Executive Summary

Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) put children’s rights issues at the highest level of the public agenda. UNICEF Nicaragua and the Ministry of Family, Youth and Children developed a joint organisation committee and implemented a common work plan for seven months. UNICEF demonstrated its ability to obtain buy-in from the Government and to mobilise civil society organisations (CSOs) to create synergy in this nationwide advocacy effort.

Building on experience in the Northern Autonomous Caribbean Region in 2013, UNICEF successfully introduced the co-creative “human-centred design” approach to the development of a regional policy for Indigenous and Afro-descendant children in the Southern Autonomous Caribbean Region. This process, led by the regional government with 11 CSOs, contributed to creating a cohesive framework for development programs in the region. The policy was approved in December 2014 in record time.

Since the Ministry of Health (MoH) re-launched the National Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) in 2013, UNICEF has been supporting the initiative in 139 health units across 15 municipalities. This year, UNICEF introduced a bottleneck analysis to develop action plans to accelerate compliance with BFH standards. With UNICEF’s support, 52 health units were successfully recertified this year, increasing the total number of BFH units to 88. UNICEF helped the MoH to develop the national-level technical capacity and tools to oversee the BFHI, which allowed the Ministry replicate the initiative in other municipalities beyond UNICEF’s intervention areas.

UNICEF Nicaragua has been supporting the global ENDViolence initiative through its project “Sexual abuse prevention through information and communication technologies (ICTs) with children and adolescents.” Adolescents were empowered as communicators with capabilities to develop and communicate information on sexual abuse prevention with their peers and authorities, using ICTs. This novel experience was presented at the regional ‘Digital Youth’ meeting organised by Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), and received an Award for its gender approach (3) from the Latin American Electronic Government Organisation.

UNICEF Nicaragua continues to strengthen the capabilities of its partners in analysis and use of data for programmatic decision-making, which was also identified as a challenge by UNICEF’s Global Evaluation of Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES) this year. In the health sector in particular, this challenge is linked to the high rotation of Government personnel at all levels.

A major bottleneck to birth registration continued to be lack of demand by parents. UNICEF is developing a partnership with community and religious leaders who can serve as catalysts in sensitising the parents on the importance of birth registration.

Obstacles also remain in the area of coordinated response to victims of violence, due to lack of
clarity on the competencies and responsibilities among different institutions. Lack of systematic and consistent data collection on violence against children (VAC) impedes the prioritisation of institutional responses.

Expansion of basic education to rural indigenous communities in Alto Wangki Bocay and the Caribbean Coast remains a major challenge, due to the predominance of empirical teachers and difficult geographic access. With UNICEF’s advocacy, for the first time the Ministry of Education incorporated these communities in its new proposal to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

The CRC 25th Anniversary event strengthened UNICEF’s partnerships with 20 artist volunteers “Friends of Children”, which resulted in the creation of a song “Imagine” Nicaragua remix to promote child rights. Another new partnership developed through the anniversary was tied to the launch of the European Union (EU)-UNICEF Child Rights Toolkits (5). UNICEF and the EU plan to organise training of trainers on the toolkits in 2015 and to continue their dialogue on strengthening partnerships around prevention of violence among adolescents.

UNICEF introduced a novel partnership between the Judiciary and the National Police to prevent violence against children and adolescents. The Judiciary has started to involve its justice operators in preventive work as well as response, in collaboration with the National Police. This model was recognised as a good practice and replicated by the Judiciary in three departments beyond the UNICEF’s priority municipalities.

During the mid-term programme review this year, a modification to the existing results matrix was proposed by incorporating the outcomes of the Adolescent Participation and Adolescent Protection. Similarly, five outputs under the Early Childhood Development component were combined into two, according to the determinants. These changes will strengthen cross-sectoral linkages by tackling the common determinants.

**Humanitarian Assistance**

Not applicable

**Equity Case Study**

Nicaragua’s national exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) rate was 31.7 per cent in 2011-2012 (Demographic and Health Survey-DHS); however, it was 15 per cent in 15 of 24 priority municipalities' targeted by UNICEF’s Country Programme 2013-2017 (UNICEF baseline study, 2013). Breastfeeding is one of the major determinants of neonatal mortality (8 per 1,000 live births, DHS 2011/12) and malnutrition (17.3 per cent of children under five are stunted, DHS 2011/12).

Nicaragua was the first country in the world to successfully implement the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative not only at the institutional, but also at the territorial level. By 2005, 65 per cent of all departments were certified as BFHI [84 per cent of health centres, 61 per cent of health posts and 77 per cent of hospitals (Burkhalter B, Gonsáles I, Herrera N et al. 2006)]. From 1998 to 2001 the national EBF rate increased from 5.9 per cent to 31.1 per cent (DHS).

Regardless of this progress, since 2006 the EBF rate has remained the same and sadly, five H certified (National evaluation, MoH, 2010). According to a study, 80 per cent of mothers in 10 municipalities knew the importance and benefits of EBF, but were not applying the knowledge in practice (Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense, 2009).
At the policy level, Nicaragua endorsed the national code on breast milk substitute (CODE) in 1999. However, the CODE is not in full compliance; industrial marketers and sales persons have free and permanent access to 93 per cent of public and private health facilities to sell and promote breast milk substitutes (MoH, 2011).

As a result of UNICEF’s advocacy, MoH re-launched the BFHI in 2013 with the aim of recertifying 80 per cent of 1,209 health units by 2015. Since then, UNICEF has supported MoH with this initiative in 139 health units across 15 of 24 priority municipalities.

Tapping into the successful introduction of the Monitoring of results for equity system approach to accelerating progress towards the elimination of the transmission of mother to child transmission of HIV (eMTCT), in 2014 UNICEF again partnered with MoH to apply MoRES by performing bottleneck analysis for the implementation of the 13 steps of the BFHI in nine of 24 municipalities. The results showed: 1) lack of compliance with the CODE (enabling environment), 2) lack of theoretical and practical training on breastfeeding for health workers (supply), and 3) lack of breastfeeding promotion in communities and socials norms related to breastfeeding and infant feeding (enabling environment).

To remove these bottlenecks, 12 action plans were prepared and implemented by health facilities to attain compliance with the 13 steps of the BFHI and be recertified. These action plans resulted in:

1) 39 municipal managers and 58 facilitators from health units obtained the capacity to monitor and ensure compliance with the 13 steps of the BFHI
2) Breastfeeding committees were created for each health unit to support recertification
3) 45 support groups were created to implement and monitor community initiatives to support nursing mothers and their families.

By December 2014, UNICEF had supported the MoH with approximately US$218,969 for BFHI. Of this amount, US$178,389 was allocated directly to health units (Luxemburg Government funding) and US$40,580 was provided from UNICEF’s core resources as technical assistance (RR: US$7,820 and Global Thematic Funds: US$ 32,760).

Sustainability:

UNICEF is the only partner supporting the MoH with the BFHI. Therefore, creating sustainability and national ownership has been crucial for this initiative. Following the BFHI bottleneck analysis, the MoH requested UNICEF to replicate the training in MoRES with health managers from the SILAIS (Integrated System for Comprehensive Health Services), for use in areas where UNICEF’s Country Programme is not targeted. In addition, in 2013 UNICEF supported the MoH for training of national evaluators for BFHI.

In consequence, during 2014 the MoH replicated the BFHI with their own resources in three SILAIS areas (Jinotega, Masaya and Chinandega), and is in the course of expanding it to others. Meanwhile, MoH officers continue to utilise the MoRES approach, so that those populations vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition are prioritised and therefore, inclusive and equitable.

Another positive result of this intervention is the “continuous monitoring for improvement” component, which is inherent in its implementation. If the MoH institutionalises and extends this
approach as a good practice in other health programmes, it could become a critical strategy for sustainability and improvement of all services.

Progress and results:

With 52 health units recertified under the BFHI, the number of BF units recertified since 2013 has increased to 88 (63.3 per cent of 139 targeted units). In addition, 36 health units were self-evaluated and waiting to be recertified in early 2015. At the national level the MoH received support to develop a monitoring guide for the CODE, which is currently under review by the MoH.

Evaluation of BFHI is planned in 2015 to collect evidence on impact-level results, such as the percentage of mothers who are initiating breastfeeding within one hour of birth of their babies, and mothers who engage in EBF. Compliance with the CODE will also be evaluated in 2015.

Next steps:

In 2015 UNICEF will continue its support to the MoH in:

• Advocacy and lobbying: BFHI activities should be clearly placed in the annual management plans of each health unit, supported by personal who have been trained in BFHI.
• Training of health personnel to improve the quality of counselling services and conduct close and systematic counselling activities with pregnant women during antenatal care visits, with community leaders and community-based organisations providing home visits to support nursing mothers. This process includes encouraging mothers and pregnant women to create support groups and receive supervision and training.
• Integration of SMS messages in breastfeeding counselling, through a pilot project in Bluefields to provide counselling services by sending tailored SMS chat messages to pregnant and nursing mothers, family members and community health workers via mobile phone.

Summary Notes and Acronyms

AMP— Annual Management Plan
ANC— Antenatal care
ARVs— HIV antiretroviral drugs
AWB— Alto Wangki Bocay
BCP— Business Continuity Plan
BFHI — Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative
BICU— Bluefields, Indian and Caribbean University
BW— Better Work (a program of ILO)
CCC— Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies
C4D— Communication for development
CEDAW— Convention to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women
CMT— Country Management Team
COAR— Country Office Annual Report
CPD— Country Programme Document
CPMP— Country Programme Management Plan
CRC— The Convention of the Rights of the Child
CSOs— Civil Society Organisations
DCT— Direct Cash Transfer
DFID— Department for International Development (UK)
DHS— Demographic and Health Survey
DRASH— Direction of Water and Sanitation
EBF— Exclusive breastfeeding
ECD— Early childhood development
ERM— Enterprise Risk Management
GAVI— Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunisation
GPE— Global Partnership for Education
HACT— Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfer
HR— Human Resources
IDB— Inter-American Development Bank
ICT— Information and Communication Technology
ILO— International Labour Organisation
IMEP— Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
INATEC— National Institute of Technology
INCAP— Panama Institute of Nutrition
IND— Nicaraguan Institute of Sports
ICT— Information and Communication Technology
JCC— Joint Consultation Committee
LACRO— Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (UNICEF)
LAN— Local Area Network
LSS— Lasos Sur Sur
M&E— Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs— Millennium Development Goals
MIFAN— Ministry of Family, Adolescents and Children
MINED— Ministry of Education
GMC— Global Movement for Children
GPS— Geographic Positioning System
MoH— Ministry of Health
MoRES— Monitoring of Results for Equity System
MOSS— Minimum Operating Security Standards
UK Natcom— United Kingdom National Committee for UNICEF
NGOs— Non-government Organisations
NOD— National Officer Level D (UNICEF)
OR— Other Resources
PAHO— Pan-American Health Organisation
PBR— Programme and Budget Review
RAM— Results Assessment Modules
PAS— Performance Appraisal System
PMTCT— Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV
PN— National Police
RACN— Northern Caribbean Autonomous Region
RACS— Southern Caribbean Atlantic Autonomous Region
RAM— Results Assessment Modules
RR— Regular Resources
SAP/VISION— UNICEF’s electronic financial management system
SILAIS— Local System for Integral Attention in Health
SLA— Service Level Agreement
TEPCE— Evaluation, programming and educational training
UNCT— United Nations Country Team
UNAIDS— The Joint United Nations on HIV/AIDS
Capacity Development

In 2013 UNICEF Nicaragua piloted a social innovation in the municipality of Bilwi, Northern Caribbean Autonomous Region, with the aim of increasing birth registration. The pilot had a positive impact on birth registration providing “human-centred” registration services. It also motivated the staff of the Civil Registry Office to do their jobs better.

Consequently, the Civil Registry Office requested that UNICEF train them in customer service, to improve the quality of birth registration services. In 2014 UNICEF implemented a human-centred customer service workshop with 16 civil servants of the municipality, including staff from Civil Registry, the office of the Vice-Mayor, Planning Division, and Cooperation Division of the Mayor’s office.

