

Update on the context and situation of children

Sri Lanka has made considerable progress in improving the lives of children, with aggregate-level indicators showing a broadly positive situation. The country has among the lowest child mortality rates in the region (11 per 1,000), and access to antenatal care, exclusive breastfeeding, and immunization are almost universal. Over 90 per cent of the population has access to improved water and sanitation, and practically every child accesses primary schooling, with no significant gender disparities. The legal framework and institutions for child protection have been strengthened, and child labour has been reduced to 1 per cent.

Yet large disparities persist in how children fare, depending on where they live or the family they come from. While poverty has declined from 29 per cent in the mid-1990s to 4 per cent today, child poverty is higher than overall poverty in 16 out of 25 districts. In Kilinochchi, 23 per cent of children live in poor households, compared to below 1 per cent in Colombo.

Such inequalities partly explain inequities in non-monetary dimensions. For example, a person classified as 'non-poor' consumes, on average, 2,123 kcal daily, while a person classified as 'poor' consumes only 1,445 kcal, with marked differences amongst districts. At 15.1 per cent nationally, wasting is at a critical level, placing Sri Lanka amongst the ten worst countries in the world. In some districts wasting reaches near-famine-like levels (25.4 per cent in Monaragala). Disparities also exist in early childhood education; while most (72 per cent) urban children aged 3–4 years attend pre-school, in rural (58 per cent) and estate sectors (48 per cent) rates are far lower. In several districts, pre-primary attendance rates are far below the national average (60 per cent), such as Ratnapura (34 per cent). While Sri Lanka has invested heavily in education, and students spend more time in school than in any other country in South Asia, quality is poor at all levels. Eleven per cent of students drop out between Grades 5 and 9, and 27 per cent fail Grade 11 examinations, with large disparities in learning achievement by province, gender, income and location.

Despite Sri Lanka's commitment to ban all forms of corporal punishment, physical punishment remains legal and prevalent. The National Child Protection Authority reports that 80 per cent of school children experienced at least one episode of corporal punishment in school during the previous term. Sri Lanka continues to grapple with ethnic tensions, directly impacting on national development. Schools remain segregated along ethnic and religious lines and most children do not learn a second national language or English due to a lack of trained teachers. Sri Lanka is also ranked the second-most vulnerable country to climate change according to the 2018 German Watch Risk Index.

On Easter Sunday 2019, 10 years of relative peace, following the end of almost three decades of conflict, were disrupted by widespread terrorist attacks. These left over 260 dead, 60 of whom were children, and more than 500 injured. Children suffered directly and indirectly; 63 were orphaned, over 150 suffered injuries, and many more struggled with emotional and psychological stress.

Despite this challenging start to the year, the policy and legal environment for children saw many positive changes. A National Child Protection Policy was approved after several years of review. Further, a National Policy for Alternative Care of Children was adopted to prevent institutionalization of children and arrange for alternative forms of family or family-like care. Cabinet also adopted a policy to amend the Children and Young Persons Ordinance to address variations in the definitions of 'child' and 'youth' in different Acts, and provide approval for Government to amend the Youthful Offenders Ordinance to define a person aged 18–22 years as 'youth'. These changes effectively prohibit the imprisonment of children in Sri Lanka, diverting those in conflict with the law to rehabilitation and education programmes. In the education sector, the development of a National Preschool Education Policy by the National Education Commission set a long-term vision for the early learning sub-sector, proposing reforms to enhance access to and quality of early learning for all children.

Service delivery systems improved, with 7,140 cases of child sexual abuse and rape processed by the Attorney General's Department, which aims to clear the entire backlog by the first quarter of 2020. This brought justice for survivors in cases which had been pending for 6–8 years on average. The Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) developed the first-ever database to record prevention/response and management of cases of violence against children. This is a unique opportunity to identify at-risk children and provide a coordinated response. In the water sector, a country-wide assessment of rural water supply schemes was initiated to generate evidence for climate resilience, water safety and security planning.

In 2019, Sri Lanka became only the 11th country globally to eliminate mother-to-child transmission (EMTCT) of HIV and syphilis. Timely and accurate national data on perinatal deaths became available, and a Multi-Sectoral Action Plan for Nutrition was implemented to address persistent undernutrition. Provincial and national stakeholders continued efforts to create conducive learning environments in schools, with the aim of improving learning outcomes. Steps were taken to strengthen teaching and learning approaches and curricula. The planned general education reform will be an opportunity to institutionalize these good practices across the country.

