

Nepal

Part 1: Situation update in the country

Following the elections in 2017, the new Government of Nepal took up office on February 15, 2018. This marked a long but successful conclusion to a political transition that began with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in November 2006. Nepal moved from a Unitary Government to the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, formed from seven new provinces and 753 local governments. The functions and financial systems previously managed by the central, district and village authorities were reorganized and integrated in the seven provinces and 753 local governments. This transition requires new legislation, institutions, administrative procedures and capacities. All three tiers - federal, provincial and local - now have executive, legislative and budgetary powers, together with judicial functions. The federalization of the country and consequential decentralization is expected to improve the outreach and delivery of services. This has critical implications for UNICEF Nepal programming.

Despite monsoons that affected the country, Nepal's economy increased by 5.9 per cent in the 2018 fiscal year, albeit at a rate slower than the 7.4 per cent of 2017-18. Inflation in the first nine months of the current fiscal year stood at 4.1 per cent, driven by non-food items (mainly construction). This limited the impact on the poorest. Nepal's economy is undergoing a transformation, as the share of the non-agricultural sector (services plus manufacturing) is increasing (71 per cent) while the agriculture sector (29 per cent) is decreasing, in keeping with a trend observed over the past decade. Given that the agriculture sector employs 66 per cent of the population, this poses a challenge to ensuring equitable and inclusive growth.

Nepal's trade deficit increased due to the narrow base of domestic production and the low growth rate of exports over imports. The balance of payments, which has remained surplus for a long time, thus slipped into the negative territory. With slower growth in remittances, the current account deficit deepened. The number of migrant workers leaving for jobs in different countries continues to fall, following a five-year low in 2017. This led to fiscal and developmental challenges, and necessitates stronger engagement from UNICEF Nepal to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the national investments and expenditures.

A quarter of the population is poor by national poverty measures, and a large proportion remains vulnerable to falling into poverty in the event of shocks (such as natural disaster,

health or economic). In 2018, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) shows that between 2006 and 2014, Nepal halved its MPI, which now stands at 28.6 per cent. Children in Nepal are disproportionately affected by multidimensional poverty. Disaggregated by age, children up to the age of nine are the poorest, with 42 per cent of them living in multidimensional poverty. The national average is 29 per cent, making children under nine almost 50 per cent more likely to live in multidimensional poverty. Female headed households are as susceptible to poverty as male-headed households. Children below the age of 10 years old represent the poorest age sub-group, with an MPI of 0.194. Children aged between 10 to 17 years and youths aged 18 to 24 years have an MPI of 0.112 and 0.090. The older age group (25 years and older) have an MPI of 0.111 and 0.120, respectively.

Given this context, the Government of Nepal remains committed to the 'Leave No One Behind' ethos of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government embraced a unique socio-economic development model in accordance with its long-term objective of creating "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepalis," which emphasizes equity as an integral to attaining a higher gross domestic product (GDP). Nepal's spending on social assistance programmes increased from 0.3 per cent of its GDP in fiscal year 2008 to an estimated 1.4 per cent in fiscal year 2017, making it among the highest in South Asia.

Nepal made progress in reducing inequity. Between 2004 and 2011, consumption among the poorest 40 per cent of the population grew almost twice as fast as consumption among the top 60 per cent, making Nepal one of the best performers on shared prosperity. However, historical and geo-spatial patterns of inequity continue to persist. This is exemplified, among other indicators, in the basic schooling completion rates, where the completion rates among Brahmins is four times higher than Dalits.

According to the 2016 Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, 36 per cent of children under the age of five are stunted, 10 per cent suffer from wasting and 27 per cent are underweight. Maternal under-nutrition (reflected as low body mass index among women aged between 15 to 49 years) is gradually reducing and stands at 17 per cent. However, overweight is rising steadily and is now at 22 per cent for the same age group, which highlights the mounting double burden of malnutrition in the country.

As per the 2016 Nepal National Micronutrient Status Survey, more than a third of adolescents are stunted. There exists a wide disparity based on ecology, wealth quintiles, mothers' education and geographic location. Among women who are at a reproductive age, one fifth (20 per cent) of women who are not pregnant and more than one-fourth (27 per cent) of women who are pregnant are anaemic. Similarly, 19 per cent of children aged between six and 59 months are anaemic while 28 per cent of the same group are suffering from iron deficiency. The other micro-nutrient deficiencies such as iron and zinc are becoming a public health problem in the above population.

The main drivers of under-nutrition are inadequate access to nutritious and diverse foods and the poor use of available foods. Infectious diseases due to unsafe water and poor hygiene and

sanitation, untimely treatment of diseases, poor use of health services, heavy workloads and limited awareness.

The above nutritional challenges continued to be exacerbated by WASH-related issues. Improved sanitation (as per Joint Monitoring Programme definition) of Nepal is 64.6 per cent and improved water supply coverage is 96 per cent according to the 2016 Demographic and Health Survey. Coverage of improved water supply and sanitation at schools is 47 per cent and 82 per cent (limited sanitation facilities as per Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) definition) respectively.

Results from a baseline survey on WASH indicators, for the new WASH programme under Accelerating Sanitation and Hygiene for All, revealed that 45 per cent of the population do not use toilets for defecation while 62 per cent of communities declared open defecation free continue to use toilets and have maintained their open defecation free status. Also, 59 per cent of the households surveyed for water quality revealed the presence of faecal contamination. The proportion of contaminated water was measured at 68.2 per cent in uncovered containers, 65.5 per cent in covered containers and 57.5 per cent in direct sources of water. Only 64 per cent of the total population have access to handwashing facilities, with the provision of water and one form of cleansing agent (a proxy indicator for handwashing).

