Oman

Executive Summary

Oman is in the high human development category, with a 2015 Human Development Index rank of 52 and has achieved Millennium Development Goal 4 to reduce child mortality. Oman’s achievements were recognized by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in the ‘Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Oman’(CRC/C/OMN/CO/3-4) in January, in which the Committee encouraged the Government to take additional steps to protect children from violence and promote the rights of children with disabilities. Though austerity measures were introduced in response to the drop of oil prices, these have not impacted services for children. UNICEF Oman was included in the budget cuts, but the 10 per cent decrease in its annual budget that resulted was low when compared with others.

The findings of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 5 and the ‘Rights-based Equity-focused Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Oman’ (hereafter referred to as the Situation Analysis) informed the ministries’ inputs into the ninth National Development Plan, where early childhood care, disability and protection were clearly highlighted. This also guided the development of the UNICEF Oman Country Programme 2017–2020. A lesson from past collaboration was that UNICEF should concentrate on a few areas where it can contribute game-changing expertise. Three programme priorities were identified: 1) integrated early childhood development (IECD); 2) protecting children from violence; and 3) inclusion of children with disabilities.

As agreed with the Government, the current (originally 2012–2015) Country Programme was extended to 2016 to allow sufficient time to lay the groundwork for the cycle ahead and properly formulate the new Country Programme Document (CPD). The work in 2016 focused on: a) the generation and use of evidence to inform advocacy and planning; b) addressing the capacity needs of local child protection committees and medical professionals to respond to violence against children and of teachers in regards to the inclusion of children with disabilities; and c) outlining the gaps and seeking coherence in the continuum of care in cross-sectoral platforms serving IECD, protection and inclusion.

As UNICEF Oman’s flagship programme, the IECD agenda was pushed forward in 2016. After strategic advocacy for governmental commitment in high-level forums, the Government committed to increase its investment in early childhood education (ECE) services and to sharply increase in the number of public preschool classes from the 2014 baseline of 98 to 834 by 2020. To support this, the ‘Oman Early Childhood Development Standards’ developed with the Ministry of Education (MoE) were disseminated to members of the state and shura councils, as well as the ministries of health and social development and civil society. These established a uniform scientific framework for coordinated interventions. In addition, UNICEF Oman collaborated closely with the Ministry of Health (MoH) to design and launch the Oman National Nutrition Survey (ONNS), which had been delayed due to restrained funding for investigating micronutrient deficiencies among children and women. UNICEF Oman facilitated the first private sector fund-raising endeavour in the country, breaking ground for public-private partnerships for early childhood development (ECD).

Other important results and milestones included the following:
• The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) and UNICEF developed child well-being and empowerment indicators that respond to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

• The MoE and UNICEF finalized the evaluation of the Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) project and subsequently initiated work to mainstream its quality education principles into the education system.

• UNICEF worked with the MoE on a teacher training curriculum for inclusive education.

• A national strategy and action plan was formulated with the MoH for developing the Baby-Friendly Initiative in Oman to improve breastfeeding and early childhood nutrition and development.

• The national 'Strategy for Prevention and Mitigation of Child Maltreatment in Oman' was finalized under the leadership of the MoH, with feedback from all concerned ministries and the support of a UNICEF international expert.

• UNICEF strengthened responses for identifying and protecting children from violence by organizing peer training workshops with the Ministry of Social Development for child protection delegates and with the MoH for medical doctors.

Less progress was made in the development of cross-sectoral platforms in IECD, protection and inclusion. The respective undersecretaries and the Supreme Council for Planning nominated the Council as the best suited to lead this work and the decision continues to be deliberated upon by the concerned government agencies.

UNICEF Oman maintained its successful collaboration with the Government, solidifying government ownership and engagement in the Country Programme through the creation of a robust, senior-level, multisectoral Programme Management Group. UNICEF Oman established new partnerships with the private sector in its first initiative to mobilize resources in the country and raised funds for the ONNS. These positive experiences will be further pursued, and partnerships will be expanded to civil society as well.

**Humanitarian Assistance**

Oman did not experience a humanitarian crisis requiring UNICEF support in 2016. However, UNICEF Oman did update the Early Warning Early Action platform during the year.