Sri Lanka

Progress was made in evidence generation to inform formulation and design of policies and programmes. The Department of Census and Statistics introduced a Child Module into the 2019 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), collecting the first-ever data on multiple dimensions of poverty and enabling child poverty measurements and reporting against Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets. Further, the inclusion of a household-level water quality assessment as part of HIES is generating data for reporting progress against SDG 6.1 on safely managed drinking water.

Sri Lanka also hosted the third annual South Asia Parliamentarian Platform for Children and became the first South Asia country to recommit to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in its 30th year. The year ended on a high note, with children at the centre of the political agenda during the presidential elections in November. With UNICEF's advocacy, several presidential candidates integrated the unfinished child rights agenda into their manifestos, a level of attention not seen in previous elections.

Major contributions and drivers of results

In 2019, the second year of its country programme, UNICEF Sri Lanka provided technical and financial support to GoSL to achieve the following results across the child's lifecycle.

Early childhood (0–5 years)

UNICEF supported important system-level changes to improve the quality of early childhood development (ECD) services in health, nutrition and early learning.

In 2019, Sri Lanka became the 11th country in the world to have achieved EMTCT status as declared by the World Health Organization. As a key partner of the National STD/AIDS Control Programme for decades, UNICEF technically and financially contributed towards the country meeting the global criteria for EMTCT, including 97 per cent coverage of HIV and syphilis testing of pregnant women, and zero reported cases in newborns. UNICEF supported strengthening of the health system by improving the quality of laboratory services and data information systems, with linkages between district and central laboratories.

In 2019, Sri Lanka received the first-ever 'Green' status on the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative assessment, with persistent efforts since 2005 contributing to its score of 91/100 against 10 parameters related to policy and programmes in support of breastfeeding women. To accelerate efforts around nutrition-relevant budget allocations, UNICEF partnered with the World Bank to conduct a Public Expenditure Review for Nutrition, looking at historical changes over time. This investigated whether GoSL is spending appropriately on priority nutrition-specific and -sensitive interventions, and presented evidence for greater investment in nutrition programming. This is a powerful tool to raise nutrition on the political agenda and build consensus among partners, including key ministries, on actions required to improve the nutrition status.

At the global summit on 'Redesigning the workplace of the future: Sharing responsibility for family-friendly policies', GoSL marked an important moment in ECD advocacy by recommitting to advancing family-friendly policies in and out of the workplace. In line with this commitment, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (MOWCA) in developing a National Policy for Child Day-Care Centres, complementing the National Guidelines for Child Day-Care Centres introduced in 2017. The draft policy is now awaiting validation from MOWCA prior to submission to the Cabinet.

After a year-long process, in 2019, the Cabinet formally approved the National Policy for Alternative Care of Children, a major milestone in preventing institutionalization. UNICEF supported development and implementation of the policy action plan, resulting in the reunification of 179 children with their families and prevention of family separation for 136 children. With UNICEF's advocacy, GoSL allocated funding for individual assessments of all children in institutional care, conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics with technical support from UNICEF. This will lead to development of individual care plans for children in institutions.

To generate demand for and increase awareness on ECD amongst parents and caregivers, in June 2019 UNICEF launched a parenting month campaign with a dedicated website (betterparenting.lk), as a platform for knowledge-sharing on care practices, including responsive feeding, play-based stimulation and love and protection for young children. By end-2019, betterparenting.lk had secured 55,000 page views and 23,000 unique users. This was supported by a conventional and social media 'superpower parents' campaign, featuring three influencers who provided 'Eat, Play and Love' guidance. To mark Father's Day, UNICEF Sri Lanka symbolically removed the parent from the UNICEF logo, using its absence to demonstrate parents' key roles in ECD, generating substantial media coverage. The campaign reached 7.1 million individuals with 880,000 engagements, 756,000 video views and 440,000 actions.

