2018 Regional Office Annual Report -- South Asia Region

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Synopsis of South Asia at a Glance

One third of the world’s children live in South Asia (approximately 621 million\(^1\) of the over 1.7 billion\(^2\) population). There are staggering 340 million adolescents in South Asia – 19 per cent of the total population in the region and 30 per cent of the world’s adolescents. Nearly 130 million South Asians live in informal urban settlements. The region is highly prone to disasters including flooding, droughts, earthquakes and climate change; the region registered also refugees flows. Almost all countries score high on the “Fragile States Index”. UNICEF in the region, has an overall budget envelop of nearly US$2.6 billion (excluding humanitarian funding). There are 53 offices (eight country offices and 45 field/sub offices) and 1632 staff.

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\(^1\) Children and adolescents under 18 years
\(^2\) SOWC, 2016
## List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMP</td>
<td>Annual Management Plan</td>
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<td>ASWA</td>
<td>Accelerated Water and Sanitation for All</td>
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<td>AWP</td>
<td>Annual Work Plan</td>
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<td>BFT</td>
<td>Budget Formulation Tool</td>
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<td>C4D</td>
<td>Communication for Development</td>
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<td>COAR</td>
<td>Country Office Annual Report</td>
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<td>CCC</td>
<td>Core Commitments for Children</td>
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<td>CHW</td>
<td>Community Health Workers</td>
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<td>CO</td>
<td>Country Office</td>
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<td>CR</td>
<td>Civil Registration</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention of the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<td>DFAM</td>
<td>Division of Financial and Administrative Management</td>
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<td>EAPRO</td>
<td>East Asia and Pacific Regional Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECCE</td>
<td>Early Child Care and Education</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<td>EPP</td>
<td>Emergency Preparedness Platform</td>
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<td>FRG</td>
<td>Field Results Group</td>
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<td>GAP</td>
<td>Gender Action Plan</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GenU</td>
<td>Generation Unlimited</td>
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<td>GAVI</td>
<td>Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations</td>
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<td>GSSC</td>
<td>Global Shared Services Centre</td>
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<td>HACT</td>
<td>Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>HQ</td>
<td>Head Quarters</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technologies</td>
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<td>MHM</td>
<td>Menstrual Hygiene Management</td>
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<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey</td>
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<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<td>MPI</td>
<td>Multidimensional Poverty Index</td>
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<td>ODF</td>
<td>Open Defecation Free</td>
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<td>OOSC</td>
<td>Out-Of-School Children</td>
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<td>RJCC</td>
<td>Regional Joint Consultative Committee</td>
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<td>RHRDT</td>
<td>Regional Human Resource Development Team</td>
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<td>RO</td>
<td>Regional Office</td>
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<td>ROMP</td>
<td>Regional Office Management Plan</td>
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<td>ROAR</td>
<td>Regional Office Annual Report</td>
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<td>ROS</td>
<td>Regional Oversight System</td>
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<td>ROSA</td>
<td>Regional Office for South Asia</td>
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<td>RRRP</td>
<td>Regional Rapid Response Mechanism</td>
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<td>R-UNDG</td>
<td>Regional United Nations Development Group</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
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<td>SAARC</td>
<td>South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation</td>
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<td>SACOSAN</td>
<td>South Asia Conference on Sanitation</td>
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<td>SAR</td>
<td>South Asia Region</td>
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<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>Strategic Plan</td>
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<td>SSW</td>
<td>Social Sector Workforce</td>
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<td>SRM-</td>
<td>Security Risk Management</td>
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<td>SWB</td>
<td>Swachh Barat Mission</td>
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<td>T4D</td>
<td>Technology for Development</td>
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<td>UIS</td>
<td>UNESCO Institute of Statistics</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNDSS</td>
<td>United Nations Department of Safety and Security</td>
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<td>UNESCAP</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
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<td>WSAT</td>
<td>Women Security Awareness</td>
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<td>Training</td>
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<td>WinS</td>
<td>WASH in School Programme</td>
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Executive summary: Due to the enormous number of children in the region (621 million), any positive achievement at scale in the region contributes significantly to the global targets. To reverse the negative trends & challenges related to economics, demographics and access to social services, UNICEF ROSA galvanized the region towards addressing six regional priorities headlines and complementary results, well aligned with the current SP and national priorities. The key results achieved in 2018 are articulated around these six headline & complementary results.

To reach results at scale, ROSA’s work in 2018 included leveraging global initiatives and campaigns (eg: Every Child Alive campaign); establishing strategic partnerships regionally/globally with public and private sector (eg: SAARC; partnership with Unilever, P&G and Lixil; partnership with Education Commission); generating evidence and knowledge platforms; improving governance and capacity, all aimed at facilitating COs to reach results at scale, and to invest strategically on children.

As result of UNICEF and its partners contributions, numerous programmatic results for children have been achieved. Striking progress has been the progress in India, through the Swachh Barat Mission (SBM) where great gains were achieved on reducing Open Defecation in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal and Bhutan programmes resulted in over 67 million additional people living in 55,136 newly certified Open Defecation Free (ODF) communities. ROSA will leverage this experience to engage and stimulate other countries to reach results at scale in the other headline results.

Progress was made in the fully immunized children where the evidence showed overall positive immunization coverage trends in South Asia with significant drop in the number of un-immunized children, particularly in India, Pakistan and Nepal. Further, ROSA continued to support emergencies in the region, mainly the Rohingya crisis, now shifting to more integrated development and humanitarian programme; the RO supported closely the Bangladesh CO to develop and roll-out the “Learning Competencies Framework and Approach” to reach over 385,000 Rohingya children. SAR overall security compliance improved from average 30% to 98% in 2018. ROSA spearheaded the development of Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) to address social inclusion gaps; that resulted in influencing countries, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, to use MPIs for budgetary allocation for children.

