monitoring child abuse, reporting, and counselling of families and children to prevent violence against children. Data on violence against children useful for informing interventions is now available at the community level.

UNICEF Maldives, through the vulnerability and capacity assessments (VCA), supported building the capacities of communities in identification and profiling of hazards and development of appropriate preparedness and response actions. Communities are now more aware and are carrying out preparedness activities at island levels.

**Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy**

At the national level, the Census 2014 data was analysed to generate information on the most vulnerable children across the country. The data was used to refine the equity profiles in education, protection and nutrition. Data generated about out-of-school children was used
to advocate with the Ministry of Education for developing the alternative education learning programmes framework (ALP), for implementation in 2017. Support was provided to add additional modules on capturing data about out-of-school children in the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

Equity profiles developed in health and nutrition re-ignited a new focus by the Ministry of Health on nutrition in the country. This resulted in new leadership appointed in the office and increased the number of staff for implementing new initiatives on nutrition. It also informed the finalization and adoption of the child health strategy and plans. The strategy focuses on reducing newborn mortality and promoting early childhood development and provides strategic directions for equitable and quality child health services.

Using the equity profiles, UNICEF Maldives held policy dialogues with key Government officials, including ministers, on the importance of a strong focus within the country’s sustainable development agenda on equity and the commitment to leaving no child behind. These discussions led to an ongoing initiative for developing an investment case study for children in the country, and the Government’s willingness to incorporate a chapter on children in the census publication. These will be used for further advocacy for increased investment in children.

**Partnerships**

Within the new Country Programme framework, UNICEF Maldives continued its efforts to strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders, government and civil society. With a strong focus on an upstream strategy, UNICEF Maldives worked closely with government partners to strengthen the institutional mechanisms and human capacities for delivering quality services to children. A strong focus was placed on inclusion and improved quality, targeting the remote islands where child deprivations such as high malnutrition and violence against children are prevalent.

UNICEF Maldives continued the One UN joint programme on Low Emissions Climate Resilient Development (LeCRED) implemented in Laamu Atoll. Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (VCA) were conducted in all 11 islands, with children and young people participating. The LaamuInfo database was developed. The VCA and the LaamuInfo will inform the development of child-centred climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction planning and island-level child-centred planning and development.

In partnership with the NGO Care Society, a behaviour change communication strategy was developed, creating greater awareness among local community leaders, schools and parents on the importance of inclusion in education of children with disabilities. This strategy will be implemented in 2017 by the Ministry of Education.

UNICEF Maldives initiated discussions with the Accor Hotels on child-friendly tourism, awareness of child online sexual abuse and training of hotel workers on child abuse. The pact will be initiated in 2017, and more opportunities on the same issues will be sought with other hotels.

A partnership between UNICEF and Advanced Paediatric Life Support of Australia, Paediatric Association of Sri Lanka, and Indhira Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Maldives (the main tertiary hospital) resulted in development of capacity of 20 doctors to efficiently manage critically ill infants and children, promoting saving of lives related to paediatric emergencies. Plans include expansion of the Advance Paediatric Life Support programme.
External Communication and Public Advocacy

UNICEF Maldives conducted high-level advocacy throughout 2016, advocating for inclusion and quality services for all children, especially those in islands with significant disparities. Continuous advocacy with ministers led to a high-level focus, especially on those excluded regions with high disparities, for increased services such as developing an e learning platform, expanding free education to include preschool and developing alternative learning programmes for out-of-school children. A commitment was secured to strengthen monitoring frameworks for Government plans and improved coordination at the ministerial level on issues affecting children.

UNICEF Maldives, in consultation with the National Sustainable Development Goals Coordination Unit, launched SDGs focusing on children’s issues, led by the Minister of Environment and Energy, who is responsible for the coordination of SDGs. The launch took place together with celebrations of UNICEF’s 70th Anniversary, in an event that also rallied seven key ministers directly linked to the children’s well-being agenda to sign a ‘Renewed Call for Every Child: No Child Left Behind’ pledge. UNICEF Maldives also signed the pledge with which the SDG agenda reaffirmed the commitment of the Government of the Maldives and UNICEF to assuring that every child survives, thrives, learns and has a protective environment. Key messages on education, health, protection and inclusion were put on all advocacy materials disseminated. UNICEF Maldives developed materials, including a song and a video presentation, containing information of the role of UNICEF in promoting child rights with equity in the Maldives. The event was attended by hundreds and covered by the local media.

UNICEF Maldives used Facebook and Twitter to communicate with and reach out to adolescents and youth. Communication through social media laid the groundwork for subsequent advocacy work carried out with the public to fuel social engagement. For instance, youth engagement for the High-Level Meeting on Cooperation for Children’s Rights (HLM3) Challenge was sought through social media.

South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation

UNICEF Maldives supported South-South Cooperation through knowledge exchange and sharing of good practices. For instance, the HLM3 held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia was the highest level political advocacy event for children in the larger Asia-Pacific region (covering South Asia, East Asia and Pacific). UNICEF Maldives supported the participation of the Maldives Government delegation to that meeting. The Maldives Government was able to showcase its progress in social protection for children and its successful free universal health coverage, as well as learn lessons from other countries in the areas of social protection and combating violence against children. Maldives made firm commitments to improve its social protection programme to be more child sensitive and to strengthen the public financial planning for sustainability of its universal health coverage programme. The delegation arranged for a future visit in 2017 to the Government of Malaysia for a learning exchange in the area of child protection.

UNICEF Maldives, with support from UNICEF ROSA and UNICEF Sri Lanka, supported the participation of a delegation of medical staff in the South–South Cooperation Regional training-of-trainers (ToTs) on Advanced Paediatric Life Support in Sri Lanka. The ToTs conducted similar trainings for local medical teams, offering services in three hospitals and clinics serving children.
Identification Promotion of Innovation

UNICEF Maldives, with support from the Global Innovation Fund, supported the Government of Maldives to develop innovative interventions in education and child protection.

UNICEF Maldives supported the National Institute of Education (NIE) in establishing an e-learning platform to improve teacher capacity and enhance implementation of the new national curriculum. The objective was to improve the learning outcomes of children. Teachers’ continuous professional development is highly affected by the high cost of training teachers in the islands dispersed across the Indian Ocean. The e-learning platform offered an innovative and viable solution to overcome resource challenges. The design of the content for the module-based e-learning platform was informed by an analysis of teacher training needs. Arrangements to host the platform on a server were completed and 7 of the 11 e-courses were developed. The platform has features to collect real-time data on learners’ activities and their feedback to improve the platform. Once all the courses are developed, the NIE team will be trained in managing and facilitating learners’ activities and monitoring the learning activities on the platform. The platform is expected to go live nationally and be made accessible to all teachers in early 2017.