**Emerging Areas of Importance**

UNICEF Oman has worked steadily and deliberately towards establishing the foundation for IECD in Oman. A four-phase strategy was adopted that consists of: 1) building evidence and advocacy; 2) addressing critical enabling environment barriers; 3) addressing service delivery bottlenecks; and 4) addressing coverage and scaling up. An ECE situation analysis was conducted, and costed action plans were subsequently developed to strengthen equitable access to services and advocate for clearer, more coordinated commitments in large-scale, high-level forums comprising of senior government officials and representatives from the private sector, research, academia and civil society. One outcome of this process was that the Government incorporated one of the recommendations of the ECE situation analysis into its education reform process, aiming to increase its investment in ECE services to 0.4 per cent of the gross national income in line with international standards and sharply increase the number of public preschool classes from the 2014 baseline of 98 to 834 by 2020. Finally, the MoE recently upgraded the ECE section into a more independent ministerial department, increasing its capacity and responsibilities, as a direct outcome of the
ECE situation analysis and costing study that UNICEF conducted in 2014. This elevated commitment will safeguard a more effective process of establishing quality ECE services for children across all governorates.

In addition, cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms were identified and highlighted as a priority in the National Strategy for Children, the ECE National Plan of Action and the National Strategy for Social Work. To that end, integrated ECD was negotiated as one of the three main programme pillars for the upcoming UNICEF Country Programme 2017–2020 with a clear direction for providing a holistic continuum of care by working across sectors with the support of UNICEF in its convening role. To elucidate the objectives of the cross-sectoral platforms, the ‘Oman ECD Standards’, developed by UNICEF and the MoE and covering children from birth to 6 years of age, were printed and disseminated to the shura and state councils and all the relevant ministries and civil society actors.

Furthermore, in infant and young child feeding, UNICEF Oman took several leaps forward in promoting more effective practices. The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative evolved to encompass breastfeeding promotion at the community level by introducing the Initiative standards at primary healthcare centres, thus becoming the Baby-Friendly Initiative (BFI). The second leap, and the largest by far, was the launch of the ONNS. The survey was riddled with delays and faced financial stumbling blocks. In the wake of decreasing fuel prices and constrained governmental budgets, MoH funding for research was greatly compromised. To address this issue, UNICEF Oman facilitated the first private sector fund-raising endeavour in the country, breaking ground for public-private partnerships for ECD. This set the stage for expanding such partnerships to increase private sector investments in IEC services across the governorates.

### Summary Notes and Acronyms

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>CFS</td>
<td>child-friendly schools</td>
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<td>CPD</td>
<td>Country Programme Document</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>early childhood development</td>
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<td>ECE</td>
<td>early childhood education</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>information and communication technology</td>
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<td>IECD</td>
<td>integrated early childhood development</td>
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<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey</td>
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<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>MoH</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
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<td>NCSI</td>
<td>National Centre for Statistics and Information</td>
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<td>ONNS</td>
<td>Oman National Nutrition Survey</td>
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<td>PMG</td>
<td>Programme Management Group</td>
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<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<td>UNDSS</td>
<td>United Nations Department of Safety and Security</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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### Capacity Development

Oman needs to obtain better data at the sub-national level and continuously explore ways in which to use available data to assess and redress inequities. To that end, an exercise was undertaken with the NCSI and all relevant ministries to develop child well-being and empowerment indicators that would respond to the SDGs. The indicators were formulated to allow for international and intra-national comparisons. The process also provided a mapping of data gaps in the country. Similarly, steps toward mainstreaming child-friendly school principles into the education system was the reviews of indicators currently collected by the
MoE to advise as to how these could be used differently to monitor the educational experience.

Whenever possible, international technical experts undertaking this work were paired with local talents to ensure the sustainability of the work and raise local capacities in managing the outcomes of the technical interventions. The international statistician working on the child well-being and empowerment indicators was paired with a local statistician identified by NCSI to shadow the expert in the entire logical process and safeguard the scientific method in future steps of populating the indicators with data.

UNICEF Oman’s pattern in training programmes has been to establish pools of trainers and encourage local cascade training. As such, two sets of trainers trained in 2015 to address child maltreatment in the local child protection committees and medical services were coached by the expert trainers while they ran their own training workshops in 2016. The first group reached 275 government child protection delegates in all 11 governorates, and the second reached 54 medical professionals, raising their awareness on the means to identify, report and intervene to protect children from violence. The community and decision makers will be further engaged in a multi-stakeholder Communication for Development plan developed in 2016–2017 that addresses behaviour and attitudes towards violence and children with disabilities.

**Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy**

The ONNS was jointly launched with the MoH to investigate the causes of micronutrient deficiencies in children under 5 years of age, non-pregnant women of reproductive age and pregnant women, disaggregated for all 11 governorates. The survey will provide evidence for the design of relevant, targeted and effective policies and plans to accelerate progress in the nutritional status of Omani children and women. The international experts recruited worked directly with the MoH Nutrition Department to allow for appropriate contextualization of the tools and research protocol and promote full ministerial ownership of the survey and technical research standards required for data collection and analysis. This will also empower the Nutrition Department in the subsequent advocacy they need to address the outcomes of the survey. Fund-raising with the private sector to support the ONNS hinged on UNICEF Oman’s ability to leverage the role of the private sector’s corporate social responsibility in such studies, where contributions are not as visible as would be in constructing buildings or purchasing equipment. This activity broke ground engaging the private sector more strategically and contributing to national development priorities for children.

Studies completed in 2015, such as the evaluation of the CFS project and the development of the strategy and action plan for children with autism spectrum disorder, led to work on mainstreaming CFS principles throughout the education system and developing a teacher training curriculum for inclusive education in the first cycle (Grades 1–4. Ultimately, national studies such as the Situation Analysis and the MICS5 were the foundation for discussions around the next Country Programme 2017–2020, essentially identifying the programmatic focus for the next cycle. Both studies primed the space for discussion on delicate social issues such as violence against children and promoting a cross-sectoral approach for programme implementation.

**Partnerships**

UNICEF Oman and the Government established a multisectoral steering committee with representatives from all government agency counterparts to accompany and guide the process of developing the new CPD 2017–2020. Representatives from the MoE, the MoH, the Ministry of Social Development and the NCSI met regularly to discuss the draft proposals
for programmatic components, proposed strategies and approaches, and designing three national consultation days discussing the CPD directions. The process validated UNICEF’s suggestions for programme components and rooted the implementation strategies in cross-sectoral work and Communication for Development initiatives. Both require a great commitment from the Government for shifting operations from a separate, sectoral system to work holistically across sectors.

This multisectoral committee format was so effective that it was modified to become a Programme Management Group (PMG) involving representatives of all governmental partners to UNICEF. This cross-sectoral coordination platform was established to support programme implementation, ensure effective policy and technical coordination and monitor programme performance against expected results. The PMG would consequently also facilitate advocacy processes within the Government. It is co-chaired by UNICEF and the Ministry of Social Development and includes representatives of the MoE, the MoH, the Supreme Council for Planning and the NCSI. This platform facilitates a holistic look at the Country Programme by government counterparts, promoting more efficient cross-sectoral linkages when considering policies and interventions addressing inequities. It is composed of senior-level directors-general, as well as ministerial officers acting as UNICEF focal points. It also shifted the historical UNICEF-Government partnership to a higher level. The PMG was established by Ministerial Decision 106/2016, and four meetings took place between September and December to review the Country Programme Action Plan 2017–2020, monitor the progress of all 2016 annual workplans and prepare for the annual review. The establishment of the PMG solidified government ownership of Country Programme activities and consequently their strategic role in troubleshooting challenges in programme implementation.

**External Communication and Public Advocacy**

Public and social media continued to show keen interest in children’s issues across a wide range of sectors, including child health, education and protection. Autism was a highlight in public conversations, resulting in accelerated action to address and improve services at the national and sub-national levels. UNICEF activity continued to appear in the public media including interviews with the UNICEF Representative. Throughout 2016, UNICEF messages focused on promoting early childhood services and investments, addressing child maltreatment and promoting the inclusion of children with disabilities in services and society.

The Government of Oman has frequently expressed its expectation that UNICEF should remain an authoritative voice for children. UNICEF Oman has focused this on the generation of evidence about inequities experienced by children. The national studies or strategies developed through UNICEF Oman are broadly disseminated within government agencies and to decision makers, middle managers and practitioners, and they also form the basis for broader Communication for Development campaigns. In 2016, this included the production and dissemination of the ‘Oman Early Childhood Development Standards’, the ‘Ten-Year Autism Strategy and Five-Year Autism Action Plan for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder’, as well as Oman’s first MICS5 and the Situation Analysis. The latter study was also produced in a user-friendly brochure for decision makers and policymakers. These documents support a streamlined planning process for advocacy and implementation.

**Support to Integration and Cross-Sectoral Linkages**

In the national consultations for the new CPD held in March 2016, the Government indicated its trust in UNICEF Oman to play a convening role in bringing senior sector stakeholders together to work on cross-sectoral approaches and implementation. UNICEF Oman was also encouraged by governmental stakeholders to facilitate the building of stronger links between the state and shura councils and the implementing ministries through its work in advocacy.
and evidence generation.

