

## Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

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### Executive summary

2017 was a very challenging year for Venezuela and for the children in the country. The economic crisis intensified with yet another year of economic contraction, increasing inflation that reached four digits, and enormous pressure on the currency.

For families, this meant increasing difficulties to afford needed goods and services in the marketplace. For UNICEF, it meant a worrisome increase in costs of planned activities and, eventually, inability to fund local partners to carry out agreed workplans, due to the official mechanism to exchange foreign currency into local currency not being active in the last quarter of the year.

Additionally, the socio-political dynamics of the country during the year, marked by extreme polarization and lack of political consensus to collectively deal with emerging needs, imprinted a tense social environment that resulted in widespread demonstrations. These included deadly violent episodes for four months around the middle of the year that took the lives of 15 adolescents. This contributed to increased security issues and protection challenges for children and adolescents, adding to the difficulties to access suitable and sufficient goods and services for their survival, development and protection. The 2017 environment was thus one of tension, of alarm for potentially deadly diseases such as measles and malaria on the rise and of potential deterioration of social indicators.

The Government extended the economic emergency decree that was released early 2016 and put in place a set of measures focused on reverting the crisis and reducing its impact. For example, according to the Government, eight million families received a Christmas cash transfer, and 4.5 million families received a monthly food and basic supplies provision from the Local Committees of Distribution and Production. Additionally, the basic salary was increased 12 times during the year. Partial imports of medicines, food and other basics reached Venezuela several times along the year; and the Pan-American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the Ministry of the People's Power for Health (MoH) announced the provision of medicines and vaccines through PAHO/WHO funding and mechanisms.

UNICEF Venezuela contributed to the response to emerging needs in the areas of health, nutrition and protection, while continuing to implement the Country Programme by adjusting its strategy. This implied strengthening the supply component of the programme, focussing on demonstration projects, consolidating collaboration at the local level, and reinforcing engagement with civil society and the private sector. UNICEF also advocated for the protection of children and adolescents during civil unrest events, as well as for the dissemination of data to inform the design and implementation of effective social protection programme and projects.

The equity approach and evidence generation guided UNICEF partnerships, and advocacy efforts boosted implementation agreements despite the frequent changes of national authorities. Linked to the human rights-based approach, UNICEF also provided ongoing support for

mechanisms that Venezuela has been implementing to comply with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and supported training activities on children's rights to reinforce programmes for children in street situations. Early childhood development was also incorporated in communication and advocacy activities, with an integrated programmatic approach.

The UNICEF Venezuela team was reinforced by implementing the structure approved in 2016 in the Programme Budget Review, and through a training plan that reached all staff members and included emergency preparedness among other topics. UNICEF Venezuela also took additional measures to enhance the safety and security of its staff and premises, given the increase in common and armed crime as a consequence of the crisis.

In spite of the economic situation, UNICEF Venezuela managed to retain 93 per cent of active donors and increased the recruitment of new donors by 32 per cent compared with 2016. On financial programme implementation, UNICEF Venezuela managed to achieve the highest annual implementation level in absolute terms in the 2015-2019 programme cycle. This was despite the fact that almost half of the year was affected by either disruptive demonstrations or currency exchange limitations.

On United Nations (UN) coherence, the office complied with the coordination mechanisms, actively participating in all inter-agency groups and raised proposals to scale UN support to its allies in Venezuela in the response to the crisis.

2018 appears to be a year in which collaboration with national authorities will be more fluid, but in which efforts to revert the effects of the economic crisis should be redoubled and coordinated so every child is able to survive, develop and thrive.

## Humanitarian assistance

Venezuela has been dealing with an economic emergency, officially declared through several Government decrees since early 2016. These decrees state that the crisis is impacting people's access to basic goods and services. Although there was no declaration of a humanitarian crisis, in 2017 families faced severe difficulties in accessing appropriate services and goods to cover the basic needs of children and adolescents, especially the most vulnerable. Beyond the Government's efforts to support these families, UNICEF Venezuela also strengthened its scope to children affected by the crisis.

According to the Ministry of Health epidemiological bulletins 2015–2016 released in May 2017, more than 240,000 people were infected with malaria in 2016, an increase of 76 per cent from 2015. The report also found marked increases in diarrhoea and pneumonia amongst children under five, pertussis, HIV/AIDS, measles and diphtheria. In this context, the Government requested UNICEF's support in 2017 to provide medicines that contributed to national efforts aimed to reverse the trend in the case of malaria and HIV.

The situation in Venezuela represents a slowly evolving crisis with an ongoing and growing impact on the population. UNICEF Venezuela is gradually incorporating a response strategy to the extent that the agreed cooperation plan allows for the extension or adaptation of UNICEF support. In 2017 therefore, UNICEF adapted its programming strategies to the implementation of demonstration projects aiming to achieve short-term results for the most vulnerable children in the areas of health, nutrition and protection.

In this scenario, and given the country's vulnerability to natural disasters, UNICEF Venezuela continued emergency preparedness efforts. With the support of UNICEF's Latin American and Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO), UNICEF Venezuela drafted a contingency plan and organized a simulation workshop in Caracas with all staff, the Regional Advisor on Emergencies and regional specialists. The content of the plan was discussed and reviewed by the Representative and the emergencies' focal point with all the Regional Advisors. This led to a comprehensive exercise, with specific requirements to fulfil the Core Commitment for Children in Humanitarian Action, including staffing, logistics, coordination and a supply strategy.

UNICEF Venezuela also strengthened its supply capacity in key areas such as nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and education by repositioning corresponding items.

### Equity in practice

The equity approach guided UNICEF partnerships with organizations that are supporting the most vulnerable children through schools or parishes in urban deprived areas and in rural communities. For example, in 2017 UNICEF Venezuela continued to advance support to the indigenous peoples of Venezuela with activities reaching children from 12 indigenous cultures in the seven states with large indigenous populations.

