

Oman

Executive summary

Oman maintained a Human Development Index ranking of 52 out of 188 countries in 2016, awarding it a high human development status. Progress achieved in promoting the rights of children has been recognized by the Committee on the Rights of the Child; the Committee encouraged the Government to take more steps in protecting children from violence and promoting the rights of children with disabilities.

Approximately 1 per cent of children below the age of 15 have disabilities. Oman's range of disability services are limited to major cities and are provided by non-governmental organizations or others of variable quality. There is inadequate data to define the scale of child maltreatment due to the nascent case notification system, stigmatization and culturally accepted practices not recognized as maltreatment. Oman met target 1 of the Millennium Development Goals to halve the prevalence of underweight children under 5 years of age; that rate is now 9.7 per cent. However, the prevalence of stunting has increased to 14 per cent from 10 per cent in 2009, and the prevalence of wasting is 7.5 per cent.

Within its first year, the UNICEF Oman Country Programme capitalized on its technical advantage to work with the Government on devising progressive solutions and shifting from standard practice to achieve greater impact in the areas of integrated early childhood development (IECD), protecting children from violence and inclusion of children with disabilities.

Some of the programme's major achievements included:

- UNICEF Oman supported quality education by shifting from projects to nationally mainstreamed interventions. UNICEF Oman and the Ministry of Education (MOE) re-conceptualized their work on child-friendly schools from school-based projects to child-friendly education (CFE) as a mainstreamed organizing theme. Similarly, UNICEF worked with MOE to develop an institutionalized training programme on inclusive education for sustained rollout.
- UNICEF Oman provided technical expertise to implement the Oman National Nutrition Survey (ONNS). Initial survey findings updated data on stunting, wasting and obesity, and highlighted geographic trends of concern. The survey has provided insights on interventions required to accelerate progress in the nutritional status of Omani children and women. The findings were validated in a meeting with relevant Ministry of Health (MOH) sections and will be used for cross-sectoral national consultations and planning as well as a United Nations joint plan of action.
- UNICEF Oman launched work to establish cross-sectoral referral mechanisms in IECD, protection and inclusion. Cross-sectoral links were clearly recommended in all related national strategies but had stalled in the face of some administrative hurdles. UNICEF Oman persisted and conducted phase 1 of mapping strengths, challenges and gaps in

2017 to great impact. Phase 2 of designing systems, protocols, roles and responsibilities continues in 2018.

- The work of a programme management group (PMG), proposed by UNICEF Oman and established by ministerial decree, has been instrumental. Formed of representatives from MOE, MOH, the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD), the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) and the Supreme Council for Planning, the group took a holistic look at the UNICEF Oman programme and promoted more efficient cross-sectoral linkages. In a country programme where proposed interventions are progressive and uncustomary to Oman – such as cross-sectoral holistic platforms, or communication for development – this cross-sectoral collaborative partnership was key in advising on links to the governmental decision-making canvas, reducing resistance to change and resolving obstacles.

Challenges to UNICEF Oman Country Programme progress include data availability and the financial crisis.

The Child Well-being and Empowerment Index (CWEI) has not been finalized due to missing intra-national data and data dissonance across sectors. An assessment of the bottlenecks in child data systems will be carried out in 2018 to determine how UNICEF Oman can strengthen them.

Oman, like other oil producing countries, has been affected by a reduction in oil prices resulting in government budget cuts enforced for the second consecutive year, including cuts to education, health and social sectors (4, 3 and 5 per cent decreases in their shares of the national budget, respectively).

Although UNICEF Oman was spared another cut in its government grant in 2017, this financial strain necessitated finding innovative ways to maximize existing and potential resources for children, in addition to re-positioning UNICEF Oman's communication and fundraising strategies.

Thus, this year, communication and advocacy highlighted UNICEF Oman's programme and role in promoting a child rights agenda and in facilitating connections with private sector entities for future engagement. Accordingly, detailed mapping of potential private sector funding partners and media was carried out in October. One of UNICEF Oman's priorities in this programme cycle is supporting the Government in finding public finance solutions for children.

Equity in practice

UNICEF Oman pursued the equity agenda across its programmes with the Government, most notably in the area of disability and inclusion. Individual activities with the various sectors were consolidated into critical advances in disability data, influencing national policies and strategies and supporting capacity-building to maintain good standards of service delivery.

In the previous Country Programme (2012–2016), UNICEF Oman worked with MOE, MOH and MOSD on various activities. These included a multi-phase capacity-building effort with social workers on the 'Portage Programme' to support families of children with disabilities, a review of the national disability law to ensure alignment with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities and technical assistance to MOH in developing data tools.

These activities were accompanied by advocacy and awareness raising, laying the foundations for a concerted push to promote the rights of children with disabilities. First, this influenced the research and evidence agenda. NCSI adopted the child functioning modules into their Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and other disability databases, initiating a shift in how disability was reflected in statistical data.

UNICEF Oman began work with MOSD and NCSI on developing a unified disability classification for Oman and bolstering the disability register that will feed into the e-Census 2020. Additionally, the rights-based equity-focused situation analysis of children and women in Oman (SITAN) provided a holistic analysis, while diagnostic studies conducted in preparation for developing the National Ten-Year Autism Action Strategy (2016) and the National Social Work Strategy 2016–2025 (2015) compiled qualitative data.

The National Social Work Strategy, through an extensive study conducted at a subnational level, examined social service delivery for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, and MOSD's capacity to deliver those services. This study's evidence base remained some of the only such data available on children with disabilities in Oman. This data informed Oman's 9th National Development Plan and guided the development of the current UNICEF Oman Country Programme 2017–2020, in which inclusion of children with disabilities is one of the three priorities.

UNICEF Oman engaged with MOSD in developing the National Social Work Strategy 2016–2025 for the express purpose of ensuring that the rights of vulnerable children are included. Within that development process, the rights of children with disabilities were mainstreamed across the pillars of social protection and social welfare, among others, as well as being established as a stand-alone pillar to further support national programming. These rights were also clearly incorporated into the multi-sectoral national childhood strategy that UNICEF Oman developed in collaboration with MOSD in order to drive all childhood policies.

Although developed with MOE, the national autism action strategy included considerations for all sectors and stakeholders, including parents, and provided a framework of action across sectors. Accordingly, MOH adapted an autism screening tool and referral protocol used in all primary healthcare centres at children's regular 18-month visit. The strategy was also translated into MOE's Five-Year Autism Action Plan to facilitate the inclusion of children with autism in regular schooling.

UNICEF Oman leveraged this process to advocate for including children with other disabilities and began work with the Specialised Centre for the Professional Training of Teachers on institutionalizing an inclusive education training programme to be rolled out to all regular classroom teachers. As a first step in this process, a teacher's guide was developed and field tested based on the Omani curricula for cycle 1 (Grades 1–4) and an accompanying training of trainers programme was designed. In 2018, work will continue to develop similar tools for cycle 2 (Grades 5–10); the programme aims to reach 50 per cent of teachers within four years.

Equity in services is also being addressed in current technical work on establishing cross-sectoral referral platforms and creating an accredited early intervention training programme to address the lack of services outside of big cities. UNICEF Oman also coordinated a social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) programme to systematically engage stakeholders, to support the formation of parent support groups and address social attitudes towards

disability.

One of the main lessons learned through this experience was the need to work both upstream and downstream while engaging all sectors. The inequitable experience of children with disabilities is both cultural and structural. While advocating for inclusive policies and national strategies is critical, there is rarely knowledge or capacity for how these are to be interpreted programmatically.

Strategic Plan 2018–2021

The UNICEF Oman Country Programme for 2017–2020 aligned in many ways with the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021, with programme pillars responding to Goal Areas 1, 2, 3 and 5. The three main programme pillars are: 1) integrated early childhood development; 2) protection of children from violence; and 3) inclusion of children with disabilities.