The goal of the workshop was to allow participants to experience customer service themselves in order to understand how “empathy-driven” service makes a difference and can increase demand. Through various exercises, participants observed different customer service situations from the user’s point of view and reflected on these experiences, in order to apply lessons learned in their everyday work as service providers. They then identified possible solutions to improve their registration services. The workshop provided space for them to exchange ideas and test them with the team.

Following the workshop, participants tested two selected solutions: the Mayor’s Office decided to build two civil registry service windows in the Town Hall, in order to make the customer experience more orderly and accessible (e.g. avoiding long queues). The group also did small-scale research on the barriers to birth registration in three rural communities and, based on their findings, developed a proposal to make birth registration more accessible to these populations. The proposal will be presented for the Municipal Assembly for implementation in 2015.

The idea of the workshop was to co-create local solutions to local problems using design thinking. UNICEF’s role was to facilitate throughout the process, but the concrete ideas and results came from the participants themselves. Although still at a pilot stage, the human-centred customer service approach could be replicated in any area of the public sector, such as health and education, as an innovative strategy to capacity development.

Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

In 2013 UNICEF supported the Northern Autonomous Caribbean Government with development of a regional policy for children and adolescents through a human-centred design approach. Building on this experience, UNICEF extended its support to the Southern Autonomous Caribbean Government, inviting 15 government officials to apply design thinking to develop the Regional Policy for Indigenous and Afro-descendant children and adolescents.

The process lasted for one year, spanned 22 remote communities, and involved more than 470
people, including more than 80 children. Building on empathy-driven tools (e.g. service trials, focus groups, observations, shadowing, etc.), a multi-sectoral coalition of Government officials gave a ‘human face’ to the qualitative data. In addition, more than 80 girls and boys expressed their points of view by taking photographs of the things which they liked and did not like. They documented empty playgrounds being taken over by adolescent gangs, and churches as one of the few spaces for positive socialisation with parents. Incorporating all the inputs collected, policy was finalised and approved in December 2014.

The initiative resulted in several key lessons learned:
(i) High-level ownership can be achieved through an inclusive co-creation approach. Key local government officials expressed an interest in adopting this model for developing other policies.
(ii) In policy-making embracing complex problems, it is necessary to step out of the expert position and avoid pushing pre-conceived solutions or agendas without fully understanding what people need, want and truly care about. This is why sufficient time and resources need to be allocated to understanding problems and their underlying causes before thinking about solutions.
(iii) Children are the real experts about their own experience, and children’s participation in policy-making is essential to validating pre-conceived solutions or interventions through asking children what they want. Rather, it requires an iterative approach to try to make sense of information gathered through different child-friendly techniques and running experiments until the right services are established.
(iv) Although development efforts are often risk-averse and may not promote experimentation, creating a real social impact requires repeating constant learning loops through fast cycles of experiments.

**Partnerships**

One of the highlights of the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child was the work of the Global Movement for Children (GMC)’s Nicaragua Chapter, which organised different activities to promote child rights. As a member of the GMC, UNICEF’s leadership was critical to coordinating activities and liaising with the Government’s organising committee. The total cost of the activities came to US$124,000, for which UNICEF’s contribution totalled 41 per cent; the rest was contributed by other members. This partnership has positioned the GMC as an experts’ group in child rights in the country.

Another new partnership developed culminated in the launching of the EU-UNICEF Child Rights Toolkits, presided over by the EU Ambassador and UNICEF’s LAC Regional Director, with over 250 participants. UNICEF and the EU plan to organise training sessions on the Child Rights toolkits in 2015 and to continue the dialogue to strengthen the partnership on violence prevention.

Only 30 per cent of Nicaraguan mothers exclusively breastfeed their babies during the first six months of life (DHS 2011), and this number declines to 10 per cent in the apparel sector (ILO 2013). Since 2013 UNICEF, together with a local NGO SoyNica, has provided technical support to the ILO’s Better Work (BW) programme to promote breastfeeding in apparel factories.

In this triangular partnership UNICEF’s technical support was critical for advocacy with BW and the factories about the importance of promoting breastfeeding at the workplace based on the evidence. With an additional eight new factories having committed to participate this year, 26 out of 80 factories in Nicaragua now participate.
The partnership also enabled the development of a sustainable model for counselling and training in breastfeeding with working mothers, which was a direct result of UNICEF’s lobbying, which encouraged factory managers to start allocating funds to promote breastfeeding.

In 2015 UNICEF will further support the ILO by generating local evidence for lobbying with other factories and the integration of a gender approach, and expanding this initiative to interventions in Early Child Development at workplace.

External Communication and Public Advocacy

The 25th Anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child was the top priority of UNICEF Nicaragua’s external communication plan. With UNICEF support, 72 activities were implemented nationwide by state institutions as a part of celebrating the anniversary, including workshops on child rights and film festivals.

A formal session of the National Assembly in November was dedicated to the CRC anniversary, during which the UNICEF Representative delivered a keynote speech. A video clip of the song “Imagine” Nicaragua remix was produced through the partnership with 20 Nicaraguan volunteer artists and was “liked” by 1,555 users of the UNICEF Nicaragua website and Facebook.

National and local media, including 16 TV channels and 26 radio stations, provided 121 free disseminations of messages and information on the CRC throughout the year, bringing an estimated savings of over US$100,000 to UNICEF. These media campaigns have reached over 67 per cent of the total Nicaraguan population (4 out of 6 million people).

UNICEF continued its efforts to strengthen external communication using social networks. The goal was to reach 10,000 followers through different social network platforms managed internally. This target had already been achieved by July 2014, and by the end of the year had reached 15,108 followers, a 71 per cent increase over 2013. UNICEF continues to lead the social networks in Nicaragua, in comparison to other organisations working with children and adolescents.

Only 13.5 per cent of the Nicaraguan population has Internet access, implying marked digital illiteracy. However, as user statistics of social networks gradually increased, UNICEF incorporated social media as a tool to educate the public by organising monthly social media campaigns on selected topics.

UNICEF Nicaragua aimed at publishing at least 100 press releases or articles by the end of 2014 to expand the visibility of UNICEF-supported programmes and promote child rights. By December, 217 press releases, articles and interviews had been produced by UNICEF, considerably exceeding the target. Of those, 189 articles and 28 interviews were disseminated through local, national and international media.

South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation

Created in 2004, “Lazos Sur Sur (LSS)” is a horizontal technical cooperation network for prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS among seven countries: Bolivia, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Sao Tomé and Principe and Timor Leste. In 2014 Nicaragua’s Ministry of Health updated the list of anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs for children, pregnant women and adults, according to the new treatment scheme developed based on the knowledge generated by the Lazos Sur-Sur. Since the 2.0 Strategy was developed, LSS supported its member countries, including Nicaragua, to facilitate a smooth transition through exchanges of
experience among member countries on supply chain and drug management and monitoring of annual estimates of ARV needs.

Nicaragua’s MoH recently sent a proposed training plan to the Secretary of the LSS to strengthen the knowledge of health professionals in HIV counselling, the new ARV therapeutic treatment scheme and elimination of discrimination and stigma. These training sessions will be conducted through virtual meetings in 2015, with technical support from LSS countries.

One of the major deliverables of LSS from recent years was continued discussion, advocacy and knowledge-sharing on HIV prevention in adolescents with diverse sexual preferences. This year the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health presented a resolution to ensure attention and care for people with diverse sexual preferences, without stigma and discrimination. Following the resolution, the MoH requested UNICEF’s technical support to develop standard interventions for HIV care for these adolescents, to strengthen capacity of health personal in HIV testing and counselling for adolescents and to implement a monitoring and evaluation plan of LSS actions in relation to adolescent HIV prevention and care in 2015.

UNICEF Nicaragua’s role in supporting the LSS was facilitation of the knowledge exchange among member countries and identifying the countries with “resources”, to match them up with other countries. During the LSS annual meeting in Bolivia, the Nicaraguan MoH delegation, with UNICEF technical support, presented the experience of incorporating an analysis of determinants for PMTCT as a part of a decentralised local monitoring system.

**Identification Promotion of Innovation**

This year UNICEF Nicaragua continued to promote innovation as a way to reach the most marginalised communities and co-create new ways for problem solving, with participation by children and adolescents. One of the major examples of being sensitive to the demand of the population in the most marginalised communities was the introduction of the human-centred approach and design thinking to policy-making in the Southern autonomous region of the Caribbean Coast (see evidence-generation section). The regional policy for children and adolescents was approved by the Government in December 2014.

Another example is a human-centred customer service workshop designed and prototyped by UNICEF with the Civil Registry Office in Bilwi, a small indigenous town with the lowest birth registration rates (see capacity development section). Through various exercises, 16 civil servants analysed different customer service experiences and applied lessons learned in their work as service providers in birth registration.

UNICEF Nicaragua came to understood that innovation is not a product, but a process for empowerment and partnership. In early 2014 Nicaragua participated in the Grand Challenge – “The 72 hours” – organised by UNICEF Chile, to seek innovative solutions for a mega natural disaster. This was particularly relevant for the Caribbean Coast due to its high environmental vulnerability. UNICEF Nicaragua supported two innovation laboratory workshops – one with the Town Hall of Bilwi in RACN and the other with the Bluefields, Indian and Caribbean University (BICU) in RACS. These sessions mobilised over 60 participants from the public and private sectors, as well as children, adolescents and youth. Two projects were submitted to the Grand Challenge, and one was piloted with Emergency Preparedness funds from the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

The workshops provided tools and methodologies that can be applied in their work, and
generated local interest in innovation. Based on the request from the BICU, UNICEF facilitated the development of a concept note to create an Innovation Laboratory on their campus, to be piloted in 2015. This co-creation process clarified why and how innovation can be helpful in solving local problems, and brought together important allies for innovation among students, professors, Government and civil society organisations.

**Support to Integration and cross-sectoral linkages**

UNICEF Nicaragua incorporated the component of preventing armed violence in Education through a cross-sectoral cooperation between Education and Child Protection. This strategy allows a comprehensive approach involving families and communities in violence prevention and sharing resources across sectors (both internally, within UNICEF, and with Government). This corresponds to the “Shared Responsibility Model” and the “Human and Citizen Security Strategy”, both promoted by the Nicaraguan Government.

In six municipalities, the Ministry of Education (MINED) coordinated capacity development activities for school counsellors and students, involving staff from the Ministry of Family (MIFAN) and National Police. A total of 788 people (79 school counsellors, 45 school principals and teachers, 598 students and 66 parents from 65 schools) strengthened their knowledge regarding armed violence prevention and response. MINED leveraged resources for the participation of school counsellors from five extra municipalities.

A handbook for the prevention of armed violence in schools was also developed by the Direction of School Counselling, with support from UNICEF. This document is being reviewed by MINED in order to replicate armed violence prevention activities in schools beyond UNICEF’s priority municipalities.

MINED also led the elaboration of six “Good Living Plans”, a cross-sectoral Government strategy for the prevention of violence, involving MIFAN, National Police, Ministry of Health and the Family and Community Cabinets. Activities include “Mobile School Counselling” in which the above mentioned authorities organise “Fairs” – with local resources – in remote communities and bring information to citizens about different themes, such as positive parenting, alcohol and drug counselling and the prevention and reporting of armed and domestic violence.

Local coordination is still weak in some municipalities; therefore, it is important to promote leadership of a well-organised Ministry such as MINED for convening and coordinating local authorities and ensuring follow-up actions. No official data on violence in schools is available at MINED, which makes assessment of results of this intervention challenging. UNICEF is piloting a real-time monitoring system in selected schools to collect data on violence in schools and other indicators such as water, sanitation and hygiene and absenteeism among students and teachers.

**Service Delivery**

Not applicable.

**Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation**

In Nicaragua 96 per cent of cases of violence against children involve sexual abuse (National Police, 2013). There is, however, lack of identification and reporting of sexual abuse due to the ‘intimate nature’ of the crime, which happens mostly in ‘safe-environments,’ such as the home.
This year UNICEF Nicaragua organised three municipal meetings to gather community points of view on sexual abuse as part of a strategy to ‘break the silence.’ During these sessions, 297 community leaders pointed out that the differing approaches used by state institutions and civil society organisations to prevent sexual abuse are the main barrier to better collaboration and coordination for its prevention.