In the area of education, factoring in demographic trends and projected economic growth between 2015 and 2030, it was estimated that the total education spending in South Asia needed to reach most SDG4 targets in terms of access and learning from pre-primary to post-secondary education, will need to increase from a regional total of nearly USD 100 Billion in 2015, to at least USD 385 Billion by 2030.

To support gender responsive programming, gender capacity building, reinforcing gender mainstreaming in programmes was a key focus in 2018; ROSA trained 300 staff across COs on gender analysis, 16 Gender Focal Points were certified as gender experts; a practical Gender Toolkit guidance across regional headline results was developed and disseminated; so as were Gender and Humanitarian guidance, Gender responsive adolescent health framework and a Regional Gender Strategy focused on the value of the girl child.

Innovation has been fully integrated into supporting programme delivery, monitoring and reporting and has demonstrated some success in 2018. Real-time RapidPro monitoring of measles immunization campaign in Pakistan showed a similar coverage of 92% (34 million children reached) to external coverage evaluation; these findings can make significant cost saving in the future by only real-time coverage evaluation. Recognizing the power of social media in influencing and winning the support for the cause of children, ROSA significantly guided social media work within the COs for growth and while directly reaching more than 277 million and engaging 133,000 every day throughout 2018, via its own channels. Such effort will continue in 2019.
To improve efficiency and effectiveness, ROSA undertook two simplification exercises, a programme process simplification in small offices and business transactions review; these resulted in galvanizing the entire organization to take global actions through establishing a working group to implement the recommendations. As a result of skills building effort to 75 staff from the eight (8) countries combined with close oversight from the RO the KPIs improved between 2017 and 2018. Further, for the first time, all COs are HACT compliant.

Due to the progress of graduation to Middle-Income Country (MICs) status of four countries (India, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan) in the region, mobilizing external resources is increasingly constrained, requiring a strategy toward domestic resources and programmatic shift to upstream work, leveraging domestic resources, private sector, and non-traditional donors.

I. Situation update: regional trends that affect children and women

**Economic trends:** Despite having one of the highest rates of economic growth, South Asia (SA) continues to have some of the largest SDG deficits in the world next to Sub-Saharan Africa. Over 300 million are multi-dimensionally poor. Although rising, the allocations for social protection in South Asia remain amongst the lowest in the world at 0.2% of GDP. In most countries, child-specific budget allocations remain critically low. In Bangladesh, which has one of the best analyses of child-focused budgeting, the total investment in children remains at 2.5% of GDP. This places UNICEF in a continued role to advocate for social policy changes that would lead to improvement in the situation of children and their mothers across the region.

**Geo-Political trends:** The tumultuous geo-political landscape of the region caused by competing priorities between India-China and India-Pakistan and rising militancy along Afghanistan-Pakistan border and within Afghanistan continue to hold back the full potential of the region.

The elections in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Maldives, while they have slowed the engagement with governments, were opportunities for UNICEF to position itself as key collaborator with the government to promote the children agenda. For example, the engagement with the new governments in the Maldives and Pakistan resulted in the development of child friendly strategies in both countries.

The increased insecurity along Afghanistan-Pakistan border and elsewhere in Afghanistan and the continued resistance of many under-served communities, resulted in UNICEF house-to-house immunization campaigns impossible in specific communities. Overcoming this challenge is imperative for the success of polio eradication. Thus, despite the immense coordinated efforts with Pakistan, Afghanistan and the RO, 2018 saw an upsurge of polio cases, reaching a total of 29 cases (21 in Afghanistan and 10 in Pakistan).

**Technology trends:** Technology has drastically changed the way we communicate, especially evident in the use of social media. 2018 saw a tremendous growth in ROSA's voice and community on social media and a message from UNICEF appeared on someone’s phone, computer, in their living room or on their bus, 300 million times. South Asia is at a critical moment where internet penetration is rapidly increasing and competition for social media advertising placements is low, representing a unique opportunity for delivery real time services to children and communities.

**Social trends:** New-born deaths account for 60% of the under-five deaths in the region, compared to 44% globally. Although the new-born mortality in South Asia continues to drop, the current pace of progress will not permit the region to attain SDG targets unless substantial investments are made to
strenthen quality of care, especially at the primary health care level. Of the 23 million children not fully immunized worldwide, more than one third lives in South Asia.

The incidence of child brides has declined by more than a third, from nearly 50% a decade ago to 30% today. India, Nepal and Pakistan have seen the most significant reduction in child marriages. Yet the region remains home to the largest number of child brides with more than 40% of the global burden, in India particularly.

Only two-thirds of children between the ages of 36 to 59 months are developmentally on track. With the current trajectory and policy interventions, South Asia is likely to miss the projected SDG target for reducing the number of stunted children by 6.6 million. This will contribute to a significant loss of human capital. About 35.7 million children are wasted and severely wasted in the region.

While great strides were made in achieving universal primary education, South Asia is still home to 28 million out-of-school-children (OOSC): 10 million at primary level, and 18 million at lower secondary level and 45% of primary-aged school children school are not learning the basics reading and mathematics. While there has been notable progress in improving access and learning levels in 2018, it is estimated that only one in four South Asian youths are on track to gain secondary-level skills necessary to succeed in the global economy. This leads to high-level of unemployment for tertiary-level graduates and large informal economies with young working poor in vulnerable employment.

The region enters a critical demographic window, “early dividend” with countries experiencing a relative increase in the working age population, low child dependency ratios, and a higher proportion of working age population. Six out of eight countries in SA (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan) are currently in this phase. One of the biggest challenge in the region now, is how to create adequate number of jobs for the millions of youth entering into the labour work force every year as well as to improve the skills and employment prospects for the millions of young working poor. This has potential negative consequences for social harmony and constitutes potential conflict driver, if not addressed appropriately. With over half of the region urbanized, most of these youths will be a part of 130 million people living in slums around the cities. They are likely to be absorbed into informal sector which now comprises almost 70% of the economy and generates most of the jobs.