Additionally, Oman presents an opportunity in terms of implementation strategies. Within this high-income country context, the Government-UNICEF Oman joint programme capitalizes on UNICEF's added value by pushing for innovative and progressive implementation methods. UNICEF Oman aims to move beyond the siloed traditional services and programming focused on expanding access to institute cross-sectoral, holistic best practices. In line with the Strategic Plan's 'Change Strategies', the UNICEF Oman country programme will pursue an equity agenda with the following major, intersecting strategies:

- Utilize UNICEF's proven convening role to build stronger links between the key implementing ministries and support them in producing advocacy tools with which to engage the Council of State and the Shura Council. This strategy will sustain the implementation of major policy initiatives for children and strengthen oversight and accountability to children and their families in relation to national policy goals and standards. The establishment of the PMG and technical offshoots has initiated this work by bringing stakeholders from different sectors to the table to redress inequities affecting children.
- Facilitate a systematic and evidence-based approach to designing, budgeting for, delivering and monitoring government programmes and services, using targeted research and data disaggregated by region, sex and household income.
- Support the design and effective delivery of SBCC strategies tailored to the Omani context and promote positive behaviour change for critical child-care behaviours and practices.

In the absence of a United Nations Development Assistance Framework, UNICEF Oman and other United Nations agencies in Oman, namely the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO), have identified possible opportunities to work together on government commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and nutrition.

UNICEF Oman will undertake a mid-term review in 2018 that will focus on one to two strategic results that will contribute to the Strategic Plan.

UNICEF Oman faces the following challenges in this work:

- There is a need for more robust and disaggregated data, including behavioural and qualitative data as well as data on the quality and sustainability of health and education services received, for planning and monitoring programmes.
- UNICEF monitoring systems do not adequately reflect the needs of programmes implemented in high-income countries. UNICEF Oman has developed its own monitoring and evaluation framework linked to government statistical databases, but regular reporting mechanisms may miss some achieved results.
- The time required for the adaptation and buy-in of change strategies presents a challenge. For example, as there are no pre-existing models of cross-sectoral referral systems in IECD, protection or inclusion, such non-traditional interventions being proposed to the Government remain abstract and require ample time for adoption and ownership before implementation.

Emerging areas of importance

Integrated early childhood development (IECD). UNICEF Oman has taken the lead on IECD in partnership with MOE, MOH, MOSD and NCSI, establishing it as one of the three programme pillars in the current UNICEF Oman Country Programme 2017-2020. In discussions, UNICEF Oman and the Government have committed to improving a number of IECD indicators during this period, such as (1) the percentage of children aged 36–59 months attending an early childhood education programme (2014 baseline: 29 per cent; 2020 target: 60 per cent); and (2) the percentage of children aged 0–5 months exclusively breastfed (2014 baseline: 17 per cent; 2020 target: 40 per cent).

In 2015, the prevalence of stunting increased to 14 per cent from 10 per cent in 2009. The wasting prevalence of 7.5 per cent is a cause for concern; it suggests that infant and young child feeding practices are suboptimal and that hygiene and diarrhoea are problems. Additionally, Oman's Early Childhood Development Index rate, at 68 per cent, lagged behind those of countries with comparable incomes.

The programme is much more holistic and strategic, systematically approaching proximal to remote levels of stakeholders and partners in IECD.

UNICEF Oman began supporting the Government in developing a National IECD Policy to safeguard previous joint work on developing national early childhood development standards, integrating IECD in the national strategies for childhood, nutrition and social work and creating an investment study for early childhood education.

Additionally, the Government and UNICEF Oman addressed the lack of wide-scale IECD services by working to consolidate available IECD services at the wilayat (province) level and setting a standard model that can be adopted by concerned ministries singly or jointly. This effort aims to develop an Omani model for IECD service delivery through existing community spaces, such as preschools, civil society centres and community-based learning centres, while maintaining global good practice standards for care, stimulation and development.

Laying the groundwork for this, work on designing cross-sectoral platforms to ensure the continuum of care in IECD, protection and inclusion of children with disabilities launched in 2017. This involved an extensive desk review and consultations in four diverse governorates with parents, government service providers, decision-makers in the education, health and social

development sectors and private sector kindergartens to map out the system currently in place and identify its strengths, challenges and gaps.

In a validation workshop conducted at the end of the field work, preliminary observations were shared as well as first thoughts on the main design elements of the cross-sectoral system, building on structures and resources that currently exist as a first step. The multiple strands feeding into a comprehensive and coherent national IECD programme are being strategically woven to ensure the greatest sustainable impact, despite limited capacities and strained resources.

Other elements in the 2017–2018 Rolling Work Plans (RWP) with all government partners included establishing accredited training programmes for IECD and early childhood intervention professionals, as well as supporting parents and caregivers in essential care practices. A national SBCC programme on better care practices in early childhood, protection and inclusion, which has been conceptualized and prepared for launch in early 2018, will supplement and sustain these efforts. A prominent public figure has been approached to champion IECD in Oman, which would provide immense support to ongoing advocacy and awareness efforts as well as mobilize resources.

UNICEF Oman also made great strides in generating robust evidence pertinent to children's early years through the implementation of ONNS. The survey, which was jointly conducted with MOH, investigated 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 initial findings were shared for discussion and validation on 10 December and provided invaluable data on stunting, wasting, obesity and micronutrient deficiencies to guide targeted, effective policy and programme interventions. The survey also shed light on feeding and caring practices that would be pivotal for integration into the national SBCC programme, as well as highlighting potential areas for additional investigation. ONNS will form the basis of MOH nutrition planning in the coming years as well as helping consolidate and coordinate United Nations agencies' interventions in nutrition and food systems.

Through these negotiated layers of implementation, the UNICEF Oman Country Programme presents an excellent learning opportunity and case study for countries in the region or with similar contexts in practical modalities for accelerating and sustaining effective IECD systems.

Summary notes and acronyms

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| CFE | child-friendly education |
| CMT | country management team |
| CPAP | Country Programme Action Plan |
| CWEI | Child Wellbeing and Empowerment Index |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| GSSC | Global Shared Services Centre |
| ICT | information and communication technology |
| IECD | Integrated Early Childhood Development |
| MENARO | UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| MOH | Ministry of Health |
| MOSD | Ministry of Social Development |

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|--------|---|
| MOSS | Minimum Operational Security Standards |
| NCSI | National Centre for Statistics and Information |
| ONNS | Oman National Nutrition Survey |
| PMG | programme management group |
| RWP | rolling work plan |
| SBCC | social and behaviour change communication |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SITAN | rights-based equity-focused situation analysis of children and women in Oman |
| SOWC | <i>The State of the World's Children</i> (UNICEF report) |
| TWG | technical working group |
| UNDSS | United Nations Department of Safety and Security |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| VISION | Virtual Integrated System of Information (UNICEF's enterprise management resource system) |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

Capacity development

Despite its high-income context, government counterparts expressed concern about capacity needs in Oman because progress towards achieving better quality results for children is moving faster than local capacities allow. A 2017 Royal Order to hire 25,000 Omanis in the public sector re-emphasized Omanization. Omanis constitute 84 per cent of the public sector work force, versus 12 per cent in the private sector. Additionally, many service provider posts, such as nursery teachers, social workers and disability rehabilitation centre staff, are held by non-university graduates. Accordingly, UNICEF Oman reviewed its capacity-building strategy to capitalize on its comparative technical advantage and ensure impact that redresses inequity.

In 2017, this took two specific forms:

- Utilizing field visits by technical experts as opportunities for shadowing and transferring knowledge to local capacities. In coordinating ONNS, UNICEF Oman provided MOH staff with technical support throughout implementation to maintain best practices while simultaneously enhancing the capacities of involved staff. During data analysis, one of the technical team members was housed at MOH for three weeks, working closely with the nutrition department statistician to ensure that data analysis and reporting capacity would be transferred to the department.
- Integrating into programmes of training institutions. The 'Inclusive Education Teacher Training Guide' was developed to become part of the regular training programme at the MOE Specialised Centre for the Professional Training of Teachers. The process involved a pilot workshop with 16 teachers and eight principals and inspectors of elementary schools in which training needs were assessed and discussed. UNICEF Oman designed a training of trainers workshop for the Centre as a precursor for national roll out.

Evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy

The key advocacy document in negotiations with the Government in relation to the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) and the RWP was the SITAN, which was published and widely

disseminated in 2017. Identifying priority programme areas and needs, the SITAN informed UNICEF Oman's joint programme with the Government. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 5 was also published in Arabic and made available on the NCSI website. UNICEF Oman initiated these research documents and provided technical guidance and support.