Aiming to scale and reduce multi-dimensional inequities, UNICEF continued to implement its intercultural bilingual education (IBE) programme to improve the quality of education for indigenous children. In this regard, UNICEF improved the teaching-learning approach through educational projects, enhancing knowledge sharing in developing educational materials for indigenous peoples, ensuring the sustainability of the initiative, and improving school performance in a small sample of indigenous students. Specifically, UNICEF:

- i. Provided technical assistance to introduce curricula and accessibility improvements to the attention programmes for out-of-school children;
- ii. Developed participatory diagnoses of children's situation in communities;
- iii. Promoted a communication campaign to prevent school dropout in indigenous communities;
- iv. Contributed to defining quality criteria and methodologies addressing the didactic and pedagogical dimensions of IBE

All activities were developed in alliance with key partners at national and subnational levels, including the Ministry of the People's Power for Education (MoE), Fe y Alegría, the Vicariate of Puerto Ayacucho and Simón Rodríguez Public Library of Puerto Ayacucho (state of Amazonas), and the Indigenous Secretariat of the state of Zulia. All these partners were important to reach the states with the largest presence and diversity of indigenous peoples. These are the southern state of Amazonas with presence of Yanomami, Yekwana, Jivi, Piaro and Curripako; Bolívar (mid-south) with Pemón and Kariña; Delta Amacuro, Sucre, Monagas and Anzoátegui (north-west) with Warao and Kariña; and the north-eastern state of Zulia with presence of Wayuu, Yukpa and Barí.

### Emerging areas of importance

**Early childhood development (ECD).** Following the efforts initiated at the end of 2016, UNICEF Venezuela promoted activities to accelerate integrated ECD in 2017, including:

- i. Communication and advocacy to raise awareness and promote engagement to act for ECD. UNICEF Venezuela presented the global report Early Moments Matter for Every Child in Caracas among its partners and decision makers to advocate on the importance of focusing and investing in ECD from an inter-sectoral approach involving education, health, nutrition and protection. A two-year end violence campaign was also initiated focusing on behaviour

change, and UNICEF Venezuela participated in the global #EarlyMomentsMatter campaign through social media.

- ii. Capacity building to promote a sustainable and integrated ECD approach. UNICEF Venezuela supported national efforts including the MoE's National Advanced Training Plan for teachers by including and prioritizing ECD content that reached 6,519 teachers nationwide. In the areas of health and nutrition, UNICEF worked with the MoH and the Venezuelan Society of Paediatrics and Childcare (Sociedad Venezolana de Puericultura y Pediatría, SVPP) to support training on newborn care and the baby-friendly hospital initiative (BFHI) to 858 medical personnel in the 20 maternal facilities that attend approximately 30 per cent of all births in the country. UNICEF Venezuela also supported state partners and civil society with training activities to build capacity on the importance of the emotional welfare of children in their early life, and shared knowledge and tools for ending violence against early childhood.

**Refugee and migrant children.** In recent years, Venezuela has experienced increasing movement of families from its territory. Though there is no recent Government data, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) registered a 2,888 per cent increase in Venezuelans who applied for refugee status in 2015 compared to 2012.

UNICEF Venezuela considered it necessary to approach this at an early stage by characterizing the population, mainly through the production of two exploratory studies. The key findings included:

- i. Over 50 per cent of Venezuelans who leave the country and go to Colombia are children. This was according to a report of the Colombian Chancellery and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in two municipalities of north of Santander state in 2017);
- ii. Families reported that the main causes of migration are the economic crisis, insecurity, the political situation and the search for better living conditions;
- iii. A preliminary profile of migrants was established in terms of sex, age, nationality, legal status, migration time, number of children in the families mobilized, access to health and education services, and reports of discrimination.

The results of these studies will be available in 2018 and will inform future contributions related to the application of international regulations, as well as to the design and implementation of public policies that effectively respond to new situations faced by children on the move.

## Summary notes and acronyms

### Acronyms

C4D - communication for development

CMT - country management team

CSO - civil society organization

ECD - early childhood development

F2F - Face to Face

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization (United Nations)

IBE - intercultural bilingual education programme

ICT – information and communication technology

LACRO - UNICEF's Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office

MoE - Ministry of the People's Power for Education

MoH - Ministry of the People's Power for Health

NGO - non-governmental organizations

OCHA - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

PAHO/WHO - Pan-American Health Organization/World Health Organization  
PFP - private fundraising and partnerships  
SACAICET - Amazonas Centre for Research and Control of Tropical Diseases, Autonomous Service, Servicio Autónomo Centro Amazónico de Investigación y Control de Enfermedades Tropicales  
SVPP - Venezuelan Society of Paediatrics and Childcare, Sociedad Venezolana de Puericultura y Pediatría  
UN – United Nations  
UNDSS - United Nations Department of Safety and Security  
UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund  
UNICEF - United Nations Children’s Fund  
UNV - United Nations Volunteers  
WASH - water, sanitation and hygiene

## Capacity development

Capacity development was a key strategy to achieve progress towards results in 2017 in four main areas.

### **Evidence-based capacity development:**

UNICEF Venezuela strengthened the capacities of actors in the child protection system, filling key gaps identified in earlier studies including knowledge of the best interest of the child, the right to good treatment, General Comment No. 21 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the principles of comprehensive protection. These training activities led to improved understanding of child protective principles for key officials in the protection system. This included all protection judges and educational defenders, half of protection councillors and a third of multidisciplinary teams in protection courts.

### **Communication for development (C4D):**

A communication for development campaign to end violence against children, supported with external communication through behaviour change, was initiated. The first steps, taken in 2017, focused on updating the baseline through a survey in schools and initial training for teachers on appropriate tools to prevent and address violence in schools.

### **Collection, analysis and use of data:**

UNICEF Venezuela responded to limitations in access to updated quality data by strengthening the capacities of national partners. This contributed to the incorporation of international standard indicators into the Supreme Court’s design of an information system for juvenile justice. In education, UNICEF Venezuela provided technical assistance to Fe y Alegría, strengthening its capacity to design an integrated statistical system in education.

### **Disaster risk reduction:**

Invited by a governmental organization, UNICEF participated in the Caribe Wave regional simulation in the northern state of Vargas and provided recommendations on education in emergencies. These will be followed up in 2018 with the new disaster relief and risk reduction authorities.

## Evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy

In an evolving context, with limited access to updated official data, evidence generation was critical for policy dialogue and advocacy efforts across four areas of work.

**Child survival:**

UNICEF Venezuela supported a study carried out by the MoH and the Venezuelan Society of Paediatrics and Childcare on the quality of neonatal care. This provided critical evidence to achieve an agreement with subnational authorities on implementing an integrated plan in five health centres to improve child survival in 2018.

**Adolescent survival:**

In some indigenous communities' adolescent suicide is a growing concern. UNICEF Venezuela supported a study by the Amazonas Centre for Research and Control of Tropical Diseases (Servicio Autónomo Centro Amazónico de Investigación y Control de Enfermedades Tropicales, SACAICET) and promoted the design of a comprehensive and participatory strategy aiming at preventing and mitigating the incidence of suicide among adolescents.