South Asia is projected to close its gender gap in 70 years, according to the 2018 Global Gender Gap Report4. In the South Asia region, Bangladesh comes top Gender Gap Index at #48, followed by Sri Lanka (#100), Nepal (#105), India (#108), Maldives (#113), and Bhutan (#122), Pakistan (#148). These inequalities are manifested across the life cycle – from conception, to birth, to childhood, adolescence through to adult life. Sex selective abortions, high maternal mortality rate, high prevalence of anemia among women and adolescent girls, highest number of out-of-school girls, high prevalence rate of gender-based violence and child marriage, early pregnancy, unsafe menstrual hygiene management practices and heavy burden of unpaid and care work remain key gender challenges for girls and women in the region. Looking forward, regional work on gender across the headline results must consider critical gender barriers and their

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3 For more, refer to World Bank 2018, South Asia Economic Focus, Spring 2018: Jobless Growth?
4 Ranking of Global Gender Gap Index in 2018 Global Gender Gap Report is published by the World Economic Forum every year. The report’s Gender Gap Index ranks countries according to calculated gender gap between women and men in four key areas: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment to gauge the state of gender equality in a country. The report measures women’s disadvantage compared to men, and is not strictly a measure of equality. The 2018 report covers 149 countries meaning that Bangladesh ranked the top in the region this year in terms of reducing gender gap.
underlying causes, especially the role of gender norms, harmful practices and patriarchal values, that privilege men’s and boys’ socio-economic value, their access to opportunities and resources over that of women and girls.

In addressing an expanding young population entering the workforce, UNICEF ROSA commissioned a study: “Developing Skills in Youth to Succeed in the Evolving South Asian Economy”. The study will generate the evidence on current and future trends in the job force and what is currently happening in the youth skills eco-system including via secondary education, while taking into consideration the voices of the affected population (youth) and practical solutions for scaling up results together with the government and the private sector. This evidence will feed into South Asia Youth Skills & Solutions Forum to be organized by ROSA and in partnership with the Global Business Coalition for Education in 2019. Through this effort, ROSA is localizing Generation Unlimited initiative in the region.

**Humanitarian Situations:** Conflicts, humanitarian crises and man-made disasters continued to affect the region in 2018, particularly in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Due to conflict-induced internal and cross-border displacements, 9.3 million people in Afghanistan and two million in Pakistan were displaced and in need of assistance. The situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan was further hampered by drought, affecting more than three million Afghans which is likely to rise to ten million in 2019. In Bangladesh, since 2017, over one million Rohingya refugees have fled Myanmar to refugee camps around Cox’s Bazaar. The humanitarian crisis has gradually stabilized in 2018 and living conditions in the camps have improved. Meanwhile in India, the Kerala floods left more than 23 million people affected, including 7 million children, and displacing over 200,000 people.

To reverse these social trends, UNICEF ROSA has made concerted efforts to align countries to collectively achieve the regional headline & complementary results (see details in text box).

**Textbox 1: Six Priority Headline Results for Children and Young People in South Asia, 2018-2021**

- **Save new-born:** 500,000 new-born lives are saved
- **Stop stunting:** 10 million fewer children with stunted growth and development
- **Every child learns:** 10 million previously out-of-school girls and boys are enrolled in pre-primary, primary and secondary and learning
- **End child marriage:** 500,000 child marriages are averted
- **Stop open defecation:** 148 million fewer individuals practice open defecation
- **Eradicate polio:** No new polio case

**II. Key results achieved against the ROMP**

This section describes the results against each of the goals of the SP, including the change strategies, and the enablers.

**Goal Area 1: Every child survives and thrives**

ROSA provided to COs technical support, quality assurance and evidence generation activities. Overall positive immunization coverage trends in South Asia with significant drop in the number of un-immunized children, particularly in India, Pakistan and Nepal. Effective and efficient management of GAVI portfolio in five ROSA countries (Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal) including USD 4.5 million for Targeted Country Assistance to fund EPI staff of five country offices in addition to providing technical assistance on the resource mobilization for health systems strengthening for Pakistan and Afghanistan. Technical support to Pakistan on the implementation of a successful measles campaign reaching 34 million children aged 9 months to 5 years (92 percent coverage). In addition, technical support for Rohingya emergency response in Bangladesh for measles and diphtheria outbreaks. International vaccine and cold
chain management course was developed and delivered to eight ROSA and two EAPRO countries, resulting in 32 immunization supply chain practitioners’ capacity strengthened. ROSA is exploring with GAVI on feasibility of establishing a regional centre of excellence for longer term needs. Technical support was provided for the successful submission of cold chain equipment optimization platform of GAVI of more than USD 10 million for Afghanistan and Bangladesh. RO support to Bhutan led to the mobilization of USD 0.3 million from Asian Development Bank (ADB) to purchase 183 units of cold chain equipment and 183 vaccine carriers.

In 2018, UNICEF ROSA provided support and oversight to Afghanistan and Pakistan COs to eradicate polio transmission. ROSA’s close involvement, resulted in a strengthened programming in the key districts still harbouring the polio virus, in an improved cross-border collaboration between the two countries with the development of Northern and Southern corridor action plans, and cross-sectoral programming plans in high-risk districts.

UNICEF ROSA amplified and leveraged UNICEF’s global Every Child Alive campaign to support the region’s pledge to reduce the annual one million new-born deaths and one million stillbirths. Seven countries have signed up. Each has developed multi-sectorial plans, aiming to sensitize the public through social media and social policy advocacy. ROSA’s key support is through developing solid investment cases that COs could use in their resource mobilization efforts. Given that the top three causes of new-born mortality and morbidity remain prematurity, intrapartum complications and severe infections, RO focussed on providing in-country technical support missions and regional trainings of trainers, to strengthened national capacities to scale-up the quality of perinatal care and the care of small and sick new-borns. Through the Kangaroo Mother care initiative, a training promoting new born care practices was held in June. This resulted in seven countries who have developed plans to kick-start these practices in their countries.