UNICEF Oman provided subject-matter expertise in the implementation of ONNS, which will address data gaps in nutrition. After completion of data collection and analysis, preliminary findings were validated in a meeting with MOH representatives from six relevant sections, facilitated by the UNICEF Regional Senior Nutrition Advisor. This meeting contextualized the findings and opened discussion about the roles of different sections and sectors in responding to the findings. These will guide UNICEF Oman and MOH to determine the most relevant policy interventions. As nutrition is a multi-sectoral issue, the findings will also provide evidence to inform the national IECD policy currently in development and the SBCC programme planned for 2018.

The need for additional improvement of data systems emerged in ongoing work on the CWEI with NCSI. In its second year of development, challenges in finalizing the CWEI pointed to data gaps, especially in intra-national data and data dissonance between sectors. The index is nearing completion and will facilitate comparison of indicators internationally and intra-nationally, providing new evidence for advocacy and programming, particularly in terms of geographical disparities.

Lastly, UNICEF Oman is working closely with NCSI and other entities on SDG indicators, building on the Government's commitment to strengthen child-related data and administrative monitoring mechanisms. UNICEF Oman played a convening role, bringing other United Nations agencies into an ongoing discussion with NCSI on related data gaps and capacity-building needs.

Partnerships

UNICEF Oman's partnership with the Government is key to the success and relevance of its country programme and contributions to the rights of children. In September 2016, the PMG was established by ministerial decree with representatives from MOE, MOH, MOSD, NCSI and the Supreme Council for Planning to support UNICEF Oman in implementing and monitoring programmes and ensuring effective policy and technical coordination. PMG members are accountable to their respective entities.

In 2017, the PMG brought about invaluable benefits in UNICEF Oman's work for children, such as:

- Engagement in review of the CPAP and ensuring the participation of relevant actors within each sector. Though this prolonged the process, it enriched discussions and ensured familiarity and buy-in with government partners at different levels.
- Providing critical guidance in troubleshooting bottlenecks, particularly with interventions that are outside of traditional practice for the Government. For example, work on establishing cross-sectoral referral platforms and SBCC had stalled for a year, despite being accepted in signed work plans, as both required operational modalities that differ from current practice. The PMG suggested solutions that were acceptable and synergetic with governmental decision-making mechanisms and provided tips on avoiding potential pitfalls.

- Effectively promoted cross-sectoral discussion of tools being developed by any one sector, such as the MOE-led early childhood care and education national action plan, as well as ongoing government commitments, such as the SDGs.

In order to partner with the private sector, high-net-worth individuals and academia, a mapping exercise was conducted to better understand the landscape and identify and segment the players. A tailored approach to engaging with each type of partner was established to facilitate the development of strategic partnerships in 2018. Discussions were initiated with some organizations, namely the leading telecom company and two local cinema chains, on opportunities for innovation partnerships, public fundraising, communication and advocacy.

External communication and public advocacy

UNICEF Oman launched an external communication and public advocacy plan, starting with the launch of social media accounts on Twitter and Facebook on 24 September and 22 October, respectively. Since then, UNICEF Oman has played an active role on both social and traditional media using Arabic and English platforms. UNICEF Oman established key relationships with newspapers, local influencers and communication focal points at partner entities.

Since these activities started, UNICEF Oman has received 25 mentions in local print media highlighting child-related topics, work with the Government and key UNICEF global events. Between September and December, UNICEF Oman acquired 290 followers and more than 5,000 profile visits on Twitter as well as 315 Facebook likes, indicating improved digital engagement. UNICEF Oman achieved this engagement by focusing on equity, protection, inclusion and early years. Prominent followers on Twitter include government officials and key private sector stakeholders. Based on the initial successes of the social media accounts, UNICEF Oman plans to launch a YouTube channel and Instagram account to exploit the fast-growing number of respondents (65.4 per cent) on these platforms.

UNICEF Oman conducted high-visibility advocacy events and campaigns around World Children's Day and publication of UNICEF's *The State of the World's Children* (SOWC) report. These garnered positive media attention and allowed UNICEF Oman to highlight key programme areas. This was part of the Country Office's strategy to reposition UNICEF's role in Oman and highlight its ongoing work with the Government, private sector and communities.

The World Children's Day activities involved a group of 16 students who shadowed or interviewed the chief executive officers of private sector institutions and prominent government figures, including ministers, undersecretaries and directors general at the various ministries. In relation to the SOWC, UNICEF Oman reached out to relevant members of the public and asked them to share their opinions related to this year's theme.

Support to integration and cross-sectoral linkages

After promoting a number of cross-sectoral working groups and establishing the PMG, UNICEF Oman began work with the Government to institutionalize such practices for children. Capitalizing on its technical and convening role, UNICEF Oman started work with the Government on consolidating comprehensive cross-sectoral platforms for referral mechanisms in IECD, protection and inclusion of children with disabilities.

Work had stalled in 2016 due to difficulties in assigning a government entity as lead, illustrating the challenges in the process and the role that UNICEF Oman needs to play to address these. Consequently, a technical working group (TWG) was established under the PMG to support the process. This comprised section heads and technical practitioners from all PMG entities engaged in the three programme areas. They reviewed concepts and tools developed by a technical firm recruited by UNICEF Oman; they also guided the field work undertaken in December 2017 to map out existing structures and mechanisms and their strengths, gaps and needs. Along with the PMG, they continue to review and validate the work of the technical firm in its assessment and recommendations for essential steps and critical investments necessary to improve cross-sectoral work in the short, medium and long term.

This work underscored clear needs for evidence generation, capacity building and advocacy, which will be taken on by the PMG and TWG. Preliminary findings have pointed to areas where the cross-sectoral linkages quickly fray, namely after identification and assessment, where roles and interaction mechanisms across sectors are unsystematic and insufficient. Despite a supportive legal framework that promotes cross-sectoral practices, administrative hurdles within and between sectors have hindered the effective development of systematic cross-linkages.

TWG members shared that their participation taught them more about existing systems and problems and shed light on the need for strengthening intra-sectoral linkages.

Human rights-based approach to cooperation

In 2017, the SITAN was published jointly by the Government and UNICEF. It provided a critical rights-based analysis of inequities, remained a key advocacy document with government counterparts and fed into the 9th National Development Plan (2017–2020) of the Government, as well as the Government-UNICEF Joint Country Programme (2017–2020). The SITAN highlighted the need for further attention to IECD services, inclusion of children with disabilities and creating protective environments by promoting cross-sectoral work and engaging parents.

The concluding observations from the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Oman's combined third and fourth periodic reports published in 2016 have been integrated into work plans with government counterparts. In 2017, this included the following interventions:

- Initiating work on cross-sectoral referral mechanisms for protection of children from violence, as well as IECD and inclusion of children with disabilities, analysing existing systems and running national consultations to inform the development of: improvements based on available structures and resources; critical investments needed to address gaps in the holistic continuum of care; and a long-term plan for the improvement of the process across sectors and through the life-cycle. This will include reporting, documentation and case management protocols. The conceptual work will be concluded in 2018.
- Conceptualizing the parameters of an SBCC programme to promote positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing and discipline to caregivers and service providers. The volatility of discussing violence publicly and the delicateness of addressing social norms have required a prolonged process of negotiation to secure buy-in, but great progress has been made in establishing the governorate child protection committees and launching the hotline with publicly shared numbers, which should allow for the launch of the work in 2018.

- Continuing to support the Government's efforts in monitoring and collecting data on children, through work on the CWEI, mapping SDG indicators and designing data registers for child protection and disability. UNICEF Oman continued to assess the status of child data systems and explored modes of supporting the Government in these processes.

Gender equality

According to the SITAN and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Oman's childhood indicators do not reveal any specific gender disparities. However, as part of a gender desk review, UNICEF Oman compiled information on women and girls from these and other diagnostic studies conducted over the last three years.

The analysis found that Oman fares well in the empowerment of women, and that in some situations women and girls have better access to services than their male counterparts. Oman has achieved near universal enrolment, gender parity in both primary and secondary education and universal literacy rates among young people aged 15–24 years, with no differences between males and females. Attendance at early childhood education stands at almost 30 per cent, with higher enrolment rates for females. Oman has also achieved universal coverage of antenatal care and institutional delivery services.

The analysis found that disparities are more prevalent among women over 18 years of age. Women have limited political participation in both the Council of State and the Shura Council, with only one woman voted into the 85-member Shura Council in 2015. Women's participation in the labour force also remains low at 29 per cent, compared to 83 per cent for males.