UNICEF analysed this barrier and found that CSOs use the human rights-based approach, while the approach used by state institutions is mainly based on the criminal justice system, as established in the Penal Code. Because of this difference in approaches, sexual abuse concepts used by state institutions and CSOs do not coincide and thus, preventive work was difficult to coordinate.

To overcome this barrier, UNICEF Nicaragua produced a concept document on the legal and procedural aspects of sexual abuse cases to reconcile the two approaches. The paper builds on international norms and standards for the promotion and defence of human rights as stated in the CRC, the Convention to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW), and the Belem do Pará Convention. The document also incorporates existing national policies, legislation, and regulations addressing sexual abuse.

After validation by the main partners (including the Women’s Secretariat, Ministry of Family, Public Prosecutor, and the Judiciary and Psychosocial Care Centre) the document was formatted in a user-friendly manner. It will be used as a resource and tool to disseminate theoretical aspects (both judicial and procedural) to state institutions and CSOs in order to consolidate the language used and knowledge of prevention and response to sexual abuse. UNICEF Nicaragua is also working on developing an online course based on the document in 2015.

**Gender Mainstreaming and Equality**

In 2013, 81.8 per cent of 6,069 victims of sexual violence reported to the Institute of Legal Medicine were between 0 and 17 years old and of those, 87.5 per cent were girls. In Nicaraguan society, where machismo culture marks everyday life, violence is often not reported or recognised.

In support of the global ENDViolence initiative, UNICEF Nicaragua introduced Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as a new strategy for preventing sexual abuse. During five monthly workshops, 140 adolescents (60 per cent girls) from four prioritised municipalities developed their competencies to prevent sexual abuse using ICTs - how to identify, report and protect themselves from sexual abuse.

Upon the completion of the workshops, the participants were able to report at least five signs of sexual abuse, compared to zero to two signs were reported prior to the training (Los Cumiches, 2014). Over 30 communication materials on prevention of sexual abuse were produced by the adolescents who opened their Facebook page to share the information with their peers.

UNICEF advocated for the Departmental Roundtables against Trafficking by linking sexual abuse with human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Both issues being high on the political agenda, UNICEF was able to call attention of the Roundtables, and convened stakeholders to discuss sexual abuse and strengthen coordination to protect children and adolescents from this crime.
A forum was organised in each municipality, where adolescents presented the communication materials and a proposal on prevention of sexual abuse to the Departmental Roundtables. The Roundtables developed a concrete action plan for prevention of sexual abuse involving adolescent communicators in its implementation.

The project started in January 2014 and will be ongoing until March 2015 with a budget of US$173,203 and technical support from seven UNICEF staff. This experience was presented at the Regional digital youth meeting in El Salvador organised by PAHO as a novel intervention in prevention of sexual abuse with adolescent participation. Additionally, this intervention was honoured with the Award on Gender Approach from the Latin American Electronic Government Organisation on December 2014.

**Environmental Sustainability**

This year UNICEF Nicaragua, through the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools programme, continued to promote the use of water systems in schools with a focus on reduction of hazardous environmental impact and adaptation to climate change. As an example, harvesting rainwater was combined with ceramic filters to ensure drinking water supply in classrooms.

In the UNICEF-assisted schools in priority municipalities on the Caribbean Coast, students and teachers developed their knowledge on the issues of environment sustainability and climate change in order to incorporate these topics into the education program. They created a plan for improving their access to WASH with a focus on environmental sustainability. The plan included activities in hygiene promotion to reduce health risks, monthly cleaning of latrines and schools, removal of stagnant water at schools, activities to decorate the school environment with WASH messages and reusing solid waste in the construction of planters, trash containers and playgrounds.

As a tool to monitor implementation of the school environmental plans developed by students and teachers, UNICEF introduced a pilot real-time monitoring system using SMS messages in selected schools in two autonomous regions on the Caribbean Coast.

UNICEF continued with the vocational training of out-of-school adolescents in the construction of water and sanitation systems, with a focus on adaptation to climate change and life skills. Since 2013 some 63 adolescents of both sexes from the two Autonomous regions on the Caribbean Coast have been trained, and are now providing their services to the community and replicating the training in schools.

**Effective Leadership**

UNICEF Nicaragua currently has 14 management mechanisms (committees and task forces), made up of representatives of staff across all categories. Two of these management mechanisms were discontinued (Contract Review Board - CRB and the Selection Committee) when the office was incorporated into the Panama operations hub in August 2014. These internal structures addressed different areas of governance and planned and carried out a work plan based on the Annual Management Plan (AMP).

The Country Management Team (CMT) continued to be the central statutory committee for decision-making to facilitate and monitor strategic management, in accordance with the AMP. A set of programme management performance indicators were monitored by the CMT during quarterly meetings. Action items established at earlier meetings are monitored at the
subsequent meeting. In 2014 six CMT meetings were held.

With support from LACRO, a training on VISION was held, with focus on the Manager’s Dashboards and Results Assessment Modules (RAM), to strengthen the capacity of programme and operations staff. Compared to the previous year, more staff are using these tools to monitor their performance and programmatic progress.

In 2013 the CMT created a new, non-statutory, ad hoc task force with the objective of assisting the transition into the Regional operation hub in Panama. The task force reviewed and revised the 27 internal work processes, taking into consideration segregation of functions, organisational policies and the office structure. Mapping of roles was completed and the Service Level Agreement (SLA), together with the revised work processes, were signed with the Panama hub within the deadline.

The Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) plan was updated and was presented to the CMT in October. An action plan needs to be developed to mitigate risks identified through the exercise at the beginning of 2015.

UNICEF Nicaragua actively participated in the United Nations Emergency Team (UNETE), under the United Nations Country Team (UNCT). UNICEF took also the lead in organising an inter-agency emergency simulation training with technical support from LACRO, and reactivated emergency thematic groups in nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene; education and protection as the coordinator.

Since the International Operations Manager post was abolished, a GS-6 Budget Assistant covered this function until March 2014. Given the transition to the Panama operations hub, the office appointed an Operations Manager (NOD level) as a temporary assistant to ensure a smooth transition.

As a good practice, UNICEF conducted a self-audit exercise with the support of the Operations Manager. Utilisation of an analytical framework by the Office of Internal Audit allowed the office to conduct a quick review of key aspects in governance, programme management and operations support. The report from the self-audit contained 27 observations and recommendations to be reviewed and considered in 2015 to strengthen internal control mechanisms and prepare for the planned audit to be conducted in 2015.

**Financial Resources Management**

At the end of 2014, the financial implementation rate was 92 per cent of US$7.7 million (Regular Resources (RR): 93 per cent; Other Resources (OR): 91 per cent; and Institutional budget: 98 per cent). All seven of the grants that expired this year were utilised at more than 99 per cent by the deadline. Since 2013 a total of US$5.97 million of OR was mobilised, equivalent to 20 per cent of the OR budget ceiling for CPD 2013-2017. Of this amount, US$1.08 million will be carried over for 2015.

Direct cash transfers (DCTs) outstanding for more than nine months currently represent 4 per cent of total DCT, equivalent to US$42,000. All of this is due to technical problems in VISION from 2012. This represents a substantial progress since the end of 2013 (38 per cent, equivalent to US$224,000), with a reduction of US$182,000. The improvement is due mainly to the Programme and Operations assistants, who reviewed each case of DCT and followed up with LACRO and HQ.
UNICEF Nicaragua conducted three workshops with 86 participants from 25 implementing partners, using the Operations Manual prepared in 2013. Furthermore, with the support of LACRO UNICEF Nicaragua conducted a training on the revised HACT framework with the participation of four other UN agencies. Using the HACT capacity assessment tool, an action plan for implementation in 2015 was prepared.

A non-statutory task force for spot-checks continued to lead the process of spot-checks in UNICEF. The implementation rate improved significantly, increasing from 24 per cent in 2013 to 79 per cent (15 of 19 planned) in 2014, with 13 of 19 implementing partners being visited. In 2015, the procedures for spot-checks based on the revised HACT framework will be revisited.

**Fund-raising and Donor Relations**

The Resource Mobilisation task force continued to lead UNICEF Nicaragua’s fundraising efforts. One of the major tasks was to update resource mobilisation strategies. For each Country Programme component, funding gaps, priority programmatic areas and fundraising strategies were analysed. In addition, based on the donor typology, lessons learned were identified based on the past two years’ efforts. The revised fundraising strategies expanded the scope to resource leveraging and advocacy, and provide guiding principles for the rest of CPD period.

In early 2014 UNICEF hosted a visit from Ms. Angie Harmon, the US Ambassador for UNICEF, with a focus on the fight against child and adolescent trafficking. Following the successful visit, UNICEF Nicaragua was asked to host another visit; this time, a group of major individual donors planned for February 2015, for which preparations began in late 2014.

A visit to the UNICEF United Kingdom National Committee (UK Natcom) in March 2014 demonstrated the importance of a strategic visit to selected Natcoms. The UK Natcom has been systematically informing the office about potential funding opportunities, and UNICEF Nicaragua contributed to the preparation of communication materials for the UK-wide campaign: “Children at risk”. The UK Natcom also invited UNICEF Nicaragua’s health specialist to attend the Annual Conference for the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, which provided another advocacy opportunity.

Seven grants expired this year were all spent down to more than 99 per cent before the expiry date. The monitoring of grant implementation occurred through programme coordination and management meetings. Four donor reports were due in 2014, all of which were submitted prior to the deadline. The quality of donor reports was ensured by the existing internal peer review mechanism.

**Evaluation**

The integrated monitoring and evaluation plan (IMEP) approved by the CMT included six studies and surveys and other monitoring activities, but no evaluation was planned. Implementation of the IMEP was monitored by the CMT at mid- and end-year. As of December 2014, the overall implementation rate of the IMEP was 75 per cent, including studies and publications that are ongoing.

Several studies conducted with Government institutions were funded by a cost-sharing mechanism between UNICEF and other partners, such as the World Bank and International Development Bank (IDB). For these studies, UNICEF provided technical assistance for preparations, definition of a conceptual framework and scope for the studies and review of a
Following the mid-term review of the Country Programme the five-year IMEP was updated. In the revised IMEP, four evaluations and seven studies/surveys were planned for the period between 2015 and 2017. This plan was developed in close collaboration between Programme sections and the Monitoring and Evaluation section. As a means to prioritise evaluations and studies and ensure their financial feasibility, each study or evaluation has an estimated budget and a proposed source of funding source.

Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

The main savings achieved during 2014 were related to staff costs. In comparison with the structure approved in the 2013 PBR, a net reduction of five posts was proposed and approved by the Programme and Budget Review (PBR) in November 2014. This resulted from the abolishment of nine positions and establishment of four new positions. Following a thorough analysis of the competencies needed vs. affordability and the strategic rationalisation of posts, UNICEF was able to identify a structure that produces savings of US$867,782 in staff costs, equivalent to a 13 per cent reduction since 2013.

This revised structure also contributed to a financing sustainable structure by reducing the staff costs paid by Other Resources, and instead charging these costs to Regular Resources and the institutional budget. Staff costs charged to RR in the new structure represent 37 per cent, which is considered as a reasonable level to secure core staff functions in programme and release OR funds for programmatic activities.

As in previous year, UNICEF Nicaragua continued to pursue several saving measures:

• Energy saving: through the use of 18 watt light bulbs, based on the recommendation of the National Engineering University
• Paper-based meeting management: Staff were encouraged to send documents electronically prior to meetings and present them on an LCD projector
• Rental costs for conference venues: For the Mid-Term Review and other periodic review meetings, UNICEF used available conference rooms in the offices in Managua and Bilwi, as well as Government’s buildings
• Cost-saving in the cafeteria/gardening and reception services shared by UNICEF and UNDP: Last year UNICEF reduced the number of employees by combining functions, saving almost US$9,000 per year.