There have been improvements in the health of women and children over the years in Nepal. Nepal made progress in reducing maternal, newborn and child mortality, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals. The maternal mortality rate declined from 538 in 2000 to 239 in 2016 (per 100,000 live births), while the newborn mortality rate declined from 39 in 2001 to 21 in 2016, and the child mortality rate declined from 91 in 2001 to 39 in 2016 (deaths per 1,000 live births). However, despite these achievements, an estimated 20,000 children under five still die each year and among them more than half die within the first month of life. Around 1,500 women still die during pregnancy and childbirth each year.

Adolescent pregnancy, motherhood and mental health are major concerns. More than 50 per cent of women responded that they were married by the age of 18.17 per cent of adolescents have begun childbearing; and 7.5 per cent of adolescents who are pregnant die due to child birth complications.

Children with disabilities are more vulnerable. Given that many aspects of functional limitation can be overcome with the right support, and 50 per cent of the onset of functional limitations happens before the age of 10, the early detection of functional limitations or disabilities among infants and young children along with effective intervention is critical. Moreover, inequities in the status of health still exist according to wealth, education level, region and ethnicity. Health interventions with an equity lens are needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 3 to 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages'.

Nepal increased the access to basic education, which is reflected in the high enrolment rates in early childhood education and basic education with gender parity at all levels. The gross

enrolment rate at early childhood education reached 84.1 per cent (girls: 83.7, boys: 84.5), and the percentage of grade one entrants with early childhood education experience increased to 66.3 per cent (girls: 65.9, boys: 66.6). The enrolment of children from disadvantaged groups in schools increased: the enrolment of children from the Dalit ethnic group rose slightly from 18.3 per cent in 2013 to 18.7 per cent in 2017; the enrolment of children from the Janajati group rose from 35.3 per cent in 2013 to 38.1 per cent in 2017.

These increases included children with disabilities, ending a decline over the past years. However, the current percentage of the total student population identified as having a disability (less than 2 per cent) remains far below global average (10-15 per cent) and schools that are equipped to cater to special/additional needs do not match the demand. For example, 3.5 per cent (212,949) of children aged between five and 12 years remain out of school, facing multiple barriers related to their socio-economic status, caste/ethnicity, gender, (dis)ability and geographic location.

While most children go to school, many of them do not learn or complete their basic education, because many schools do not meet the minimum requirements of an appropriate environment, learning materials, and teachers with the capacity to ensure that children learn. By the age of four, only 12 per cent of children from the lowest economic quintile read simple words and letters, whereas it is 65 per cent for the highest quintile. Reading assessments show that only 13 per cent of grade three students have reading fluency and comprehension in Nepali, which means that most children do not have the skills needed to learn, with children from ethnic minorities being disproportionately represented.

According to the Education Management Information System in 2017, grade eight graduation rates rose to 69.9 per cent (girls: 70.2, boys: 69.4). The basic level repetition and drop-out rates continued to decline, with boys (5.7 per cent and 4.2 per cent respectively) performing slightly less than girls (5.3 and 3.8 respectively).

The net enrolment rate at secondary level increased for grades nine to 12 (girls: 43.7, boys: 44.1), however the quality of secondary education remains poor, evidenced by the low average grade point average in Secondary Education Examination (grade 10). Around 60 per cent of students secured scores of less than 40 per cent in Mathematics and Science in these exams in 2017.

According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014, child labour ranked high at 37 per cent, which makes Nepal the 13th worst country in the world on the issue, and the worst in South Asia. There are an almost equal number of boys and girls exposed to child labour, though there is a significant divide between rural (4 per cent) and urban (16 per cent). The Government of Nepal renewed its commitment to end child labour with the endorsement of the National Master Plan on Child Labour (2018-2028). Nepal become a 'pathfinder' country of Alliance 8.7, the global partnership to achieve Sustainable Development Goal target 8.7 of eradicating forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour.

The new Act Relating to Children (2018) defines and criminalizes acts of violence against children including child marriage. The law defines state accountability to support victims of child marriage on a case-by-case basis. The Nepal Girl Summit II brought together the Government of Nepal, United Nations agencies, development partners and civil society (including community and religious leaders) to reaffirm their commitment to end child marriage by 2030. The Summit activities mobilized newly elected local representatives to include ending child marriage in their priorities and commit to actions in line with the National Strategy to End Child Marriage (2015).

The Act prohibits all corporal punishment of children in all settings, which makes Nepal the first country in South Asia, and the 54th country globally, to achieve a complete ban on violent discipline. The law specifies that service providers, such as health practitioners and educators, mandatorily report offences against children. In addition, the law prohibits those convicted of violence against children and child sexual abuse to work with children in the future. This created an important platform to integrate child protection issues within other sectors, especially education and health.

Compared to 2017, the number of cases registered with the police related to rape, attempt to rape, child marriage, domestic violence and trafficking of women and children increased from 13,549 to 14,796. This demonstrates continued progress in the governance and legal provisions that protect women and children and occurred despite the temporary setbacks due to a lack of clarity caused by the transition to the federal system.

Nepal faces natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, fires and cold waves that impact lives, livelihoods and infrastructure. The global risk index prepared by the Index for Risk Management ranked Nepal 46 out of the 191 countries. Cumulative figures over the past four decades (1971–2010) indicate that 30,982 people have lost their lives and another 57,227 have been injured due to small to medium scale disasters in Nepal. The findings from the recent studies conducted by various research institutions underscores the possibility of another high magnitude earthquake, particularly concentrating in western Nepal. The country's inherent vulnerability to disaster and climate change and the lack of capacity to address those risks not only threatens the hard-earned development gains, but increases the risks to people's lives and livelihoods.