UNICEF Maldives supported development of a mobile application for reporting of violence against children, establishing a call-centre linked to the Maldives Child Protection Database (MCPD). UNICEF also supported development of an e-learning platform for training of social workers across the country. The initiative is contributing to improving reporting and responding to cases, especially in the remote islands. By December 2016, 50 per cent of the 19 Family and Children Service Centres across the 19 atolls were connected to the database, linking the key service providers, such as police officers and social workers, at central and regional levels.

Support to Integration and Cross-sectoral Linkages

UNICEF Maldives continued to support the expansion and strengthening of the community social groups (CSGs) at the island community level, which were initiated in 2015. The CSGs are comprised of select members from the Family and Child Social Centre, the school, the health centre, the police, the islands councils, and community leaders and civil society representatives.

The CSGs provide a coordinated and coherent approach to address issues that warrant a cross-sectoral response at community level. They also provide a platform for working together on issues related to women and children, including children with disabilities. Even in its initial stage, the initiative has increased cross-sectoral coordination and improved dialogue between partners in attending to issues of children at the island levels. This coordination is critical as there are certain departments that are not represented at the community level.

Discussions have begun in the community social groups on formulating interventions to strengthen parenting capacities on prevention of abuse, including child sexual abuse and exploitation. Discussions on finding alternatives for children who are out of school have picked up momentum. For example, in the atoll of Fuah Mulaku in the south region, the group initiated the identification of vulnerable children and families that needed to be supported by respective sectors. The Government has requested that UNICEF Maldives support further expansion of the community social groups to additional vulnerable atolls.

The groups have become a cross-sectoral force supporting monitoring of child rights at the island levels, liaising with relevant ministries for support in interventions. They also are
working with vulnerable families and children at risk of abuse in early identification and response.

Service Delivery

UNICEF Maldives continued its strong focus on an upstream strategy, working closely with Government partners to strengthen the institutional mechanisms as well as human capacities for delivery of quality services to children. A strong focus was placed on inclusion and improvement of quality, rather than service delivery, targeting the remote islands where there were child deprivations such as high malnutrition and violence against children. UNICEF Maldives also strongly advocated for child-sensitive policies based on sound evidence and strategic technical assistance.

Procurement of vaccines was facilitated through the UNICEF Supply Division in Copenhagen. While the Government provided funding for the vaccines, UNICEF Maldives, through UNICEF Copenhagen Procurement and Supply Division, provided technical support for vaccine forecasting and management, and facilitated procurement of all the routine vaccines in the expanded programme for immunization (EPI), as well as for non-EPI vaccines (such as travel vaccines and influenza vaccine), Vitamin-A and de-worming tablets.

Maldives executed the ‘the Switch’ in April 2016 as part of the Global Polio Endgame strategy. The use of oral polio vaccine (OPV) was stopped, beginning with removal of the type-2 component of trivalent OPV (tOPV), through a switch to bivalent OPV (bOPV). The process needed to be globally synchronized, so comprehensive planning, close implementation, and monitoring was essential. WHO and UNICEF Maldives, with support from UNICEF ROSA, provided support to ensure timely planning and implementation of the Switch plan, resulting in successful recall and disposal of tOPV and introduction of bOPV in all islands by the required date. Timely supply of bOPV was ensured through close liaison with UNICEF Copenhagen.

UNICEF Maldives will continue assisting the Government with procurement requests in 2017, to ensure adequate vaccines are available in the country in a timely manner.

Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation

To achieve the human rights-based approach (HRBA) benchmarks, UNICEF Maldives provided support to the Government to implement the recommendations of the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Ministry of Gender and Family officers and police were trained on how to recognize online exploitation and sexual exploitation; and a call-centre and mobile application were developed to enhance reporting of violence against children and response to cases in remote islands. UNICEF Maldives supported the recommendation on promotion of other measures to detention of children in conflict with the law by supporting development of a model for diversion programs for these children. Support also was provided for developing a national strategy to address drug abuse by children.

To enhance inclusion in education, UNICEF Maldives, in partnership with the NGO Care Society, supported the formulation of a behaviour change communication strategy to address discrimination of children with disabilities. The strategy stipulated key programmatic interventions that will be implemented in 2017. UNICEF Maldives also supported the development of a policy framework for alternative education programs for vulnerable and out-of-school children, with the participation of out-of-school children informing the design of potential programs.
UNICEF Maldives also supported capacity development of police officers and social workers to implement the obligations of the CRC. To mark Children’s Day, UNICEF Maldives, in partnership with NGOs, held consultations with children on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals, providing a constructive dialogue with children and increasing their awareness of their rights.

Advocacy programs supported by UNICEF Maldives highlighted the roles of key stakeholders and their accountabilities in reaching children from the hard-to-reach islands with quality services. These efforts resulted in a stronger commitment from key government ministries and other stakeholders to do so.

UNICEF Maldives also contributed to the One UN Human Rights Action Plan to strengthen reporting on Human Rights Mechanisms and monitoring of treaty body recommendations, which is being developed by the Attorney General’s Office.

**Gender Equality**

UNICEF Maldives, together with the other UN agencies, strongly advocated with parliamentarians for the passage of the Gender Equality Bill.

UNICEF Maldives advocated with the National Action and Coordination Group against Violence against Children (NACG) to look at the incidence of child marriage, which led to an initial rapid assessment by the NGO Society for Health Education to understand the drivers of child marriage in the country. The assessment findings indicate poverty as the main driver. The NGO plans to undertake a more representative assessment to explore the issue further, and UNICEF Maldives will support the process. The issue of child marriage and the possible drivers is an area for follow-up, monitoring and advocacy with the Government in 2017.

Gender has been mainstreamed into respective programme activities. The nutrition programme focused on enhancing capacity of mothers and fathers to make better choices for infant and young child feeding, with a specific focus on the supportive role of the father during breastfeeding. The community social groups had a key role in identifying and responding to child sexual abuse, especially for girls, as well as responding to gender-based violence in the 14 islands where community social groups have been established. Gender has been mainstreamed in the new education curriculum as well as in teaching and learning materials.

In 2016, in its capacity as the lead agency for contingency planning in the country, UNICEF Maldives, with support from United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and UNICEF ROSA, and in collaboration with other UN agencies, the Government and NGO partners, led the development of the Inter Agency Contingency Plan. The Plan includes priority preparedness activities such as training of partners on gender-based violence and exploitation using available minimum standards such as the UNICEF Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) and UNFPA’s gender-based violence guiding principles. Priority response activities also included measures to combat gender-based violence during emergencies.