Despite limited resources in the HIV programming, ROSA supported COs to strengthen their partners’ capacity to advance the elimination of mother to child transmission. The Health and Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) section worked jointly to assess the needs of adolescents and youth key populations, in HIV programming and mental health.

UNICEF embarked on a new partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to build a technical and organizational leadership of regional platforms in SA on women’s nutrition and early childhood nutrition. UNICEF’s Stop Stunting agenda brought attention to the maternal nutrition as a driver of child’s growth and development in early life and women’s well-being. It commissioned evidence reviews and analyses on maternal nutrition in South Asia which confirmed that: (i) children born with a low birth weight are more likely to be wasted and severely wasting; (ii) no country in the region has fully operationalized the 2016 WHO recommendations on the nutritional care of pregnant women; (iii) a range of barriers acting at individual, household and health service delivery level affect whether pregnant women receive nutrition interventions. Findings were shared at a joint SAARC and UNICEF Regional Conference on “Stop Stunting | Power of Maternal Nutrition” in Kathmandu in May 2018. Attended by 120 government representatives, academics, UN partners and CSOs from all South Asian countries, it resulted in a Call for Action to scale-up the nutritional care of women during antenatal and postpartum care. UNICEF ROSA also mobilized global experts to review the emerging evidence on wasting in South Asia and its implications on policy and programmes response.

5 Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India.
6 Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Maldives.
Both health and nutrition sections supported the ongoing Rohingya crisis and established an implementation research to document and strengthen the health response. Strengthening primary healthcare, with a strong community base for the delivery of health, nutrition and ECD interventions, is a priority for UNICEF ROSA; the findings of an evaluation commissioned in 2018 Community Health Workers in all eight countries will provide evidence to further work in 2019 and beyond.

Goal Area 2: Every child learns
UNICEF ROSA with COs have significantly increased the capacities of government and partners towards ensuring 10 million previously out-of-school children are enrolled in school and learning by 2021 through contributing to cross-sectoral ECD work on early learning standards as well as working in the areas of adolescent education/skills, education systems support and EdTech innovations.

In 2018, in partnership with the Education Commission, ROSA convened the Learning Generation Conference (in May) which galvanized greater political will by South Asian leaders to accelerate results in learning at the pace of the fastest improving countries. ROSA’s work with the Commission resulted in developing country projections on the investments required to meet Education SDG 4 targets. Those projections are now used to trigger high-level discussions on sustainable finance for education (Afghanistan, Pakistan) not only with Governments, but with partners (DFID, UNESCO, SIDA etc) and donors (World Bank, USAID, Government of Sweden etc) as well, or on financial needs by sub-sector, like in Bhutan or Nepal for pre-primary education for example. Factoring in demographic trends and projected economic growth from 2015 and 2030, we estimate that the total education spending in South Asia needed to reach most SDG4 targets in terms of access and learning from pre-primary to post-secondary education, will need to increase from a regional total of nearly USD 100 Billion in 2015, to at least USD 385 Billion by 2030. For Bhutan and India, if domestic investments in education increase at the same pace as economic growth, then financial needs for education could be mostly met from domestic sources only.

In June, the first ECCE (Early Child Care and Education) forum in South Asia was held in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Regional Network on Early Childhood. Over 750 delegates from 43 countries signed up for Kathmandu Statement of Action in support of ECCE. Drawing on HQ’s Pre-primary Conceptual Framework, ROSA supported the roll-out of the strengthened pre-primary systems in Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka along with a regional mapping of early learning initiatives.

ROSA supported the scale-up of quality Secondary Education and youth skills in India and Bangladesh; initiated a robust mapping of youth skills solutions with the opportunity to scale through public-private sector partnership. UNESCO, ROSA and EAPRO organized the annual Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education: "Transforming Learning: Meeting the Skills Demand to Achieve the SDGs” which convened government, partners and youth leaders resulting in the SAARC road-map to advance youth skills. Through collaboration with the World Bank, ROSA advanced improved learning metrics in the region during the South Asia Conference on "Using Large-Scale Assessments to Improve Teaching and Learning” leading to the agreement to create a regional knowledge and capacity building platform. ROSA worked closely with Bangladesh CO to develop and roll-out the Learning Competencies Framework and Approach to reach over 385,000 Rohingya children.

Looking back on the year, some valuable lessons surfaced. When working with Governments on costing education sector plans and efficient financing, ROSA reiterates the importance of regular engagement with COs to sustain momentum and adapt to changes. Progress on ECD requires sustained inter-ministerial commitment and multi-sectoral partnerships. Greater private sector engagement is needed to finance investments for youth and deliver scalable solutions.

Goal Area 3: Every Child is protected from violence and exploitation
The region averted 2 million child marriages, surpassing the 2014-2017 goal four-fold, as revealed in UNFPA-UNICEF evidence review7. ROSA’s key achievements are solid evidence generation and knowledge-informed programmes to strengthen the social service workforce, child protection legal framework, and regional collaboration on civil registration and migration in South Asia.

In 2018, ROSA delivered reform assistance in partnership with the UN and other actors. A Social Service Workforce (SSW) baseline study completed with the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, revealed a vast SSW coverage in SA ranging from 781 per 100,000 child population in Maldives to 0.34 in West Bengal. The study identified countries with evidence on how to improve SSW coverage gaps. South-South cooperation was promoted during a UNICEF-ESCAP meeting with civil registration (CR) officials resulting in a South Asia Civil Registration (CR) network and it confirmed that CR is required for effective civil identification. As input to the network and regional action plan to improve CR, ROSA reviewed the CR systems in all countries, identifying gaps in the registration process and identifying concrete examples for cross country learnings. With 10,000,000 immigrants in SA, systems that allow safe and protective cross border movements and communication between authorities are important for the safety making this journey. UNICEF hosted a meeting with The Hague Conference on International Private Law and government child welfare and immigration officials to discuss solutions for cross-border migration including trafficking.