**Preventing school dropout by improving the quality of education:**

A national study supported by UNICEF on bottlenecks and barriers for improving the quality of education was produced by Fe y Alegría and will inform UNICEF Venezuela for policy dialogue in 2018. Additionally, to reduce school absenteeism in indigenous communities, UNICEF Venezuela supported the preparation of an assessment of intercultural bilingual education in 15 schools serving 4,778 indigenous students in the Amazon region which will be used in 2018 to design projects and to advocate on the appropriate actions to improve IBE at the national level.

**Child protection:**

The findings of a study on juvenile justice carried out with the Office of the Ombudsman were used to improve national policies and alternatives to imprisonment of adolescents in the coming years. A monitoring system of children in street situations was put in place through UNICEF's technical support to child protection councils and other local entities in five out of a total of 335 municipalities in urban areas.

**Partnerships**

In 2017 UNICEF Venezuela worked to build capacity and deliver results through a diverse range of partners to be more effective in its support to children facing emerging challenges while continuing to implement the country programme.

**Child protection system:**

UNICEF Venezuela supported four municipalities in the metropolitan area of Caracas to address the emergent situation of children in street situations by facilitating the setup of coordination mechanisms between governmental and non-governmental organizations and designing appropriate tools to gather and analyse information. Additionally, UNICEF supported activities with the business sector to raise awareness of the networks exploiting children in street situations and their duty to respect children's rights.

**Subnational institutions:**

To promote and improve a comprehensive rights and equity-based approach to indigenous children, UNICEF Venezuela promoted the coordination of different actors involved in this goal in the state of Amazonas through the setup of an inter-institutional committee with the participation of subnational governmental and non-governmental partners in education and health.

**Private sector:**

Individuals and corporate foundations approached UNICEF Venezuela to support its programmes during the year. This resulted in agreements, including private financial support to education and nutrition programmes, including the promotion of the kangaroo-mother method in the largest maternity in the country, and a private corporate donation of hygiene products to support UNICEF's health programmes.

**The United Nations system:**

Teenage pregnancy in Venezuela is among the highest rates in Latin America and is one of the causes of maternal and neonatal mortality. UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) worked together in an all-encompassing committee, integrated by civil society organizations (CSO) and government institutions, to support national efforts to reduce adolescent pregnancy. Both UN agencies actively participated in the inter-institutional discussions and forums to establish the operational plan for the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy (to be implemented from 2018).

**External communication and public advocacy**

Venezuela's dynamic and challenging context led to changing public priorities and increasing vulnerabilities. To better serve in the promotion of child rights, UNICEF Venezuela adapted its communication and advocacy strategy to include key initiatives designed to expand reach with messages that engaged with a broad public and expanded UNICEF's voice as a credible, impartial and trusted source. To meet these goals in 2017, UNICEF Venezuela focused on increasing visibility and enhancing advocacy by:

- i. Disseminating communication assets proactively through traditional and online media, achieving a 75 per cent increase in media coverage and 10 per cent increase in social media followers;
- ii. Leveraging UNICEF's technical profile in interviews and statements. For example, UNICEF Venezuela took the opportunity of the UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review to release a statement through the UNICEF spokesperson in the session, raising in this global forum the need of "timely, updated, and disaggregated data";
- iii. Speaking out on emerging issues affecting children. UNICEF issued statements showing concern in relation to health data released in May and on violence affecting children during the protests from April to July. The statements not only reached an audience of millions but also highlighted UNICEF's neutral position and placed its messaging at the centre of the public eye;
- iv. Organizing events, such as the presentation of the report Early Moments Matter and a major launch event with allies for an End Violence campaign with the participation of children and featured a concert by UNICEF National Ambassadors, Sistema Nacional de Orquestas y Coros Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela (National System of Children and Youths Orchestras and Chorus).

**Identification and promotion of innovation**

In the challenging context of Venezuela, UNICEF was able generate relevant opportunities to advance progress towards results for children, especially those who are most disadvantaged, by searching different ways that could lead to results. Three main strategies were employed:

- (i) Bridging private sector opportunities towards child survival results. In 2017, UNICEF Venezuela connected some local and international companies willing to support through in-kind donations, with CSO partners ready to receive those donations. For example, UNICEF Venezuela funnelled the interest of a local company in supporting UNICEF programmes into a donation of hygiene products to Caritas for three neonatal care centres;
- (ii) Technical assistance to build capacity in fundraising. UNICEF Venezuela shared knowledge and provided technical assistance to regional authorities on strategies and tools that could support efforts to raise funds for nutrition and protection programmes not fundable by UNICEF but being implemented by civil society organizations in the northern state of Miranda;
- (iii) Monitoring the situation of children with no availability of updated official data. To plan strategies and activities that could effectively serve the most vulnerable children, UNICEF had to find a way to monitor the situation despite the lack of timely, disaggregated and reliable official data. Thus, UNICEF Venezuela adapted the traditional evidence generation approach by generating new monitoring templates and combining information from diverse sources -latest official data, studies from NGO and the academia, media reports and direct observation.

## Service delivery

The effects of the crisis in Venezuela opened spaces of collaboration with national and subnational authorities, especially in the areas of health and nutrition. UNICEF's efforts focused on complementing the work of government and civil society partners in a coordinated manner while increasing core capacities of partners.

UNICEF and the Venezuelan Society of Paediatrics and Childcare supported the MoH in the national assessment of neonatal care quality. The aim was to identify areas for improvement and inform decisions to bring the minimum necessary conditions for the effective execution of neonatal protocols, such as infrastructure, human resources, medical supplies and laboratories.

Contributing to reduce neonatal mortality, UNICEF obtained support from the private sector with the delivery of antiseptic supplies to three maternities attending over 33 per cent of deliveries in Distrito Capital (Caracas). Additionally, in response to emerging challenges and following a request by MoH, UNICEF provided medical supplies that included over 100,000 antimalarial treatments, antiretrovirals for some 2,200 children and 15,000 HIV tests.

In alliance with Caritas Venezuela, UNICEF started in the last quarter of 2017 the first phase of a nutritional recovery plan targeting at least 1,500 children aged under five at risk of malnutrition and 700 suffering from severe acute malnutrition. The activities were linked to national guidelines that will be implemented in 2018. The partnership includes the strengthening of Caritas' nutritional surveillance system, which is based on community promoters.

UNICEF continued to enhance the capacities of local partners to bring services as near as possible to families and children in remote areas of the Amazonas region with limited access to health services. Through an agreement with SACAICET, UNICEF supported the improvement of the malaria surveillance system using evidence generation activities and the refreshment training of 435 health workers serving a total of 108,750 people in communities on the diagnosis and treatment of malaria.