To address these disparities, UNICEF Oman will examine the child's entire environment holistically, even unmarried young women above 25 who are setting the trends and influencing social norms for girls in general. This is an area that required more development within UNICEF, both conceptually and programmatically, and UNICEF Oman will tap into opportunities for exploring it further with government counterparts.

In a high-income country context, UNICEF Oman's focus lies on promoting gender-sensitive policies through evidence-based advocacy. Instead of undertaking stand-alone activities that address gender, UNICEF Oman continued to work with MOE, MOH and MOSD to ensure that gender considerations are clearly highlighted in national plans and strategies. Gender was similarly mainstreamed throughout the CPAP and all indicators in the results framework and the corresponding monitoring framework were disaggregated by gender.

Environmental sustainability

The UNICEF Oman Country Programme does not involve any direct implementation or direct beneficiaries and so all work related to environmental sustainability was focused on the office and its daily operations. The office has taken tangible steps towards 'greening', 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. Table 1 below illustrates the trends in the office's environmental footprint in 2016 and 2017. Although some areas have shown an increase, all except fuel consumption remain lower than the 2015 baseline. Fuel consumption will be monitored closely in 2018 to stem the increase but will be directly dependent on UNICEF Oman's level of participation and presence in activities outside the office. The use of electricity

comprised 55 per cent of the office's total carbon dioxide emissions. Air travel contributed another 27 per cent, while office vehicles contributed 10 per cent.

Table 1: Trends in UNICEF Oman office environmental footprint, 2015–2017

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | Percentage change in 2017 |
|---|---------|--------|--------|---------------------------|
| Number of air travel trips | 43 | 33 | 27 | -18% |
| Water consumption (L) | 28,441 | 15,546 | 18,480 | 19% |
| Electricity consumption (kwh) | 304,587 | 67,898 | 87,312 | 28% |
| Recycled paper/cardboard and waste (kg) | 150 | - | 30 | - |
| Petroleum cost (L) | 2,070 | 3,050 | 4,575 | 50% |

L: litres; kg: kilogram; kwh: kilowatt hour

UNICEF Oman also received Greening and Accessibility Funds, which were used to make the office's entrance, conference room and guest lavatory more accessible to persons with physical disabilities. This was well-received by visiting partners and served as a non-cost prohibitive example of introducing reasonable accommodations in older office buildings.

Effective leadership

The one remaining audit recommendation regarding secondment of government personnel has been resolved with the termination of that practice as of January. Due to UNICEF Oman's small size, there is a persistent challenge in relation to the segregation of business roles. To mitigate this, some roles were delegated to the UNICEF Regional Office, Gulf Area Office and Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC).

With the change in senior management in September (Representative), UNICEF Oman reviewed workflow and accountabilities and updated the membership of all statutory committees and the table of authority. The country management team (CMT) met five times in 2017. As of October, monthly CMT meetings, bi-weekly management meetings and monthly general staff meetings were established.

During its meetings, the CMT reviewed the annual management plan's priorities, progress, achievements and challenges and recommended appropriate measures to improve performance. The enterprise risk management was updated and regularly reviewed. In November, the business continuity plan was updated and security and information and communication technology (ICT) elements were tested.

Programme management performance and budget were closely monitored through an expanded rolling workplan monitoring framework. Two staff members received budget monitoring and reporting training in November to strengthen this area. UNICEF Oman updated its office improvement plan and monitored it through management reviews, with focus on staff career and professional development as areas requiring improvement.

Since the retirement of the operations officer in December 2016, the operations unit was supported by a programme assistant. A retiree operations officer was recruited in November to

bolster the current structure and simulate an audit to work on critical areas that require strengthening. The operations officer position will be filled in January 2018.

Financial resources management

UNICEF Oman received its annual programme budget from the Government in two equal tranches, the first received in June and the second in October. This grant was at 100 per cent utilization by 15 December 2017; by the end of December, the budget management allotment stood at 100 per cent utilization. Additionally, UNICEF Oman received Global Thematic Funds in Education from the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENARO) totalling US\$436,322 and set to expire by December 2018, with 37 per cent utilized by 13 December 2017. The utilization rate was low due to the receipt of US\$238,198 in November 2017. These funds allowed for the implementation of some activities in the first two quarters of the year before receipt of the first government instalment.

Budget utilization was closely monitored by the country management team through the global key performance indicators and regular budget reports generated by both operations and programme departments. This monitoring resulted in improved management of contributions and budget utilization; UNICEF Oman has consistently scored well in the key performance indicator dashboard. The United Nations harmonized approach to cash transfers does not operate in Oman, and UNICEF Oman does not have direct cash transfers, nor does it have regular resources or other emergency resources expenditure.

Bank reconciliation was hindered by the unexpectedly long process of closing the United States dollar account and transferring the balance to the local currency bank account. Bank reconciliation took six months but was finally resolved through close collaboration with GSSC.

Existing standard operating procedures and related workflows were revised to align with GSSC standard operating procedures. The handover of in-scope payment processes to GSSC transpired without interruption, supported in no small part by coordinating directly with the relevant GSSC focal point.

Fundraising and donor relations

UNICEF Oman has secured thematic funding from the Global Education Fund to bridge the 10 per cent reduction in the government grant in 2016. In addition, UNICEF Oman continued to support MOH in raising funds for ONNS from the local private sector, successfully garnering approximately US\$110,000. To raise these funds, UNICEF Oman facilitated bilateral engagements between the private sector and MOH.

However, it is important to note that the legal framework in Oman restricts the United Nations' ability to launch public fundraising campaigns. This is under discussion and concrete steps have been identified to overcome this challenge during the coming years in the hope of utilizing this platform for advocacy and further fundraising.

After mapping of the private sector in November, UNICEF Oman revised its fundraising strategy and developed targeted proposals to engage with various entities. Though efficient strategies will enable maximum reach with available resources, UNICEF Oman has set a fundraising aspiration of US\$1 million for the end of the country programme in 2020 to address the funding gap.

Evaluation and research

During 2017, UNICEF Oman moved forward with recommendations resulting from the evaluation of the 'Government of Oman – UNICEF Child Friendly Schools Initiative', completed in 2016. The evaluation was the basis for two management responses and actions, namely: (1) the mainstreaming of child-friendly schools principles throughout the education system; and (2) improving the status of the educational inclusion of children with disabilities.

In response to the first recommendation, UNICEF Oman worked closely with MOE to shift from the child-friendly schools project approach undertaken during the last UNICEF Oman Country Programme to an approach that seeks to mainstream CFE throughout the whole education system. During the reporting period, UNICEF Oman supported MOE in conceptualizing this approach and developed protocols and guidelines that would facilitate roll-out of CFE at the national, governorate and school levels.

The resulting strategy guides the shift to a child-friendly education (CFE) system without causing undue disruption to the existing system. UNICEF Oman proposed six principles as thematic organizers for schools, including the principles of inclusion and democratic participation, among others. This strategy and the related guidelines were well received and endorsed by the MOE undersecretary. Building on this achievement, UNICEF Oman is supporting MOE in establishing the required governance and management structures to institutionalize CFE and kick-start its roll-out.

In response to the evaluation's second recommendation and to complement the work on child-friendly education, UNICEF Oman also worked with MOE and its Specialised Centre for the Professional Training of Teachers to develop a professional 'Inclusive Education Teacher Training Guide' for cycle 1 (Grades 1–4) to promote inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classrooms. This resource was reviewed by the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York and evaluated positively. UNICEF Oman also designed a training of trainers programme as the first step in institutionalizing the training in MOE, in order to reach 50 per cent of teachers in four years.

Efficiency gains and cost savings

UNICEF Oman succeeded in making substantial savings through negotiating a reduction of monthly costs of the SITA Line connection. This resulted in an approximately 50 per cent reduction from US\$97,585 to US\$48,792.

In addition, UNICEF Oman undertook several months of negotiations with the Security Services and Safety Company, resulting in a US\$6,130 reduction across four months which translated into a US\$30,000 saving for 2017, representing a 22 per cent drop.

Supply management

UNICEF Oman did not procure supplies for programme-related initiatives. Procurement requests to the UNICEF Supply Division were made directly by government agencies, with UNICEF Oman providing administrative liaising support where needed. These requests included supplies for cold chain equipment in the amount of US\$150,866.80. All transactions were funded by direct transfers from MOH to the UNICEF Supply Division.

UNICEF Oman's main form of programme activity is the provision of technical support. The cash value of this supply and other services in 2017 is captured in Table 2 below.