**Environmental Sustainability**

In 2016, UNICEF Maldives partnered with the Government, particularly the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC), to support key activities to promote climate resilience and child-focused disaster risk reduction (DRR). Under the UN joint programme on Low Emissions Climate Resilient Development (LeCRED) the conceptual framework needed to
establish Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) was developed. The Centre now has the capacity to support communities to develop and institutionalize the Teams.

UNICEF Maldives also supported the establishment of community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) capacity in all 11 target islands of Laamu atoll. Those communities now have the capacity to identify their hazard profiles and develop appropriate preparedness and response actions. The CBDRM exercises also increased engagement of children and young people whose participation is vital for sustained climate change adaptation/disaster risk reduction work in the country, as they are most vulnerable to the hazards.

With support of UNICEF ROSA, in 2016, UNICEF Maldives provided 18 dewatering pumps to 9 islands that face continuous flooding throughout the year. The National Disaster Management Centre reported that those islands no longer request support during monsoon season and are better at planning for such eventualities. The islands now have the ability to update their vulnerability and capacity assessments and disaster management plans, which are key components of the island development plans.

Effective Leadership

UNICEF Maldives reinforced its emphasis on programme assurance and enforcement of the harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT) assurance plan. It continued to emphasize its governance mechanisms for effective leadership. This includes the programme and operation group (POG) Team and the country management team (CMT). Key internal workflow processes were reviewed along with the table of authority (TOA). Statutory committees were reconstituted and terms of reference were shared with respective members of the committees to ensure smooth functioning of the office and tracking efficiency and effectiveness.

In addressing programme management performance, UNICEF Maldives continued to use an implementation and performance monitoring tool – essentially the Performance Management Dashboard and score cards - to track progress and corrective actions taken on a timely basis, with focus on results for children. UNICEF Maldives also ensured implementation of management responses of evaluation recommendations. Results in key areas were discussed in the programme and operation group and the country management team meetings for strategic directions and actions. The country management team provided guidance and directives to accelerate implementation, and emphasized increased monitoring of implementing partners to reduce risks as a follow on to the findings of the macro assessment conducted for the new Country Programme Document 2016-2020.

The country management team reviewed enterprise risk management (ERM) and mitigation measures were identified and incorporated into workplans for follow up, while also closely monitoring the implementation of the annual management plan (AMP). The business continuity plan (BCP) was updated to ensure efficient implementation in an emergency. The country management team, with support from the senior management team, continuously monitored the security situation of the country, and kept staff abreast of developments and ensured that staff were equipped to continue business during instances of high insecurity.

Financial Resources Management

The country management team ensured regular implementation and monitoring of key performance indicators (KPIs), including the score cards, with set benchmarks outlined in the Annual Management Plan (AMP). Any areas lagging behind the Plan and regional benchmarks were discussed and any bottlenecks identified with clear actions identified by management to alleviate the bottlenecks.
By the end of 2016, all key performance indicators had been met, with no outstanding Direct Cash Transfers (DCTs) over 6 months. This was achieved through continuous monitoring by the Country Management Team, improved planning, timely implementation, and continuous monitoring with implementing partners. Special measures were put in place to ensure full utilization of Other Resources (OR) funds with shorter life span and of those grants expiring in 2016. At year-end, the implementation rate stood at 95 per cent.

Cash and treasury management was undertaken with the objective of maintaining an optimum level of cash at bank as per the financial procedures. UNICEF Maldives smoothly transitioned to bank transfer payment system and at year end about 90 per cent of the payments were processed using bank transfers. The bank charges for transactions other than replenishment charges were negotiated and completely removed, resulting in savings on bank charges. Bank reconciliation was completed in a timely manner with guidance from the Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC), liquidations of DCTs were completed on time, and effective cash forecasts were prepared with the coordination from programme sections.

Utility costs were monitored regularly in the Programme and Operation Group meetings and actions to reduce costs were identified. Electricity and telephone costs decreased by 17 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively, compared to 2015.

Increased compliance with HACT (scheduled spot checks and systematic programme visits) added to efficiency in programme implementation and utilization of funds through a Quality Assurance and Assessment Plan, which included timely programme visits with counterparts and closely monitoring programme activities. At year end, completion of quality assurance of HACT was at 100 per cent.

**Fundraising and Donor Relations**

UNICEF Maldives, with 54 per cent of other resources (OR) budget of the total budget, continued its resource mobilization efforts in 2016. Ninety-five per cent of the total allotment for 2016 was utilized (RR – 94 per cent and OR – 95 per cent).

UNICEF Maldives continued to implement the resource mobilization and partnership strategy to meet the funding gap. Bilateral engagements with in-country diplomatic missions continued, and discussions were held for probable partnerships with the High Commissions of China, India and Sri Lanka. Potential partnerships and future collaborations were explored with the private sector, including hotels and resort companies such as Accor hotels. A senior management team undertook a mission to Sri Lanka to meet with the diplomatic mission to discuss potential areas of partnership. Potential areas of interest, including supporting initiatives for out-of-school children, were expressed by the Embassy of Kuwait. The team also met with United Arab Emirates diplomats, who encouraged leveraging partnerships for disaster risk reduction.

UNICEF Maldives received thematic funds, used to support interventions in education, child protection, HIV/AIDS, disaster risk reduction and water sanitation and hygiene. In 2016, UNICEF Maldives obtained funds from the Innovation Fund that are currently being used to implement two innovations in education and child protection programmes.

Several proposals were funded for nutrition, health, HIV/AIDS, and child protection. UNICEF Maldives also secured funding for Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) from the UK Department of Foreign Investment and Development (DFID) through the Regional support. Under the One UN Low Emissions Climate Resilient Development Programme (LeCRED) programme, UNICEF secured funding for a synergistic implementation of the disaster risk reduction component of the programme with other UN agencies and partners.
To ensure optimal use of funds, fund-monitoring mechanisms are in place. Monthly programme and operations coordination meetings, Country Management Team meetings and in-house tracking tools ensured all funds were utilized by grant expiration date.

**Evaluation and Research**

The integrated monitoring and evaluation plan for UNICEF Maldives for 2016 was prepared and endorsed at the beginning of the year by the Country Management Team, who then regularly monitored it, ensuring 100 per cent implementation by end of the year.