## Human rights-based approach to cooperation

UNICEF provided ongoing support for mechanisms that Venezuela has been implementing to comply with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. An example is the National Human Rights Plan, the implementation of which is supported by UNICEF Venezuela through its work plan with the National Council of Human Rights. In 2017, this alliance reported key results related to the Committee's recommendations:

- i. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was translated into three indigenous languages (Recommendation number 82)
- ii. Norms and protocols proposed for the health sector (Recommendation number 53)
- iii. Standards and protocols proposed for the education sector (Recommendation number 64), and
- iv. An action plan to disaggregate investments in children and adolescents from total public expenditure (Recommendation number 18).

Actions were also taken in response to the Committee's recommendations on providing adequate and systematic training and/or sensitization on children's rights to professional groups working with and for children. UNICEF Venezuela provided technical assistance to programmes of continuous professional development for law enforcement officials, judges, teachers, and other officials from governmental and non-governmental institutions such as MoE, the Supreme Court, the Office of the General Prosecutor, Ombudsman's Office, the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents, the National Association of Protection Counsellors and Fe y Alegría.

As part of efforts to address emerging issues children face due to the economic crisis, UNICEF Venezuela supported initiatives related to children in street situations, including training sessions on children's rights and the broad dissemination among decision-makers in the child protection system of the General Comment Number 21 of the Committee, related to children in street situations.

## Gender equality

While most of the population of Venezuela is affected by the economic crisis, it is clear that the impact is different in terms of gender. Several global reports and studies produced by counterparts in the field show that boys and men are the most affected by homicides and violence, while girls and women are the most affected by sexual exploitation.

In 2017, UNICEF requested that all studies on child protection provide information disaggregated by gender. Gender disaggregated data is needed to inform programme design and implementation and to monitor progress and tailor UNICEF Venezuela programmes to respond to differences by gender and other factors.

In the case of children in street situations, UNICEF shared the information at technical meetings with governmental and non-governmental partners that while children and adolescents were victims of economic exploitation, the victims of sexual exploitation were girls.

Also, in studies produced by partners on the right to an adequate standard of living, UNICEF obtained qualitative evidence that women reduced food intake so that other members of the family could eat. All this information was shared with UNICEF allies to promote gender mainstreaming in programme design and implementation.

## Environmental sustainability

In 2017 UNICEF Venezuela continued to promote some small but effective measures that contributed to environmental sustainability and the greening of UNICEF. These included reducing the number of printed materials and encouraging staff members to use digital files and electronic documents. In addition, a reduction of CO2 emissions from 2.9 TN to 2.0 TN per staff member was achieved.

## Effective leadership

The main challenges faced by the UNICEF Venezuela country management team (CMT) in 2017 were related to the evolving situation, marked by the economic crisis and four months of civil unrest. Despite this, the team was able to identify opportunities to extend UNICEF's support while reinforcing the office structure and management procedures.

This included strengthening the office human resource capacities. This was a challenge identified in 2016, for the country's context evolved from a middle-income country framework to an economic crisis scenario, requiring a different mix of skill sets. The country management team implemented the 2016 Programme Budget Review agreements and approved the use of the United Nations Volunteers Programme to reinforce UNICEF's staff structure in the areas of emergency preparedness, protection and nutrition.

To track management indicators at country management team meetings, Insight indicators were reviewed for follow-up and action as required. This was useful not only for management purposes but also as a positive contribution to generate synergies between the different areas.

While UNICEF Venezuela has no open audit recommendations, in view of the closure of the regional hub and the strengthening of the operations area, the country management team agreed to a self-assessment with the participation of private sector fundraising and the operations units to identify risks and areas of improvement. The recommendations will be implemented in 2018.

The country management team prioritized emergency risk management, including effective emergency preparedness. This comprised activities such as a multi-sectoral humanitarian training and a comprehensive contingency plan in close coordination with UNICEF LACRO and supply orders issued for the prepositioning of supplies. In addition, the UNICEF Regional Advisor on Education in Emergencies and two UNICEF Venezuela staff participated in the Caribe Wave simulation in the northern state of Vargas, and training activities were held with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UNICEF LACRO, including emergency simulations in Caracas.

The UN system partially implemented the business continuity plan to guarantee staff's safety and the continuity of operations during civil unrest from April to July.

## Financial resources management

UNICEF Venezuela maintained the review of Insight performance indicators as a permanent item in the country management team agenda, allowing the collective monitoring of budget priorities and implementation in a timely and effective manner.

To fund activities linked to the response to the crisis, UNICEF Venezuela was assigned US\$1 million in central UNICEF set-aside funds. Of these funds, 76 per cent were implemented in

2017, as well as 97 per cent of Regular Resources allocated to the office. The country management started to use a resource allocation table for its budget discussions, which allowed the monitoring of progress in execution and the programmatic needs for budget assignment or adjustments.

Despite having projected a cash flow for the office, this was not 100 per cent executed as programmed. This was because the national economic distortions brought all areas in the office into a dynamic of constant adjustments in disbursements to counterparts and operating expenses. This, along with the impossibility since September to replace funds in local currency due to the stand-by of national exchange rate policies, meant that UNICEF could not maintain a balanced cash flow in local currency and per the requirements of the Country Programme. The country management team implemented some actions to reduce the impact of this distortion, such as off-shore contracting that is economically more favourable than local hiring, as well as reducing operational expenses. Moving office premises led to savings of 24 per cent in rent.

With the reinforcement of the operations area, new controls were established and those already existing were strengthened to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Global Shared Services Centre regulations and standard operating procedures. Bank reconciliations were prepared and sent as established and the payment process was simplified, decreasing response time from the request to the effective payment to provider.

### **Fundraising and donor relations**

UNICEF Venezuela broadened its fundraising strategy, aiming to guarantee the availability of flexible funds to finance programmatic activities and strategies to respond to emerging issues affecting the most vulnerable children and adolescents. To explore funding opportunities comprehensive and user-friendly information was produced and shared with UNICEF's Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division (PFP), UNICEF LACRO, the United States Fund for UNICEF, and the UNICEF Office in Brussels. This resulted in US\$1,282,000 raised from UNICEF grants (set-aside and global thematic funds). UNICEF Venezuela also agreed to a draft proposal on nutrition with the European Union (EU) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), to be implemented in 2018 with European Union funding.

In a context of hyperinflation and high devaluation, local fundraising efforts focused on recruiting new pledge donors and growing the total donor base to approximately 9,000. This achievement was possible due to investment funds that helped implement upgrade campaigns to maximize flexible income. Notably, despite the economic situation, UNICEF Venezuela managed to retain 92 per cent of active donors and increase the recruitment of new ones by 32 per cent compared with 2016.