In 2018, small-scale localized disasters impacted the lives of people and infrastructure in different parts the country. As per the Ministry of Home Affairs, 460 people (265 male and 195 female) lost lives to disaster, and more than 37,945 people (7,589 families) were affected, of which 41 per cent were children. While the entire population is at risk from natural hazards, children, women and other vulnerable groups are disproportionately exposed.

Part 2: Major Results including in humanitarian action and gender, against the results in the Country Programme Documents

Goal Area 1: Every child survives and thrives

Health

Improve equitable access to and use of quality health interventions:

Skilled birth attendance delivery slightly decreased from 52.4 per cent in 2017 to 51.5 per cent in 2018, however, Health Management Information System data shows that delivery with skilled birth attendants in UNICEF-supported areas is 90.1 per cent this year. This data might be not be fully accurate however, as over-reporting can happen when women from other areas come to UNICEF-supported areas to deliver babies to be in a district hospital or birthing centre.

UNICEF supported the expansion of newborn care services in partnership with Ministry of Health. The total number of hospitals providing specialized newborn care services increased from five in 2017 to 21 in 2018. Among the 16 new specialized newborn care services, UNICEF Nepal provided support in needs assessment and in the establishment of the services in eight hospitals.

UNICEF Nepal supported capacity of 112 medical doctors on level II newborn care, at a regional level; and supported 12 hospitals to implement the Nepal Perinatal Quality Improvement Project. This was achieved by providing training to 866 health workers on essential newborn care, kangaroo mother care for premature and low birth weight management, and sepsis management. UNICEF provided support to conduct 288 Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles in 12 hospitals; in conducting a maternal and newborn health (MNH) update and a review of essential obstetric care in the selected municipalities, as well as clinical mentoring and coaching in 88 health facilities in Provinces 2,6 and 7. UNICEF had the opportunity to review the progress in MNH and provided orientations and updates to health workers and nursing staff working at the peripheral facilities. This resulted in an improvement in the skills of health workers to provide quality MNH services in these facilities.

UNICEF provided technical assistance during the implementation of the National Immunization Programme through a partnership with Family Welfare Division/EPI section as well as the logistic management division. However, there was a marked increase in the dropout rates between DTP1 and DTP3 from 4.7 per cent in 2017 to 7.4 per cent in 2018 nationally. The rate was recorded as higher in UNICEF-supported areas, at 9.7 per cent.

The reasons behind the higher dropout rates are likely due to two factors: the absence of clear guidance to implement health interventions; and limited leadership skills and capacities of governance as the country is undergoing a transition. Despite these challenges, UNICEF Nepal worked to ensure that all vaccines were timely distributed to targeted children even in the remote areas where UNICEF provides support. UNICEF Nepal provided technical assistance to the NIP with WHO and Ministry of Health and Population, specifically in the areas of supply and cold chain management and social mobilization. One of the key achievements this year was the introduction of a new vaccine, fractional inactivated polio vaccine. UNICEF provided technical assistance in the development of the guideline and in implementing the training.

UNICEF provided technical assistance to develop and finalize the Government's cold chain

equipment optimization platform proposal to GAVI. Further technical assistance was provided in the development of an operational deployment plan in 2018. The platform, which is supported by GAVI, will install 1,200 items of new cold chain equipment across the country beginning in 2019 over the course of three years. The aim is to improve vaccine management and enhance the coverage with a focus on equity.

UNICEF provided technical assistance to the integrated management of neonatal and childhood illness programme which enabled districts health offices to continue their planned capacity building activities to health workers and community health volunteers. UNICEF's support to the local governments has been in planning health activities including contingency planning in line with the government fiscal year. There are plans underway to ensure women's participation in capacity-building activities conducted at federal and local levels.

A National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy was finalized in 2018. UNICEF contributed to rolling out the strategy, providing orientation at the federal and provincial levels, and supported the Family Welfare Division in the expansion of adolescent friendly health services in 38 new health facilities in Province 2, 6, and 7.

UNICEF Nepal overall supported governments to establish platforms, systems, and performance dashboards to track financial data and service delivery performance data (i.e. stock outs, service utilization, human resource data). There are plans to support the public expenditure review. UNICEF handed over 70 (out of planned 74) fully equipped prefabricated health facilities to the Government in earthquake-affected areas as part of the earthquake recovery, which will benefit approximately 500,000 beneficiaries. The remaining health posts will be completed and handed over by the end of the first quarter of 2019. UNICEF Nepal prepositioned emergency health supplies for 10,000 households in Kathmandu and three field offices.

Nutrition

In 2018, in line with a memorandum of understanding signed between National Planning Commission and UNICEF, UNICEF supported NPC in developing and launching the Multi Sector Nutrition Plan II (2018-2022). This plan addresses the high burden of malnutrition among children, adolescent girls and boys, and women (both pregnant and not pregnant). Nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive actions were developed at federal, provincial and local levels and implemented in 30 multi-sector nutrition plan districts (308 municipalities). These actions included interventions such as the promotion of breastfeeding, the timely introduction of complementary feeding, the improvement of the quality and frequency of children's diets, and the treatment of severe acute malnutrition.

Nutrition counselling and micronutrient supplements - such as Vitamin A, deworming to children under the age of five, and iron folate to adolescent girls, women who were pregnant or lactating - were provided. In coordination with the local governments, UNICEF Nepal contributed to services such as the treatment of infections, hygiene and sanitation, early stimulation, preventing child marriage, improving school health and nutrition, improving production and the

consumption of nutritious diets through agriculture and livestock.