Supply Management

As a result of a strategic shift in the Country Programme, a significant decrease took place in the volume and amount spent for supply procurement since 2013. Due to the country’s vulnerability to natural disasters and potential effects of climate change, however, emergency supply planning continues to be one of the most essential components of early warning and preparation and disaster risk reduction. For this reason, UNICEF reviewed the internal work flow of the supply component prior to joining the Panama operation hub in August 2014 and proposed a revised work flow for supply procurement services, which was approved by the Panama hub to be managed by them due to the office’s limited human resources.

Security for Staff and Premises

The Business Continuity Plan (BCP) was updated, and presented and approved by the Country Management Team. No simulations were carried out, but an exercise is planned for the first
quarter of 2015.

The Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) was also updated and presented to the CMT. An action plan needs to be developed in 2015 in order to mitigate the identified risks.

In coordination with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), UNICEF staff participated in inter-agency radio checks twice during this year. One of the radio checks was conducted in the second quarter of 2014 during a real emergency due to several earthquakes in Managua, which resulted in the country’s declaration of a yellow alert. These exercises allowed the security focal point and management to analyse strengths and weaknesses in staff safety and security preparedness.

In coordination with the UNDSS, 12 UNICEF staff participated in training sessions on advanced security courses, which are particularly relevant due to the country’s vulnerability to environmental hazards and the precarious security situation in some regions.

This year, UNICEF’s security focal point (also a ICT officer) made several field visits to Bluefields, a capital town in the South Caribbean Autonomous Region to identify new office premises based on the assessment of the ICT infrastructure and security situation. Several difficulties were faced due to the legal situation of the available properties. The security assessment results were reviewed by the UNDSS and the proposed premises were visited by the UNDSS security focal point for an additional review. Following more than 12 months of efforts, the Bluefields sub-office was established in October 2014 in new premises.

Some progress was registered in MOSS compliance in the sub-offices in Bluefields and Bilwi, by installing security cameras, smoke detectors, alarm systems, motion sensors, a perimeter wall (Bilwi), 24 hour security guards (Bluefields) and others. Pending activities are required to be completed by January 2015.

The UNCT agreed to install GPS in all UN official vehicles. Six UNICEF vehicles are fully equipped with GSP systems based on the Startrack application, which includes a web browser system, car assets, current location and travel history of vehicles, ignition lock and other features.

**Human Resources**

In preparation for joining the Panama operations hub, UNICEF Nicaragua submitted a new structure for the Operations section to the Programme Budget Review (PBR), which was approved in 2013. This structure had a net reduction of five positions. This year, a consultative process was undertaken to identify a proposal for a new programme structure, with support from the Joint Consultation Committee (JCC). Recommendations from the Mid-term review, which was concluded in October, provided important justifications and inputs for preparing support documents for the new structure for the PBR.

The new programme structure was approved by the PBR in November 2014, to be implemented in 2015. The structure includes a net reduction of five posts (abolishment of nine positions and establishment of four positions); of the nine abolished posts, three had been vacant due to funding constraints or staff separation. A strategic redeployment plan was prepared, to be implemented early 2015, including such mitigation measures as recommendations for a lateral move of qualified staff from abolished posts.
Due to the new operations structure, UNICEF Nicaragua underwent seven separation processes, including one international staff. The Regional Human Resources Advisor visited Nicaragua, providing technical support to assist the HR unit to provide tailored administrative and career development support. Some staff took early retirement or special leave without pay as a bridge to early retirement, while others took up a new positions with other organisations or other UNICEF offices.

Another challenge in HR was to ensure a supportive work environment during the period of gradual downsizing. In collaboration with the local staff association, a workshop on stress management was organised for all staff, with support from a local group specialised in creative approaches.

Among the 13 recruitment processes which took place, three positions in operations were recruited within the deadlines. To support the transition to the Panama Hub, a NOD Operations Manager was hired, in addition to two administrative assistants and one HR assistant on a temporary appointment. In the Programme area, the HR unit supported the recruitment of six national staff, including two programme specialists, three programme assistants and a driver.

With respect to UN Cares, UNICEF Nicaragua updated the database of doctors specialising in HIV care and treatment, purchased male condoms that were placed in bathrooms and provided staff counselling on HIV prevention and welfare, with special attention to confidentiality.

Under the leadership of the training committee a staff capacity development plan was developed; 62.7 per cent of planned activities were completed. In addition, 29 capacity development activities that had not been planned originally were completed.

Regarding the performance assessment system (PAS) in 2014, 26 staff completed the planning phase this year; of those, 65.3 per cent completed it prior to April 30th. Among 15 staff who completed a mid-year review, 46.7 per cent had finished by August 30th.

**Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology**

An important achievement in ICT support this year was the installation of Office 365, a new UNICEF standard business Microsoft software. With the ICT unit’s support, mailboxes of all UNICEF users were successfully transferred from Lotus Notes to Outlook, and the Office 2013 suite is now part of the standard software installed in all computer equipment and some mobile devices. Users now access their email through Outlook 2013, which is providing better functionality in emails, documents, contacts and calendars.

Lync, an integrated element of Office 365, offers instant messaging, webinars and online meetings with screen-sharing options, and voice or video conferencing for anyone, including non-UNICEF users. This year, UNICEF used Lync frequently as a cost-effective tool to connect the three UNICEF offices, communicate with LACRO and other offices for meetings and webinars. Given this improved access and easy utilisation, all internal communication is now based on Lync. Skype was replaced by Lync as the main communication tool connecting the main office in Managua with sub-offices during weekly coordination meetings and in-house webinars.

UNICEF Nicaragua is currently undertaking a pilot project to install a function of the automatic weekly backups of the “My Documents” folder, which will be saved in the external hard drive via Local Area Network (LAN). Implementation is expected in 2015.
To provide optimal Internet connection to the newly established Bluefields office, the ICT section supported the installation of Internet with a bandwidth of 5 megabytes per second. A technical problem was encountered, as UNICEF has five megabytes for downloading but 0.5 megabytes for uploading data. The ICT section is seeking alternative options for resolving this situation and optimising the service.

Programme Components from RAM

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 Effective and efficient programme management and Operations support

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF Nicaragua joined the Panama operations hub for shared remote operations services in August 2014. The previous year the CMT had created a new non-statutory, ad hoc task force with the objective of assisting the transition. The task force reviewed and revised 27 internal work processes, taking into consideration segregation of the functions, organisational policies and the office structure. Mapping of roles was completed and the Service Level Agreement and revised work processes were signed with the Panama hub within the deadline.

Starting at the beginning of 2014 UNICEF Nicaragua facilitated a participatory consultative process to identify a new programme structure to propose to the PBR, with support from the Joint Consultation Committee. Following a thorough analysis of UNICEF’s structure and competencies needed vs. affordability and rationalisation of posts, a new, sustainable structure was identified offering savings of US$867,782 in staff costs compared to the 2013 LACRO PBR. The ratio of staff costs charged to RR was 37 per cent, which represents a reasonable level for securing core staff functions in programme and releasing OR funds for programmatic activities.

Since the International Operations Manager post was abolished, a GS-6 Budget Assistant covered this function until March 2014. Given the transition to the Panama operations hub, UNICEF appointed an Operations Manager (NOD level) as a temporary assistant to oversee the transition.

Preparation of the Revised CPMP for 2013-2017, following the mid-term programme review (MTR) took into account several factors: a) Guidance and ceiling from the Executive Director; b) MTR recommendations resulting in post changes for the proposed programme structure; c) guidance from LACRO and alignment with the strategy for creating an Operations Hub and moving to the Panama hub effective 1st August 2014; d) an office-wide participatory process to explore options and develop evidence-based strategies to improve organisational effectiveness and efficiency; e) functional changes identified to improve efficiency, effectiveness and administrative consistency and to strengthen technical capacity within programme teams; and (f) mitigation measures for staff whose posts were abolished, as announced by the UNICEF Deputy Executive Director (DED).

With respect to strengthening Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfer and DCT policies and procedures, UNICEF Nicaragua conducted three workshops with 86 participants from 25 implementing partners, using the organisational Operations Manual prepared in 2013. Furthermore, with the support of LACRO, UNICEF conducted a training on HACT, including participation of four other UN agencies to ensure compliance with the revised HACT
Framework. Using the HACT capacity assessment tool, UNICEF prepared an action plan for implementation in 2015, which was presented to LACRO.

The staff capacity development plan focused on safety and security, management and leadership, risk management, gender, human resources, SAP, HACT and Operations.

This year, HR section supported 13 recruitment processes and 7 separation processes (including one transfer within the organisation). The priority and challenge in Human Resources (HR) was to provide tailored administrative and psycho-social support to staff members in posts that were abolished posts or were due separation due to the gradual downsizing of the Operations section and further downsizing of Programme structure.

**OUTPUT 1** This output will cover governance structures and systems that are necessary to adequately manage risks and achieve programme results. These governance structures and systems will be described in detail in the Annual Management Plan. Activities and associated costs corresponding to the Biennial Support Budget functions at country level covered under Functions 2, 4, 8 and 11, including the salaries and related non-staff costs of Representative, Deputy Representative, Chief of Operations, Information/Communications staff, Information Technology, business continuity and risk management, will be included under this result.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
As part of preparations for the transition to the Panama operations hub, UNICEF Nicaragua submitted a new Operations structure to the PBR, which was approved in 2013. The new structure included a net reduction of five positions. In 2014 UNICEF undertook a revision of the existing programme structure and proposed a new structure, with support from the Joint Consultation Committee. Recommendations from the MTR concluded in October provided important justifications and inputs to prepare supporting documents for the new structure for the PBR.

UNICEF updated its Enterprise Risk Management and presented it to the CMT for review and discussion in October. An action plan is needed by early 2015 to mitigate risks identified through the exercise.

As a good practice, the office conducted a self-audit exercise with support from the Operations Manager. Utilising an analytical framework from the Office of Internal Audit allowed UNICEF Nicaragua to conduct a quick review of key aspects in governance, programme management and operations support. The report from the self-audit contains 27 observations and recommendations to be reviewed and considered by the office in 2015 to strengthen internal controls mechanisms and prepare for the planned audit to be conducted in 2015.

UNICEF updated its Business Continuity Plan, which was presented and approved by the Country Management Team (CMT). No simulations were carried out; the office plans to conduct this exercise during the first quarter of 2015.

An important achievement in ICT support this year was the installation of Microsoft Office 365, the new UNICEF standard business software. Skype was replaced by Lync as the main communication tool connecting the main office in Managua with sub-offices during weekly coordination meetings and in-house webinars. To provide optimal Internet connectivity for the newly established Bluefields office, the ICT section supported the installation of Internet with a bandwidth of 5 megabytes per second.
OUTPUT 2 This output will cover management of financial and other assets of the organisation, including activities and costs associated with office administration, corresponding to the Biennial Support Budget functions at country level covered under Functions 10 and 12, including the salaries and related non-staff costs of Administration and Finance, rent, office furniture and equipment, office security, maintenance and vehicles.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
The global context of financial and economic crisis, closing down some bilateral cooperation (mainly from European countries), and Nicaragua’s classification as a middle-income country have affected UNICEF’s fundraising capacity since 2013. During the MTR process completed in October 2014, however, UNICEF Nicaragua decided to maintain the CP ceiling proposed for the cycle 2013-2017, based on a recommendation from LACRO (US$34 million for five years, consisting of US$3.75 million of regular resources (RR) and US$30.25 million of other resources (OR).

As of end-December 2014, the financial implementation rate reached 92 per cent of US$7.7 million (including RR: 93 per cent; OR: 91 per cent; and Institutional Budget: 98 per cent). Seven grants expired this year, all of which had been spent down to more than 99 per cent by the deadline. Since 2013, US$5.97 million of OR has been mobilised, equivalent to 20 per cent of the OR budget ceiling for CPD 2013-2017. Of the US$5.97 million available, US$1.08 million will be carried over to 2015.

In late 2014 UNICEF learned of the closing down of Citibank in Nicaragua, which is expected towards the end of 2015. In 2015, the office will start assessing other financial institutions in the country and select a new bank to manage UNICEF’s financial resources.