In 2017, net income for programmes was reached with the support of the Private Fundraising and Partnership Division which subsidized some costs that are denominated in US dollars while income is in local currency. Funds raised allowed programmes to partially fund demonstration projects prioritized by the office.

Finally, a corporate partnership agreement with one of the biggest banks in the country was signed, resulting in a substantial grant in local currency for health programmes as well as an avenue to reach their millions of clients and invite them to become pledge donors in 2018. The cost income ratio was approximately 14 per cent, excluding staff costs.

## Evaluation and research

Despite the dynamic political and economic situation and the lack of structured and systematic evaluation mechanisms in the country, UNICEF Venezuela was able to complete some core activities. The Plan for Research, Impact Monitoring and Evaluation (PRIME) was prepared in March, following organizational guidelines. It was part of UNICEF's annual planning process and it was approved in April by the CMT.

The Plan included four activities: three studies and one evaluation. Three of these are considered baselines for the Country Programme 2015-2019 indicators. At the end of 2017, PRIME reached 75 per cent compliance. The remaining evaluation on intercultural bilingual education progressed only in the preparation of the quality criteria.

## Efficiency gains and cost savings

UNICEF Venezuela achieved significant savings in 2017 following a change of premises. This will be reflected in 2018 with savings of US\$28,800, representing seven per cent of operational non-staff costs.

In 2017 UNICEF Venezuela worked with UN agencies on the business operations strategy process. The road map was established and priority processes defined for 2018 with the aim of achieving common agreements and a simplification of business processes. There are optimistic prospects for the 2018 Business Operations Strategy and further savings for UNICEF, since the new office is in the same building as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

UNICEF Venezuela implemented other initiatives, including the use of suppliers that other UNICEF country offices had already evaluated and approved, saving time in the processes of selection and bidding. It was estimated that this initiative saves between 16 to 48 hours of staff time in the selection processes in the area of private sector fundraising. In addition, the office increased the use of global long-term agreements for the purchase of programme, communications and office supplies, which contributed to the saving of resources and time.

## Supply management

During the year, UNICEF Venezuela considerably increased its procurement in response to requests, mostly by the MoH. Due to shortages in the local supply chain, these purchases were made in the international market through UNICEF Supply Division.

UNICEF Venezuela did not keep any of the supplies provided in storage. Once the supplies arrived in the country, the delivery was coordinated from the customs offices to MoH distribution centres. The largest amount of supplies, both in terms of volume and costs, was directed to address the health sector, one of the most affected in the current context.

Due to scarcity in the local market, the office acquired office supplies and equipment in the international market, using global long-term agreements from the Supply Division, which allowed UNICEF Venezuela to save in operating costs.

Additionally, as part of emergency preparedness measurements, UNICEF Venezuela initiated the process to preposition nutrition, health and education supplies in 2018, to be able to respond to natural disasters if needed.

<b>UNICEF Venezuela Procurement 2017</b>		
<b>Area</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Value in US\$</b>
Programme supplies	Antimalarial drugs	\$208,551
	Antiretroviral	\$131,194
	VIH tests	\$15,000
	Special formula for infants	\$162,086
	Prepositioning education supplies	\$166,561
	Prepositioning nutrition supplies	\$337,000
	Prepositioning breastfeeding supplies	\$108,301
<b>Sub total</b>		<b>\$1,128,693</b>
Operational supplies	Computer equipment	\$44,431
	Office equipment	\$12,300
	Office vehicle	\$32,226
	Other office supplies	\$25,000
	Printing materials	\$15,023
<b>Sub total</b>		<b>\$128,980</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$1,257,673</b>

### Security for staff and premises

In 2017 UNICEF Venezuela took significant steps to enhance the safety and security of its staff and premises.

The country office identified the need of additional measures to ensure the safety of staff and premises, given the increase in common and armed crime as a consequence of the crisis. Among the measures implemented, UNICEF Venezuela adopted flexi-time from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from March to September to reduce the exposure of staff members at risk hours, mainly during the months of civil unrest. In addition to this, the vehicles of the office were reinforced in order to protect staff during field missions and when attending meetings outside the office.

UNICEF Venezuela moved to new premises, which not only reduced operating costs but also offered significant security improvements compared to the previous office. These included 24 hours a day, seven days-a-week guards, building access control, and an integral plan of evacuation coordinated with the building's management in case of emergency.

Other preventive measures were the implementation of monthly routine tests for activating the call tree and providing UHF radio to staff members so that they are connected to the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) at all possible times.

### Human resources

UNICEF Venezuela recruited all but one of the 2016 Programme Budget Review approved staff positions and reinforced programmes and private sector fundraising capacities by hiring UN Volunteers and project-specific consultants.

To build internal capacity, various training courses were offered in compliance with the development plan, where all staff members were trained in topics such as teamwork, change management and crisis communication. All the funds assigned for training were used, based on the 2017 training plan.

Due to the evolving context, UNICEF Venezuela also reinforced its staff capabilities in the area of emergency preparedness. In addition, an emergency simulation was held with the support of experts in the area, where UNICEF Venezuela was able to identify its strengths and opportunities in the case of a natural disaster.

To ensure that all staff members commit to the values of the organization, information on the 10 minimum standards on HIV in the workplace was made available. During the year, the office complied with the dates established in the performance management cycle, monitoring the established stages and providing support to new staff with the development of their objectives.

The results of the Global Staff Survey issued in 2017 showed a marked improvement of staff conditions and perception about working conditions and about the concern of management regarding staff wellbeing. The areas of concern referred to more knowledge required about the efficiency of the operations and about internal human resource mechanisms. The former was addressed through the implementation of the approved 2016 Programme Budget Review decisions, and the latter will be fully addressed in 2018.

### Effective use of information and communication technology

The improvement of equipment was an important contribution to improve administrative and programmatic processes. UNICEF Venezuela acquired state-of-the-art computer equipment (according to the UNICEF's standards), which provided greater speed and processing capacity, enabling the digitalization of documents, including digital signature, and resulted in the less use of paper.

#### **Training:**

Some 85 per cent of staff members took part in training activities on the use of Office tools, Windows 10 and of information technology (IT) equipment.

#### **Cloud-based tools:**

UNICEF Venezuela ended 2017 with most of its files handled and hosted in OneDrive or the shared unit provided by LACRO through Light IT. This allowed staff to access and share documents from any computer with colleagues and counterparts. This was very beneficial during the months of civil unrest when many meetings had to be cancelled. Electronic file sharing, renewed equipment and programmes such as Skype for business made possible the continuation of programme and advocacy activities during that time.