A number of key actions implemented in 2018 resulted in better resilience among families and communities, including the promotion of optimal breastfeeding and complementary feeding, increased capacity on maternal, infant and young child feeding and management of severe acute malnutrition in children under the age of five and strengthening mechanisms to prevent and treat micronutrient deficiency disorders, with a focus on those who were particularly vulnerable to shocks and hazards. In general, UNICEF's role as a cluster co-lead, with the government counterpart, helped to ensure that the multi-sector nutrition plan is responsive towards the risk of natural disasters and helped create a structure to that drives a coordinated response to emergency preparedness, mitigation and response.

In 2018, according to HMIS, 141,893 children aged between six and 11 months were exclusively breastfed for the first six months and 143,484 children of the same age were received complementary food at a crucial time in their development. Mothers and caregivers of 330,818 children received counselling in how to feed and care for mothers, infants and young children. Through UNICEF Nepal advocacy, several breastfeeding spaces were created across the country and the safer motherhood bill was endorsed by the Parliament. The bill will help ensure that women receive 98 days of paid maternity leave, which can be extended up to one year without pay.

Further information in the report details the treatment of children with severe acute malnutrition in 36 districts including flood affected districts. According to the report, 18,942 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition were reached, out of which 10,111 were discharged. Whilst, 86 per cent of the children recovered, 4 per cent died and 7 per cent defaulted. These numbers exceed the SPHERE quality standards.

The HMIS report (July 2018) provides other key data that showcase the extent of the nutrition programmes. For example: 259,000 (51 per cent) children aged between six and 23 months received multiple micronutrient powders; 2,438,788 (92 per cent) children aged between six and 59 months received Vitamin A capsules; and 1,119,642 (81 per cent) adolescent girls received weekly iron folic acid tablets. In total, 584,399 (77 per cent) women who were pregnant received more than 180 tablets of iron folic acid. As part of the overall nutrition plan, UNICEF Nepal helped 12,942 health workers and 29,344 female community health volunteers strengthen their capacity to deliver the nutrition-specific services. UNICEF supported the procurement of 4.8 million Vitamin A capsules, 52.39 million sachets of multiple micronutrient powder and 891,000 sachets of RUTF along with transportation of the items across 30 multi-sector nutrition plan districts.

The health and nutrition section of UNICEF Nepal jointly supported the Government to address the immediate and underlying determinants of malnutrition such as infant and young child feeding, promotion of maternal and child care at household level, treatment of acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency disorders, treatment of childhood illnesses and maternal infections.

UNICEF Nepal successfully advocated in leveraging government funds by mobilizing US\$ 2.8 million from the Government, of which 48 per cent of the total funds was allocated (US\$ 6.5 million) for the implementation of the multi-sector nutrition plan within 308 local governments. The contribution of local governments increased by 50 per cent in 2018/2019 from the last fiscal year. Reinforcing the overall nutrition planning has been the development of a nutrition in emergency management plan specifically tailored for earthquakes, floods and cold waves.

UNICEF Nepal, in collaboration with the Nutrition Innovation Lab/USAID, organized a scientific symposium on “Food, diets and nutrition: 25 years of progress for Nepal” to review the achievements made during the Millennium Development Goal era (1990-2015) and came up with recommendations for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8 targets for the Government of Nepal to work together at all government levels.

UNICEF Nepal organized training/orientation for 308 health coordinators and other health workers to build capacity, 30 multi-sector nutrition plan district coordinators, and 308 volunteers. The training enabled them to understand and adapt the local implementation of the national plan.

Building on an evaluation conducted on early childhood development, the National Planning Commission together with UNICEF Nepal support, began to develop the 2019-2030 early childhood development strategy. This strategy is being created in a consultative manner with multi-sectoral stakeholders, including relevant ministries and civil society organizations. It is anticipated that the strategy will strengthen coordination across the three different governments in Nepal and ensure children receive integrated services that foster development at the critical early phase in their lives.

To ensure mainstreaming of early childhood development in local planning, the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration developed the local integrated early childhood development planning package with UNICEF support. This package was used by 16 municipalities to develop local integrated early childhood development plans, to implement programmes holistically, such as parenting education. Similarly, with UNICEF’s support, content around early stimulation and nutrition was incorporated into the parenting education package that reached 700 communities and included training. Plan International requested to adopt the parenting education package.

Goal area 2: Every child learns

Equitable access to quality education

UNICEF Nepal contributed towards the goal of ensuring all children, especially the most disadvantaged, benefit from access to and participation in pre-primary and basic education. UNICEF Nepal and partners strengthened education sector planning and implementation, including joint reviews. As a result, the Government achieved 69.5 per cent of the key performance indicator targets of enrolment, retention and learning outcomes despite the post-

disaster and transitional context. A key performance indicator was the reduction of out-of-school children, which decreased to 212,949 from the 2015/16 baseline of 541,542. This represents a more than 60 per cent reduction of out-of-school children.

The Government, with UNICEF support, implemented the Consolidated Equity Strategy in 10 districts identified with the highest disparities in terms of education outcomes, as measured through the equity index. As a result, the total number of children, aged between five and 12, identified as out-of-school decreased by 47 per cent across 186 local governments.

Further strengthening the equity approach, UNICEF Nepal co-leads the inclusive education sub-working group which supports the government draft of the inclusive education master plan, including coordination between development partners and Government. An achievement was the Government scale up of an innovative model, “KheldaiSikne Kendra,” to 50 alternative learning centres across the country. UNICEF Nepal supports this model to provide quality alternative learning opportunities to urban out-of-school adolescents.