Direct cash transfers outstanding for more than nine months currently represent four per cent of the office’s total DCT, equivalent to US$42,000. All pending cases are due to technical problems in VISION originating in 2012. The 2014 figures represent substantial progress compared to end-2013 (38 per cent of DCTs outstanding for over nine months, equivalent to US$224,000); indicating a reduction of US$ 182,000 during the course of 2014. The improvement is due mainly to efforts by Programme and Operations assistants to review each DCT and follow it up with VISION technical experts in LACRO and HQ. In 2015, a top priority will be to continue to review these DCT cases from 2012 and liquidate all of them as early as possible, with support from HQ and LACRO.

OUTPUT 3 This output will cover Human Resource management, including staff development and learning, staff well-being and staff-related security costs. Activities and associated costs corresponding to Biennial Support Budget functions 13 and 16 will be covered here.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
This year, UNICEF Nicaragua carried out 13 recruitment processes (three fixed-term and 10 temporary appointments). The new Operations structure (comprising a GS6 Operations Assistant, GS6 Human Resources Assistant and GS6 ICT Assistant) was completed within deadlines. To support the transition to the Panama hub and to strengthen management capacity a NOD Operations Manager was hired on a temporary appointment from April to December 2014. As an additional support in preparation for the transition to the Panama Hub and implementation of the new working modality, two administrative assistants and one HR assistant were hired on temporary appointments.
For Programme, recruitment of a NOC Education and NOC Monitoring and Evaluation staff were concluded at the end of 2014. Temporary appointments included two GS4 Programme Assistants and one GS2 driver. Finally, a GS4 Communication Assistant recruitment process was completed by December 2014. Due to the office’s transition in operations and changes in the HR staff, some recruitment processes took more than the standard 90 days. All FT recruitment processes and 43 per cent of recruitment for TA positions took more than 90 days.

Due to the new operational structure, UNICEF Nicaragua underwent seven separation processes, including one international staff. The HR section, with support from LACRO, provided tailored information to these staff on the separation. Some took the option of early retirement or special leave without pay as a bridge to early retirement, while others took up new positions with other organisations or were transferred to other UNICEF offices.

Another challenge in HR was to ensure a supportive work environment in the context of gradual downsizing. In collaboration with the local staff association, a workshop on stress management was organised for all staff, with support from a local group specialising in creative education.

Due to the incorporation into the regional hub, UNICEF Nicaragua developed a staff redeployment plan. Part of this plan involved transition of operations and administrative functions to the Panama hub, developed during 2014 to provide support to staff in abolished positions. The second part was a review of the programme structure to be effective in 2015. The approved programme structure includes positions to be abolished, therefore, a strategic redeployment plan was prepared, for implementation in early 2015.

**OUTCOME 2**

By 2017, girls and boys aged 0-6 years in indigenous, Afro-descendent and rural communities in 24 prioritised municipalities with greater disparities will have access to integral and appropriate services in health, nutrition, education and protection at family, community and institutional levels.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Between 2006 and 2012, the mortality rate for children under five years old in Nicaragua dropped from 49.5 to 21 per 1,000 live births (Demographic and Health Survey, DHS). Despite the fact that the fourth Millennium Development Goal was achieved, national efforts for further reduction are underway. To support these initiatives, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Health by developing the capabilities of paediatricians and neonatologists in three key areas: neonatal resuscitation techniques, continuous positive airway pressure and Kangaroo mother care for premature babies.

The national stunting rate among children under five declined from 21.7 per cent in 2006 to 17.3 per cent in 2011/12 (DHS). In 24 UNICEF priority municipalities, the stunting rate was 31 per cent in 2013 (UNICEF baseline study). With UNICEF’s support to the MoH in the area of increased access to quality nutrition services, 90 per cent of children under 12 months in 15 municipalities received their growth and development evaluation, and their development status was reported in accordance with WHO standards.

The national exclusive breastfeeding rate during the first six months of life was 31.7 per cent in 2011-2012 (DHS). In 15 of 24 prioritised municipalities, the EBF rate was 47 per cent (UNICEF baseline study, 2013). Through UNICEF’s advocacy, the MoH re-launched the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in 2013 with the aim of recertifying 80 per cent of 1,209 health units as baby-friendly by 2015. UNICEF is currently working in 139 health units across 15 municipalities to
support this initiative. During 2014 UNICEF successfully supported 52 health units for recertification, increasing the total number of facilities certified since 2013 to 88 (63.3 per cent of the targeted 139).

UNICEF is the only organisation supporting MoH with BFHI, and has worked with the MoH to create sustainability and national ownership. The Ministry is currently implementing the BFHI in 22 municipalities outside UNICEF’s priority municipalities, with their own resources, with support from BFHI national evaluators and health personnel trained by UNICEF in 2013.

With UNICEF’s technical support, the national immunisation programme conducted a mapping exercise to identify the most isolated communities with the lowest immunisation coverage to prioritise home visits. UNICEF advocated with the MoH to use the home visits as an opportunity not only to vaccinate, but also to identify sick children and assess their nutritional status. This exercise contributed to a steady increase in vaccine coverage among children under 12 months, from 91 to 94 per cent between 2013 and 2014 (MoH, 2014) in seven prioritised SILAIS. The home visits also detected 1,143 cases of pregnancy complications and 161 sick children (MoH, 2014), in addition to 6,981 children in need of evaluation by the Growth and Development Surveillance Programme.

Although Nicaragua receives support from the Global Fund against Malaria, Tuberculosis and HIV and the national budget includes the purchase of rapid HIV tests for pregnant women and their children, there is still a financial gap. Due to UNICEF’s advocacy, along with other UN agencies (UNFPA, PAHO and UNAIDS), the MoH committed to progressively ensuring the provision of rapid test kits for all pregnant women, starting in 2015, with funds from the national budget.

At the national level, the births of 15.5 per cent of children under six years of age were not registered in 2011/12 (DHS). In the 24 priority municipalities, the proportion of under-registration among children younger than three years old was 34 per cent (UNICEF baseline study, 2013). The obstacles continue to be: 1) difficult access to birth registration services, 2) an outdated law and 3) lack of prioritisation of birth registration by the state and the public. Between 2013 and 2014, UNICEF supported registration of 4,564 children and adolescents aged 0-18 years, although the progress was only moderately successful, compared to the target of 9,500 children to be registered by 2014.

With UNICEF’s support, the Central Civil Registry Office mobilised its team to serve the most disadvantaged populations of the country through mobile registration services, which a 2013 UNICEF baseline study found to be the most effective way to combat non-registry in remote communities with limited access to services. In the prioritised 24 municipalities, the proportion of registered children in the most distant communities was 58 per cent. In communities served by a mobile registry unit during the past two years, however, the probability of children being registered was 85 per cent higher than in those without this service.

Nationally, the net enrolment ratio for preschool education increased from 56 per cent in 2010 to 59.2 per cent in 2013 (MINED). In the 24 priority municipalities, preschool enrolment was 52 per cent, with a drop-out rate of 11 per cent in 2013 (UNICEF baseline study).

In 2014 UNICEF’s actions to improve the quality of preschool education focused on five of the 24 prioritised municipalities: one in Alto Wangki in Bocay (northern part of the country) and four additional municipalities on the Northern Caribbean Coast. Specifically, UNICEF supported MINED with capacity development of preschool teachers and educators from 97 ECD centres in
53 communities to use new ECD methodologies and promote creative reading. This training is expected to have both direct and indirect impacts on improved quality of attention and education for over 10,000 preschool children.

**OUTPUT 1** By 2017 Families have acquired skills for integral development of their children under 6 age and use of relevant services.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

With UNICEF’s technical support, 52 health units in 15 municipalities (in two SILAIS) were recertified as baby-friendly in 2014, and an additional 36 health units were ready to be evaluated for recertification. One of the criteria of being a baby-friendly hospital is to ensure the continuity of breastfeeding after mothers are discharged following childbirth. To help accelerate the recertification process, UNICEF supported a bottleneck analysis in these municipalities. Based on the results, 12 action plans were developed by the breastfeeding committees for hospitals and communities.

Implementation of these action plans resulted in the following outputs: 1) 39 municipal managers and 58 facilitators from health units obtained the capacity to monitor and ensure compliance with the 13 BFH standards, 2) a breastfeeding committee was created for each of the health units to support the recertification process, and 3) 45 support groups were created to implement and monitor community initiatives supporting mothers and families with the continuity of exclusive breastfeeding and sensitisation on the importance of early childhood development.

Between May and October 2014, the northern dry corridor zone of Nicaragua suffered from severe droughts. Together with the Panama Institute of Nutrition and the IDB, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the MoH for development of a national protocol for a nutrition survey for children under the age of six living in the dry corridor area. Implementation of the protocol is expected in 2015, as a part of emergency preparedness and early warning.

One of the main challenges is the lack of educational materials for community-based promotion of nutrition and prevention of malnutrition at the MoH. UNICEF, together with PAHO and WFP is supporting the MoH to reproduce existing educational materials, including flip-charts to be used for nutrition counselling and a nutrition handbook addressing the needs of children under six years old.

The other challenge was a significant delay in the disbursement of funds to SILAIS, due to the MOH’s centralised financial management system. UNICEF transfers funds to SILAIS via the MoH central level, and it takes an average of three months for SILAIS to get the funds. This requires UNICEF to be more agile in work planning with the MoH, and to strengthen its financial monitoring and capacity development based on the revised HACT guidelines.

**OUTPUT 2** By 2017, children (girls and boys) under 5 years of age will receive health promotion, and prevention and timely care for chronic malnutrition, taking into account their cultural patterns and customs.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

This output was discontinued as of January 2014 when the result matrix was modified, in accordance with the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2014-2017. New three outputs on selected determinants incorporate earlier outputs on health, nutrition and HIV, including this one.
OUTPUT 3  Institutional strengthening for the improvement of the management of services of maternal and child health, based on the analysis of indicators for the equity-based EMB decision-making processes.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
This output was discontinued as of January 2014 when the result matrix was modified in accordance with the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2014-2017. New three outputs on selected determinants incorporate the earlier outputs on health, nutrition and PMTCT.

OUTPUT 4 By 2017, pre-schools in prioritised municipalities will have teachers with capacities for education of girls and boys aged 3-5 years in their maternal languages.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
With UNICEF’s technical and financial support to the Ministry of Education, 154 teachers and community educators working at preschools (92 per cent female) from four rural indigenous municipalities sharpened their skills in developing education materials using locally available natural resources. Sixty per cent of the participants were from Miskitu communities, 24 per cent from Mayaguna and 16 per cent from mestizo. The workshop also provided an opportunity for educators to exchange experiences.

The skills acquired by the teachers and community educators are expected to have a direct impact on improving attention to 3,075 children between three and five years old in their schools. Additionally, 7,900 children in the region will indirectly benefit from the trained teachers and educators through replication of the skills during monthly municipal meetings with other teachers and community educators. For continuity and sustainability, with UNICEF’s technical support, municipal MINED advisors put in place a system to monitor the performance of the trained educators in applying their skills.

Through the UN Joint Human Security Programme implemented in the area of Special Regime of the Alto Wangki Bocay area, 60 community educators from 14 communities improved their skills to promote reading and recreation for children between three and five years of age. Through a new alliance with the Foundation for Children’s Books, UNICEF supported the organisation of mobile library units in preschools in each of 14 communities. The Foundation provided technical assistance in the selection of books, taking into account the socio-cultural context and recent research results, as well as organising demonstrative sessions with children to promote reading and use of the mobile library.

To strengthen intercultural bilingual pre-school education, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the design process, review of the book "Knowledge of Mayangna People on coexistence of man and nature: Fish and Turtles" through UNESCO’s ‘Programme of Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems’. The guidebook and related materials were approved by MINED and will be used by preschools and their teachers in 30 Mayangna communities.

OUTPUT 5 By 2017, municipal civil registry offices have strengthened their capacities for systematic registry and mobile registry services for rural population.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
In 2014 UNICEF led the birth registration component of the UN Joint Human Security Programme, which was implemented in 29 rural indigenous communities in Alto Wangki (north
UNICEF supported the organisation of mobile birth registration units to reach the most isolated communities through an inter-sectorial effort involving the Civil Registry Office, Indigenous territorial government, community leaders, municipalities and the Ministry of Health.