#### **Support to partners:**

UNICEF Venezuela also supported activities of the National Statistics Institute (INE), including the review of its educational software's design and implementation. The interactive software, which aims to boost statistical culture among students from five to 15 years of age, is delivered by MoE in tablets to the students. It was developed using free software and it currently resides in the National Statistics Institute website. The UNICEF Venezuela Information Technology Review resulted in the successful evaluation of this project.

#### **Social media:**

UNICEF Venezuela continued to expand its reach in number of followers  
Facebook: 19,996 in January to 21,449 in December  
Twitter: 125,848 in January to 128,874 in November  
Instagram: in 7,121 April to 11,420 in November

YouTube: in 345 January to 385 in November

These increases boosted UNICEF Venezuela communication and advocacy efforts to put children on the public agenda by disseminating information and campaigns to the wider public in compliance with the annual workplan.

## Programme components from RAM

### ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

**OUTCOME 1** Effective generation of funds and management of Central Investments.

#### **Analytical statement of progress**

The 2017 Private Fundraising and Partnerships plan was based on generating quality and flexible income for the Country Programme by increasing the total individual donors base and recruiting new pledge donors, and by implementing value maximization activities to retain and upgrade the current average monthly gift. In terms of business strategy, the objective was to increase income by maintaining at least 60 per cent of existing alliances and reach at least one new partnership with a company in prioritized sectors such as banking, insurance and telecommunications. The aim was to generate income to fund UNICEF programmes' planned activities but also to receive flexible income that could be used to respond to emerging needs.

The main challenge was to implement the plan in a context of recession, devaluation and inflation and with socio-political dynamics marked by political polarization that led to street demonstrations the second quarter of the year, which obligated to identify and renegotiate new venues for the implementation of Face-to-Face (F2F) activities. Security concerns had an impact on the logistics of the F2F team. The complex economic environment also led to the closing of companies while the remaining ones were very sceptical about investing due to uncertainty.

In spite of the challenges described above, in the individuals' channel UNICEF Venezuela invested in strengthening the F2F programme both in-house and outsourced. This has continued to be the main source of new pledge donors (80 per cent) since 2014 when the programme started. Also, to overcome the high inflation rate, two upgrade campaigns were implemented with acceptable response rates. Both actions were possible thanks to investment funds received from the Private Fundraising and Partnership Division, which allowed UNICEF Venezuela to maximize investment when exchanged into local currency. The funds helped to strengthen the donor base while the situation stabilized and the average income increases to regional standards. The cost per acquisition of new pledge donors in hard currency is significantly lower than in other countries in the world (12 per cent of the regional average), which represents an opportunity to continue investing in the near future.

In relation to the business goals, in order to respond to the current situation that affects the population in general and children and adolescents in particular, UNICEF Venezuela prioritized the implementation of demonstration projects in areas such health and nutrition, and protection. The latter focused on the needs of children in street situations. UNICEF drafted proposals for potential corporate partners focussing on these key areas of work.

As a result of the strategies implemented and the measures taken with the support from UNICEF LACRO and the Private Fundraising and Partnership Division, in spite of the challenging context UNICEF Venezuela managed to surpass the fundraising goal in local

currency by over 479 per cent. A growth of 1,170 per cent was experienced in comparison to 2016. The income in US dollars did not increase at the same level because of the effects of the devaluation (+400 per cent of the official exchange rate). Despite this, income in hard currency was over 150 per cent higher in comparison to 2016.

In terms of expenses and to achieve efficiency, UNICEF Venezuela received support to cover some operational costs that are denominated in hard currency. This temporary support allowed UNICEF Venezuela to meet the institutional target of cost income ratio and to deliver approximately US\$180,000 of net income for programmes. The cost income ratio was approximately 14 per cent, excluding salary costs.

The fundamentals of the private fundraising operations seem strong and promising. The growth of the pledge channel was solid with 126 per cent in 2015, 36 per cent in 2016 and 57 per cent in 2017. Recent projections for the Private Fundraising and Partnership Plan 2018-2021, based on trends, indicate that there is room and potential to continue growing. However, there are still challenges with hyperinflation expected to continue in 2018. This situation could affect individuals' donations both in volume and in average gift amount, and at the same time have an impact on expenses. Other factors that could jeopardize the growth are: the lack of quality of goods and services for fundraising activities mainly in the individuals' channel (such as goods and suppliers); and insecurity, which constitutes a serious threat to people and limits the freedom of movement in public places where most of the F2F activities take place. In addition, insecurity also hinders business activities which then prevents economic growth.

Therefore, the fundraising strategy will be adapted and monitored to respond to the market conditions to take advantage of opportunities that could arise. These will include:

- i. Identification of initiatives to appeal for funds for the most vulnerable children from individuals or businesses;
- ii. Maximization of investment funds;
- iii. Innovative methods of attracting new donors using digital and corporate pathway to pledge activities and;
- iv. Investing in retaining current donors, both individual and corporate, to secure sustainability and funding for programmes for children.

## **OUTPUT 1 Effectively managed Private Sector Fundraising operations.**

### **Analytical statement of progress**

Through private fundraising and partnerships, UNICEF Venezuela managed to locally mobilize over US\$200,000 despite the complex context. The amount raised in 2017 represents a 1,170 per cent increase in local currency compared to 2016 and 150 per cent more in US dollars. Sixteen per cent came from individuals and 84 per cent from companies, with 20 per cent of the funds being unrestricted. The net income for programmes was approximately US\$180,000, allowing to partially fund demonstration projects that the office prioritized in 2017 in order to respond to emerging needs.

In spite of the complex environment, over 2,800 new pledge individual donors were recruited, reaching over 9,000 active donors. A 92 per cent retention rate was achieved. Due to the economic situation, the average gift was approximately US\$1. The growth in individual donations was driven by:

- i. The identification of the most secure and populated venues for F2F activities such as clubs, stores, parks and private events;
- ii. The implementation of 97 per cent of investment funds (US\$31,385) to strengthen the F2F in-house operation and to develop an outsourced face-to-face programme through a marketing agency.

The latter also allowed UNICEF to expand donor recruitment activities to four of the largest and most economically active cities in the country: Maracaibo, Valencia, Barquisimeto and Porlamar. The investment funds were also used in value maximization activities such as upgrade, reactivation and saving campaigns, partially compensating the effects of inflation.