In addition, all national documents that were developed with the Government were born from cross-sectoral consultation and collaboration. These included the ECD Standards, the national strategies for mitigating child maltreatment and autism action, as well as the child well-being and empowerment indicators. The establishment of the PMG is in and of itself a platform to ensure cross-sectoral linkages in all aspects of the Country Programme. This was also foreseen to facilitate the proper management of the upcoming Country Programme, where all three programme components are cross-sectoral in nature.

Finally, the 2016 annual workplans included an activity to establish cross-sectoral platforms for IECD, protection from violence and inclusion of children with disabilities, between the MoE, MoH and Ministry of Social Development. The aim was to lay the groundwork for effective referral networks and a holistic continuum of care from prevention to intervention to follow-up and monitoring in each of the three fields. The activity was endorsed by respective undersecretaries, but implementation stalled as the ministries and the Supreme Council for Planning explore who should lead such a process for effective coordination.

**Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation**

Oman’s combined third and fourth periodic reports were discussed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in January 2016. Overall, Oman was lauded for the levels of progress achieved regarding the rights of children within the reporting period, and UNICEF was singled out as having greatly contributed to those efforts. As a follow-up, some of the Committee’s concluding observations related to violence against children and the rights of children with disabilities were included in the Country Programme 2017–2020. The roles of all duty bearers, including parents, the Government, the private sector, civil society and the media, were drawn out in the process.

In addition, the CPD was based on the situation analysis, where the need for better sub-national data was highlighted to better identify and redress inequities among children. This need will be met by the ONNS, where child nutrition is concerned. The child well-being and empowerment indicators and the ensuing data gap analysis will highlight specific data needs to better assess equity and inequities among children. UNICEF Oman worked with the Government on the implementation of the Child Law 2014 to clearly outline roles and accountability mechanisms; however, this process is pending the finalization of executive decrees attached to the law. In the meantime, UNICEF Oman is continuing to work with the Government to strengthen the cross-sectoral platforms required for the holistic implementation of the law.

**Gender Equality**

Oman has been praised by the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women for its positive record in adhering to human rights conventions. Oman is among the countries leading the Arab subregion in the realization of women’s rights. Girls have achieved parity in school enrolment, surpassing boys, and Oman has achieved near universal coverage for maternal health. As such, it is not surprising that practically all of UNICEF Oman’s efforts to mainstream gender equality considerations in the Country Programme were marked “significant”. Instead of stand-alone activities addressing gender, UNICEF Oman worked with the MoE, the MoH and the Ministry of Social Development to ensure that gender considerations were highlighted in national plans and strategies, such as the ‘Strategy for Prevention and Mitigation of Child Maltreatment in Oman’. Seeking gender equality in protection was also at the heart of training workshops led by medical professionals and trainers of the local child protection committees on protecting children.
from violence. In addition, work conducted with the MoH to promote breastfeeding was expanded into the community to address the declining exclusive breastfeeding rate.

Environmental Sustainability

The UNICEF Oman programme does not involve any direct implementation or direct beneficiaries, so all work related to environmental sustainability was focused on the office and its daily operations. The office has accordingly taken tangible measures to ‘green’ the office, as reflected in its improved Environmental Footprint Assessment, conducted and updated as support to the United Nations’ Climate Neutral Strategy. A baseline measure was taken in 2015, and the table below indicates improvements in the office’s environmental footprint in 2016.

In other initiatives related to environmental sustainability, UNICEF Oman halted the use of plastic water bottles and plastic cups to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from the consumption of bottled water.

Effective Leadership

The remote internal audit was concluded at the end of 2015 with overall positive outcomes. All the audit recommendations were closed by March 2016, and two issues that were highlighted as requiring attention were: 1) the need to increase oversight over delegation of authorities and assignment of roles; and 2) the need to increase oversight of planning processes and take specific steps to clarify responsibilities for the implementation of planned activities.

The second issue was incorporated into all annual workplans with clear assignment of responsibilities, and the first issue was addressed through a clearer segregation of roles, though, as the audit noted, this would remain a challenge with only two professional staff in the office. To respond to this, roles were delegated to the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office and the UNICEF Gulf Area Office to mitigate possible conflicts of interest.