UNICEF Nepal also supported 500 non-formal girls’ access to education classes. The classes were implemented across 41 local governments in Province 2 and 12,243 girls enrolled in the programme, out of which 11,679 (95 per cent) completed the full cycle and 10,736 (88 per cent) were mainstreamed into formal education. In the current academic year, 300 new classes were held. To ensure a standard to formally recognize and certify learning outcomes of those who complete non-formal education, UNICEF helped develop an equivalency framework. An equivalency framework for Grades 1 to 8 was drafted, learning resources were identified and achievement test items were developed and piloted.

To mitigate risks to children in emergencies, UNICEF Nepal supported the government school safety master plan by contributing to the implementation guideline and a communication and dissemination strategy. CSS covers safe learning facilities, school disaster managements, and risk reduction. With UNICEF Nepal support, 5,467 teachers and school management committee members and 98,547 students (48 per cent girls) received disaster risk reduction training. As a result, key activities strengthened the overall strategy: school disaster management plans were developed by 581 schools; and orientation on CSS was provided to 137 local government representatives and 75 journalists to raise awareness about school safety. Nineteen local governments integrated disaster risk reduction into their education planning and resource allocation.

In the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake, more than 5,648 children benefitted from 155 transitional learning centres that were built where schools were damaged. In the earthquake-affected districts, 190 teachers and 92 Government staff were trained on disaster risk reduction, while 113 schools received education materials.

To ensure that schools remain open during periods of instability or violence, UNICEF Nepal held orientations on the ‘Schools as Zones of Peace’ framework for 18 local government representatives and 18 journalists in Province 2. As a result, 79 per cent of schools remained

open over the course of 223 days, which was an increase from the baseline of 70 per cent of schools that were open for at least 200 days last year.

Further efforts to ensure children remain learning in challenging situations were demonstrated through the education cluster which coordinated an effective response to the 2017 floods. This was achieved through 'education cannot wait' funding. As a result, UNICEF reached 77,044 students (53 per cent girls) from 273 flood affected schools with education materials and WASH interventions. WASH facilities were restored in 241 affected schools and during the 2018 flood response, UNICEF helped 485 (59 per cent girls) children to resume their education.

A vital aspect of UNICEF Nepal intervention is the access to accurate data. UNICEF's support to the Government's 'data must speak' initiative led to the development of a web-based Education Management Information System portal, where over 90 per cent of community schools (33,000) uploaded their data. Through this portal, local governments and schools can now access data and compare the numbers with local, provincial and national averages.

Learning outcomes

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, UNICEF Nepal led a workshop which identified key strengths, challenges, and strategies across the sub-sector. The aim was to improve equitable access, efficiency and quality of pre-primary provision in Nepal. Sensitization materials (a guidebook and flyer) on early childhood education and development for newly elected local level representatives and relevant stakeholders were developed and distributed to all 753 local levels in Nepal.

With the support of UNICEF, the Education Review Office developed a tool based on early learning development standards and tested it among 1,835 children in 150 early childhood development centres. The study found the following domains on track: 67.1 per cent on cultural domain, 86.9 per cent on social domain, 79.4 per cent on emotional domain, 80.8 per cent on physical domain, 78.8 per cent on intellectual domain, and 81.8 per cent on language domain.

An area of significant success was the impact of early grade learning interventions in 400 schools on learning outcomes. This was relevant where early grade reading interventions were provided for 24,571 students (13,002 girls), in grades 1 to 3. Following the three-year intervention, the final report found that 43 percent of students in Grade 3 were meeting grade-level targets for reading fluency and comprehension, as compared to the baseline of 15 percent. This is an increase of 186 per cent. UNICEF's participation as the co-lead of the early grade reading working group helped to meet the government's commitments in the School Sector Development Plan and helped to ensure that the early grade reading minimum package was used throughout the country.

Skills development

'Sambhav', the after-school programme targeting vulnerable children in 400 schools reached 41,410 students in 2018 and 93,000 students over the past three years. It will end in

December. While evaluation results indicated that improvement in learning outcomes was minimal, children's participation in and awareness of harmful social practices was enhanced. The key elements of the after-school programmes are continuing in Province 2, focusing on enrolment, changing attitudes and addressing negative behaviours. Given the evaluation and to ensure its replication is effective, the programme will no longer address learning outcomes, where other programmes focus.

UNICEF Nepal contributed to building life skills for children, including social and financial skills for 3,624 GATE graduates through "Rupantaran" classes. Advocacy with local governments in Province 2 is working to mainstream the "Rupantaran" programme in line with the "Save daughters, educate daughters" campaign. Ten local governments provided letters of support to commit in-kind resources immediately and explore financial support next year.

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

UNICEF's advocacy efforts and technical support over several years has contributed to the new and mostly progressive Act Relating to Children (2018). This law will help reduce violence against children by defining and prohibiting different forms of violence against children and by making offences into government-party cases. The law brings Nepal closer to alignment with international standards and recommendations from human rights mechanisms. It lays out a number of provisions for formal best interest determination; clarifies alternative care, separation of a child from her/his parents or guardian, and custody of the child at the time of the divorce. The law prohibits the unauthorized placement of children in institutional care.

Whilst the Act Relating to Children (2018) brought about positive changes for children, UNICEF is continuing advocacy to amend the law to bring it in line with Nepal Child Protection Systems Mapping Report (2015) and Committee on the Rights of the Child concluding observations (2016). These amendments: (1) increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility which is currently set at 10 years; (2) criminalize child labour; (3) making it explicit that the Government is responsible for provision of services for children who have protection concerns; (4) make the Prime Ministers' Office responsible for multi-sectoral coordination of children's affairs; and (5) remove gender discriminatory provisions.