The evaluation of the Life Skills Education (LSE) programme initiated in 2015 was completed. Management responses were developed for each of the recommendations. These included the development of a strategy to monitor the implementation of the national curriculum and strengthening in-service training of teachers and school management on teaching the new competency (life skills based curriculum).

These recommendations were monitored by the country management team and were integrated into existing programmes. The national evaluation capacity has improved due partly to the support provided by UNICEF ROSA and UNICEF Maldives to Government partners. Due to UNICEF advocacy, the evaluation function was mainstreamed in Government sectoral key ministries and will be enhanced in 2017.

Key evaluations in 2017 will include an impact evaluation of the social protection programme jointly with 3ie.

**Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings**

UNICEF Maldives moved to new premises in 2016. The efficiency gains from this move included cost savings in the long-run in terms of hosting meetings in-house rather than opting for hall hire, as well as reduction in time spent on travels for meetings given the new office’s strategic location.

UNICEF Maldives strengthened its cost saving culture. Staff are more conscious of saving energy, reducing carbon footprint and reducing costs. Positive practices inculcated include turning off lights and air conditioners when not in use, responsible use of water and telephone and the re-use of paper. To reduce the expenses on communication, the mobile packages for staff were revised to ensure a further reduction on mobile bills.

Removal of transaction charges further reduced banking costs. UNICEF Maldives began receiving daily e-bank statements, which increased the efficiency and effectiveness of managing the cash at bank. To reduce the day to day expenses of the office, UNICEF Maldives made sharing of printers and printing black and white and double sided compulsory.

Payment processing by GSSC drastically increased efficiency by reducing the time taken for processing transactions and increasing reliability.

**Supply Management**

As Maldives transitions to an upper-middle income country, the Country Programme (2016-2020) was designed to support high level advocacy, evidence generation and capacity development. As such, supply and procurement services were limited to technical expertise and vaccines.
With the support of UNICEF Procurement and Supply Division (PSD) based in Copenhagen, UNICEF Maldives facilitated the procurement of vaccines for the Government, ensuring required documentation, communication between parties, and funds directly transferred to PSD by the Government. UNICEF Maldives will continue to provide this support in 2017.

Based on discussions with the Government and identified technical gaps, technical expertise was provided in the form of consultancies to support implementation of programmes. The launch and integration of the Talent Management System (TMS) in the recruitment process increased efficiency, effectiveness and transparency throughout the hiring process for consultants.

Security for Staff and Premises

The security situation in the Maldives continued to fluctuate. The Representative is a member of the Security Management Team (SMT) and participated in all meetings where security matters were deliberated and solutions proffered with regard to the country's evolving political context. The security situation was closely monitored to ensure staff security both inside and outside of the office. Staff were updated whenever announcements were made by political parties on rallies and demonstrations, and any other emerging security situation or eminent threat to safety. Advisories were provided as necessary, and security updates and guidance were provided by the security team, along with precautionary messages on how to ensure safety and the proper use of social media in such events.

To enhance security of the new office premises, and to comply with Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS), with funding support from UNICEF ROSA, a security door was installed to reinforce the main entrance. A 24 hour CCTV camera system was installed at key locations in the building and Shatter Resistance Films were installed in all the glass doors and windows. Support was provided by the UNICEF regional office to ensure that the new office premises was reinforced as per the security requirements with the help of regional contingency funds.

United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) for Maldives, based in Sri Lanka, visited the new office premises and provided continuous support to ensure MOSS compliance.

Human Resources

The learning plan was developed at the beginning of 2016. The human resources development team (HRDT) considered each request weighing need, fair opportunities, available resources and added benefits to career development. The learning plan identified key gap areas based on the resources available, and the implementation was monitored through the HRDT.

Through the Regional HRDT envelope, joint staff training was conducted addressing an office-wide learning need identified as ‘Strengthening advocacy skills including use of social media’. All staff participated in a three-day training on Results-Based Management with support from the UNICEF Regional Office. Along with other UN staff, UNICEF Maldives staff underwent a first-aid training focused on health and safety. With support from UNICEF ROSA, an Emergency Preparedness and Response Training was conducted, which increased staff awareness on socio-political and environment risks and ways to address them through the Business Continuity Plan.

UNICEF Maldives undertook five recruitments within the stipulated timelines, which included three national posts, one general staff post and one TA post. The staff totals 14 members, 43 per cent males and 57 per cent females.
UNICEF Maldives continued to support implementation of activities of the Global Staff Survey Action Plan related to work-life balance and seeking career development opportunities.

Staff performance was monitored through regular interactions with the supervisor and supervisee through regular check-ins as per ACHIEVE, the new performance monitoring system. Staff learning, maintaining work-life balance and use of flexi time when needed were emphasized.

To enhance staff capacity, staff benefited from specialized programmes throughout the year within and outside the region, including network meetings. Staff also used AGORA to access learning opportunities in various areas of need.

### Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

UNICEF Maldives leveraged resources to standardize CAT6 network with CISCO switch and strengthen ICT infrastructure, installing IP PABX, which is now fully functional.

Office 365 significantly improved access to the ICT resources. To further enhance communication and efficiency, all staff can now access office emails through their mobile devices, allowing timely receipt and response. Skype and Skype for Business (Lync) were increasingly used by staff to host online meetings and conduct interviews. This has improved efficiency and reduced local and overseas telephone charges. The use of video conference facilities has further increased efficiency and effectiveness. UNICEF Maldives monitored IT needs and procured items to ensure that all ageing items were replenished accordingly.

UNICEF Maldives used Onedrive to synchronize documents in staff laptops, which allowed staff to work wherever internet access was available.

To reduce ICT footprint, common printers were installed in two locations within the office and staff were advised to use the most cost efficient printer settings. This has resulted in remarkable reduction of consumables.

### Programme Components from RAM

#### ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

**OUTCOME 1** Inclusive equitable and quality social services for children (and adolescents), especially the disadvantaged and vulnerable are improved by 2020

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
The new country programme started in January 2016, with a sharpened equity focus to reduce disparities and achieve the progressive realization of the rights of all children in the Maldives. Outcome 1 focuses on strengthening equitable services to children and adolescents in the areas of health, nutrition, education and child protection. Key interventions related to these areas were initiated, and are contributing to overall outcome results.

In an effort to reduce child malnutrition, UNICEF Maldives focused on strengthening institutional capacity on child and maternal nutrition interventions. The national standards for infant and young child feeding (IYCF) were finalized, along with the IYCF Programme. Several training programmes in infant and young child feeding and breastfeeding counselling increased the capacity of healthcare workers and nurses in six atolls (provinces) to better
deliver informative counselling to parents and caregivers, especially those with infants and young children whose growth is faltering.