UNICEF supported the training of 55 community leaders (40 males, 15 females) from 16 communities in indigenous population’s rights, in conjunction with stressing the importance of birth registration. The advantages of birth registration were explained; for example, populations with updated registries can be better protected against human trafficking and other crimes.

A total of 1,959 children and adolescents aged between 0-18 years were registered during the under review (78 per cent of the target). Some 289 children and adolescents received their birth certificates from the registry campaign in 2013. The mobile registry strategy has been effective in remote communities, but it demands external resources. Obstacles include scarce capacity among national partners in C4D strategies; as a result UNICEF had to rely on certain partners which because they were in high demand, caused significant delays in the elaboration of work plans and coordination.

UNICEF also provided technical support for advocacy with the National Assembly for approval of the new law on birth registration, which was under review at year’s-end. UNICEF organised capacity-building sessions with the National Assembly to discuss the beneficial aspects of the new legislation in support of universal birth registration. A constraint was the additional administrative burden in the work plan elaboration as a result of a request to UNICEF by the Assembly to work on approval of the Law for Administrative Change prior to reviewing the Birth Registration Law.

In 2013 UNICEF worked with registrars of the Mayor’s Office in Bilwi (RACN) to enhance the quality of customer service, to increase birth registration rates. UNICEF teamed up with the same office to pilot improved customer service in the public sector, using human-centred design. As a result, the Mayor’s Office constructed two new service counters to provide more organised and quality birth registration service to the public, and is developing a proposal to better coordinate civil registry activities in rural communities. Religious leaders were involved in support for the work of the civil registry office in identifying children without birth certificates.

**OUTPUT 6** By 2017, SILAIS and prioritised municipalities have technical capabilities to quality care population living in the most disadvantaged, mainly indigenous and Afro-descendants including PTMC of HIV.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF provided technical support to the MoH to improve the skills of health management teams from 15 municipalities in monitoring the key indicators for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) and antenatal care (ANC). Ninety per cent of health personal learned the norms for pregnancy care, including PMTCT. UNICEF conducted joint monitoring with local SILAIS personnel to enhance compliance with the standards for ANC visits. By September 2014, 42 per cent of pregnant women attended four ANC visits, and by end-year the figures are expected to exceed those of the previous year (55 per cent, MoH).

UNICEF supported seven SILAIS to monitor the HIV test kits supplies and purchase rapid HIV test kits for communities with the lowest coverage. Access to HIV testing among pregnant women in these SILAIS increased from 53 per cent in 2013 to 90 per cent in 2014, and access to HIV tests among HIV-exposed children under 12 months rose from 72 to 83 per cent during
the same period.

With UNICEF’s support, health facilities in the seven prioritised SILAIS were equipped with national guidelines for nutrition for pregnant women and under-five children, accompanied by the training of health personnel. The IDB in Central America, Panama’s Institute of Nutrition and PAHO are supporting the training in other SILAIS, using the same guideline.

UNICEF, in conjunction with WHO and PAHO, provided technical assistance to the MoH to strengthen the national monitoring and evaluation system for nutrition. UNICEF supported the MoH to organise training for 51 facilitators (doctors and nurses) and 277 health workers from five SILAIS on how to interpret nutrition indicators for mothers and children.

UNICEF also supported the MoH with the training of 30 doctors and nurses and 180 community leaders in three SILAIS in maternal and child health promotion, ANC, integrated health management for neonatal diseases and infant feeding.

Through the UN Joint Programme UNICEF, UNFPA and PAHO successfully advocated with the MoH to incorporate the Communication for Development strategy for reducing maternal and infant mortality in 18 high-risk communities. UNICEF developed a guideline and tools for community leaders and families, to facilitate the identification of determinants (linked to social norms and cultural practices) that could contribute to reduced maternal and infant mortality, and to monitor the implementation of actions at the household level. As a complement, UNFPA trained health personnel on C4D strategies.

**OUTPUT 7** By 2017, management teams of prioritised SILAIS and municipalities have capacities for health situation analysis, planning and monitoring results for equity and management of implementation of maternal and child health services.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Since UNICEF introduced the concept of Monitoring Result for Equity System in 2012, a local performance monitoring system for PMTCT has been sustained by the MoH. In five SILAIS supported by UNICEF, staff responsible for treating HIV and AIDS are now assessing the compliance of the health units against the indicators of PMTCT on a trimestral basis and taking necessary actions to remove bottlenecks. The health managers meet with MoH central staff every quarter to report on progress toward implementation of the national plan for elimination of HIV. Due to improved collection and use of disaggregated data, the MoH, UNICEF and partners are now better able to focus their actions on the most marginalised populations using more tailored approaches.

Nine out of 15 municipalities participating in the UN Joint Programme for MDG 4 and 5 performed bottleneck analyses for exclusive breastfeeding and identified the following bottlenecks: 1) lack of compliance with the International Code of marketing of breast milk substitutes, 2) lack of theoretical and practical training on the part of health workers to support nursing mothers, 3) lack of promotion of breastfeeding in communities and 4) lack of a monitoring system for the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative.

To remove these bottlenecks, 12 action plans were prepared in three hospitals and their communities: (Nueva Segovia, RACS, Madriz) to ensure exclusive breastfeeding up to six months. At the national level, UNICEF supported the MoH to develop a monitoring guide for the International Code of Marketing, which is currently awaiting final MOH approval. In addition,
UNICEF is providing technical assistance to the MOH central level to identify solutions in the area of reducing neonatal mortality, with a focus on both supply and demand.

The main obstacles include: 1) high turnover of human resources at the MoH, 2) heavy workload of health personnel, preventing them from dedicating time to analyse and make use of existing data, and 3) the need for strengthening capabilities of local SILAIS health management teams and epidemiologists in data analysis and evidence-based programmatic decision-making, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their interventions in public health.

OUTCOME 3 By 2017, girls, boys and adolescents in the condition of major disadvantage, mainly indigenous populations and afro descendants, have enrolled in and completed primary education in a timely manner.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

This year UNICEF prioritised its support to the Ministry of Education in 10 Caribbean Coast municipalities the Alto Wangki Bocay (AWB) area and both autonomous regions to promote intercultural bilingual education, using the Regional Autonomous Education System as a reference. UNICEF, together with five UN agencies, worked with the indigenous territorial government and MINED to implement the UN Joint programme on Human security in the AWB, for which UNICEF continued to be the lead agency in the education component.

UNICEF’s support focused on improving the quality of education by strengthening teaching skills in basic education, given the region’s high teacher empiricism (24.4 per cent in the country for primary education; Guzmán 2013). In the 24 municipalities prioritised by UNICEF, the dropout rate for primary school was 7 per cent, while an additional 14 per cent of students were lagging behind, spending two or more years in the first grade (Baseline study, UNICEF 2013). To reduce the dropout rate and increase the completion rate, UNICEF supported teacher training on curriculum management and mainstreaming of inclusive education, to ensure that teachers provide education based on each child’s individual learning pace. Furthermore, the teachers obtained skills for incorporating new methodologies, such as the Analytical Synthetic Phonic method.

Learning from the experiences of other Latin American countries such as Chile, Costa Rica and Mexico, UNICEF Nicaragua partnered with the National Academy of Sciences and initiated a dialogue with the Ministry of Education to develop local capacity in Science Education based on Inquiry (ECBI) methodologies. The initiative seeks to promote interactive participation and development of critical thinking and research skills among students through a process of inquiry. A group of 14 primary school teachers in the Southern Atlantic Autonomous Region were initially trained as facilitators, and subsequently replicated this methodology with 52 teachers from nine schools. The Ministry of Education at the regional level is monitoring and documenting best practices so that the approach can be adopted nationally.

Lack of access to water and appropriate sanitation for children in schools is one of the determinants contributing to unfavourable conditions for the pursuit of the quality education. This year, a total of 5,767 students (2,937 girls, 2,830 boys) from 19 schools in three priority municipalities obtained access to improved water and sanitation. UNICEF’s support to MINED consisted of building water and sanitation systems in accordance with national standards, with a focus on equity and inclusion and adaptation to climate change. Students attending these schools are now creating and maintaining the school environment with better hygienic conditions to decrease the risk of acquiring infectious diseases and avoid negative impacts on
their learning ability.

An additional aspect that strongly influences education is the relationship between the school and its environment. In this regard, UNICEF has promoted and facilitated collaboration between local authorities, teachers, parents and students to organise participatory diagnostics of the situation of schools and responses. At the regional level, UNICEF supported strengthened coordination between the Ministry of Education and the Department of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (DRASH), which enabled the updating of an inventory study on WASH in schools in two municipalities in the region. The results of the study will be used as a planning tool that will allow schools to identify and prioritise the most serious deprivations.

Coordination among these institutions also helped to support implementation of a pilot phase of the real-time monitoring system, using SMS messages, in 11 schools in two priority municipalities in the South and North autonomous regions. Results from the pilot suggest that SMS-based real-time monitoring can serve as an effective tool for schools that are geographically inaccessible and where the risk of dropout is higher. UNICEF’s technical support to the development of the real-time monitoring system was recognised by local partners as a contribution to improved governance in education and WASH.

UNICEF Nicaragua continued to be an active member of the education donor roundtable, advocating for greater investment in the most vulnerable communities, such as Alto Wangki Bocay and the Caribbean Coast. A new proposal for the second phase of the Global Partnership for Education, developed by MINED, for the first time incorporates these indigenous communities to improve school environments in the targeted geographic areas.

UNICEF, in partnership with the World Bank, is supporting MINED in the design of a national monitoring system that enables timely feedback on the implementation status of the National Education Strategic Plan 2011-2015 and the new plan to be designed in 2015. UNICEF’s support was requested by MINED and the World Bank in the area of sharing lessons learned from its pilot experience with real time monitoring and good practices from other countries’ experience in decentralised education-monitoring systems.

The main challenges include: (i) scaling-up the real-time monitoring system at the most remote schools, where mobile phone service is unavailable; (ii) developing models of the water and sanitation infrastructure in schools for potential replication by other schools; (iii) expanding the coverage of basic education to rural indigenous communities; and (iv) integrating school teachers who are not graduates of MINED’s professional courses in education.

**OUTPUT 1** By 2017, girls, boys, adolescents and their families have acquired competencies for the management of inclusive quality education which includes access to water, sanitation and hygiene with focus on adaptation to climate change.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

As a part of the strategies to ensure that children in primary and secondary schools have continuous access to drinking water and hygienic sanitation, UNICEF and MINED developed a training programme for communities on creating and maintaining a healthy school environment. The capacity-development process targeted parents, student representatives, pedagogic advisors and school teachers, who formed a school council at each school.

The process involved five steps: (i) participatory school diagnostics; (ii) selection of the most
appropriate technology for construction of a water and sanitation system at each school, taking into account the feasibility of operation and maintenance; (iii) capacity development of a committee to handle operations and maintenance; (iv) creation and operationalisation of student sanitation brigades; and (v) development of an action plan for a healthy school environment, including maintenance of the water and sanitation infrastructure.

To strengthen student leadership in peer-to-peer education and child-centred teaching methodologies, 65 students (33 girls, 32 boys) from primary schools in 14 communities of Alto Wangki Bocay (AWB) were trained as local facilitators in collective book reading within their sociocultural context. These children are currently promoting creative and recreational reading in schools and communities in AWB, with technical support from the Foundation for Books for Children, an NGO with considerable experience in social issues related to children in the AWB area. During the meetings organised by these facilitators, they read stories and conveyed messages that contributed to the development of children and adolescents, while promoting interactions among them. This initiative is supported and monitored by MINED directors and teachers.

Given that in 2013 only the municipality of Puerto Cabezas was supported by UNICEF to prevent pregnancy and HIV in schools, this year support was extended to the other four priority municipalities of the North Caribbean Coast. A total of 478 girls (57 per cent) and boys (43 per cent), as well as adolescents in sixth and seventh grades developed competencies in pregnancy and HIV prevention, which is a cross-cutting component of the national curriculum. This participatory training was supported by 27 teaching advisors from MINED and the Secretary of Education.

One of the challenges is to maintain a continuous dialogue with parent representatives, in order to identify the barriers to access and quality of education, and to define joint action plans that will respond to these barriers and improve local education.