Support to COs and creating knowledge platforms remained central in ROSA’s work. ROSA continued to deliver technical support to COs on the use of ICT in CR, social welfare institutional reform, child labour studies, and child marriage programme documents. ROSA enhanced knowledge management by establishing a website on child protection, disability, and a UNICEF-UNFPA site for child marriage, consisting of research articles and learning opportunities. Eleven e-bulletins capturing country successes were disseminated and six webinars held. UNICEF initiated a UNFPA-UNICEF evidence series on child marriage. The regional network meeting focused on the SSW, data and communication.

New lessons gleaned from a UNFPA-UNICEF evidence review exposed nuances that further inform programming. One such finding is that poverty may not be driving force behind child marriage, but the perception of future poverty does. Another finding indicated that encouraging girls’ education may not reduce her risk of marrying as a child but has a likely impact on her children. ROSA and partners also continue to address other harmful practices such as chaupadi8.

Goal Area 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment
In 2018, Governments in South Asia made reducing open defecation a priority, and several countries established national targets, programmes and budgeted plans. Particularly striking has been the progress in India, through the Swachh Barat Mission (SBM) where great gains were achieved on reducing Open Defecation in Pakistan. Afghanistan, Nepal and Bhutan programmes resulted in over 67 million additional people living in 55,136 newly certified Open Defecation Free (ODF) communities.

Strong political advocacy and support were fundamental to reducing open defecation, at SACOSAN VII all Ministers committed to the Islamabad declaration with ten action points for acceleration actions on

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7 Report is undergoing final edits before publication.
8 Chaupadi refers to a centuries old tradition that banishes females during their menstruation period from the house. In Nepal, ban was imposed by the Supreme Court in 2004, it is a practice that is still heavily widespread in the mid and western regions of Nepal. Source:
sanitation in South Asia. The Government of India organized an international and south-south learning event in September - the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Conference to share their knowledge and learnings from the SBM where Ministers and representatives from 64 countries.

Water quality and water scarcity remained a key area of concern and action throughout 2018 with many countries focused their interventions on monitoring and improving water safety and linking interventions to enhanced climate change and risk-informed programming.

Data and evidence remained central to WASH in the region including the establishment of the SDG baseline targets for WinS, country snapshots and a regional synthesis of Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) and the development of a database and atlas for WASH across the region. Baseline surveys were initiated in three ASWA II countries and a number of key publications were produced and disseminated.

New opportunities for working in partnership were explored with Unilever, P&G and Lixil; and collaboration with the Asian Infrastructure Investment bank in four countries (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India) to look at blended financing opportunities to leverage results at scale for children in urban environments. Guidance was developed for COs on working with the Private Sector in WASH and, a market assessment was launched in three countries (Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal).

One important program reflection is the importance of political will and partnership in achieving results at scale was demonstrated throughout the region and the results on reducing Open Defecation demonstrates this especially in India. A new social norm has been established and ROSA will need to adapt its programming approach to stabilise and reinforce this over the coming years.

**Goal Area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life**

ROSA continued to address critical policy gaps in South Asia. With substantial progress on evidence building on child Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI), a comprehensive report is being developed. Countries continued to make progress on Child Focused poverty work including an open opportunity in Afghanistan, where the President issued instructions to use MPI for budgetary allocations. Good progress in MPI was made in three states in India (Maharashtra, Chattisgarh, Gujrat), Pakistan province of Punjab, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Public Finance for Children got a boost with work in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

ROSA supported country offices in multiple ways: with Bangladesh CO to identify underlying causes of the lack of domestic resources, which resulted in redirecting unutilized allocations into investing in a Universal Child Grant scheme; further in Sri Lanka, the government agreed to increase allocations for Early Childhood Development; and in Nepal and Bhutan, MPI influenced the allocations at the subnational level. Building on the experience of Public Expenditures Reviews in several countries, a Regional Strategy for Public Finance is being drafted to elevate UNICEF engagement at high-level policy. ROSA leveraged funding throughout all COs to initiate a crowd sources study on Social Protection in the region to be completed in 2019. The section led and authored two research papers including one for parliamentarians in Dhaka to advocate for children.

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9 Menstrual Hygiene Management: the challenges facing students and nuns in Bhutan; Menstrual Hygiene Practices in Nepalese’s Schools and communities; An Appraisal of WASH sustainability studies in Pakistan; The Bangladesh ASWA Approach to Drinking Water Supply NS and UNICEF’s Regional Urban WASH Strategic Framework for South Asia.

Humanitarian Response

As South Asia is highly prone to humanitarian situations, human-caused and natural disasters, ROSA’s contribution in the area of humanitarian coordination leadership, strategic vision, resource mobilization, evidence and knowledge generation and deployment of staff to respond to emergencies are critical for the countries in the region to respond the needs of affected children.

In 2018, UNICEF’s ROSA continued to provide overall humanitarian coordination and technical support to COs and partners to fulfil the Core Commitments for Children (CCC) in Humanitarian Action. Thus, UNICEF dialogued with the SAARC Cooperation Disaster Management Centre to promote the participation of children and the application of the CCC in national disaster risk reduction, response policies and strategies. ROSA contributed to the revision of the CCCs and core humanitarian workstreams such as Accountability to Affected Population, Cash in Emergencies, PSEA, Preparedness and Resilience framework development. Eight country case studies in core humanitarian themes were developed aiming to better apply best practices and lessons learned from the field.