Table 2: UNICEF Oman's cash value of services, 2017

| Type of service | Value of supply input (US\$) |
|--|------------------------------|
| Technical assistance | 357,493.00 |
| Operational services and supplies | 24,960.00 |
| Estimated total amount as of 10 December 2017 | 382,453.00 |

Security for staff and premises

In 2017, Oman remained at security level 1 as it experienced no humanitarian emergencies affecting children or UNICEF Oman programme activities, implementation or 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 Oman. The Security Management Team met regularly to update the security plan and the status of Minimum Operational Security Standards (MOSS) compliance.

UNICEF Oman facilitated a mission of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) in October to update the Security Risk Assessment, Security Plan, and MOSS. UNICEF Oman's premises and procedures were found to be MOSS compliant. Training workshops on security and road safety were also conducted for personnel from the United Nations agencies, as well briefing and training the office security guards on safety and security of the premises and office access control.

UNICEF Oman participated in all Security Management Team meetings in which the prevailing security situation, as well as any resulting implications for staff, premises and programmes, were assessed.

All staff members were briefed on the country security plan, standard operating procedures and policies, and all staff completed the mandatory security in the field training modules.

Human resources

In 2017, UNICEF Oman implemented its newly approved country programme management plan and programme and budget review, which resulted in the establishment of a senior monitoring and evaluation assistant to bolster office capacity in that area. Additionally, the recruitment plan mainly focused on filling the vacant posts of the retired operations officer and senior executive assistant, taking into account UNICEF Oman's needs vis-à-vis the current country programme management plan. All posts were successfully filled except for that of the operations officer, for which no sufficiently qualified candidate was identified.

Individual training plans were discussed with supervisors and included in individual performance appraisals. Additionally, the CMT developed and endorsed an office learning plan, 'Objectives and Schedule'. By the end of 2017, UNICEF Oman staff and technical consultants had held five sessions covering eight learning topics. This included office-wide participation in a webinar and

activities during Ethics Month.

Implementation of ACHIEVE has improved performance management reviews and facilitated discussions with supervisors. By end of December 2017, 100 per cent of discussions between staff and supervisors were completed.

The staff representative maintained oversight of the office improvement plan, highlighting new priorities as they were identified. The small size of the office prevented the sharing of country-specific Global Staff Survey results, so UNICEF Oman relied on general trends identified in the region. These included career and professional development, which were brought into performance appraisal discussions.

Effective use of information and communication technology

UNICEF Oman's ICT systems continued to utilize the Lightweight, Agile ICT Infrastructure in 2017. Office data is hosted in the Regional Office Light Service Centre and cloud-based Microsoft Office 365 services.

UNICEF Oman's computers were upgraded to the new standard operating system, Windows 10, with a new version of the Microsoft Office productivity suite, Office 2016. This upgrade aimed to increase staff productivity, enhance security for UNICEF Oman's assets and data with hard drive encryption and make computing and collaboration more user-friendly. Office connectivity has been improved by installing a new 10 Mbps backup fibre link from another service provider.

Skype-for-Business's unified communication tools, including free self-managed online meetings, chatting and audiovisual calls, improved staff effectiveness and efficiency by improving collaboration between both internal UNICEF Oman staff and external partners. The Microsoft OneDrive for Business file sharing tool allowed staff to securely upload, access and share files at no cost and from any location, which facilitated information sharing and business continuity.

UNICEF Oman ICT support is provided by the Regional ICT Support Hub modality. The ICT Hub also manages the overall ICT functions remotely for the office. On-site IT support is provided by a local service provider in Oman; in 2017, this was supplemented by one visit from the UNICEF Regional ICT Support Hub officer. One ICT customer satisfaction survey was conducted this year with mostly excellent and good ratings for the ICT Services, ICT Hub and the local service provider support.

Programme components from RAM

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 By 2020, high quality, inclusive IECD services, with stronger parent and caregiver engagement, are available to all children, especially the vulnerable, in two governorates.

Analytical statement of progress

In this first year of the new UNICEF Oman Country Programme, the expected rate of implementation was slightly delayed. The year witnessed delays as the CPAP review process extended for eight months, but with active engagement of government counterparts, especially the newly formed PMG. The discussion was rich and supported the introduction of ambitious non-traditional activities to achieve this outcome, such as the establishment of cross-sectoral

platforms, SBCC programme and conceptualization of the IECD community-based models to address the low coverage of services.

While there has not yet been progress in the last activity, the first two are finally taking shape after delayed start dates, with a government commitment to start SBCC by February 2018. Though the delays are unfortunate, they provided space for unpacking and demystifying the seemingly abstract interventions proposed and allowed UNICEF Oman to start the work on steady footing with full government support.

Significant progress was made towards the establishment of effective cross-sectoral platforms for IECD, child protection and inclusion of children with disabilities. These platforms seek to ensure that better referral systems are in place to provide integrated services for children and their families. To ensure that the Government is closely involved in the process of developing these platforms, UNICEF Oman supported the establishment of a government TWG that facilitates the process across sectors.

Focus group discussions and interviews were conducted with the aim identifying gaps and opportunities in the current service referral process across sectors. Preliminary observations have already highlighted the need to strengthen services through establishment of a national integrated case management system and to enhance the quality and availability of services.

Building on these findings, UNICEF Oman will design a model for a cross-sectoral platform for coordination, collaboration and referral and present it to government counterparts for validation in early 2018. This will involve defining the structures, roles and responsibilities of involved entities, harmonizing protocols across sectors and proposing a monitoring and evaluation framework, among others. It is expected that the design and validation of the platform will have been completed in April 2018.

The field research also re-emphasized the importance of a number of interventions that UNICEF Oman is covering in its two-year RWP. For example, field research found that there is a need to raise awareness about children with disabilities, child protection issues and issues related to early childhood development among the general public, thought and behavioural leaders and the workforce across sectors. UNICEF Oman will address this issue through its SBCC programme in 2018, as noted above. Furthermore, field research indicated the need for parent support groups and for enhanced early intervention centres in governorates outside of the capital Muscat; UNICEF Oman will address these issues as well.

The most pertinent achievement was in generating evidence to serve this outcome, specifically in completing implementation of ONNS (final report due in January 2018), which provided long-awaited data on stunting, wasting, obesity and feeding practices. The data also provided UNICEF Oman with a better understanding of disparities at the subnational level; findings have identified three governorates where rates are particularly worrying. ONNS has provided insights about interventions required to accelerate progress in the nutritional status of Omani children and women.

Ironically, data was also the largest challenge in achieving this outcome, due to a continued delay in completing the CWEI and work on SDG indicators. Work in this area shed light on a number of data challenges, including the gaps in disaggregated data and data dissonance between sectors. This has become an agenda item for the PMG in 2018 where we plan to explore potential modes or opportunities to support better child data systems.

OUTPUT 1 1.1 An approach and mechanism developed to streamline and operationalize the delivery and monitoring of integrated IECD services, including referral between services.

Analytical statement of progress

Under this cross-cutting activity (Output 1.1, 2.1, 2.4 and 3.1), UNICEF Oman, with technical support from Maestral International, worked on ensuring buy-in from senior-level stakeholders and eliciting their insights on the planned work. With the aim of identifying gaps and opportunities in the service referral process across ministries, focus group discussions and interviews were held with policy-makers as well as directors, service providers and parents in Dhofar (south), Sohar – north, Nizwa – centre, and Muscat (capital).

Preliminary observations have already highlighted 1) how cross-sectoral linkages can be strengthened and brought up to good practice standards within existing structures and resources in the short term; 2) what critical investments are needed for improvement in the medium term; and 3) recommended changes for a robust, comprehensive system in the long term. Preliminary findings have also shown the point at which cross-sectoral linkages quickly fray, namely after identification and assessment, and the need for unified protocols and clearly outlined roles and responsibilities in each sector. Building on these findings, UNICEF Oman will design a model for a cross-sectoral platform for coordination, collaboration and referral and present it to government counterparts for validation and contextualization in early 2018.

UNICEF Oman and Maestral worked closely with the PMG, which is overseeing this effort, and with the government TWG, which was established to support the cross-sectoral platforms and worked with Maestral to facilitate an efficient process. TWG members shared that the project activities have taught them more about existing systems and problems and that a ripple effect is taking place within their sections to improve their own work by looking across sectoral siloes. Their participation in the field work also shed light on the need to strengthen intra-sectoral linkages, which is pertinent with such multi-faceted programmes such as IECD, child protection and inclusion of children with disabilities.