The Child Health Strategy and Action Plan was endorsed by the Government, and will be costed in 2017. It provides strategic directions for the delivery of quality equitable child health programmes and services. The capacity of a cadre of medical doctors was developed on Advanced Paediatric Life Support, improving the early management of acutely ill and injured children, and enabling more lives to be saved related to paediatric emergencies. Challenges related to staff turnover and monitoring of services still persist. Setbacks were also observed due to frequent changes at policy level – with the change of three health ministers experienced in 2016. UNICEF ensured that key issues related to child health and nutrition, especially from an equity angle, were advocated for when new ministers took office. WHO continued to be a close and valued partner, working with UNICEF Maldives on nutrition, neonatal and immunization interventions and advocacy. For instance, a joint partnership between WHO and UNICEF ensured the smooth implementation of the global polio switch in the country, within the set global timeline. UNICEF Maldives also benefited from several capacity building initiatives of South-South cooperation, facilitated by UNICEF ROSA.

Several education measures are being implemented by the Government to improve the quality of education and to ensure that no child is left behind. The Ministry of Education announced free and compulsory 14 years of education for every child.

The Ministry began upgrading of teachers and ensuring that all teachers are qualified and licensed by end of 2017. UNICEF’s contribution to improving inclusive and equitable and quality education included initiation of the operationalization of the School Quality Assurance and Accountability mechanism at the central level. This mechanism includes development of a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the new national curriculum at the central and subnational levels and development of an e-learning platform for training of teachers for the curriculum rollout. Support was provided for the development of the School Health Strategy and Action Plan to strengthen school health. Through a partnership with CARE Society, a local NGO, support was provided to develop a behaviour change communication strategy and to address social cultural attitudes that exclude children from education, especially children with disabilities. UNICEF Maldives also provided support to develop a policy and framework for provision of alternative and flexible learning options for children who are out of school or are at risk of dropping out of school.

With an aim of creating a holistic child system for child protection at national and community levels that prevents, protects and responds to cases of violence against children, UNICEF Maldives, together with the Government, focused on building capacity of communities and institutions. Case-workers were reached with refresher training, leading to improved capacity for risk assessments, report writing, development of intervention plans, and interviewing techniques. Investigating officers received training that increased their capacity to lead investigation of child victims of abuse and exploitation. The trained Community Engagement Officers will help establish programmes for prevention of juvenile crimes and will work closely with the community social groups in addressing these issues at community level. The programme also will engage the judiciary to strengthen capacity and sensitize judges to issues of child abuse and violence against children.

UNICEF Maldives worked closely with the Ministry of Gender and Family as a lead agency to establish the community social groups (CSGs). Twenty six CSGs were created in four atolls, comprised of sectors relevant to and directly responsible for child protection and expected to provide support at community level for prevention and respond to child protection issues. The CSGs also are providing the learnings necessary for establishing a
coordination mechanism at island, atoll and national levels.

A mobile application for reporting is being developed that will be linked to the ‘Call-Centre’ and the Maldives Child Protection Database. This will enable easier access and facilitate easier reporting of cases of violence against children from remote islands. The information from both the calls and SMS would be centrally captured, analysed and used for timely response and action.

OUTPUT 1 Comprehensive mechanism for child and adolescent nutrition interventions strengthened, especially in the regions with high malnutrition rates.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF Maldives’ support for the nutrition programme in 2016 focused on building institutional capacity in maternal and child nutrition among healthcare workers, with an emphasis on areas with high malnutrition rates. Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) National Standards were finalized in 2016. The standards provide clear guidelines to practitioners on recommended intakes of food for children, and enable health service providers to deliver consistent information and messages to mothers and other caregivers on early, exclusive and continued breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding.

With support from UNICEF Maldives, trainings in infant and young child feeding practices were conducted for health staff in health centres from six atolls (Shaviyani and Noonu Atoll in the North region, Fuahmulah and Addu in the South Region, and Alifu Alifu & Alifu Dhaalu in the Central region). Assistance from WHO and UNICEF Maldives supported an IYCF training of healthcare workers on all islands of Laamu Atoll (South Central), which was facilitated by Training of Trainers (ToTs) trained in by UNICEF in 2015.

The 75 newly trained health workers provided messages on breastfeeding and complimentary feeding to parents and caregivers of 7,800 under-five children, as well as counselling to parents of children whose growth might be faltering. The increased knowledge and awareness of good feeding practices among caregivers contributed to increased knowledge and skills of health workers and subsequently, increased access of families to infant and young child feeding services in these islands.

With the aim of promoting awareness on maternal and child nutrition, several information, education and communication tools were developed in 2016, including video spots, posters and leaflets with key behaviour change communication messages. The resources are being distributed to all 189 islands in the country, and will provide useful tools to impart nutrition messages through the health centres. The TV spots reached households throughout Maldives, including the ones that are difficult to access. The updating of Growth Monitoring Standards and tools were delayed due to technical expertise limitations, and will continue in 2017. Once compiled, the data will be analysed to monitor improvement on the nutritional status of children.

OUTPUT 2 Policies and strategies for implementation and monitoring of inclusive and equitable child health programmes developed and implemented.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
The Child Health Strategy and Action Plan, with a focus on reducing newborn mortality and promoting early childhood development was endorsed, providing strategic directions for equitable and quality child health services. The strategy provides strategic guidance and the action plan outlines a road map to implement the strategy and roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders, with a focus on quality equitable services. The costing of the strategy and action plan was delayed until 2017, due to difficulties in collecting data and staff capacity limitations. UNICEF ROSA supported UNICEF Maldives to build their capacity on
the costing tool, through a regional South-South cooperation training on costing of Essential Newborn Action Plans in Sri Lanka.

With support from UNICEF ROSA, UNICEF Maldives participated in a South-South cooperation knowledge exchange to China, to learn from the well-established maternal and child mortality surveillance system. Maldives will initiate maternal near-miss audits in 2017, and strengthen the maternal and health Information system.

The antenatal care (ANC) programme in Raa and Baa Atoll (North Central region) was strengthened with support from UNICEF Maldives, with 73 health providers trained on preconception and ANC interventions. Monitoring of integrated management of childhood illness and essential newborn care services in regional hospitals took place in 2016, and gaps in services were identified, including the limited number of IMCI trained practitioners. WHO and UNICEF ROSA’s collaboration built the capacity of immunization managers from 18 atolls on vaccine management.