The Country Management Team met regularly to improve operations and programme management performance by regularly monitoring internal and global key performance indicators, strengthening the budget monitoring system and maintaining the Office Improvement Plan as a standing item at all meetings. Similarly, risk identification, management and mitigation were also standing items on the country management team agenda, as follow-ups to the extensive discussions related to updating the office enterprise risk management early in the year. Risk mitigation actions were also reflected in staff performance plans. Programme management performance was also closely monitored in bi-monthly programme management team meetings to discuss and follow up on programme implementation progress and develop an annual workplan monitoring framework that was updated weekly.

Financial Resources Management

UNICEF Oman received its full annual programme budget from the Government as other resources and utilized 94 per cent by 14 December 2016. A total of 92 per cent of institutional budget funds was also utilized. In addition, UNICEF Oman received global thematic funds for education from the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office totalling US$198,124 for activities taking place in 2016–2017. Thirty-five per cent was utilized by the end of 2016 due to delays in identifying and recruiting technical experts.

In addition to the global key performance indicators, the country management team developed a list of internal key performance indicators that were periodically monitored to
ensure efficient office performance, and the programme management team regularly monitored programme implementation and funds utilization. This has provided greater oversight and resulted in improved management of contributions and budget utilization, and UNICEF Oman has consistently scored well in the key performance indicators dashboard.

There is no United Nations harmonized approach to cash transfers in Oman, and UNICEF Oman does not have direct cash transfers, nor does it have regular resources or other resources emergency expenditures. With UNICEF Headquarters approval, bank dealings were shifted from HSBC to Standard Chartered Bank Oman, and bank reconciliations were prepared on a timely basis throughout the transition.

The internal audit undertaken in 2015 indicated that controls and processes in financial management were generally well established and functioning well. Elements requiring continuous monitoring, such as risk identification, management and mitigation, were introduced as standing items at all country management team meetings. The process of closing the audit observations came with several capacity-building opportunities in control and planning processes, improving office systems and procedures and updating staff knowledge on organizational policies and guidelines in operations and programme areas. Lessons learned were effectively used in developing the new Country Programme 2017–2020.

### Fundraising and Donor Relations

Given Oman’s high-income status, programme activities, budgeted at US$1,097,029 in 2016, were almost entirely funded by the Government, at 82 per cent. The remaining US$198,124 were allocated by the Global Education Fund. At the end of the year, the utilization rate stood at 100 per cent for both grants.

For the new Country Programme 2017–2020, funding from the Government will be constrained due to ongoing fiscal pressures related to the price of oil. The programme cycle is budgeted at US$4,508,000, with only 74 per cent to be covered by the Government. This leaves a funding gap of US$908,000 for the programme period (US$ 227,000 per year). To address this gap, UNICEF Oman developed a fund-raising strategy aimed at raising financial and in-kind contributions from Oman’s private sector. The Government has clear restrictions for fundraising and does not allow funds to be raised from donors outside of the country or through public fund-raising within the country. The private sector in Oman is relatively small, with more than 90 per cent of the country’s income from the extractive industries. The remaining businesses that offer opportunities for partnerships are in banking, telecommunications, food and beverages and tourism.

UNICEF Oman tested its fundraising strategy by organizing a fund-raising event in August 2016 with the MoH. The event aimed to raise US$390,000 for the ONNS implemented in collaboration with the Government. The event was attended by a total of 53 participants from 37 private sector companies. The funds will be directly donated to the MoH. UNICEF Oman’s advocacy strategy will complement and leverage future fund-raising work.

### Evaluation and Research

As a bridging year programme between Country Programme cycles, the 2016 programme’s integrated monitoring and evaluation plan (IMEP) was an extension of the 2015 Plan. The main evaluation undertaken that was finalized in 2016 was for the Government of Oman-UNICEF CFS initiative, which was endorsed by the MoE and received an overall rating of “satisfactory” from the UNICEF Headquarters Office of Evaluation quality review. The evaluation was considered to have done a “good job at addressing equity, gender and child
“rights” and at producing recommendations that were well-grounded and “logically derived from the findings”.

The evaluation was the basis for two management responses and actions: 1) the mainstreaming of CFS principles throughout the education system; and 2) improving the status of the educational inclusion of children with disabilities by working with the Ministry’s Specialized Teacher Training Centre to develop a corresponding teacher training curriculum. The first action represents UNICEF’s departure from working with CFS as a project implemented in schools to translating the principles into protocols and indicators promoting equity and quality education throughout the system, reaching all students.