UNICEF technically and financially supported strengthening the social services workforce, scaling up this pilot initiative to

Sri Lanka

another 16 villages. This brought the total to 23 villages, with 360 officers engaged, building capacity of statutory child welfare service providers, modelling inter-sectoral coordination and case management, and addressing service provision challenges. A total of 512 child protection cases were reported, of which 482 (237 boys, 245 girls) were resolved. Local government authorities incorporated the initiative into annual workplans, aiming to scale up to another 36 villages using their own resources with UNICEF's technical support. UNICEF also supported the development of databases to record and manage cases of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children (with MOWCA), and to track cases of violence against children (with the National Child Protection Authority).

In response to the Easter Sunday attacks, UNICEF facilitated psychosocial interventions for those affected, reaching 4,012 children and 512 adults. This required training on psychosocial first aid and assessment for 83 government officers and 176 community volunteers. Seven children who had lost both parents were reunified with extended families and 16 who had lost one parent received support based on individual needs assessments. UNICEF also supported MOWCA to strengthen coordinated child protection services in affected areas, benefitting 186 children.

Middle childhood (6–9 years)

In 2019, the National Child Protection Policy was adopted by GoSL, establishing the framework for a multi-sectoral approach to creating a protective environment, including the prevention of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children. In promoting non-violent and positive disciplining approaches, UNICEF contributed to strengthening the child protection system through assistance to the revision and approval of the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children (NPAEVAC) by MOWCA. Through NPAEVAC, stakeholder coordination and mechanisms protecting children from violence are developed and strengthened, including access to services, with particular focus on corporal punishment, sexual abuse and exploitation, and online safety.

Corporal punishment in all forms and settings has not yet been banned in Sri Lanka, but in 2019 an inter-ministerial Cabinet paper on full prohibition was drafted. Once this is adopted, and the requisite laws passed, the government will be able to legislate to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings, improving the enabling environment to implement positive disciplining programmes in schools and at home.

The policy environment was further reinforced through system-strengthening initiatives, specifically the integration of peace education, social cohesion and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) into the national primary curriculum, and the introduction of positive disciplining concepts in schools and communities. These help equip children with socio-emotional and life-skills to be resilient and productive citizens, while parents and teachers learn of the harmful effects of corporal punishment and the benefits of using positive disciplining alternatives.

Based on an evaluation of school health and nutrition programmes, UNICEF technically supported the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Health to develop the School Health and Nutrition Policy, with new and existing directives and strategies to implement and monitor a national school health and nutrition programme. This will use the school system as a strategic entry point to enable all school children to benefit from educational opportunities and empower them to adopt and promote healthy lifestyles.

UNICEF obtained government ownership of the child-centred Multi-Level Pedagogical Approach, which advances inclusive, equitable and effective learning by transforming traditional teaching-learning practices to better address the differing learning needs of primary students. UNICEF's advocacy and technical assistance demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach in four provinces and a formative evaluation of the approach, together with the MoE and National Institute of Education, will be conducted in 2020. This will provide recommendations for education reforms from 2020, and is an example of UNICEF's role in modelling approaches and generating evidence to influence decision-making. This approach promoted an inclusive pedagogy as a core part of inclusive education systems and, together with ongoing support to a small-scale pilot on building teachers' capacity to identify children with learning difficulties, will inform education reforms to make systems inclusive and equitable.

At sub-national level, UNICEF initiated a shift towards results-based management principles and approaches in education sector planning and management. In partnership with the provincial government, a comprehensive and participatory education bottleneck analysis was undertaken in the Eastern Province, amongst the poorest-performing provinces in education. Based on this, a multi-year priority action plan was drafted and will be integrated into provincial plans from 2020. This proved to be an effective capacity development model facilitating an evidence-based, results-oriented approach to provincial planning, and will help ensure that the allocation of the province's limited resources and capacity are appropriately prioritized. This exercise will be replicated in the Northern Province, another educationally challenged province, in 2020, and will help create a learning network in the education sector. UNICEF will continue to support implementation and monitoring of provincial action plans in 2020, and better align direct support for programme interventions.

Sri Lanka

Finally, the climate change agenda gained momentum in 2019 as UNICEF increased focus on promoting climate-resilient water, sanitation and hygiene programming and financing, specifically on the generation of evidence in the rural water supply sector, which will inform climate resilient models in 2020.