UNICEF Maldives supported capacity building on Advance Paediatric Life Support (APLS) through three trainings. Two APLS trainings were South-to-South regional trainings held in Sri Lanka with support from UNICEF ROSA. The Training of the Trainer (ToT) course enabled the ToT-trained Maldivian doctors to co-facilitate a subsequent APLS provider course in Maldives to 16 medical staff. Technical expertise was provided by APLS Australia and Paediatric Association of Sri Lanka. The training helped improve the early management of paediatric emergency cases. Development of knowledge and skills necessary to efficiently manage critically ill infants and children contributed to saving more young lives, including newborns.

UNICEF Maldives supported data collection and provided technical expertise to include adolescent young key affected populations (YKAP) in the ongoing HIV/AIDS Biological and Behavioural Survey. The findings will be instrumental for developing future targeted interventions for these populations.

**OUTPUT 3 Enhanced Implementation and monitoring of inclusive, child and gender sensitive education, including learning achievements.**

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
Efforts in 2016 focused on developing a monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the National Curriculum and operationalizing the School Quality Assurance and Accountability Framework. This was geared toward improving the quality of education and monitoring of learning achievements.

UNICEF Maldives supported the development of a system for monitoring and reporting of the national curriculum at the national and subnational levels. A review of the curriculum implementation was undertaken, which informed the development of a strategy on monitoring the curriculum along with a set of monitoring tools and indicators. The monitoring tools and the strategy are in the process of being finalized and will be implemented in 2017. UNICEF Maldives also supported the National Institute of Education (NIE) to develop an e-learning platform to train teachers across the country to enhance implementation of the curriculum. A training needs analysis was undertaken to inform the design of a Moodle-based e-learning platform. Actions were taken to address issues such as slow speed of Internet in the islands, limited IT infrastructure and staff shortages at the National Institute. Consensus was reached on the key courses, the learning model to be used and the hosting arrangements of the learning platform. Content for seven e-courses (English, Islam, Science, Health and Physical Education, Inclusive Education, Creative Arts and Assessment for
Learning) and the platform to host them are being developed and the hosting arrangements were confirmed with the Ministry of Education. Additional courses will be developed in 2017 after the platform is launched. UNICEF Maldives also continued to support the development of the Education Management Information System (EMIS), geared to develop a module on tracking vulnerabilities among students, identifying students at risk of dropping out and inclusion of children with disabilities. The module being developed will be incorporated into the core module that was developed in 2015. Data from the system is currently used by the Ministry of Education to monitor student's attendance and appropriate actions are taken by the schools and the Ministry.

Support provided to operationalize the SIQAAF (the school improvement, quality assurance and accountability framework) resulted in development of a school health and safety strategy. Once implemented in 2017, the strategy will strengthen the implementation and monitoring of school health dimension of the SIQAAF thereby creating healthier and safer schools for children. UNICEF Maldives, in partnership with the NGO Care Society and the National Institute of Education, developed a behaviour change communication strategy to address discrimination of children with disabilities, in particular promoting their inclusion in education. The strategy will be finalized and implemented in 2017.

**OUTPUT 4** Alternative education system for the most vulnerable children established and operational.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
In 2016, efforts focused on developing a policy framework for provision of alternative and flexible learning programs for vulnerable and out-of-school children. Analysis of education data from Census 2014 suggested that students were more at risk of dropping out at lower secondary level (net attendance rate 74 per cent) and analysis of secondary data showed that boys drop out more than girls. This data was further supported by the data on juvenile delinquency from the Juvenile Justice Unit, which suggested that 95 per cent of children in conflict with the law are school dropouts and are mostly adolescent boys. The majority of drug users are in the age group 15-19 years (National Drug Use Survey, 2012). The Assessment of Vulnerabilities among Adolescents that UNICEF Maldives conducted in 2014 suggested a lack of interest in studies and bullying to be the main factors that predispose adolescents to drop out of school. UNICEF Maldives aligned its results to address the issues for adolescents, particularly to prevent them from dropping out of school and opting for risky behaviours such as drug use, offending and participating in gang activities.

In 2016, using the above data, UNICEF Maldives successfully advocated with the Ministry of Education to develop alternative education programmes and flexible learning programmes for children and adolescents who show disinterest in academics, are not coping well, or are out of school. This advocacy resulted in the development of a policy framework for the provision of alternative learning and flexible learning strategies that is being reviewed by the senior management of the Ministry of Education. Once the framework is finalized, a set of alternative learning programmes will be developed and institutional capacity will be strengthened to deliver and monitor the programmes. The programs will be piloted in selected areas chosen by the Ministry of Education.

**OUTPUT 5** Child protection system effectively prevents, and responds to VAC, CiCWl, and for prevention of drug abuse, by 2020. % of cases of VAC that received response and successfully closed as defined by standardized operational procedures, and by trained professionals
**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

With an aim of creating a holistic child protection system at national and community levels that prevents, protects and responds to cases of violence against children, UNICEF Maldives, together with the Government, focused on building capacity of the communities and the institutions.

Community social groups are considered a key element of the child protection system in the Maldives. If they function well, they can significantly help to address violence against children, including sexual abuse. Fourteen groups across three atolls were created. They started to involve officials from education, health, police, island councils, and civil society groups. They facilitated coordination, discussion and interventions on child abuse cases where multi-disciplinary responses are required. Six of the fourteen groups initiated the identification of vulnerable children and families, while another six began developing community interventions for the prevention of violence against children, including sexual abuse. UNICEF Maldives supported the community social groups in developing island/community level plans for the prevention of violence against children, including sexual abuse.

Twenty-eight social workers participated in refresher training on risk assessments, report writing, development of intervention plans, and techniques for interviewing children and adults. Training also covered how to work with colleagues from other sectors.

To improve investigation of child protection cases, 33 investigating officers from the Maldives Police Service participated in a course on Advanced Child Interviewing Techniques. Since then, 60 child abuse cases have been investigated by trained investigating officers. UNICEF Maldives provided technical support to Maldives Police Service in developing the course. Forty-nine government stakeholders from the Department of Immigration and Emigration, Prosecutor General’s Office, police and social workers were oriented on the emerging issues of online sexual exploitation and sex tourism. UNICEF Maldives provided technical support to deliver the orientation. Screening of persons with sexual abuse reports during visa approval processes, sensitization of immigration officers at the airport, and training of police officers and social workers were identified as important needs that are now included in the Government’s 2017 sectoral plans.