The regional humanitarian strategy continued to assure immediate support to COs in delivering humanitarian assistance and strengthening humanitarian capacities to ensure preparedness for timely, effective and quality responses; further complemented by enhancing inter-agency coordination and building skill-sets at the regional, national and sub-national levels to enhance risk informed programming and disaster risk reduction (eg: Nepal and Bhutan). The new global Emergency Preparedness Platform (EPP) was launched and rolled out in all eight countries in the region. Over 100 UNICEF staff were trained on it and its procedures which helped UNICEF India and Afghanistan respectively, to quickly mobilize staff and partners to respond to emergencies. Through the establishment of the SAR Regional Rapid Response Mechanism (RRRM), 35 UNICEF out of 65 recruited staff in the eight COs were trained. This enhances regional response capacity and ensure that UNICEF COs could deliver timely and quality emergency responses.

ROSA led the Global Emergency Coordination of the L3 cross border response to the Rohingyas crisis bringing together COs, ROSA & EAPRO and HQ to ensured strategic, timely and adequate assistance. An evaluation of UNICEF’s Rohingyas Crisis response was undertaken, and a management response being developed will contribute to further rationalization and prioritization of UNICEF work in 2019. In addition, ROSA supported COs during rapid-onset emergencies, such as the flooding in Kerala, with rapid funding and development of an EPF to kick start response to 868,000 children with psychosocial support, 500,000 people with access to safe water and 580,000 people with access to WASH facilities and rolled out of the community engagement platform and promoting accountability to the affected populations during the recovery process.
Change Strategies

This section elaborates how the change strategies of the SP plan are deployed in ROSA.

Programming excellence for at-scale results for children: 2018 was the first year that ROSA Headline and Complementary results were implemented under the ROMP (2018-2021). Throughout the year, multiple multi-sectoral discussions resulted in a monitoring framework for these results. Programme review & discussions fostered further collaboration, particularly on social policy, youth, skills & employment amongst others and knowledge management.

The RO started exploring alternatives and possible approaches to undertake small sample surveys to give real time data to gauge real-time progress. ROSA commenced work on analysing the SMQs from 2014 to date to come up with trend progresses on the intermediate results, which will be reflected in a regional annual progress report. One of the important feature of the monitoring framework is the complementary results consisting of set of intermediate results that lead ultimately to the achievement of headline results (eg: maternal anaemia is a complementary result for maternal nutrition).

Gender-responsive programming: Gender capacity building and reinforcing gender mainstreaming in programmes were a key programming focus in 2018. ROSA trained 300 staff across COs on gender analysis, 16 Gender Focal Points were certified credentialed as gender experts; to strengthen gender responsive programming, a practical Gender Toolkit guidance across regional headline results for (Health, Nutrition, Education, Child marriage, WASH and ECD) was developed and disseminated; as were Gender and Humanitarian guidance, Gender responsive adolescent health framework and a Regional Gender Strategy focused on the value of the girl child. Cross-Regional collaboration was enhanced through gender socialization to frame results under SP Goal 5 and multi-regional gender data report on SDG gender data gaps, in addition to gender integration based on UNICEF Gender Action in country programme.

Winning support for the cause of children from decision-makers and the wider public: Overall, ROSA contributed substantially to influence and win support for the cause of children. ROSA also guided social media work within the COs for growth and while directly reaching more than 277 million and engaging 133,000 every day throughout 2018, via its own channels. ROSA supported the COs on social media, media and advocacy work to reach more influencers and stakeholders with strategic content on child/youth issues. Further, ROSA trained 32 Communication and Health teams on an integrated advocacy

**Text Box 3: Summary of key progress on headline results**

1. **Save new born**
   - Percentage of women aged 15–49 attended at least once during pregnancy by skilled health personnel (ANC1) is increasing significantly in all countries.
   - WHO/IGME estimates shows, the probability of dying between birth and exactly 5 years of age, expressed per 1,000 live births is dropping significantly across all countries, so as the proportion of live births attended by skilled health personnel.

2. **Fully immunized and eliminate polio**
   - In the immunization side, progress have been registered, the data at national level showing fully immunization at 80% and plus in some countries; however, on the polio side, there is still lot of effort to put forward to reach our goal (see below note specific to polio)

3. **Every child learns**
   - Out-school children in primary school age is decreased in 7 countries (India, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh), while stagnating or increase in Afghanistan because of worsening conflict droughts and floods. Nevertheless, good news is observed in lower secondary school where the pattern is a decrease in all countries except in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

4. **Preventing child marriage**
   - The MICS-DHS and recent censuses in all countries concur that the child marriage is dropping in all the countries as measured to percentage of women 20-24 years old who were married or in union before age 18; while stagnating or increasing the others. UNICEF and UNFPA has been key driving force to support the government in the region in this area.

5. **Reducing stunting**
   - According to the estimates of the HH/Nutrition surveys (UNICEF, WHO, World Bank) Joint child malnutrition estimates (JME), the prevalence of stunting is decreasing in all countries except in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

6. **Eliminating open defecation**
   - Number of people in the communities that have been certified free of open defecation in the reporting year only, shows that with UNICEF contribution, and government leadership south Asia is making a substantial progress with India driving the overall progress.
approach that could be used universally but focused on the Headline Result of Save New-borns. Each participating COs developed a country-specific advocacy plans for saving new-borns, which will be implemented in 2019.

Developing and leveraging resources and partnerships for children: In 2018, a forum in Bangladesh in 2018 gathered 35 parliamentarians which resulted country-specific plans to address children issues; UNICEF supported the countries in the implementation of their workplans. Furthermore, ROSA signed an MOU with SAARC which translated into several regional advocacy events on children. Several sectoral events and partnerships (education, health, nutrition, WASH) that resulted in advocacy and leveraging resources for children took place, such as: (i) Joint SAARC and UNICEF Regional Conference on “Stop Stunting | Power of Maternal Nutrition” in May 2018 resulting in a Call for Action to scale-up the nutritional care of women during antenatal and postpartum care; (ii) a UNICEF-ESCAP meeting with civil registration; (iii) Education Commission & ROSA convened the Learning Generation Conference; (iv) partnership were explored with Unilever, P&G and Lixil. For further information on other partnerships (sectoral refer results above).