In terms of nutrition, significant progress was made during the reporting period with finalization of an initial draft of ONNS. Data was collected from women of child-bearing age, women who are pregnant and children under 5 across 3,304 households in all 11 governorates. Blood samples taken from target beneficiaries were analysed by laboratories in Germany and Jordan and the technical consultants contracted by UNICEF Oman, GroundWork, supported data analysis on the ground.

A validation workshop with relevant stakeholders in the health sector and the UNICEF Regional Senior Nutrition Advisor was held in December to contextualize and validate the findings. These findings will guide the national IECD policy and UNICEF programming on IECD as well as inform UNICEF Oman's planned SBCC programme. A large-scale dissemination workshop is planned for 2018.

Meanwhile, work progressed on the development of the CWEI in collaboration with NCSI. A final draft was submitted to NCSI for feedback. The CWEI will facilitate comparison among various types of indicators by country and by governorate and further enhance the evidence base for children, especially leading up to SDG reporting.

OUTPUT 2 1.2 In targeted wilayats of two governorates, quality IECD services that include children with disabilities, low income and other vulnerable children, are delivered through pre-schools and community-based learning centres by accredited IECD workers.

Analytical statement of progress

Designing the model is being linked to the outcome of the cross-sectoral platform design. Work is expected to start in 2018. UNICEF Oman aims to ensure that the model corresponds to gaps in the provision of early childhood development services and builds on systems that already exist.

OUTPUT 3 1.3 High quality, inclusive parenting education and supports available and implemented in under-served areas.

Analytical statement of progress

Under this cross-cutting activity (Output 1.3, 2.3 and 3.3) UNICEF Oman will work with the Government and a specialized communications company towards the development and implementation of an SBCC programme. A key bottleneck to starting this work was the unfamiliarity of government counterparts with the SBCC approach and confusion about the objectives of the mapping and research studies required for its design. Addressing this required UNICEF Oman to take a longer-term approach to ensure government buy-in and engagement.

To ensure that the work embarks on stable footing, a mission involving the company and the UNICEF Regional C4D Advisor is planned for February 2018 in order to obtain high-level government buy-in. Delays in launching the work in the previous year indicated that it is essential to unpack and demystify what SBCC will entail and how the various sectors will be involved before work is officially commenced.

SBCC work will focus on UNICEF Oman's three programme areas of IECD, child protection and inclusion of children with disabilities. Phase I of the initiative, ending in March 2018, will aim to raise the awareness and engagement of key stakeholders across institutions and sectors on the added value of SBCC programming, concepts and efficient approaches; define the key elements of an Omani process of change, centred on local ownership, at the government, service and community levels; and build the coordination mechanisms and steering committees that will oversee subsequent phases of strategic planning and implementation.

Once Phase I has been completed, UNICEF Oman, with technical support from Magenta Consulting and through discussion and validation with government counterparts, will develop an Oman-specific strategy and implementation plan.

OUTCOME 2 By 2020, families, caregivers, and service providers offer quality, effective protection practices and services for all children at risk of or exposed to violence.

Analytical statement of progress

In this first year of the new UNICEF Oman Country Programme, the expected rate of implementation was slightly delayed. The year witnessed delays as the CPAP review process extended for eight months, but with active engagement of government counterparts, especially the newly formed PMG. The discussion was rich and supported the introduction of ambitious non-traditional activities to achieve this outcome, such as the establishment of cross-sectoral

platforms, SBCC programme and conceptualization of the IECD community-based models to address the low coverage of services.

While there has not yet been progress in the last activity, the first two are finally taking shape after delayed start dates, with a government commitment to start SBCC by February 2018. Though the delays are unfortunate, they provided space for unpacking and demystifying the seemingly abstract interventions proposed and allowed UNICEF Oman to start the work on steady footing with full government support.

Significant progress was made towards the establishment of effective cross-sectoral platforms for IECD, child protection and inclusion of children with disabilities. These platforms seek to ensure that better referral systems are in place to provide integrated services for children and their families. To ensure that the Government is closely involved in the process of developing these platforms, UNICEF Oman supported the establishment of a government TWG that facilitates the process across sectors.

Focus group discussions and interviews were conducted with the aim identifying gaps and opportunities in the current service referral process across sectors. Preliminary observations have already highlighted the need to strengthen services through establishment of a national integrated case management system and to enhance the quality and availability of services.

Building on these findings, UNICEF Oman will design a model for a cross-sectoral platform for coordination, collaboration and referral and present it to government counterparts for validation in early 2018. This will involve defining the structures, roles and responsibilities of involved entities, harmonizing protocols across sectors and proposing a monitoring and evaluation framework, among others. It is expected that the design and validation of the platform will have been completed in April 2018.

The field research also re-emphasized the importance of a number of interventions that UNICEF Oman is covering in its two-year rolling workplan. For example, field research found that there is a need to raise awareness about children with disabilities, child protection issues and issues related to early childhood development among the general public, thought and behavioural leaders and the workforce across sectors. UNICEF Oman will address this issue through its SBCC programme in 2018, as noted above. Furthermore, field research indicated the need for parent support groups and for enhanced early intervention centres in governorates outside of the capital Muscat; UNICEF Oman will address these issues as well.

Meanwhile, UNICEF Oman completed the conceptualization of the child-friendly education model, together with guidelines and protocols for implementation at the national, governorate and school levels; this is a pertinent achievement towards this outcome. By introducing this organizing theme to cut across the education system, different existing programmes contributing to protective learning environments – in early learning, special education, school health, child rights and so on – would be consolidated, capitalizing on opportunities for preventing and responding to violence against children.

OUTPUT 1 2.1 Regulations and guidelines are streamlined and a coherent set of protocols for the protection of children from violence, abuse, and neglect are developed to regulate services and referral between departments. Regulations to Protecting children from violence

Analytical statement of progress

Under this cross-cutting activity (Output 1.1, 2.1, 2.4 and 3.1), UNICEF Oman, with technical support from Maestral, worked on ensuring buy-in from senior-level stakeholders and eliciting their insights on the planned work. With the aim of identifying gaps and opportunities in the service referral process across ministries, focus group discussions and interviews were held with policy-makers as well as directors, service providers and parents in Dhofar (south), Sohar – north, Nizwa – centre, and Muscat (capital).

Preliminary observations have already highlighted 1) how cross-sectoral linkages can be strengthened and brought up to good practice standards within existing structures and resources in the short term; 2) what critical investments are needed for improvement in the medium term; and 3) recommended changes for a robust, comprehensive system in the long term. Preliminary findings have also shown the point at which cross-sectoral linkages quickly fray, namely after identification and assessment, and the need for unified protocols and clearly outlined roles and responsibilities in each sector. Building on these findings, UNICEF Oman will design a model for a cross-sectoral platform for coordination, collaboration and referral and present it to government counterparts for validation and contextualization in early 2018.

UNICEF Oman and Maestral worked closely with the PMG, which is overseeing this effort, and with the government TWG, which was established to support the cross-sectoral platforms and worked with Maestral to facilitate an efficient process. TWG members shared that the project activities have taught them more about existing systems and problems and that a ripple effect is taking place within their sections to improve their own work by looking across sectoral siloes. Their participation in the field work also shed light on the need to strengthen intra-sectoral linkages, which is pertinent with such multi-faceted programmes such as IECD, child protection and inclusion of children with disabilities.

In September 2017, UNICEF Oman organized a training workshop on the theory of change and results-based management to PMG members and other government stakeholders to enhance their programme oversight and implementation capacity. This training allowed them to monitor programme performance against expected results as per the endorsed RWP for 2017–2018 and the CPAP Results Framework, as well as enhanced their own strategic planning capacities in their respective sectors. The workshop was attended by 25 participants from MOE, MOH and MOSD as well as the Supreme Council of Planning and NCSI. It was the first such training conducted in Arabic for government partners.

OUTPUT 2 2.2 Schools have regulations to identify and refer cases of violence against children, manage violence in schools, and to apply positive discipline and create inclusive learning environments.