If police officers can engage with communities and the community social groups, they can more effectively prevent juvenile crimes. The first batch of 30 police officers from some atolls and Male were trained as community engagement officers. They will work closely with the community social groups for the prevention of juvenile crimes and violence against children. Nineteen adolescents with criminal records are now under the diversion programme that also provides them with internships that build vocational skills for future employability.

Sixty-three schools in Male and across eight atolls developed school-level child protection policies. UNICEF Maldives assisted the Ministry of Education in drafting the national level policy, developing the templates and guidance document for the school-level policy, and for the rollout to schools in four atolls, with the Ministry of Education leading the expansion to additional atolls.

**OUTPUT 6** Effective coordination and monitoring mechanism operational for timely response to VAC and CiCWL at national, selected atolls and islands with high prevalence of child abuse.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Currently, the response to violence against children and the treatment of children in conflict with law is ineffective and a comprehensive legislation and an effective monitoring and coordination mechanism, at national, atoll and island levels is required.
The establishment of community social groups at island level is demonstrating what an effective coordination mechanism can achieve. Based also on the CSG experience, the Minister of Gender and Family established a technical working group consisting of members from Maldives Police Service, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Prosecutor General’s Office and UNICEF Maldives. The technical working group coordinates policy and practice between key actors, and generates multidisciplinary solutions for child protection, including protection of children from sexual abuse. UNICEF Maldives played a key role in the discussions by bringing international standards and best practices to the table.

The National Drug Agency under the Ministry of Home Affairs is leading the preparation of the National Strategy for Drug Abuse Prevention, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Children and Adolescents. Key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health are involved in drafting the strategy. Consultations with policy makers have taken place at atoll/regional level and at national or central level, including young people and civil society groups. UNICEF Maldives provided technical support and suggested use of international best practice as the basis for the strategy.

The Maldives Child Protection Database (MCPD), operated by Maldives Police Service, continued to expand. Data input and analysis has become easier through a conversion to a web-based application. Half the 19 Family and Children Service Centres in the atolls are linked to the database. All police units in the atolls, the Ministry of Gender and Family, and the Juvenile Justice Unit of Ministry of Home Affairs were trained on the use of the Database.

A mobile application for reporting of violence against children is under development by the Maldives Police Service with support from UNICEF Maldives. The Ministry of Gender and Family is committed to establishing a call centre, and plans are in an advanced stage, with testing to begin by January 2017. All calls to the call centre will be received by a dedicated staff. The call-centre will also be linked to the MCPD to ensure cases are recorded and analysed for a complete picture, increasing the efficiency of the response. UNICEF Maldives played a key role in the conceptualization and supported establishment of the call centre protocols and operational procedures, based on international standards.

UNICEF held advocacy meetings at ministerial level to expedite the passage of the pending bills on child rights and juvenile justice. These bills are crucial to ensure that the emerging issues faced by children both as victims of abuse and children in conflict with law are addressed, with the best possible solutions.

OUTCOME 2 Evidence generated for policy advocacy for inclusion in social services by 2020.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
This programme area includes strengthening national and subnational capacities for generation and use of data and evidence for policymaking, and planning and programme development, as well as analyses of inequities, including vulnerable populations and advocacy on inclusive policies and strategies.

The Chapter on Children in the 2014 Census Government publication was completed. The Census Chapter described the demographic profile of the child population, and provided a comprehensive profile of children on the following key areas: age-sex composition and population density, sex ratio for under-five population (sex ration 104, Census 2014) and children, literacy, school attendance and educational attainment, child workers and the sectors of employment, nuptiality and fertility of child population, living arrangement and household composition, and pockets of social deprivation faced differently by boys and girls. UNICEF Maldives advocated for equity analysis to highlight children’s issues and
centralize them on the country’s development agenda.

With additional capacity building and technical support provided by UNICEF ROSA, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) was able to improve the equity profiles, which are currently being used to strengthen policy advocacy and development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks aimed at tracking reduction of disparities among vulnerable children and families.

Various reforms were made to the social protection programmes to improve the targeting system. Some schemes were changed to better target the intended beneficiaries, for instance, the electricity and fuel subsidy was abolished and the universal food subsidy was changed to target only the poor. The food subsidy programme, which cost the government US$19 million annually, was abolished in October 2016 and the intended beneficiaries under the scheme currently receive US$153 annually. This in turn helps attain the goal of greater fiscal space and deficit sustainability, increasing Government’s ability to fund social sectors. National Social Protection Agency’s capacity was strengthened in monitoring to improve targeting of social protection programmes and to update the registry to include the most vulnerable children.

Agreement was secured with the Government to generate national data on child poverty and child vulnerabilities by including the multidimensional overlapping deprivations analysis (MODA) module in the ongoing DHS and Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES). Dialogue is ongoing with UNICEF ROSA through a partnership with a credible international institution to support the secondary analysis of DHS and HIES surveys to profile child poverty, and engage with government on measurement and routine monitoring of child poverty.

The fiscal deficit and the debt conditions resulting from the impact of the global economic shocks still pose major challenges and constraints on the National Budget, and have impacted the Government’s ability to address issues affecting children in quality health care, especially on remote islands, and education and unemployment, child protection and social protection, especially for the most vulnerable in the far-flung islands. High level dialogue with the Ministry of Finance to strengthen child friendly budgeting resulted in the launch of the investment case study aimed at analysing the current budget allocations vis a vis the current situation of children and the possible impacts in the long term against a no investment scenario; and articulate concrete recommendations on how the Government of Maldives can improve equitably the quantity and quality of public spending on children.

The geographic dispersion of islands in the Maldives has always hampered prompt emergency response to both weather and man-made hazards. As part of the One UN joint programme on Low Emissions Climate Resilient Development Programme (LeCRED), UNICEF supported the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) to build capacities of Island Communities to prepare and respond to climate hazards. UNICEF Maldives supported NDMC to carry out child and gender-sensitive community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) activities, including the development of Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments and Disaster Management Plans in all 11 inhabited islands in Laamu Atoll. The participatory CBDRM activities, which are designed to encourage girls’ and women’s participation (since children and women are more vulnerable to climate hazards), allowed community members to identify potential hazards, including destructive weather events, and how best to prepare for them. UNICEF Maldives encouraged the participation of children and young people in such island-level planning.
UNICEF supported the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) to develop the standard operating procedures required to establish Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) at island level. The conceptual framework was reviewed by UNICEF ROSA and UNICEF EMOPS, which provided clarity on how the teams will operate in an island context to support planning and implementation of preparedness and response activities. The framework, which is currently being finalized, would also determine the capacity building regime and equipment/support the community emergency response teams will be afforded under the guidance of the National Disaster Management Centre. Maldives plans to institutionalize the teams, whereby they will become the first responders to any emergencies in an island context, working together with the Maldives National Defense Force, where its presence is available.