United Nations working together: UNICEF participated actively to the R-UNDG strategic collaboration, including but not limited to regular overall and sectoral coordination meetings (eg: nutrition). To address the polio resurgence and review joint actions, the Regional Director of WHO and UNICEF RD undertook a joint mission to Pakistan and renewed commitment to maintain open communication to foster good avenue to tackle polio. ROSA together with UNDP, UN-Women and UNFPA contributed to the identification of accelerators in the six areas of the common chapter. As UNDAF convening agency for Bhutan, UNICEF coordinated the development and quality assurance with other agencies in country and regional levels that resulted to a quality framework. As part of the Regional UN Peer Support Group, ROSA contributed to the quality assurance of various UNDAF (eg: Bhutan, Philippine Myanmar), the regional peer support retreat, and the new UNDAF guidelines. UNICEF actively contributed to the internal and inter-agency discussions on the on-going UNDS reform through the R-UNDG. As part of the global programme on child marriage, UNFPA-UNICEF partnership in the region has been very active, which contributed to avert over two million marriages. The engagement of UNICEF and UN-ESCAP resulted to the identification of key action plan for SDGs monitoring and joint support missions to support in country workshop for statistical capacity building, and which will be taken forward in 2019.

Fostering innovation in programming and advocacy for children: 2018 saw a significant effort T4D and ICT initiatives to deliver programme results at regional and country levels. Focus was on several approaches: (i) scaled up RapidPRO in Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan and Humanitarian Performance Monitoring (HPM) in Rohinyga crisis. This resulted in the Child Grants Distribution monitoring in Nepal (69,000 children); Real-time RapidPro monitoring of measles immunization campaign in Pakistan showed a coverage 34 million children reached, which is similar to external coverage evaluation findings; (ii) engagement with sectors (eg: EdTech to identify best practices in reaching out-of-school children and teachers at-risk areas; regional WASH innovation Challenge); (iii) engagement with BRAC on the innovation challenge and exploration of U-Report pilots, dialogue with ICIMOD on T4D options to engage with young people. To foster integration of T4D in programme planning, ROSA developed the regional T4D and ICT governance mechanism, as formalized in a RMT meeting.

Using the power of evidence to drive change for children: In 2018, UNICEF played a crucial role in defining the types of data required to monitor progress on child rights. ROSA promoted the generation and use of evidence through Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), in Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and
Pakistan. As results of a UNICEF leverage, Pakistan government started the implementation of decentralized MICS, fully funded by the provincial government, and with technical support from UNICEF. The results have been endorsed by the governments and being now used for provincial and national sectoral plans.

ROSA supported the national statistical offices through skills building in data management, SDGs monitoring, and the government to implement MPI to assess household and child poverty (Bhutan, India, Nepal, Afghanistan). Further, a regional strategy on KM is being developed, to ensure adequate dissemination and use of evidence generated.

South Asia allocated 0.65% of its overall programme expenditure to evaluation, which is below the one percent benchmark; only India and Nepal met the benchmark. Regarding coverage, Bhutan and Maldives did not conduct any evaluation in the past 3 years. Overall, SA conducted nine evaluations among which four evaluations were rated “Satisfactory”, one “Fair” while the remaining four are yet to be rated. The regional evaluation strategy was revised and extended to 2021; the evaluation network devised approaches to implement the commitments of the UNICEF Evaluation Policy (2018). Evidence frameworks were finalized for all six regional headlines results to coordinate the research, evaluation, and studies needed to fill evidence gaps.

Enablers

**Responsive, transparent and accountable internal governance:** ROSA initiated a platform to discuss operational issues and provide solutions based on best practices ensuring internal control for an effective and efficient operations support to Programmes. RO also provided input for improvement for the roll-over of Budget Formulation Tool (BFT); two COs and ROSA attended the BFT-Users Acceptance Test. Further ROSA Operations processed eight mail poll PBRs from five (5) COs, supported four (4) countries on audited related issues (India and Bangladesh for their audit exit meetings, addressing audit recommendations in Pakistan and Afghanistan).

ROSA supported the COs to create and manage Strategic Implementing Partnerships and Collaborative Relationships, for an effective, efficient, and risk-responsive use of resources that meets UNICEF's accountabilities. As a result, for the first time, all COs in South Asia have met the HACT minimum requirements.

All required committees (RJCC, RHRDT, CRC…) have been fully functional during the year. The RD has exercised her oversight function throughout the year, through in-country visits or virtually, on strategic moments and when need arises.

Since endorsement by the RMT of the regional security strategy, South Asia overall security compliance improved from average 30% to 98%. The mainstreaming pillar follows operationalizing ROS (Regional Oversight System) with the introduction of a RBM approach to security and the introduction of KPI’s which were agreed to be included in the ROAR’s and COAR’s. Implementation of the ROS is in its final stage in close coordination with IT section. Capacity building and mainstreaming were implemented during numerous field mission. Three COs security professionals (Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan) completed the UNDSS Trainer Development Course enabling them to facilitate country capacity building programme. An extensive Women Security Awareness Training (WSAT) compliance project following a security training needs assessment by the RO and as part of Security Risk Management Measures (SRM-M) was initiated in India.
Results-oriented, efficient and effective management: To foster a results-oriented culture within ROSA, the office has maintained regular weekly meetings with the heads of sections and programmatic reviews at mid-year and end year attended by all staff members. Always results focussed, these meetings allowed the team to track progress. In addition, two regional management team meetings (RMT) took place, with the participation of HQs division and distinguished guest speakers. In 2018, a mini RMT took place in Mumbai where the RMT members had an opportunity to exchange with the Executive Director. To embed a culture of results in the region, UNICEF invested in its human capital. The RBM skills building benefitted 130 staff in 2018, raising the cumulative number of skilled staff to 1,000. To improve ways in future skills building, ROSA in collaboration with HQ/FRG initiated an assessment of the current investment and ROSA initiated the RBM skills building for partners to optimize results culture among its partners.