The second action is similarly a shift in supporting the rights of children with disabilities by contributing to systemic changes promoting inclusion, which additionally benefited from the ‘Ten-Year Autism Strategy’ and the ‘Five-Year Autism Action Plan for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder’ commissioned by UNICEF and the MoE. Both activities will continue into 2017.

Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

As part of its efficiency gains in the use of resources and related cost savings, UNICEF Oman successfully installed the Microsoft Lync system in all computers, providing a unified communication tool offering free, self-managed online meetings, chat services and audio/video calls. This led to significant communications cost savings, particularly as other Voice over Internet Protocol services such as Skype are blocked in Oman. In addition, though United Nations agencies in Oman such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) frequently collaborate, there are no joint United Nations operations in Oman.

Supply Management

UNICEF Oman did not procure supplies for any programme-related activities. The office’s only local procurement activity related to the purchase of the office generator for US$22,207. As such, UNICEF Oman is not involved in any warehousing, logistics, delivery or usage activities.

Procurement requests to the UNICEF Supply Division were made directly by government agencies, with UNICEF Oman providing administrative liaising support as needed. This included supplies for the ONNS totalling US$3,800, vitamin A capsules for US$6,930 and cold chain equipment for the amount of US$131,584. All of these transactions were funded by direct transfers from the MoH to the UNICEF Supply Division.

Security for Staff and Premises

In 2016, Oman remained at security Level 1 as it experienced no humanitarian emergencies affecting children or UNICEF programme activities implementation and deliverables. The overall security situation in Oman continues to be peaceful, and there have been no perceived risks or specific threats to the United Nations presence in the country.

The Security Management Team, led in 2016 by UNICEF in close collaboration with the three other United Nations agencies in Oman (WHO, UNFPA and FAO), agreed to conduct a security risk analysis in 2016 with the support of the Security Adviser. The Security Management Team met three times to update the security plan and the status of Minimum Operating Security Standards compliance.

UNICEF Oman facilitated a mission of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) in October to update the security risk assessment, the security plan, the Minimum
Operating Security Standards and the Minimum Operating Residential Security Standards. Training workshops were also conducted for personnel of the United Nations agencies present in Oman, as well as the office security guards who were briefed and trained on safety and security of the premises and office access control.

Throughout the year, UNICEF Oman, as the security focal point, maintained close communications with government agencies such as the Disaster Management Committee and Oman Charitable Organization, as well as the Civil Defence Authorities, the Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All staff and Security Management Team members were briefed on the country security plan, standard operating procedures and policies and complied with them all.

**Human Resources**

As a small office, UNICEF Oman was greatly supported by the UNICEF Regional Office, which effectively extended office capacity. UNICEF Oman also relied on UNICEF personnel globally, recruiting retirees to assist in closing audit recommendations and filling in for the programme manager during her maternity leave. Staff were also recruited from other offices on stretch assignments to assist with the country programme management plan preparations and reviewing the results assessment module and virtual integrated system of information inputs, as one Country Programme cycle wrapped up and another was initiated, as well as other overall programme support.

In response to a high priority audit recommendation, the system of seconding government staff as project officers was renegotiated with the Government and replaced with the PMG. The secondment system will be discontinued effective January 2017, and the PMG is a more robust cross-sectoral committee that brings about greater leadership and ownership by the Government, as described in earlier sections of this report. In addition, the newly approved programme and budget review for 2017–2020 abolishes the current programme assistant post and introduces the post of a senior monitoring and evaluation assistant that would bolster office capacity in that area. The NOB post for communication for development has also been abolished as it remained unfunded, and several rounds of recruitment bore no viable candidates for the post. As an alternative, a request for a Junior Professional Officer Communication for Development candidate has been submitted to the global system. The Staff Association maintained oversight of the Office Improvement Plan and ran another staff survey to highlight new priorities as the rate of progress towards meeting OIP 2015 priorities was very good. Areas identified as requiring more attention, such as career and professional development, have been brought into e-PAS discussions. Finally, an ethics dialogue facilitator focal point was assigned and underwent a regional training in November 2016.

**Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology**

UNICEF Oman information and communication technology (ICT) systems leveraged the ‘Lightweight, Agile ICT Infrastructure’ standard in 2016, with a reduced ICT infrastructure footprint. The office data was hosted at the Middle East and North Africa Regional Office Light Service Centre with cloud-based Microsoft Office 365 services. The use of the ‘Lightweight, Agile ICT Infrastructure’ standard enhanced user mobility and access to corporate applications, power and ICT hardware cost savings, improved business continuity, and reduced local ICT support complexity. The Skype for Business unified communication tool improved staff effectiveness and efficiency by improving collaboration between both internal UNICEF staff and external partners and offering free self-managed online meetings, chatting and audio/video calls. As mentioned earlier, this also led to savings in communications costs. The OneDrive for Business file-sharing tool allowed staff to securely upload, access and share files at no cost and from everywhere, thus facilitating information sharing and business continuity. UNICEF Oman ICT support was provided by the Regional
ICT Support Hub modality. The ICT Hub also managed the office’s overall ICT functions remotely. On-site information technology support was provided by a local service provider in Oman; this was supplemented by two visits in 2016 by the UNICEF Regional ICT support hub officer. One ICT customer satisfaction survey was conducted in 2016, with generally good ratings for ICT services and Hub support and similarly good ratings for the local service provider.

Programme Components from the Results Assessment Module

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 By 2015, the Government of Oman establishes strategies and standards for inclusive early childhood learning and development and strategies for enhanced care at community and family level to benefit children

Analytical statement of progress:
In Oman, the concept of IECD services is gaining clear momentum for children under age 6, a period during which children develop at the most rapid pace of their lives physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually. Finalization of the first national ECD Standards represented a key component of implementation in 2015 of a new ECE National Plan of Action, while enhanced childcare and infant and young child feeding, like ECD, have been incorporated into a number of ground-breaking national policies. In practical terms, this has translated into a greater government commitment for preschool services and national research to investigate the nutritional status of children under 5 and mothers. All of this has been enhanced by UNICEF technical support/capacity development, including assistance to policymakers to identify ECE challenges and gaps, as well as strong advocacy.

OUTPUT 1 Inclusive, costed, quality ECE strategies, standards and plans are developed using current data, in consultation with state and shura councils, and line ministries

Analytical statement of progress:
The development of the ‘Oman ECD Standards’ and an ECE situation analysis and costed action plans to strengthen equitable access to services led to advocating for clearer, more coordinated commitments in large-scale, high-level forums comprising senior government officials and representatives of the private sector, research, academia and civil society. One outcome of this process was the Government’s commitment to increase its investment in ECE services to 0.4 per cent of the gross national income in line with international standards and the sharp increase in the number of public preschool classes from the 2014 baseline of 98 to 834 by 2020. Additionally, cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms were identified and highlighted as a priority in the National Strategy for Children, the ECE National Plan of Action and the National Strategy for Social Work.

A diagnostic study was conducted on children with autism spectrum disorder, which was the precursor to developing the ‘Ten-Year Autism Strategy’ and the ‘Five-Year Autism Action Plan for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder’. The Strategy was finalized in 2016, designed and printed for broader dissemination to decision makers, policymakers, middle managers and practitioners within the Government to promote inclusive education for children with disabilities. The Strategy facilitates streamlined cross-sectoral interventions to ensure the continuum of care for children with disabilities.

OUTCOME 2 By 2015, the Government of Oman has adopted adequate strategies and costed plans to implement child rights policies and framework.
Analytical statement of progress:
To advocate for adequate strategies and policies aimed at the implementation of child rights in Oman, UNICEF focused on the generation of evidence about inequities experienced by children. The national studies or strategies developed through UNICEF Oman are broadly disseminated within government agencies to decision makers, middle managers and practitioners and form the basis for broader Communication for Development campaigns. This included the production and dissemination of the ‘Oman ECD Standards’, the ‘Ten-Year Autism Strategy’ and the ‘Five-Year Autism Action Plan for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder’, as well as Oman’s first MICS5 and the Situation Analysis. Findings from the MICS and the Situation Analysis have informed the National Social Work Strategy and the National Strategy for Children, key strategies for the advancement of child rights, as well as the planning for the ninth National Development Plan.

Development of the nation’s first multisectoral strategy on child maltreatment and a 20-point action plan by the MoH is also a significant step towards advancing child rights. The magnitude of the problem of child abuse and neglect in Oman has been poorly defined because the implementation of a system of case notification has not been available, although anecdotal and other evidence indicates the issue is growing in the country (e.g. trends in reported neglect/physical maltreatment cases; high levels of reported bullying in schools affecting up to 76 per cent of Grade 8 students; increased reports of cyberbullying; etc.). Finally, work on developing protocols to mainstream CFS principles throughout the educational system has started and will be completed by the end of January 2017. It will provide policy guidelines and protocols to carry the CFS principles throughout the educational system, supporting Oman’s response to SDG 4 on education. This was underscored by important groundwork laid to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration between the different sectors, representing a paradigm shift for the Government toward a more holistic approach to achieving child rights.