The partnership for this work on CERTs includes the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, the National Bureau of Statistics, the National Social Protection Agency and the National Disaster Management Centre. Emergency work involves local NGOs and islands communities.

**OUTPUT 1** Social protection systems strengthened for improved targeting of the most vulnerable.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
In 2016, efforts focused on strengthening the social protection programmes through improved coordination and monitoring and evaluation frameworks at the Ministry levels as well as sharpening the targeting criteria for vulnerabilities.

With support from UNICEF Maldives, the National Social Protection Agency (NSPA) increased its capacity to strengthen data management and monitoring systems. This enabled it to improve the targeting criteria and mechanisms of social protection programmes, which has now increased coverage of the social schemes to vulnerable children.

UNICEF also supported the agency to conduct regular monitoring of the programmes to track changes in eligibility criteria of beneficiaries and to assess effects (both positive and negative) of the programmes on children. Three monitoring trips were supported in Raa Atoll, GaafAlif Atoll and Gnaiyani Atoll, during which the status of 1,307 beneficiaries (including 244 children, 648 adults with disabilities and 476 children of single parents) was reviewed through the existing targeting mechanisms and included in the registry. In the absence of systematic collection of data to track inclusion and exclusion errors, the monitoring visits were determinant in correcting inclusion and exclusion errors from misinterpreted and fraudulent cases.

UNICEF Maldives supported the Social Protection Management Information System review, which now includes disability information from 6,224 beneficiaries, including 1,795 children eligible for the disability allowance. The review was based on the WHO International Classification of Disease criteria. It generated a refined database which is currently used to manage the information of the persons with disabilities eligible for the disability allowance.

UNICEF Maldives also supported the National Social Protection Agency to develop sensitization materials and to conduct sensitization sessions to raise awareness of current and potential beneficiaries of existing social protection programmes in far-flung islands. These sensitization sessions increased the number of applications by 10 per cent in the three schemes available, including single parents, foster parents and disability allowance, and contributed to increasing the coverage of services in the far and hard to reach islands.
UNICEF continued its advocacy for a more coordinated child sensitive Social Protection with a functional monitoring framework. UNICEF supported three joint coordination meetings with NSPA to discuss progress related to implementation, major bottlenecks and mitigation measures to fast track achievement of planned results. The coordination of the Social Protection Programme between NSPA and the Ministry of Gender and Family was further strengthened in the occasion of the 3rd Asia – Pacific High Level Meeting (HLM3) on Child Rights held in Malaysia, which focused on Social Protection among others themes. This coordination mechanism and the monitoring framework will be further strengthened in 2017.

OUTPUT 2 Systems for generating evidence are strengthened at national and sub national levels for inclusive and equitable policies, plans and services, especially for the most disadvantaged.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
In 2016, efforts focused on delivering monitoring and evaluation frameworks for key social sectors, equity profiling and development of equity briefs, and strengthening of sectoral databases for children.

Through technical assistance from UNICEF ROSA, the NBS was supported to develop and refine equity profiles on education, nutrition and child protection, which were disseminated and are currently used for evidence-based policy making and policy interventions. Further refinement is expected with the release of the DHS and HIES, which are expected to be published in 2017. The Census Chapter on Children, which was initiated in 2015, was completed in 2016, providing socio-economic data on children to planners and policy makers.

With UNICEF Maldives support through Results-based Management, Monitoring and Evaluation and Equity Profiling trainings, capacities of Government entities were strengthened to better report on results for children using available evidence.

With support from UNICEF ROSA, initial inter-ministerial diagnostic consultations were held to inform the development of comprehensive and integrated monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the key social sectors, including education, health, gender and family and social protection and environment and energy in 2017. This initiative has the endorsement of the Ministry of Finance, with a commitment to link child deprivations to the quality of public expenditure and budgetary decisions that leaves no child behind.

The MaldivInfo database was updated with administrative data from sectoral databases and data from census 2014 with CensusInfo. This overall database provides disaggregated data on children that is used for policy planning and decision making for children and refinement of the Equity profiles. UNICEF supported the NBS to finalize and launch LaamulInfo, which is currently used for island-level policy making and local planning processes. With the training on LaamulInfo, members of 16 island councils from 11 islands of Laamu Atoll are now able to use it to support island level planning.

Key partnerships included efforts with the National Bureau of Statistic and key sectoral Ministries, particularly with the Ministry of Education for the Education Management and Information System (EMIS) development, and with the Ministry of Gender and Family for the Maldivian Child Protection Database (MCPD).

Future efforts will focus on the finalization of the national surveys (DHS and HIES) to profile child poverty and the update of equity profiles to continue to inform policy making in 2017.
OUTPUT 3 Child and gender sensitive disaster resilience and climate change adaptation plans and programmes institutionalized and operational at national and sub-national levels.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
In 2016 efforts focused on supporting the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) to strengthen national and local capacity to prepare and respond to disasters.

UNICEF provided technical assistance to NDMC through a national consultant, which improved its capacity to better plan, coordinate, implement and monitor activities under the joint annual work plan (2016/2017). With UNICEF’s support, NDMC was able to develop the conceptual framework required to establish CERTs as the primary responders to address climate hazards and emergencies locally. The initial conceptual framework, which was jointly reviewed by UNICEF ROSA and EMOPS New York, includes the training needs of CERTs including disaster preparedness planning, first aid and flood mitigation.

UNICEF Maldives provided support to NDMC to carry out Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) exercises in all 11 inhabited islands in the Laamu Atoll, under the Joint UN LECRED Programme. With this CBDRM work, island communities now have the capacity to identify their own hazard profiles, assess their risks and vulnerabilities, and develop their own response actions. The disaster management plan (as an output of the CBDRM) was annexed to the island development plan, ensuring institutionalisation of DRR and CCA at the island level. This process ensured continuous engagement with community members, most importantly through the participation of children, youth and women, to internalise preparedness and response actions and to build resilience to climate change.

With support from ROSA, in 2016, UNICEF Maldives provided 18 dewatering pumps to 9 islands that faced continuous flooding throughout the year. With this equipment, the target islands no longer request support during monsoon season and are better at planning for such eventualities. The islands now can update their vulnerability and capacity assessments and disaster management plans, which are key components of the island development plans. Key partnerships included efforts with the NDMC, local NGOs and island communities.

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Evaluation and research

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Lessons learned

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