**OUTPUT 2**

By 2017, teachers in prioritised municipalities have increased their teaching capacity for quality primary education which is relevant to cultural contexts, with focus on cross-sectoral curriculum.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Considering that the role of teachers is crucial not only for learning in classrooms but also to prepare students to learn, investigate, reflect and transform their school environment, a cycle of training programmes was developed and implemented: hygiene education, based on life-skills education; water conservation; and climate change. A total of 384 education officials (308 women, 76 men) including school counsellors, principals and teachers, participated in the training sessions and are now teaching these themes to 5,767 students (2,937 girls and 2,830 boys) in 19 schools.

Similarly, trained pedagogical advisors are prepared to replicate this knowledge to teachers from other schools in three municipalities during monthly municipal ‘Evaluation, Programming and Educational Training’ (TEPCE) workshops.

As a strategy to monitor progress in health and hygiene behaviour change in the classrooms, these trained teachers developed a monitoring tool which has been applied in some classrooms. However, this is an ongoing effort and will be resume during the next school year.

Given the high turnover of teachers and the appointment of new teachers in secondary
education in the communities in Alto Wangki Bokay (AWB), 148 primary school teachers received refresher training on various themes and are now utilizing their competencies with 3,195 children and adolescents in 14 schools in AWB.

The refresher training included themes such as: planning and evaluation of learning, reading comprehension techniques, strategies for technical writing, practical experimental work and problem-solving, as a response to the main issues identified during the visit of local educational advisers. MINED, at the central level, gave technical support for these training activities, which were implemented as part of the UN Joint Programme in Human Security.

UNICEF extended its support in 2014 to eight municipalities on the Caribbean coast, where teachers of first and second grades had the opportunity to exchange experiences in teaching languages and mathematics. This has allowed the identification of new methodologies to more effectively develop skills in language and reading comprehension, as well as highlighting its link with learning in mathematics in the early grades of primary education. In 2015 UNICEF plans to support processes of curriculum reform and professionalization of teachers in remote communities.

OUTPUT 3 By 2017, Ministry and secretary of Education in two regions in the Caribbean Coast have acquired capacities for curriculum development, decentralised planning, and real time monitoring of the management of Education for equity.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

In 2012 UNICEF conducted an inventory of the situation of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools in priority municipalities of the Caribbean Coast. Building on this experience, the Ministry of Education and the Department of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene of the Southern Caribbean Coast requested that UNICEF provide technical and financial support to update the inventory, covering all schools in two priority municipalities. This study is currently being finalised and will be used as a planning tool by the Government to improve investments in school infrastructure and prioritisation of the work in 2015.

UNICEF supported a pilot phase of a real-time monitoring system using key indicators in education management with 11 schools in the Atlantic autonomous regions. Data collection was supported by the participation of 109 people from school communities (61.9 per cent, students; 20 per cent parents; and 18.1 per cent, school directors) who reported information via SMS messages. The results of the pilot project provided the education authorities with real-time information on teacher absenteeism, functionality of the water and sanitation systems in schools and the incidence and typology of violence in schools. Based on the results from the pilot phase, UNICEF is currently advocating for a potential replication and integration into the MINED’s national education information management system.

UNICEF Nicaragua, with technical support from the Civil Association of Education for All (an Argentinian NGO and Centre of Excellence in Monitoring of Results for Equity System), has strengthened the capacity of 60 education authorities and teachers from 10 schools in analysing barriers to school completion through a participatory study in the municipality of Puerto Cabezas, RACN. The study report was used to define future strategies for tackling major problems in education in the region. To ensure continuity and build a more sustainable local monitoring system, UNICEF will embark in 2015 on support for the training of school directors to monitor the results of educational management.
At the end of the school year UNICEF supported MINED with a pre-registration process involving house-to-house visits to identify children who are not attending school. This exercise identified gaps in the current education offer, against the demand, and provided important baseline data to MINED in its preparations of a proposal for the second phase of the Global Partnership for Education.

OUTCOME 4 By 2017, children and adolescents in conditions of greater disadvantage in 24 priority municipalities have equitable access to prevention of, and response to violence in its various manifestations.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF Nicaragua continued in 2014 its work with authorities, community leaders and adolescents to support equal access to a life without violence. The key strategy used was work with the justice operators to provide better, more rights-based services to child and adolescent victims of violence, as well to ensure a fair and lawful process for adolescents in conflict with law.

The justice operators received training in results-based management and analysed the barriers to inter-institutional coordination in juvenile justice at the local level. UNICEF also introduced a strong focus on evidence-generation, through which different institutions and authorities working on child and adolescent justice jointly identified common indicators for violence prevention and response. Additionally, UNICEF piloted an Injury Surveillance System in the municipality of Bluefields (South Caribbean Autonomous Region) in cooperation with local authorities, in order to collect real-time data on the magnitude and nature of violence against children.

UNICEF worked with adolescents who are exposed to social risk and are in conflict with the law to strengthen their skills in preventing different types of violence in their communities through enhancement of life skills, incorporating recreational activities and education on conflict-resolution techniques. UNICEF Nicaragua has been supporting the global ENDViolence initiative through its project on sexual abuse prevention, in which adolescents, local authorities and community leaders have acquired knowledge on sexual abuse and prevention tools, with the introduction of information and communication technologies as a novel tool.

Confusion about the legal and conceptual definitions of sexual abuse has prevailed in the public dialogue. Rather than limiting public understanding to the legal concept, which defines sexual abuse as physical sexual contact without penetration, UNICEF introduced a broader perspective, defining sexual abuse as a pervasive misuse of power and trust for sexual purposes, whether physical or psychological. This has led to the production of guides and other materials for adolescents and implementation partners to better understand the multifaceted nature of sexual abuse.

In 2014 the Supreme Court of Justice took the lead in inter-institutional coordination for improving the judicial response to child and adolescent victims of violence, as well as making the juvenile penal process fairer for adolescents in conflict with the law. The innovative aspect, influenced by UNICEF, was that the Judiciary began to involve its justice operators in preventive work, not only in response. This was a result of a new collaboration agreement between the Judiciary and the National Police, facilitated by UNICEF.

The two institutions are now working together to prevent youth from becoming involved in armed violence in communities and schools, through strengthened cooperation and the sharing of resources and information.
UNICEF provided technical support to the Judiciary to develop a 16-hour training programme in conflict mediation for adolescents. The programme accredited 60 adolescents at social risk or in non-custodial situations and 45 adolescents deprived of liberty (13 per cent female, 87 per cent male) as mediators in community conflicts. Many of the adolescents have expressed their willingness to continue working as mediators in their neighbourhoods and communities and to replicate the training with their peers.

Based on this experience, a comprehensive methodological guide was developed in partnership with the Supreme Court of Justice, and will be used to replicate the training in other municipalities. This will ensure that the intervention will reach adolescents in other departments where UNICEF is not working during the current Country Programme. Moreover, with the technical assistance provided by UNICEF, a handbook for armed violence prevention in schools was developed and is being reviewed by the Ministry of Education for use in counselling and education sessions on preventing armed violence in schools outside of UNICEF’s priority municipalities.

MINED, with UNICEF support, developed six “Good Living Plans” for 100 per cent of the 24 priority municipalities, outlining action plans for prevention of violence in schools and communities. The plans are part of the national strategy to prevent violence and are based on a model of dialogue and cooperation.

Several ongoing challenges have been identified and continue demand attention from UNICEF. Obstacles remain in the coordination of work in response to victims of violence, due to lack of clarity with regard to competencies and responsibilities among different institutions involved, as well as to a lack of resources. There is also a lack of systematic collection of data on violence against children to help orient and prioritise the institutional response. UNICEF is working with the National Police and the Judiciary to identify common indicators and support the development of an information management system on violence against children.

Another challenge identified by the institutions is the involvement of parents and guardians in violence-prevention activities. Most of the adolescents and youth at risk or with custodial measures come from dysfunctional families, but their social reintegration would require active participation of their parents. Often the adolescents do not feel the support of their parents and are left alone to deal with their problems. The Police’s Juvenile Affairs calls for stronger support from the community to support these adolescents. This is an area where UNICEF should concentrate more intensely in future programming, through a Communication for Development strategy and other activities targeting communities.

**OUTPUT 1** By 2017, children and adolescents -mainly those most disadvantaged- have the ability to protect themselves from violence, as well as to identify and report cases to the competent authorities.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

This output was discontinued early 2014 when the result matrix was adapted to the new structure of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2014-2017. This output was incorporated in the three new outputs created under Outcome 3.

**OUTPUT 2** By 2017, girls, boys and adolescents in the situations of physical psychological violence will receive comprehensive responses to restore their rights.
Analytical Statement of Progress:

This output was discontinued in early 2014 when the results matrix was adapted to the new structure of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2014-2017. It was incorporated in the three new outputs created under the Outcome 3.

OUTPUT 3 By 2017, children and adolescents, prioritising the most disadvantaged, have the ability to protect themselves from violence, as well as to identify and report cases to the competent authorities.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

This year, UNICEF, with two civil society organisations supported the creation of the ‘Adolescent Communicators’ Network’ in four municipalities, with participation by 140 adolescents (60 per cent females, 40 per cent males). Using information and communication technologies such as social media and audio-visual techniques, they developed communication materials for prevention of sexual abuse, including identification of red flags and reporting procedures. These materials were shared with their peers and the general public through a Facebook platform and presented by adolescents to Departmental Anti-Trafficking Roundtables in three municipalities, together with a proposed action plan.

UNICEF and the Police’s Juvenile Affairs unit continued collaboration for the prevention of armed violence. The result was a reduction in the number of youth gang groups (or groups at high social risk) in six territories: of 26 groups involving 333 members identified by the end of 2013, only seven groups and 149 members remained active as of December 2014, a decrease of 73 per cent in the number of groups and 55 per cent in the number of adolescents involved.

The 184 adolescents who abandoned youth gangs (100 per cent males) have been reintegrated into schools or employment. Youth gangs in Madriz and Nueva Segovia were disbanded. As a result, all six territories that received UNICEF support since 2013 are now gang-free.

UNICEF also supported the Ministry of Education in introducing the topic of armed violence prevention in lesson plans for secondary school counsellors. In three municipalities (Somoto, Bluefields, Bilwi), 598 students from 29 schools strengthened their capacity for armed violence prevention and 359 adolescents participated in developing messages for violence prevention in schools. In six prioritised municipalities, 37 per cent of school counsellors gained knowledge on national legislation against weapons, children’s rights and juvenile penal justice. Furthermore, they developed their competencies for facilitating conflict resolution, using a handbook with practical exercises to prepare lesson plans and personalised guidance to students.

Challenges included difficult access to communities where the most disadvantaged adolescents live, and adolescents’ reluctance to discuss the issue of violence with their families because violence mostly occurs at home. Additionally, adolescents, primarily males, are perceived by their communities as part of the problem of violence, which results in discrimination and exclusion from economic opportunities.

OUTPUT 4 By 2017, competent authorities (National Police, Public Attorney Office, Judicial Branch) have strengthened their capabilities for comprehensive rights-based response to victims of domestic violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking and to adolescents who are in conflict with the law.
Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF collaborated with two national civil society organisations to strengthen the capacities of 87 CSOs, institutions and media in four priority municipalities in the area of preventing sexual abuse. A mapping of good practices was conducted to document local experiences through a booklet and a mini-documentary film.

In three "community point of view" meetings organised by UNICEF and the NGOs, 297 community leaders identified the different approaches used by CSOs and state institutions as a main barrier to better coordination for the prevention of sexual abuse. While CSOs use a human rights-based approach, state institutions strictly use a judicial approach linked to the Penal Code. To reconcile these approaches, UNICEF Nicaragua produced a document in a user-friendly format to be used by stakeholders as a tool.

UNICEF, together with the Judiciary, organised six departmental forums with 329 community members (parents, civil society organisations and authorities) to promote local dialogue on legal procedures for adolescents in conflict with the law. In these forums, infographics explaining the legal path and judicial procedures for adolescents were validated by community members and are currently under finalisation.