Adolescents (10–19 years)

Ongoing high-level advocacy with the Ministry of Justice resulted in critical changes in the Children and Young Persons Ordinance, bringing the national legal framework protecting the rights of adolescent girls and boys in line with international standards. The revised policy increased the age that defines a child from 16 to 18 years, helping prevent imprisonment of children below 18 who are in conflict with the law, and instead referring them to rehabilitation/education services. The Youthful Offenders Ordinance is being amended to cater to youth above 18 years.

With support from the Disaster Management Centre, MoE achieved a key DRR milestone by finalizing the National Comprehensive School Safety Guidelines that had been in development for over a decade. These will be rolled out to all schools with the assistance of development partners, including UNICEF. Further, the revised National Sanitation Policy (2017) was operationalized, including a component on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM).

To promote social cohesion and citizenship skills among adolescents, MoE integrated peace education and safe school concepts using non-conventional approaches into selected subjects of the school curriculum, with UNICEF's support. MoE also developed supplementary teaching materials and trained teachers to facilitate practical learning and application of these concepts. The findings of the first-ever UNICEF-supported study on ragging and sexual and gender-based violence in Sri Lankan state universities received significant attention from stakeholders, private entities and the media. This led the Ministry of Higher Education and the University Grants Commission (UGC) to develop a strategy to combat these issues through high-level consultations and awareness creation involving the Human Rights Commission, Attorney General's Department and National Police Commission. The strategy was issued through a UGC circular to promote conducive learning environments in state universities.

To foster adolescent participation, MOWCA and the Department of Probation and Child Care Services worked with UNICEF to develop and roll out a child-centred DRR programme. This included an adolescent toolkit adapted to the Sri Lankan context, used in children's clubs to empower children and facilitate meaningful participation in disaster and development settings, as well as to identify and prevent broader child protection concerns. As a result, a three-year child-centred DRR action plan was endorsed by GoSL, and integrated into the National Action Plan for Children's Clubs.

UNICEF supported a regional study on Youth Skills and Solutions for South Asia, including convening a national forum with the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Development Programme, to identify thematic areas and entry points in skills development. Further, a UNICEF study on menstrual rituals and their impact on health, hygiene, educational attainment, economic opportunity and bodily autonomy of Tamil women informed national-level advocacy on the need for MHM, and provided the evidence to develop behaviour change communication materials on MHM practices.

Social policy and child rights monitoring

In 2019, with technical and financial support from UNICEF, the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) initiated the first-ever official measurement of child and multidimensional poverty. A child module was included in the 2019 Household Income and Expenditure Survey and administered to half (approximately 12,500) of sampled households. UNICEF, together with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, will support DCS to design a methodology to measure and publish child poverty in Sri Lanka using data collected in 2019. To this end, UNICEF built the capacity of 25 DCS statisticians to institutionalize multidimensional child poverty measurement, enabling the identification of key deprivations faced by children. UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Economic Reforms and Public Distribution to put child poverty onto the policy agenda, and to ensure that evidence informs policy and programme design. These represent substantial gains in setting baselines and targets for ending poverty, particularly child poverty, in all its forms, and achieving SDG-1.

As a recognized partner in social protection, UNICEF support to the National Planning Department and capacity-building of key technical officials leading social protection reform helped build trust and sensitized GoSL on the need for the social protection system to be child-sensitive. During the presidential election, UNICEF strongly advocated for greater attention to child poverty and a social protection system that takes into consideration the particular needs of families and children. This included specific advocacy with candidates to establish a universal child benefit, starting with families with children under five years, as a means of reducing disparities, eliminating child poverty and ensuring the right start in life for all children. Social protection for children was included in the president-elect's manifesto, which was converted into a policy framework. With technical support from development partners, UNICEF is making the investment case for a universal child benefit, estimating costs and simulating impacts on poverty and consumption. UNICEF is also designing a training programme on principles and policy issues in social protection for government and UN staff, to further support GoSL in conceptualizing, formulating and implementing the country's first National Social Protection Strategy. These efforts will help ensure that the

Sri Lanka

government can provide efficient, effective social protection services to the most deprived girls and boys.