The number of children living in residential/institutional care fell from 23,572 to 23,385. This is partially attributable to UNICEF Nepal technical support to the Government. The data collection of children in institutional care improved through regular monitoring by the Central Child Welfare Board and the use of web-based tools, for which UNICEF provided technical support. One fourth of the 566 residential care institutions throughout Nepal were monitored by the Board to ensure that children are not unnecessarily institutionalized and that institutional care facilities comply with standards of care. UNICEF Nepal contributed to ensuring data on one-third of the children (7,500 out of 23,385) in the Central Child Welfare Board online information management system.

In terms of protecting children's mental well-being and based on the emergency recovery plan,

the Government allocated budget to 36 psychosocial support centres. This helps sustainability of psychosocial support services at a community-level for women and children with psychosocial issues. UNICEF Nepal, as a co-lead of protection cluster, revised and updated the protection contingency plan, based on the protection strategic work plan in collaboration with the Government and cluster members.

UNICEF provided technical support and orientation to newly-elected local government representatives reaching approximately 25 per cent of all 753 local governments. As a result, they are better equipped to locally plan and budget for the prevention and response interventions aimed at reducing child labour, child marriage, violent discipline and the institutionalization of children.

UNICEF worked with the Government of Nepal to address social norms related to gender discrimination and gender-based violence. The 'Men Engagement Strategy for Ending Violence against Women and Girls' is a federal-level policy commitment which is used by provincial assemblies and local government representatives in all seven provinces when developing their local plans. These events took place during the '16 days of activism against gender-based violence'. As a result, approximately 2,000 provincial and local government representatives were sensitized with strategic messages on promoting positive roles for men in ending violence against women and girls; changing harmful social norms and stereotypes about masculinity; and engaging men and boys in developing government policies for ending violence against women and girls.

The school environment was a platform to scale-up approaches to prevent violence against children. UNICEF Nepal support improved interventions that target school-based prevention of violence against children, including the creation of national suggestion box guidelines (2017) and referral/linkages with police and other child protection services in the community, based on the existing partnership with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

The Government-endorsed 'Rupantaran' life skills training package enabled students to speak up if they experience or witness violence. A total of 32,583 (male 15,356, female 17,227) Grade 5 to Grade 9 students (aged between 11 to 16 years) and approximately 2,000 school teachers gained knowledge on preventing gender-based violence and the school-based response mechanism. Schools have started to refer cases to judicial committees of municipalities. In addition, 2,725 gender-based violence watch group and child-club members were trained on gender-based violence and child protection. To tackle the issue of violent discipline, especially affecting young children, UNICEF Nepal provided technical support to a revised parental education package. The package contained more information on the negative impact of violent discipline and practical positive disciplining methods which parents and caregivers can practice.

In 2018, behaviour-change communication interventions reinforced UNICEF's policy and advocacy on child labour, which led to the adoption of the National Master Plan on Child Labour (2018-2028). These interventions were implemented in selected municipalities to curb

the social acceptance of child labour of almost 50,000 people. Approximately 2,498 (1,360 female and 1,138 male) government representatives, including the police, and women and children offices, received training/orientations on child labour and child protection.

In collaboration with the National Judicial Academy, Nepal police, the Office of the Attorney General, and Child Justice Coordination Committee, UNICEF Nepal advocacy and technical support resulted in Government institutions broadening the scope of work on justice for children to address child victims and witnesses of violence in addition to children in conflict with law. The new Act Relating to Children (2018) is a framework for aspects that protect children including: diversion; non-custodial measures for children who are in conflict with law; restorative justice; reasonable compensation for the victims; and a time limit for filing cases of offences against children. UNICEF Nepal contributed to the revision by the National Judicial Academy, Child Justice Coordination Committee and the Office of Attorney General, and Nepal police of the training curriculum for judges, lawyers, prosecutors and police personnel under new legal provisions.

The capacity building work that UNICEF Nepal supported through trainings and outreach programmes increased the number of cases of women and children report to the police on rape, attempted rape, child marriage, domestic violence and witchcraft. The number of reported cases rose by 7.6 per cent from 13,573 in 2017 to 14,796 in 2018. The rise in reporting indicates that women and children are increasingly seeking justice; it implies that the police are trusted by the community and that the police are handling cases related to women and children in a more child- and gender-sensitive manner. Trainings were provided to an additional 200 police officers and 25 district registrars, with modules on child justice and psychosocial support; management of the online gender-based violence database; and measures for victim assistance and witness protection.

The school-based outreach campaign for children, 'Police my friend', reached 3,838 students (2,208 girls and 1,630 boys), aged between 11 to 16 years. In collaboration with the juvenile correction homes, an additional 333 children (321 boys and 12 girls) in conflict with the law accessed legal, psychosocial support and social work services, and 188 (185 boys and three girls) children were reintegrated with their families.

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

Water supply

In 2018, 33,793 people, including 16,900 women, were reached with improved sources of drinking water. This was achieved through the construction and rehabilitation of 46 water supply schemes (including 10 pilot schemes meeting Sustainable Development Goal requirements) as a part of regular and earthquake reconstruction programmes. UNICEF Nepal conducted sustainability checks on 40 water schemes (implemented over the past five years) which revealed a 75 per cent functionality rate. Sustainability checks on an additional 63 water supply schemes were conducted through the regular monitoring mechanism in the earthquake affected districts. All the water supply schemes are functioning.

UNICEF continued to support the Government to address the issue of poor water quality through the development and implementation of 46 water safety plans. Support was provided to the Government to build a critical mass of master trainers (120 professionals) who will help local governments scale up the development and implementation plans. A simple water-quality monitoring mechanism at local government level was established with the help of UNICEF, and will be implemented once local capacity is in place. UNICEF Nepal supported the Government to equip three mobile vans that will monitor the quality of the water quality during regular development and in emergency contexts. Setting up provincial and local level water quality monitoring/surveillance and information management and response systems will require additional support given that provincial government agencies for WASH are still in transition and have limited human resources.