OUTPUT 1 Draft national plans of action for child care and protection are prepared and costed

Analytical statement of progress:
This output was achieved in 2015 with the adoption of the National Strategy for Children. UNICEF provided important technical assistance and advocacy in its work with national counterparts to develop the Strategy, which addresses an important policy gap. The Strategy was also heavily based on the principles articulated in the Articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including considering the best interests of the child in all relevant actions, as well as on the new Child Law of Oman.

In 2016, work continued to bolster the training capacities of trained child protection delegates in the local child protection committees, and 275 child protection delegates from all governorates underwent a third cycle of training to upgrade and hone their skills.

OUTPUT 2 By 2014, the quality of community-based services for children with disabilities is improved

Analytical statement of progress:
With two phases of training completed in 2015, the Portage capacity-building system was established. Thus, the third phase and any future phases of training will be organized directly by the Ministry of Social Development.
OUTPUT 3 A costed scale-up plan/roadmap for the CFS initiative is developed and informed by an evaluation of CFS.

Analytical statement of progress:
An overall CFS evaluation was completed. It provides information on the type of policy decisions that need to be made to further inform efforts to mainstream a future scale-up at the national level. The evaluation identifies what aspects of the initiative have been successful and where further development is necessary. Work on developing protocols to mainstream CFS throughout the educational system have started and will be completed by the end of January 2017. The protocols will provide policy guidelines for mainstreaming the CFS model in all schools. There are currently 24 schools that apply the CFS concept.

OUTPUT 4 By 2015, 50 per cent of stakeholders and community leaders are able to effectively communicate on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Oman including prevention of harmful practices;

Analytical statement of progress:
Regional trainings on the Convention on the Rights of the Child resulted in strengthened awareness of regional teams on the Convention.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been mainstreamed into other activities. For example, the CFS initiative also provided opportunities for teachers and students in three pilot governorates to strengthen their knowledge and awareness of the Convention. The Convention is actively discussed in classroom settings and at parent-teacher association meetings.

OUTCOME 3 By 2015, Government of Oman has adopted adequate strategies and costed plans to implement child rights policies and framework.

Analytical statement of progress:
Reported under Outcome 2 above.

OUTPUT 1 Draft National Plans of Action for child care and protection are prepared and costed; National Plan of Action for children/child strategy, with specific focus on child vulnerabilities at both national and sub-national levels is developed.

Analytical statement of progress:
To support the Ministry of Social Development in the development of the National Strategy on Social Work, UNICEF supported the identification of a group of highly qualified technical experts serving as advisers to the Ministry’s Steering Committee and provided technical quality assurance for the overall process and output documents. UNICEF also assisted in the identification of specialized experts to support thematic diagnostic studies and the development of national action plans in the areas of children and disability in 2014, the final action plan for children and disability were developed and ready for dissemination within the scope of the national strategy.

The Omani Child Law was approved by the shura and state council, and a royal decree was also issued.

OUTPUT 2 Enhanced capacity at national and sub-national levels to plan, implement and monitor programmes to address child vulnerability.
Analytical statement of progress:
Upon consultation between the Ministry of Social Development and UNICEF and reflecting the strategic shifts emerging from the midterm review dialogue, the resources reserved for social policy training for Ministry of Social Development officials were diverted to support the scoping exercise on the formulation of the National Action Plan on Social Work to ensure a more strategic approach towards social work and subsequently the required capacity to deliver quality services and protection. As was identified in the discussions during the midterm review scoping exercise and the annual review meetings, the progress of IR has been constrained due to the fragmentation of activities that are not clearly linked to the overall results and strategies and in alignment with the priorities and systems of the Government. The IR was, however, revitalized with the new direction set: to provide technical support to the preparation of the National Action Plan on Social Work. The National Action Plan and Strategy were completed at the end of 2015 and have provided apt grounds for pushing through a cross-cutting child rights agenda.

Evaluation and research

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Other publications

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<tr>
<td>Ten-Year Autism Strategy and Five-Year Autism Action Plan for Children with ASD</td>
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<td>Oman Early Childhood Development Standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS5)</td>
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<td>Rights-based Equity-Focused Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Oman (SITAN)</td>
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Lessons learned

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<td>Establishing cross-sectoral platforms for IECD, protection from violence, and inclusion of children with disabilities</td>
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Programme documents

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