To look at how domestic resources are promoting or hindering results for children, UNICEF analysed the 2019 Budget Speech by the Minister of Finance, focusing on key social sectors and subsectors for children. This was circulated amongst development partners and key influencers, and helped establish UNICEF's credibility as an actor in public financial matters. In partnership with a local think tank, UNICEF developed five high-quality Budget Briefs to examine the adequacy and equity of resource allocations to critical social sectors. The briefs will be launched in 2020 as information sources and advocacy tools to use with the new government. To promote transparent and accessible budgets, UNICEF supported the Eastern Provincial Council to produce the first-ever citizen's budget in Sri Lanka. The Finance Commission was present at the launch and committed to including in their official guidelines for budget preparation the requirement for all provincial councils to produce citizen's budgets from 2020.

UNICEF partnered with Batticaloa Municipality, Eastern Province, to make it the first Child-Friendly City in Sri Lanka. This involved the generation and use of evidence on the situation of children. By the end of the reporting year, the mayor had established a dedicated Child-Friendly City team in the Municipal Council and 20 teams at ward level, organized awareness sessions, and launched an initiative for children to share ideas on how to make Batticaloa more child-friendly. This last received inputs from almost 1,900 children.

Programme and operational effectiveness

To strengthen programme effectiveness, UNICEF conducted an evaluability assessment of its Country Programme to determine its readiness to be credibly evaluated and to check its coherence and logic. The findings are now guiding the review and strengthening of programme design, including programme logic and measurability. Based on the recommendations, the programme team convened for a two-day retreat to reflect on programmatic progress and accountabilities using the lifecycle approach as opposed to a traditional sector-based approach. This resulted in a matrix management structure to clarify individual accountabilities, and clarification of internal outcome-level coordination structures for the 2020 Annual Management Plan. Further analysis of lessons learned and the impact of using the life-cycle approach will be conducted in 2020.

Sri Lanka was the first country globally to roll out results-based management for inclusive social development (RBM4ISD), a capacity-building initiative with key government partners at national and provincial levels. Government commitment was an important driver, and UNICEF played a key role in creating demand and bringing together actors to identify common issues and solutions. Eight provincial workshops were conducted, with more than 200 attendees, and a national-level workshop reached another 40 government officials. The experience showed that institutionalizing RBM4ISD in government systems and processes can help ensure that no one is left behind. The lessons learned from the pilot were shared with country offices in South Asia and beyond.

UNICEF also prioritized integrated campaigning to generate awareness among key audiences, drive policy change and action, and generate funding and partnership opportunities. For example, the Ara Wade Presidential Pledge Campaign used two critical moments – the 30th anniversary of CRC and the national presidential election – to place children's rights onto media and political agendas. This helped secure commitments from presidential candidates to drive the agenda forward, and mobilized over 22,000 people to take advocacy action. UNICEF and Parliament also co-hosted the South Asia Parliamentarian Platform for Children, resulting in the signing of [the Colombo Declaration to take Concrete Actions to Realize Child Rights in South Asia](#), a re-commitment to the CRC.

Operational effectiveness enabled strong implementation of the Country Programme and achievement of results for children. Consistent and organized budget management helped UNICEF achieve a utilization rate of over 95 per cent in 2019. In procurement, UNICEF executed 95 per cent of its annual supply plan in collaboration with government partners. UNICEF maintained stability of ICT infrastructure and, during the Easter Sunday bombing attacks, the Business Continuity Plan was activated to support critical business processes, enabling the successful continuation of operation and business processes.

UNICEF continued working with other UN agencies as part of the Business Operating Strategy for 2018–2022 to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of UN support to programme delivery. By working together, UNICEF benefited from common long-term arrangements which saved staff time and approximately US\$20,000 in transaction costs. Safety and security were also essential elements and, following the Easter Sunday bombings, UNICEF implemented security risk management measures to reduce the terrorism risk from high to medium.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

1. The roll-out of RBM4ISD offers critical lessons for other offices.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka faces persistent systemic bottlenecks affecting the implementation of policies and programmes to eliminate child deprivations and reduce the long-term consequences of multidimensional poverty. Given the state has the resources to make the greatest impact on children (UNICEF contributes only 0.06 per cent of the national budget), it is critical that issues such as ineffective planning and monitoring, leading to poorly formulated budgets with minimal opportunities for civic engagement, are addressed.

Sri Lanka was the first country to pilot RBM4ISD, with provincial and national government partners. RBM4ISD aims to strengthen government performance management systems to ensure public services are delivered efficiently, effectively and equitably, by maintaining a focus on results, not inputs.