Sanitation and hygiene

Over the course of 2018, UNICEF helped 174,553 people (50 per cent female) to gain access to a basic toilet, exceeding the annual target of 150,000. Five of the ten targeted local Governments drafted total sanitation action plans to sustain an open defecation free status and climb the sanitation ladder to achieve safely managed sanitation.

The capacity of 13 local governments was developed on the three-star approach to WASH in school. This approach includes child-centred disaster risk mapping, safe water management, and menstrual hygiene management. A total of 56 schools were provided with access to improved WASH facilities and supported on software aspects including hygiene promotion activities. A baseline survey was conducted in Province 2 to measure the status of sanitation and hygiene before the initiation of the new programme, Accelerating Sanitation and Water All.

The Government of Nepal participated in SACOSAN VII with support from UNICEF. Nepal had shown commitment to reach 100 per cent sanitation coverage by 2018 and move forward towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal through total sanitation. Government of Nepal participated in the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Conference and shared lessons from Nepal with the rest of the world.

A field note on menstrual hygiene practices in Nepalese schools and communities was produced and shared. The learning generated during programme implementation was shared through conferences such as Water Engineering and Development Centre and SACOSAN VII. Papers including “Sustainability of open defecation free in Nepal”; “Impact of climate change on WASH services: a case from Nepal”; “Equity and inclusion in WASH in Nepal: policy and practice” and “Analysis of Menstrual Hygiene Practices in Nepal: The role of WASH in Schools programme for Girls Education” were published through WEDC.

System strengthening

There was a delay in the federal process of the Ministry of Water Supply and Departments which impacted the finalization of the WASH Act and WASH Sector Development Plan. Despite this challenge, UNICEF Nepal supported the approval of WASH in school directives, and

helped ensure the guideline on WASH in health care facilities is close to finalized.

Support was provided to develop local government-level WASH plans that integrate climate resilient development and risk management in four municipalities. This will provide model WASH plans to be scaled up in 2019 to additional local governments. UNICEF Nepal supported the strengthening of WASH monitoring mechanisms at national and sub-national levels, through the establishment of local monitoring systems in 44 local governments, in Province 2. This intervention included updating the National Management Information Programme (NMIP) that provides data on the coverage and status of water supplies. The report will be ready by the first quarter of 2019.

UNICEF provided financial assistance to two government engineers to pursue MSc study in Engineering in Nepal as part of future leadership development strategy. In addition, UNICEF Nepal strengthened the capacity of selected local governments in Province 2 on emergency preparedness and response. In 2018, 141,647 people including 73,656 women were reached with WASH services during flood response and recovery. UNICEF was the WASH cluster co-lead at national level, however there is a need to provide additional support at a local level given this period of transition.

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

In 2018, children benefited from policies that address poverty, vulnerability and exclusion. UNICEF provided technical advice to the Government which expanded the child grant towards a universal coverage. In October 2018, the Government committed to expand the child grant to reach each child under the age of five in six additional districts (Bajura, Doti, Jajarkot, Kailali, Mahottari, and Sarlahi). This amounts to an additional 300,000 children, at a cost of an additional US\$ 13.2 million (NRs. 1.49 billion) annually. The cash is given to mothers or primary care takers with empowering effects, especially in enhancing the financial inclusion of women.

UNICEF Nepal continued to strengthen the child grant programme's efficiency and transparency by deploying technology-based solutions. The Department of Civil Registration with support from UNICEF implemented RapidPro which provides real-time monitoring in three pilot districts (Achham, Bajhang and Rautahat) and connects people to SMS-based information related to payment dates; and enables them to provide feedback using SMS and Interactive Voice Response on their experience in collecting and using the grants. A total of 30,055 families and caregivers have access, benefiting 68,902 children under the age of five. Among the registered population 43 per cent are female, 51 per cent are male, and 6 per cent did not indicate.

In partnership with DFID, UNICEF worked with the relevant ministries in charge of social protection and disaster response to strengthen shock responsive social protection. The aim was to strengthen the preparedness and capacity of the social protection system for disaster response through evidence-based policy advocacy. UNICEF Nepal commissioned an analysis of Nepal's social security allowance schemes to respond to floods and droughts; as well as

options for donors to fund humanitarian cash transfers when responding to disasters through the social protection system. The studies highlighted high exclusion rates and limited knowledge and capacity among the implementers. The key findings were presented during a joint high-level panel and the evidence discussed in technical meetings with the Government and development partners. The Government drafted a standing operating procedure for the use of cash in an emergency, drawing upon experiences from the 2015 earthquake.

Building on lessons learnt, in 2018 UNICEF hosted a delegation from Armenia and Tajikistan to learn about Nepal's experience in implementing a large cash transfer programme, as well as current efforts to support shock-responsive social protection.

Addressing the challenges faced by children with disabilities is a focus of UNICEF Nepal's work. Within an approach of making development disability sensitive, UNICEF contributed to building evidence and influencing government policy. UNICEF Nepal commissioned ODI and conducted an 'Assessment of Nepal's cash allowances for children with disabilities' to examine the barriers faced by children with disabilities in accessing the disability allowance.

A paper entitled "Disability in Nepal: Taking Stock and Forging a Way Forward" produced by the Disability Research Centre, provided insight into the situation of persons or children with disabilities. The study pointed to a high exclusion rate, spurring the need for analysis (as through Multiple Indicator Study Cluster 6) and strengthening existing social protection systems. The findings contributed to the framework of the new partnership with the Government of Norway focusing on inclusive education.