UNICEF continued to support the National Police’s Youth Affairs unit in the implementation of community intervention plans for the prevention of violence in six territories. The plans included cultural, educational and sports events led by police officers specialised in working with adolescents at risk. As a result of implementation over the past two years, UNICEF priority municipalities are now gang free.

UNICEF, the National Police and the Andalusian and Spanish agencies for development cooperation in the EU developed a partnership to plan a knowledge-sharing forum on violence prevention among youth and adolescents, scheduled to be held in Nicaragua in early 2015 and involving other Central American countries. The idea emerged from the participation of the National Police in the II International Conference on Child Protection organised by LACRO in Cuba in 2014, which encouraged continued knowledge sharing through horizontal cooperation.

With UNICEF’s support, 357 public servants, police authorities and justice operators working on commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking in Bluefields and Puerto Cabezas strengthened their capacity to receive cases, conduct case investigations and impose sanctions. Members of the Anti-Trafficking Roundtables also developed their capacity to fulfil their mandate to coordinate prevention of and response to human trafficking.

Challenges include weak coordination among local actors, and a need to develop a strategy to reach the most remote communities.

OUTPUT 5 By 2017, national and regional authorities have developed capacities in updating policies based on evidences, formulation of budgets, and monitoring with the focus on result based management for restitution of the rights of the adolescents living in conditions of violence.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF, the Judiciary and National Police started incorporating the MoRES approach to generate evidence for the prevention of and response to armed violence. The Judiciary carried
out an analysis of barriers and bottlenecks in six Adolescent Criminal Courts, covering all 24 priority municipalities. The main indicator identified for monitoring was the number of adolescents who go through the ordinary (adult) penal process because they lack identification documents.

Following Nicaragua’s participation in the 2013 global training on Injury Surveillance, UNICEF supported the organisation of a training workshop in Bluefields on that topic. As a part of UNICEF’s global initiative to incorporate a public health approach to the prevention of violence, the injury surveillance system will allow partners to obtain real-time data and develop evidence-based strategies and policies.

During the training session, 28 authorities and members of civil society, along with UNICEF staff, learned about the injury surveillance system and its application in their municipality. The local authorities acknowledged the importance of this kind of system and selected the Town Hall as the lead institution for setting it up. A proposal on the pilot project will be presented to the municipal authorities and implemented in 2015, to demonstrate results for potential replication nationwide.

The Supreme Court of Justice recently established the National Observatory on Violence against Women, and will be working with the Ministry of Family and other institutions to harmonise different data on violence, which is considered as an opportunity for UNICEF support starting in 2015.

Despite support provided to the Departmental Anti-Trafficking Roundtables in 2013, it was not possible to continue with the development of a community-based monitoring system on commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking, due to multiple obstacles. First, the issues of exploitation and trafficking are very sensitive, because they are crimes and require police investigation. Also, the inter-sectoral approach required to respond to exploitation and trafficking makes the coordination among state institutions and CSOs difficult in this field.

**OUTCOME 5** By 2017, adolescents who are most vulnerable to social exclusion, especially women gain spaces, opportunities and capacity to participate in their development.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

This year UNICEF supported the government of the Southern Autonomous Caribbean Region of Nicaragua to develop a ‘Regional Policy for Indigenous and Afro-descendant Children and Adolescents through a Human-Centred Design’ approach. Building on experience in the Northern Autonomous Caribbean Region in 2013, UNICEF successfully introduced the co-creative Human-Centred Design approach to policy-makers, while ensuring the participation of 11 civil society organisations. This process contributed to a cohesive framework for development programmes in the region, reducing the potential for future duplication of efforts.

Local decision-makers decided to make the implementation of the Regional Policy a ‘pilot’ project. According to high-level local government officials, this co-creative approach is “a model to be followed by other policies, based on shared responsibility” (Thomas Gordon, Technical Director of the Commissions of the Regional Council of RACS, during the public policy forum, 24 November 2014, Bluefields). The buy-in from local counterparts, achieved through the inclusive co-creation approach, resulted in an empathy-driven policy, which was finalised and approved in December 2014, in record time.
Throughout the year, UNICEF supported the Government (including the MoH, MINED, National Police and Supreme Court of Justice) to organise several capacity-development opportunities for 3,093 adolescents (1,392 boys, 1,701 girls). These training sessions took place in seven prioritised municipalities (Bluefields, Laguna de Perlas, Tortuguero, Karawala, Bilwi, Somoto and Matagalpa) targeting adolescents who are mostly out of school or in conflict with the law. They were trained on topics such as HIV prevention, masonry and prevention of the use of arms and sexual abuse through ICT; life-skills education is incorporated in these training sessions as a cross-cutting strategy for adolescent capacity development.

At the same time, UNICEF supported strengthening of the protective environment for children and adolescents by reactivating the Municipal Commission for childhood and adolescence in 25 per cent (six of 24) of the prioritised municipalities. In the same municipalities, UNICEF conducted a mapping of institutions and organisations working for child and adolescent rights. According to the mapping results, in these six municipalities adolescents have spaces and opportunities to share their demands with authorities.

In terms of HIV peer-to-peer education, UNICEF introduced new techniques such as singing, theatre and drawing to train 100 adolescents (55 per cent female) from three rural municipalities (Desembocadura de Rio Grande, Laguna de Perlas and El Tortuguero) in the RACS in prevention of HIV and early pregnancy. These adolescents are now replicating their knowledge through individual or group counselling sessions with 601 adolescents (60 per cent females).

Since 2013 UNICEF supported the development of vocational training course on masonry and plumbing, with a focus on climate change, entrepreneurship and psychosocial skills in the Northern Atlantic Autonomous Region. Since 2013 some 63 adolescents (23 females, 40 males) who were out of school, at high risk for school exclusion or in conflict with the law have successfully graduated from the courses.

Tapping into the initial results and experiences, and as a part of the sustainability strategy, UNICEF and the Directorate of Water and Sanitation (DRASH) of the Southern Autonomous Region are advocating with the National Technology Institution (INATEC) for accreditation of these courses as one of the professional training courses offered by INATEC, to ensure local sustainability.

Local-level advocacy with INATEC entailed presenting the data from the National Police on the level of juvenile delinquency in Bluefields and the experience from Bilwi from 2013, where adolescents obtained opportunities for employment through vocational training in masonry. It was agreed that UNICEF and DRASH will adapt the training module in compliance with INATEC requirements, and the leadership of INATEC will bring the proposal to its national curriculum department for review and approval.

In 2014 UNICEF Nicaragua and the U.S. Peace Corps for the first time signed a memorandum of understanding for volunteer service-sharing, by which Peace Corps volunteers supported UNICEF and the Ministry of Health to implement a training course on “Lifeskills and strong family” with 350 adolescents (58 per cent female) in Somoto, San Lucas and Bluefields.

UNICEF, together with PAHO and UNFPA, provided technical assistance to the MoH for the development of a national plan to reduce adolescent pregnancy. PAHO developed regulations for health care for adolescents, and he World Bank and UNFPA will support the MoH and Youth Ministry for implementation of communication campaigns to reduce adolescent pregnancy.
To leverage resources for integration of the Sport for Development strategy in adolescent protection and participation, UNICEF continued building on its alliances with the National Sports Institute. This collaboration facilitated a technical review of a funding proposal presented to UNICEF by the National Police to implement the Sport for Development strategy with marginalised adolescents in Bluefields.

Based on the results of the MTR concluded in October 2014, a modification to the programme result structure was proposed to incorporate two outputs of the Outcome 4 (Adolescent participation) into the outcome on Adolescent Protection (Outcome 3) starting in 2015. This change will strengthen the synergy among programmatic strategies for adolescent protection and participation, addressing two main determinants: demand and the enabling environment.

**OUTPUT 1** By 2017, adolescents in greater exclusion have developed social relationship skills (gender, intercultural and intergenerational) to manage vulnerabilities related to extreme poverty, gender based violence in different manifestations, and inequity in 24 prioritised municipalities.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
UNICEF, together with the leadership of DRASH in RACS and the international NGO Water Aid, in RACN, organised two vocational training courses, in masonry and plumbing, with a focus on climate change. Among the 34 adolescents who graduated from the course in 2013 in Bilwi, 44.1 per cent (15 of 34; three females, 12 males) have obtained jobs in a related field. Among 39 graduates in RACS this year, 51.3 per cent (20 of 39; 50 per cent females) are working as facilitators for the workshop on masonry with school sanitation brigades in 10 schools where UNICEF is supporting the WASH in Schools programme.

UNICEF continued its advocacy with the MoH to increase access to HIV testing for adolescents and improve the quality of the HIV test registry, disaggregated by age and sex. In five prioritised SILAIS, 8 per cent of teenagers had access to HIV counselling and testing in 2014. While the level of access is still extremely low and needs to be increased, this was the first time that data on access to HIV testing among adolescents became available. In coordination with MoH and MINED, facilitated by UNICEF, school counsellors in the RACS strengthened their knowledge about preventing HIV and early pregnancy. Meanwhile, 600 adolescents (60 per cent females) had access to HIV counselling through peer-to-peer education.

With technical support from Peace Corps volunteers in Somoto and San Lucas, UNICEF supported the MoH to train 100 parents and guardians of adolescents who are exposed to social risk in positive upbringing skills and effective discipline. UNICEF is advocating for the MoH to incorporate this intervention in their work, tapping into the alliance with MINED, the National Institute of Sport and municipal governments.

One of the constraints was the lack of the baseline data for developing indicators on adolescent participation, especially disaggregated data at the departmental or municipal level. UNICEF conducted a baseline study this year and included a few key indicators on adolescent participation to obtain the data. With respect to the vocational course in masonry and plumbing, INATEC regulatory frameworks prevent some adolescents from enrolling in its formal courses, due to minimum age requirements (14 or 16 years old depending on the courses) and having to be enrolled in its corresponding grade of secondary education.
OUTPUT 2 By 2017, regional governments have strengthened capacity to develop and update evidence-based policies and elaborate public budgets that take into account the rights of the most vulnerable children for social exclusion.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Transformation of 15 public employees into public entrepreneurs: UNICEF supported the Southern Autonomous Caribbean Government to integrate a Human-Centred Design approach to the development of a Regional Policy for Indigenous and Afro-descendant Children and Adolescents. This year-long process spanned 22 remote communities; more than 470 people were interviewed. Building on empathy-driven tools (e.g. service trials, focus groups, observations and shadowing), the government coalition gave qualitative data a ‘human face’ through the creation of archetypes, representatives of what people want, need and value.

Eighty-eight children from different communities participated by expressing their perspectives through photography, placing the issue of socialisation and recreation as a high priority on the policy table. A total of 36 low-cost, innovative solutions were identified, with participation by 76 local decision-makers, youth and children, and through crowdsourcing via LinkedIn. The policy document was presented to 65 participants from different sectors, generated strong interest and commitment, and was approved in December 2014.

Creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem for child rights: In alliance with the private sector, UNICEF mobilised 30 organisations and 1,000 individuals around responsible tourism; these actors have been supporting the development of social entrepreneurship in 27 business areas to contribute to child rights and poverty mitigation. A fellowship was created with a local university allowing students to serve as hands-on coaches to local entrepreneurs. While a solid exit strategy was identified, it is not yet certain whether investments will be sustainable without UNICEF’s support.

Evidence contributing to more equitable and progressive tax regulations for increased fiscal space: Of the eight studies planned with the Ministry of Finance, four will be finalised in December 2014 and the rest will be finished in 2015. These studies have been instrumental for the development of: (i) a new methodology for granting exonerations to businesses that have a significant impact on poverty reduction; and (ii) changes to the tax law to increase the fiscal space (e.g. decreasing tax evasion, measuring percentages of taxpayers, etc.). The main challenge is that researchers at the ministry are spread thin with demands from the many areas addressed by the Finance Ministry.

UNICEF supported the Bluefields, Indian and Caribbean University to strengthen the Observatories of human and autonomous rights, incorporating indicators on children, adolescents and women in indigenous communities. The Observatories are expected to serve as a system to monitor implementation of the Regional Policy for Children.
## Evaluation

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## Other Publication

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## Lessons Learned

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