A good practice and a lesson for other countries planning to roll out RBM4ISD is that government must demand for and be committed to this approach, and UNICEF has a key role to play in creating that demand.

For this, UNICEF first built capacity of its own staff on results-based management. They then shared tools and learning with government partners at critical times in the programme cycle. This real-time application showed how results-based management can enhance planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Another important learning is that there should be commitment within the country office in advocating for RBM4ISD and demonstrating its added value. UNICEF should play a convening role, bringing together actors at national and provincial levels, to identify common issues and solutions.

The response from engaged government partners, and their incorporation of key learnings into planning processes, was significant. However, institutionalization will require engagement at both national and provincial levels to gain traction and achieve sustainability. Sustained, long-term advocacy and technical support will be required to influence the enabling environment.

To roll out RBM4ISD, therefore, country offices are recommended to:

- Conduct preliminary, evidence-based advocacy for RBM4ISD and support mapping of capacities/gaps and resources in the context of SDGs.
- Invest in technical support to adapt the RBM4ISD framework to fit the country's systems and processes.
- Co-create and contextualize training materials with local institutions and partners.
- Hand over to government departments, track progress and support evaluations to inform future directions.

2. Integrated communication campaigns are key advocacy platforms.

In 2019, UNICEF developed and delivered integrated communication and advocacy campaigns using multiple channels to achieve positive changes for children. This included an innovative and integrated advocacy and communication tool, the 'Ara Wade: A Vote for Children' presidential pledge campaign. This was timed to engage two moments presenting unique advocacy opportunities- CRC@30 and the presidential election - to place children's rights on the media and political agenda, with the specific goal of securing commitments from all 35 presidential candidates to prioritize six critical children's issues. UNICEF would then work to convert commitments into action.

The campaign used two primary tools. First, direct advocacy was conducted with all presidential candidates and political parties, supported by direct advocacy with influential individuals from the private sector and civil society. Second, a multi-channel communication campaign used television, print, public relations, social media, digital advertising and direct (digital) mail to educate voters and the media on the six critical issues. Individuals were encouraged to undertake direct advocacy with candidates through a campaign website (www.arawade.lk) from which they could request action via emails to all 35 candidates.

This integrated campaign achieved its initial goals. All leading candidates, including the new president, committed to children's priorities, with many including aspects of the campaign in their party manifesto. Children's rights were firmly placed on the national agenda, with 39 items of national news coverage in four weeks. Members of the public were informed of the importance of child rights, and the campaign securing a digital reach of 28 million with over 5 million video views. Individuals were encouraged to act, with 1.19 million engagements, and a further 22,000 campaign email actions. Over 30 private sector entities were engaged, with 13 committing support for the campaign, and many publicly endorsing it. Through the campaign UNICEF also partnered with the Colombo Stock Exchange on World Children's Day.

In 2020, UNICEF will build on these results to engage the new government, follow up with companies reached, and use the list of individuals who acted on the campaign.

Country Office Annual Report 2019

Sri Lanka



The lessons learned through this campaign are:

- Elections provide an opportunity to encourage discussion on children's rights, however it is critical, albeit challenging, to maintain total impartiality.
- Providing clear ways for individuals to 'take action' is important.
- Adequate understanding of the issues must be ensured so advocacy messages resonate, and this takes time.

3. Underlying challenges to social cohesion can easily resurface.

Over the last decade, the GoSL has focused on reconciliation amongst communities to address the 'silent' divisions that perpetuate and contribute to social disharmony, putting in place mechanisms to deliver on peacebuilding commitments. However, the Easter bombings in April 2019 eroded this delicate fabric of social cohesion.

Although UNICEF has been involved in peacebuilding and transitional justice programmes at national and sub-national levels, in collaboration with other UN agencies and development partners, this area of work has not been central to ongoing programming given Sri Lanka's positive trajectory and graduation to upper-middle-income status. However, the lesson learned for the country office is that, in a context where grievances and underlying ethnic issues persist, it is prudent for UNICEF to ensure social cohesion is always mainstreamed into programming.

Following the attacks, UNICEF held a capacity development workshop, supported by HQ and Regional Office, for staff to apply a social cohesion lens to their work and to reflect on areas where conflict-sensitive programming should be strengthened. Moving forward, UNICEF will mainstream social cohesion programming by building aspects into programme design and introducing targeted interventions as appropriate.