In the run-up to the Global Disability Summit that took place in London in 2018, UNICEF Nepal organized a national disability conference with key partners. The conference Disability in Nepal: Working Together for an Inclusive Society was attended by representatives from federal and local governments, civil society and development organizations. The event helped drive the discussion around the need for inclusion of persons or children with disabilities.

As the co-chair of the social protection task team, UNICEF plays a leading role in coordinating development partners' social protection joint approaches, as well as cross-sector advocacy and research. UNICEF Nepal considers engagement in the ongoing federalism process as critical and provided timely generation of analysis and evidence including commissioning the Oxford Policy Management to examine its impact on key child-focused service delivery. To ensure advocacy efforts target senior level policy makers, UNICEF facilitated the participation of a delegation of Members of Parliament to the South Asia Parliamentarian Platform for Children, held in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It is anticipated that they will be UNICEF's key allies for future advocacy with parliamentarians.

UNICEF Nepal partners with the Central Bureau of Statistics and the World Bank to produce new poverty estimates and trends in 2019, including for children. This provides crucial, updated and disaggregated data to monitor the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 1, including the specific targets on child poverty.

Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

Theory of change

In 2018, UNICEF implemented the theory of change despite constraints posed by the new federalized structure of the state. UNICEF Nepal continued implementation with little in the way of diversion from plans. The assumptions put into the development of the theory of change are holding true. Consistent evaluation is needed given the changing nature of the environment that UNICEF is operating within.

Cross-cutting strategies

There were valuable lessons gained through the integration of cross-cutting strategies in areas such as health -system strengthening. Embedding community engagement and disaster risk reduction into health programmes proved positive, igniting discussions with local governments on the further development of contingency plans and health strategies at the provincial levels. The cross-cutting approach to interventions targeting children with functional limitations led to significant resource mobilization. Norwegian Government funding will create knowledge on the prevalence of disability across Nepal and empower children with functional limitations to stay in and learn from schools, through the integration of WASH interventions in schools and implementation of inclusive education practice.

Key constraint: Federalism

The transition from a Unitary Government to the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal provided a host of constraints that UNICEF has had to manage. The functions and financial systems previously managed at the central level are now devolved: this impacted systems, resources and capacity at the local level to absorb these new functions. A lack of awareness, technical expertise and resources constrained capacity. The lack of systems and resources hampered areas such as data management. In certain instances, data collected at local levels for monitoring key indicators was more reliable than data reported through the Government central monitoring system. The transition requires new legislation, institutions and administrative procedures. All three tiers, federal, provincial and local, now have executive, legislative and budgetary powers, together with judicial functions.

Lessons learned

Working in collaboration with the three tiers of Government (federal, provincial and local) has been challenging and rewarding. For example, UNICEF Nepal facilitated close collaboration among education cluster members to work with national and local governments and school management committees. This collaboration drove rapid decision-making and solutions. UNICEF Nepal's established local mechanisms to monitor 'open defecation free' status declared by many parts of Nepal. Monitoring is conducted by an independent third-party. Joint monitoring and supervision with local governments helped identify gaps in service quality and delivery, promoting further collaboration.

Capacity building has proven to be a key priority. For example, in the case of nutrition programmes, local-level awareness was essential on the importance of investing in nutritional well-being of adolescents, women and children, as was strengthening the capacity of newly recruited officials to mainstream nutrition into local planning processes. UNICEF Nepal provided technical support to roughly 25 per cent of local governments on child protection issues. To tackle the challenges related to limited capacity of health coordinators and other staff, UNICEF provided technical assistance and conducted onsite coaching and mentoring at health facility levels. In the context of disaster risk reduction, the country office worked on sensitizing and building the capacity of local government officials and elected bodies on risk informed planning and budgeting.

UNICEF engaged with local governments across the new, federal Nepal with a letter of agreement, a critical component to UNICEF programming for the second half of 2017 and into 2018. An integral part of this engagement included declaring the budget for local municipalities to the Ministry of Finance, ensuring full transparency. The letters of agreement helped secure commitment and accountability from local governments. For example, UNICEF engagement and advocacy with local governments from planning to budgeting helped to prioritize maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health related issues, and sustain results in local governance structures.

Advocating for the allocation of budget to child-related programmes is essential within the decentralized context. UNICEF Nepal worked to ensure sufficient budget would be allocated for the implementation of the nutrition-specific actions related to the multi-sector nutrition plan and supported local levels to establish the nutrition information system. Consequently, UNICEF was successful in leveraging 29 per cent (US\$1.69 million) from 308 local municipalities out of the total funding of US\$5.67 million. This was achieved as part of a holistic effort that included all the local elected officials signing of the declaration of commitment to eliminate malnutrition from their municipalities. Another lesson related to the use of advocacy was in relation to UNICEF's social policy agenda, which was successful in leading the Government to adopt a universal approach to the child grants programme, to be expanded to all districts during the current Country Programme (2018-2022).

Data collection

In terms of data collection, there are valuable lessons from an ongoing pilot of the use of RapidPro to link beneficiaries of the child grant programme to an SMS-based information service. This moved slower than planned due to challenges that a non-government organisation partner faced when coordinating 400 local governments.

Looking ahead

Across all areas of programmes, UNICEF Nepal will continue to focus on providing local level support in the areas of planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and reporting whilst strengthening the collaboration across the tiers of Government and bolstering technical and leadership capacity of relevant officials. In tandem with a coordination role and providing technical assistance at central, provincial and municipality levels, UNICEF Nepal will monitor

the situation at local levels and adapt when required, advocating for change and ensuring that interventions are carried out in timely and efficient manner. Despite challenges, there are valuable lessons that will serve as a basis for future actions, especially to work efficiently in a dynamic environment.

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