Analytical statement of progress:

Following a child-friendly schools pilot in 24 schools across five governorates during the last UNICEF Oman Country Programme (2012–2016), UNICEF Oman sought to revise the child-friendly schools concept into a mainstreamed child-friendly education approach as an organizing theme throughout the educational system. Accordingly, a strategy was developed along with protocols to implement a ‘big bang’ approach across Oman, all completed during the first half of 2017. These have been reviewed by MOE, approved by the undersecretary and recommended for endorsement by the Minister.

The CFE strategy advocates shifting to a child-friendly education system without causing undue

disruption to the existing system. It proposes six principles as thematic organizers for schools, namely the principles of: (1) inclusion; (2) democratic participation; (3) child-centeredness; and (4) protection; as well as two cross-cutting principles on (5) equity and (6) resilience and sustainability.

The CFE strategy proposes that schools and their communities select one or more priority CFE principles on which to focus annually in order to mainstream CFE. Based on these priority plans, schools would receive appropriate levels of resources through their governorates. In turn, governorates will rely on the central ministries to enact policies and allocate annual budgets to support endorsed school plans for mainstreaming CFE. The strategy proposes that this would involve schools leveraging new resources through the local private sector, but there would also be some re-profiling of the existing education budget allocations to support CFE.

The second phase planned for 2018 seeks to establish governance and management structures to ensure that the work is robustly institutionalized within MOE to support intra-sectoral coordination, and with other ministries to support inter-sectoral coordination.

OUTPUT 3 2.3 Families and health, education and social service providers able to recognize the danger signs and symptoms of child maltreatment and know where to seek help.

Analytical statement of progress

Under this cross-cutting activity (Output 1.3, 2.3 and 3.3) UNICEF Oman will work with the Government and a specialized communications company towards the development and implementation of an SBCC programme. A key bottleneck to starting this work was the unfamiliarity of government counterparts with the SBCC approach and confusion about the objectives of the mapping and research studies required for its design. Addressing this required UNICEF Oman to take a longer-term approach to ensure government buy-in and engagement.

To ensure that the work embarks on stable footing, a mission involving the company and the UNICEF Regional C4D Advisor is planned for February 2018 in order to obtain high-level government buy-in. Delays in launching the work in the previous year indicated that it is essential to unpack and demystify what SBCC will entail and how the various sectors will be involved before work is officially commenced.

SBCC work will focus on UNICEF Oman's three programme areas of IECD, child protection and inclusion of children with disabilities. Phase I of the initiative, ending in March 2018, will aim to raise the awareness and engagement of key stakeholders across institutions and sectors on the added value of SBCC programming, concepts and efficient approaches; define the key elements of an Omani process of change, centred on local ownership, at the government, service and community levels; and build the coordination mechanisms and steering committees that will oversee subsequent phases of strategic planning and implementation.

OUTPUT 4 2.4 An integrated management information system developed that tracks children at risk of or exposed to violence and those with special protection needs.

Analytical statement of progress

Data on the situation of children at risk of or exposed to violence is lacking. As part of UNICEF Oman's effort to establish cross-sectoral platforms, a case management and monitoring system

will be designed to enable proper documentation of cases as well as inform adaptation and continuous refinement of the inter-sectoral platforms after their establishment.

UNICEF Oman and Maestral will work with partners to identify who should record data and documentation and how it should be reported (the 'flow' of data) in order to inform the design of the integrated management information system. Furthermore, UNICEF Oman will oversee a programmer who will develop the database and electronic data entry forms and ensure oversight, technical input and respect for data confidentiality.

Preliminary observations from the field research have identified the need for an electronic referral system and will thus inform the establishment of this management information system. Once the management information system has been completed, it will support the generation of monitoring reports on data and trends which are essential for evidence-based decision making in the area of child protection.

OUTCOME 3 By 2020 children with disabilities enjoy high quality services that promote their inclusion in society.

Analytical statement of progress

In this first year of the new UNICEF Oman Country Programme, the expected rate of implementation was slightly delayed. The year witnessed delays as the CPAP review process extended for eight months, but with active engagement of government counterparts, especially the newly formed PMG. The discussion was rich and supported the introduction of ambitious non-traditional activities to achieve this outcome, such as the establishment of cross-sectoral platforms, SBCC programme and conceptualization of the IECD community-based models to address the low coverage of services.

While there has not yet been progress in the last activity, the first two are finally taking shape after delayed start dates, with a government commitment to start SBCC by February 2018. Though the delays are unfortunate, they provided space for unpacking and demystifying the seemingly abstract interventions proposed and allowed UNICEF Oman to start the work on steady footing with full government support.

Significant progress was made towards the establishment of effective cross-sectoral platforms for IECD, child protection and inclusion of children with disabilities. These platforms seek to ensure that better referral systems are in place to provide integrated services for children and their families. To ensure that the Government is closely involved in the process of developing these platforms, UNICEF Oman supported the establishment of a government TWG that facilitates the process across sectors.

Focus group discussions and interviews were conducted with the aim identifying gaps and opportunities in the current service referral process across sectors. Preliminary observations have already highlighted the need to strengthen services through establishment of a national integrated case management system and to enhance the quality and availability of services.

Building on these findings, UNICEF Oman will design a model for a cross-sectoral platform for coordination, collaboration and referral and present it to government counterparts for validation in early 2018. This will involve defining the structures, roles and responsibilities of involved entities, harmonizing protocols across sectors and proposing a monitoring and evaluation

framework, among others. It is expected that the design and validation of the platform will have been completed in April 2018.

The field research also re-emphasized the importance of a number of interventions that UNICEF Oman is covering in its two-year RWP. For example, field research found that there is a need to raise awareness about children with disabilities, child protection issues and issues related to early childhood development among the general public, thought and behavioural leaders and the workforce across sectors. UNICEF Oman will address this issue through its SBCC programme in 2018, as noted above. Furthermore, field research indicated the need for parent support groups and for enhanced early intervention centres in governorates outside of the capital Muscat; UNICEF Oman will address these issues as well.

UNICEF Oman developed an inclusive education teacher training guide for cycle 1 teachers in regular classrooms and subsequently designed an accompanying training of trainers programme. Developing and field testing the teacher's guide created space and opportunity to discuss some of the main challenges riddling inclusive education and led MOE to request the development of a national inclusive education policy with a whole-school approach to be linked to the CFE model.

Though delayed, effective steps were also made towards developing an accredited early intervention training programme. UNICEF Oman led initial discussions with government counterparts about establishing a taskforce to advise on optimal ways of institutionalizing the programme in Oman. In early 2018, the programme will be presented to a number of practitioners from MOH, MOSD and civil society in the form of a 'teaser' workshop. This workshop is expected to inform how the programme can be adapted to Oman's context and what the best pathways towards institutionalization are.

Finally, work on unifying disability classifications across sectors and strengthening national disability data will start in January 2018, with the aim of enhancing data on children with disabilities and evidence-based programming in this area. UNICEF Oman's goal is to establish a Unified Disability Registry to allow for more accurate national data on children with disabilities.

OUTPUT 1 3.1 The inter-sectoral planning and conduct of early interventions for children with disabilities are strengthened, with focus on under-served areas and most vulnerable children.

Analytical statement of progress

Under this cross-cutting activity (Output 1.1, 2.1, 2.4 and 3.1), UNICEF Oman, with technical support from Maestral, worked on ensuring buy-in from senior-level stakeholders and eliciting their insights on the planned work. With the aim of identifying gaps and opportunities in the service referral process across ministries, focus group discussions and interviews were held with policy-makers as well as directors, service providers and parents in Dhofar (south), Sohar – north, Nizwa – centre, and Muscat (capital).

Preliminary observations have already highlighted 1) how cross-sectoral linkages can be strengthened and brought up to good practice standards within existing structures and resources in the short term; 2) what critical investments are needed for improvement in the medium term; and 3) recommended changes for a robust, comprehensive system in the long term. Preliminary findings have also shown the point at which cross-sectoral linkages quickly fray, namely after identification and assessment, and the need for unified protocols and clearly

outlined roles and responsibilities in each sector. Building on these findings, UNICEF Oman will design a model for a cross-sectoral platform for coordination, collaboration and referral and present it to government counterparts for validation and contextualization in early 2018.

UNICEF Oman and Maestral worked closely with the PMG, which is overseeing this effort, and with the government TWG, which was established to support the cross-sectoral platforms and worked with Maestral to facilitate an efficient process. TWG members shared that the project activities have taught them more about existing systems and problems and that a ripple effect is taking place within their sections to improve their own work by looking across sectoral siloes. Their participation in the field work also shed light on the need to strengthen intra-sectoral linkages, which is pertinent with such multi-faceted programmes such as IECD, child protection and inclusion of children with disabilities.