As results of skills building effort to 75 staff across the eight (8) countries in the region, in the use of Insight, technical support and quality assurance from RO to countries, friendly reminders monitoring reports to COs and commitment from RO and CO to see improvements on their performance, the KPIs has improved between 2017 and 2018. The findings of an independent quality review of AMP and AWP of all eight (8) countries to be finalized in 2019 aims to support the COs to further address the areas of improvement, and to foster a programme excellent throughout the region.

As result of an excellent collaboration between ROSA, FRG and GSSC, two simplifications exercises have been completed in 2018, respectively programme processes and business transaction simplification. These exercises resulted in the establishment of a working group to review the findings, in addition to other efforts. DED, FRG are spearheading the group, with participation of ROSA, FRG, DFAM, GSSC and Supply Division. Reports is accessible in the following link: Simplification Report Bhutan commences their new CPD in 2019 and ROSA supported the CO in developing the new programme that builds on the ‘One UN’ approach.

Staff capacity to drive change for children: The regional workforce gender balance has improved in 2018, with Bangladesh joining as a parity country with 51:49 overall female: male ratio following a focused recruitment strategy. Two COs, Pakistan and Afghanistan, need support to make progress. Recruitment timelines were met by both CO and RO. ROSA approval and validation targets were exceeded with an average of 48 hours. Programme countries are still overrepresented across the regional workforce. (57:43). ROSA leads in tackling prevention of harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority, with 100 % completion of online mandatory learning, rollout of in-person and webinar-based learning, and management masterclass harassment management module for mid-level managers. Overall, 3,400 training units were offered, with 50:50 gender balance in participation. Further the introduction of the region-wide Staff Exchange programme, benefited 22 staff on-the-job learning skills, with exceedingly positive feedback. All COs in the region have developed action plans to implement the recommendations of the Global Staff Survey and pulse survey.
Versatile, safe and secure knowledge and information systems: ROSA supported COs and RO sections in the development and implementation of solutions to address identified knowledge and information system needs in 2018. This included assistance to the development of a regional Child Protection knowledge portal, updates and enhancements to the SharePoint or feasibility assessment of using a different platform allowing easier access for external stakeholders (eg: South Asia Parliamentarians). Additionally, solutions to automate or simplify business processes and provide more innovative ways of sharing data were also developed, including but not limited to: HR Training Database to track information on trainings such as cost, types of trainings, individual profiles; a mobile South Asia Data Pocket Book application to facilitate to key children-related indicators. Ongoing support was provided with the existing applications in the region such as PSBScan to manage barcoded assets and Travel2Field. Further, the Enterprise Content Management sites and document work place started in 2018. This also included upgrading the office server backup software and malware protection software. As part of the oversight activities, a peer review of the Bhutan ICT operations also took place.

III. Lessons learned and constraints

Over the year, valuable lessons had guided ROSA both in the areas of program and operations. These have implications in achieving results at scale. Lessons will be capitalized to foster results for children in the region. This section presents key lessons and challenges during 2018.

In programming, UNICEF leveraged on political will and changes in political landscapes to advance programming. Political elections had slowed down UNICEF ability to engage with the governments. However, these changes can also be excellent advocacy entry-points. UNICEF has strategically positioned itself as key collaborator with the new elected government to promote the children agenda. In the region, two countries (Maldives and Pakistan) seized these opportunities positively to develop child friendly strategies. The lesson for UNICEF is to prepare advocacy packages/papers in advance to ensure UNICEF is ready to influence transition governments.

Scaling up results require strong political will and partnership with government counterparts. The political will behind the Open Defecation success in India, led to massive state investments resulting in an unprecedented reduction in Open Defecation. ROSA will need to unpack the key contributing factors to successfully change these social norms, to influence other sectors in changing norms in the region. In addition, ROSA’s contribution to the COs, will be sharing knowledge and best practices in government engagement across the region which other COs could use in order to increase investments in the headline results.

One other valuable lesson is around improving convergence in programming. ROSA tested successfully the concept of bringing management and sectoral team together to engage cross-sectoral discussion in RMTs. Such expanded RMT with integrated cross-sectoral sessions were pivotal in stimulating countries to review and consolidate their convergence structure. Another effective approach is having a ROSA-wide approach to jointly develop a monitoring and evidence framework (linking ROMP headline and complementary results). This produced a positive effect on cross-sectoral collaboration at regional level and at COs level.

In the year ROSA faced three key challenges in both programs and operations: increasing obstacles in mobilizing resources for Middle-Income Countries (MIC); reduced access due to insecurity and complications in placing highly calibre UNICEF staff in the region in a timely manner.
Due to the progress of graduation to Middle-Income Country (MICs) status of four countries (India, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan) in the region, mobilizing external resources is increasingly constrained, requiring a strategy toward domestic resources and programmatic shift to upstream work, leveraging domestic resources, private sector, and non-traditional donors.

In the region, four countries transitioning to Middle-Income Country Status (Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives), resulting in programmes shift toward upstream work. This requires a strategy toward domestic resources and programmatic shift to upstream work, leveraging domestic resources, private sector, and non-traditional donors.

Due to the increased insecurity along Afghanistan-Pakistan border and elsewhere in Afghanistan, UNICEF and partners continue to face challenges in many under-served communities as part of the polio response. Overcoming this access challenge is imperative for the success of polio eradication.

In the area of operations, UNICEF offices face increasing challenges in obtaining visa approvals in some countries, based on nationality, limiting UNICEF’s ability to deploy based on diversity and competence. Gender parity ratio remains stagnant in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal. Hazardous pollution leads to loss of high calibre applicants. ROSA will continue to develop mitigation strategies to overcome these challenges.
Annex I: Progress against ROMP Results

ROAR Result Matrix 2018.xlsx