In relation to income from businesses, the strategy was centred on approaching companies more resilient to the crisis and with potential to explore pathways to pledge, such as banks, insurance and telecommunication companies. A partnership with one of the country's largest banks, Banco Occidental de Descuento, was signed in 2017. The bank provided a grant for health programmes equivalent to US\$154,000 and agreed to explore corporate pathways to pledge initiatives in 2018. UNICEF tested a Christmas fundraising initiative with the largest e-commerce platform in Latin America, Mercado Libre, and negotiated a partnership with Ticket Mundo, a local company that sells tickets for entertainment events online, to be implemented in 2018. The objective is to generate cash donations and contacts for further conversion into monthly donors. These activities contributed to reinforce the UNICEF brand while reaching new audiences for engagement.

Alignment and good coordination across UNICEF Venezuela through the private fundraising and partnership, communication, programme and operations teams, led by management had a positive impact on local fundraising results. This included an increased social media presence of UNICEF's work in Venezuela, support in sensitizing F2F staff and telemarketers about children and adolescents, the production of documents to manage communication for fundraising purposes, and management's support to adapt processes to the demanding market conditions, in line with UNICEF policies and procedures.

**OUTCOME 2** The identity, direction and well-being of UNICEF and staff are managed efficiently and effectively to enable the achievement of results for children in the country.

### **Analytical statement of progress**

Linked to its internal management and the coordination with UNICEF NY Headquarters, UNICEF LACRO and the UN system, UNICEF Venezuela focused on strengthening systems and improving effectiveness through:

- i. Strengthening the human resources mainly by completing all vacancies as per the approved Programme Budget Review submission, allowing a segregation of functions internally;
- ii. Improving the country management team performance by enabling mechanisms that facilitated the choice of strategies used in order to identifying challenges and opportunities to expand UNICEF's support;
- iii. Improving security by specific activities, and;
- iv. Reinforcing technology capacities.

Given the context in the country, with the increase of common crime, in 2017 it was relevant that UNICEF Venezuela moved to new premises in a more convenient location, with better security and at a lower cost. Additionally, to provide greater security to staff while on duty travel, two

vehicles were adapted with security measures. To improve working effectiveness, IT equipment was updated and all staff participated in at least one specific training on the new software.

UNICEF Venezuela reduced operational costs through its own activities and interagency initiatives, which contributed to a most efficient use of the Regular Resources and the Institutional Budget. Implementation, disbursement of funds to implementing partners and the timely recording of contributions from fundraising activities of donor contributions were efficiently conducted. With these measures, the risk of devaluation of these contributions was eliminated. For savings and effective purchase and services, given the high costs and shortages in the local market, UNICEF Venezuela explored opportunities in the international market, and was able to benefit with significant savings.

UNICEF Venezuela completed the process of recruiting staff to fill its vacancies according to the approved Programme Budget Review submission. This strategy was aimed at reinforcing the areas that showed personnel shortages, a situation that generated bottlenecks in the implementation and execution of operations.

The human resources unit together with the staff association, prepared the proposal for the local training committee identifying the areas of reinforcement that the personnel needed. This proposal additionally incorporated the areas identified in the Global Staff Survey.

Challenges that UNICEF Venezuela might face in 2018 will be those linked to the impact of the political, social and economic evolving events. To mitigate the effects, the search of international suppliers that can provide the required goods and services is key for an effective implementation of UNICEF activities. Additionally, the formalization of common services with the UN system through the implementation of the business operation strategy will allow a greater efficiency of both financial and human resources strategies.

**OUTPUT 1** Governance and Systems exist to support the direction of country operations.

#### **Analytical statement of progress**

To guarantee operations in 2017, UNICEF Venezuela focused on strengthening systems and improving effectiveness.

#### **Human resources:**

Following the strategy outlined in the Programme Budget Review submission approved in September 2016, UNICEF Venezuela filled all but one vacancy. This allowed a segregation of functions internally, improving effectiveness and efficiency indicators in processes such as payment processing and recruitment, which led to the reduction of operational costs. Additionally, UNICEF Venezuela continued to receive the support of the Global Shared Services Centre. With the reinforcement of the operations' structure in the areas of finance and human resources, the office minimized response times and gained autonomy in taking decisions. UNICEF Venezuela celebrated the positive results of the Global Staff Survey and the country management team worked with the staff association and the human resources department to address the issues that came out of the survey taking actions to strengthen the capacities of the team.

#### **Country management team:**

The complex situation in the country influenced the choice of strategies used in order to implement the activities agreed in the Country Programme and the Annual Management Plan,

while identifying challenges and opportunities to expand UNICEF's support to the most vulnerable children. During the four months of civil unrest, the CMT approved the implementation of Business Continuity Plan activities such as teleworking and the use of complementary information and communication technology (ICT) devices, to facilitate the continuity of operations and enhance staff security. To improve its performance and support more timely and effective management, the CMT systematized in its monthly meetings the review of the standard performance indicators, through the Insight dashboard.

**Security:**

UNICEF Venezuela moved to new premises in a more convenient location, with better security and at a lower cost. Following UNICEF guidelines, the office is now organized as an open space, achieving more effective integration between areas and a more productive workspace. Additionally, to provide greater security to staff while traveling to activities and meetings, a second vehicle was put in service. The two vehicles have been adapted with security measures to maximize the safety of staff during duty travel.

**Information and communication technology (ICT):**

UNICEF Venezuela upgraded ICT equipment and provided staff with training in the new software. The upgrade of equipment led to a faster processing speed, and greater and better connectivity both outside and inside the office. At the same time, the digitalization of certain processes had a positive impact in CO2 reduction.

**Business operation strategy:**

UNICEF Venezuela participated with all UN system agencies in the Business Operation Strategy training and implementation with the purpose of establishing common processes that will lead to cost savings and efficiency gains.

**OUTPUT 2** Stewardship of Financial Resources creates the conditions to pursue country operations.

**Analytical statement of progress**

In 2017, UNICEF Venezuela took further steps to mitigate financial risks in a context of hyperinflation and recession, which prompted the management to implement actions to ensure compliance with UNICEF commitments in Venezuela and safeguard resources.

UNICEF Venezuela focused on efficient implementation and disbursement of funds to implementing partners and the timely recording of contributions from fundraising activities. The reinforcement of the UNICEF staffing capacity in human resources contributed to this, decreasing disbursement times to implementing partners and accelerating the registration of donor contributions. With these measures, the risk of devaluation of these contributions was minimized. Effective monitoring of cash payments to implementing partners, as well as the liquidation of these funds was managed. By the end of 2017, UNICEF Venezuela achieved 53 per cent of liquidations of its implementing partners in less than three months, with the 35 per cent between three and six months, and 12 percent between six and nine months. In spite of the difficulties in transport in the country due to the reduction of flights and insecurity, all 14 planned programmatic visits and eight out of 10 spot checks were carried out.