With the aim of building national capacity in early intervention, UNICEF Oman and the Government have agreed to work together to establish an accredited early intervention programme to produce a cadre of trained Omani professionals for wider coverage of services for children with disabilities.

A Training Workshop on Contemporary Practices in Early Childhood Intervention is scheduled for January 2018. Practitioners from MOH and MOSD as well as civil society centres are to assess the appropriateness and relevance of Georgetown University's programme to Oman. UNICEF Oman has proposed a task force with representatives from MOH, MOSD and early intervention centres to guide the process of importing and adapting a suitable university programme to Oman.

OUTPUT 2 3.2 A teacher training programme is developed and delivered to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools and curriculum.

Analytical statement of progress

Under this output, UNICEF Oman, with support from disability experts, worked closely with MOE to develop a professional teacher training guide for inclusive education to support on-the-job teachers in transforming their teaching and classroom management to include children with disabilities. The guide, which focuses on cycle 1 (Grades 1–4), was developed through close consultation with senior decision makers at MOE and through field testing with cycle 1 teachers and principals. The guide was shared with the education section of UNICEF Headquarters in New York for feedback and was deemed an excellent tool that could serve as a model to other countries.

The inclusive education training guide builds on the wealth of resources on inclusive education developed by UNICEF and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as well as the MENA Life Skills and Citizenship Education Initiative and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The guide is also in line with work conducted on CFE in Oman.

To support roll-out of the guide to schools in Oman, UNICEF Oman also designed a training of trainers for cycle 1 teachers during the reporting period. The training was provided to professional trainers housed at MOE's Specialised Centre for the Professional Training of Teachers.

To follow up, UNICEF Oman will work with the Specialised Centre for the Professional Training of Teachers to develop a realistic and measurable training plan to reach 50 per cent of cycle 1 teachers in regular schools over the next three years. This effort will promote inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classrooms and further enhance learning outcomes in general as teaching methods become more responsive to diverse learning. Running this training through MOE's Specialised Centre for the Professional Training of Teachers will ensure that this training becomes institutionalized as part of existing pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes in Oman.

OUTPUT 3 A Communication for Development plan (behaviour change communication plan) is developed to address social attitudes and common practices related to children with Autism and other disabilities.

Analytical statement of progress

Under this cross-cutting activity (Output 1.3, 2.3 and 3.3) UNICEF Oman will work with the Government and a specialized communications company towards the development and implementation of an SBCC programme. A key bottleneck to starting this work was the unfamiliarity of government counterparts with the SBCC approach and confusion about the objectives of the mapping and research studies required for its design. Addressing this required UNICEF Oman to take a longer-term approach to ensure government buy-in and engagement.

To ensure that the work embarks on stable footing, a mission involving the company and the UNICEF Regional C4D Advisor is planned for February 2018 in order to obtain high-level government buy-in. Delays in launching the work in the previous year indicated that it is essential to unpack and demystify what SBCC will entail and how the various sectors will be involved before work is officially commenced.

SBCC work will focus on UNICEF Oman's three programme areas of IECD, child protection and inclusion of children with disabilities. Phase I of the initiative, ending in March 2018, will aim to raise the awareness and engagement of key stakeholders across institutions and sectors on the added value of SBCC programming, concepts and efficient approaches; define the key elements of an Omani process of change, centred on local ownership, at the government, service and community levels; and build the coordination mechanisms and steering committees that will oversee subsequent phases of strategic planning and implementation.

OUTPUT 4 3.4 Evidence and analysis about the situation of children with disabilities are strengthened. Evidence on situation of children with disabilities

Analytical statement of progress

In January 2018, UNICEF Oman will start leading a national discussion about disability classification as well as the establishment of a 'National Disability Register'.

Data on children with disabilities is lacking. Improving quantitative and qualitative data will thus also empower decision makers, families and civil society to address the situation of children with disabilities. Currently each ministry uses a different classification for disability, which undermines the accuracy of data. The lack of interconnectivity between different entities' databases compounds this problem. Indeed, data collected through Oman Census 2010 indicated that only 1 per cent of children under the age of 15 had a disability; this figure has

been deemed inaccurate by government stakeholders who believe that the figure is in fact higher.

UNICEF Oman's work on a unified disability classification and the establishment of an inter-linked national registry is expected to support the Government in strengthening evidence and analysis about the situation of children with disabilities by ensuring routine data collection about the numbers of children with disabilities, as well as the coverage and quality of specialized care and education services.

The National Disability Register is expected to facilitate a more systematic, evidence-based approach to data collection; resolve classification and data issues within sectors; enhance coordination between the ministries and other actors, including private entities; and aid in delivering services. The National Disability Register is expected to feed into the Oman Administrative e-Census 2020. Work on this activity was delayed until January 2018 in order to align with the work schedule of Oman's e-Census 2020 and the technical team working on the registers.

OUTCOME 4 The identity, direction and well-being of UNICEF and staff are managed efficiently and effectively to enable the achievement of results for children in the country

OUTPUT 1 51 : Governance and systems exist to support the direction of country operations

Analytical statement of progress

For the first year of the new UNICEF Oman Country Programme 2017–2020, an annual management plan was developed with the involvement and commitment of CMT members. The plan was approved in February 2017.

UNICEF Oman's annual management plan focuses on three main management results:

- Get organized around efficient and effective governance systems;
- Put into place effective and efficient management of human resources; and
- Maintain an effective, strategic and transparent management of financial resources and define how decisions are being taken at the various levels of management.

Many topics were identified as standing items on the CMT's agenda, including monitoring of indicators and scorecards, following up on high-risk areas already recorded in the enterprise risk management portal, making security updates and checking the implementation status of the programme and support budgets.

OUTPUT 2 5.2: Stewardship of financial resources creates the conditions to pursue country operations.

Analytical statement of progress

On a monthly basis, the CMT continued to monitor the key performance indicators and red flag areas, including grant expirations, budget commitments and utilization, resource mobilization, cash flow forecast and bank optimization.

Bank reconciliation was completed, uploaded and approved in UNICEF's Virtual Integrated System of Information (VISION) by the set deadlines, with regular follow-up on the reconciling items. Monthly financial closure and review of accounts were properly performed in 2017. The existing standard operating procedures and related work flows were reviewed in line with GSSC standard operating procedures.

Likewise, UNICEF Oman revised and reconciled the VISION table of authority and VISION roles mapping table. By the end of the year, there were no roles without approved mitigation measures. The cost-saving activities initiated in 2016 continued to be implemented in 2017; they are contributing to cost reduction, but the impact on the overall operational costs remains low. By 10 December, funds utilizations stood at 100 per cent for budget management allotment.

Finance and business management progressed towards more efficiency and integration with GSSC. The handover of in-scope processes related to payments made by UNICEF Oman to the GSSC went without interruption, resulting in instant efficiency and quality gains. The simplified payment processes along with additional quality control by independent staff in Budapest and more transparent monitoring of payments progress through the GSSC case management software MyCase helped UNICEF Oman.

OUTPUT 3 Output 5.3: Human resources have the capacities, skills, morale and motivation to support country operations

Analytical statement of progress

UNICEF Oman developed a training plan, including individual and group training, monitored it quarterly and shared it with the UNICEF Regional Office. Also a batch recruitments talent group have been created for general service staff for use in the direct selection modality, allowing to considerably reduce the recruitment times in the future. The office has succeeded in recruiting two GS posts during the second quarter of 2017.

To overcome difficulty in finding a suitable candidate for a technical position, UNICEF Oman decided to freeze the post of operations officer at NO-B level from January to December 2017.

UNICEF Oman's culture around performance management is changing with advice, support and coaching including quality of e-PAS and ACHIEVE.

Document centre

Evaluation and research

| Title | Sequence Number | Type of Report |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014, Sultanate of Oman | 2017/001 | Survey |

Lessons learned

| Document type/category | Title |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Lesson Learned | Setting the stage for inclusion |

Programme documents

| Document type | Title | Name |
|---------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| AWP/RWP | Oman Rolling Work Plan 2017 - 2018 | Oman RWP 2017 - 2018.pdf |
| CPD | Country Programme Document Oman | Oman_CPD_2017-2020.pdf |