Due to high costs and shortages in the local market, UNICEF Venezuela explored purchase and services' opportunities in the international market through UNICEF's Supply Division to meet its programmatic and operational needs, and was able to do so with significant savings. The

implementation of the cash flow in United States dollars and local currency was key to the monitoring of this action. In addition, moving premises represented not only environmental and safety improvements for the staff, but also a 24 per cent saving in the cost of office rent since November.

During the year, four meetings were held of the joint consultative committee. Among the issues addressed were the staff's concerns in relation to the security situation, improvements to the physical conditions of the office, and the need to receive more training on security issues. The timely response to these concerns contributed favourably to improvements in the organizational climate and productivity. The security-related requests were attended and managed with UNDSS: there were five talks on this topic during the year.

**OUTPUT 3** Human resources have the capacities, skills, morale and motivation to support country operations.

### **Analytical statement of progress**

During 2017 and following the provisions of the 2016 Programme Budget Review submission, UNICEF Venezuela completed the process of recruiting staff to fill its vacancies. This strategy was aimed at reinforcing the areas that showed personnel shortages, a situation that generated bottlenecks in the implementation and execution of operations. As a result of strengthening the human resources unit, the recruitment processes were reduced from an average of 72 to 52 days. However, despite this improvement, it is important to highlight that the selection processes were affected by the limited availability of qualified candidates. This is mainly due to a lack of suitable profiles in the professional market since the crisis triggered the migration of qualified professionals. Despite this situation, UNICEF Venezuela implemented new forms of searching candidates that allowed compliance with established procedures, as agreed in the Programme Budget Review submission.

By strengthening its internal structure, UNICEF Venezuela was able to address management indicators such as effectiveness and work-life balance. In addition, together with the staff association, the human resources unit prepared the proposal for the local training committee identifying the areas of reinforcement that the staff requires. This analysis, which included the results of the Global Staff Survey (GSS), presented a robust and complete plan to address the staff's concerns and needs, in agreement with UNICEF's guidelines.

Some 70 per cent of staff completed the mandatory training modules. The human resources unit monitored this and shared reminders with the staff. In addition, UNICEF LACRO Multi-Country Facilities Service and the Global Shared Services Centre provided great support to effectively carry out human resources processes.

UNICEF and UNDSS organized several talks with the UN system counsellor. In addition, and due to security incidents that affected staff members, this resource was used on three occasions for counselling. Two staff members received peer support volunteer training: one at an advanced level and the other at the beginner's level, reinforcing peer support to the team.

UNICEF Venezuela complied with the gender policy of the organization, with 56 per cent of female and 44 per cent of male staff.

**OUTCOME 3** Country programmes are efficiently designed, coordinated, managed and supported to meet quality programming standards in achieving results for children.

**Analytical statement of progress**

UNICEF was able to expand its support to children and adolescents affected by the evolving situation in Venezuela in 2017. To effectively manage a programmatic agenda with an increased amount of activities, UNICEF Venezuela reinforced its staffing capacity and adapted strategies in search of the most effective ones to deliver results for children in the short term. Some 98 per cent of the total budget and 92 per cent of HACT planned activities were implemented. Agreements were reached with new allies, and UNICEF advocated for a sufficient, timely and effective response to the children and adolescents most affected by the crisis.

To better contribute to the promotion of children's rights through advocacy and engagement efforts, UNICEF Venezuela adapted its communication and advocacy strategy by increasing its visibility to reach broader audiences and leveraging UNICEF's public profile as neutral and trustworthy organization. Traditional media coverage reported a 75 per cent increase, which along with a 10 per cent increase through digital media, facilitated the dissemination of UNICEF messaging to raise awareness and advocate for children affected by emerging challenges. Events, partnerships and celebrities were relevant paths to leverage messaging and reach wider audiences.

UNICEF Venezuela focused on two monitoring and evaluation priorities in 2017: monitoring the situation of children and adolescents as a tool for advocacy and dialogue, and strengthening the national statistical systems to improve data about children and adolescents. The lack of timely, disaggregated and reliable official data about children limited the evidence of the impact of the crisis. In response, to ensure the timely monitoring of the situation of children, UNICEF Venezuela combined data and information from diverse sources such as official data, studies from NGO and the academia, media reports and direct observation. In addition to advocacy efforts for evidence generation, UNICEF supported its partners by providing technical assistance for the strengthening of information systems.

A key challenge in 2018 is expected to be the unpredictability of costs and access to sufficient funds for programme coordination and implementation, for the production of an internal update of the situation analysis using all studies completed between 2015-2017, to be able to consolidate procedures and tools to reinforce performance effectiveness.

**OUTPUT 1** UNICEF staff and partners are provided guidance, tools and resources to effectively design and manage programmes.

**Analytical statement of progress**

Since the evolving situation in the country brought in emerging challenges for children, to better serve those affected by the crisis UNICEF expanded its support in some areas, such as health and nutrition, and adapted strategies, including in supply. This meant a growth in the amount of programmatic activities to be implemented and to effectively manage this increased agenda, UNICEF Venezuela:

- i. Reinforced the programme section team through the Programme Budget Review-approved incorporation of a health and nutrition specialist in June, who took the lead of the

Programme section; and with the UN Volunteer programme. This included recruitment of UN Volunteers specialized in nutrition, protection and emergencies, and a programme assistant. In addition, consultants were hired to work in specific projects or activities.

- ii. Adapted strategies in search of those that could be most effective to deliver results for children in the short-run. For example, UNICEF was able to provide medical supplies for children affected by malaria, HIV and metabolic diseases.
- iii. Implemented 99 per cent of Regular Resources assigned to the office, 96 per cent of Other Resources-Regular and 100 per cent of Other Resources-Emergencies.
- iv. Implemented 92 per cent of HACT planned activities for 2017 in comparison to the 84 per cent in 2016. UNICEF continued to strengthen its allies' capacities for the management of UNICEF funds and procedures.
- v. Reached agreements with five new allies among national and subnational entities, and the civil society, which enabled UNICEF to expand its support to children affected by the crisis. These new agreements included Caritas Venezuela on nutrition, and health authorities in Caracas, the capital, who joined other 15 partners implementing programmatic activities in 2017.
- vi. Advocated at meetings and through both bilateral and external communications for the release of updated data about children, the coordination of efforts in the response to the crisis, and the expansion of UNICEF support to the most vulnerable children and adolescents.

For effective programme coordination, UNICEF had to cope with increases in costs of planned activities. Eventually it became not possible to fund local partners to carry out agreed workplans, as the official mechanism to exchange foreign currency into local currency was not active in the last quarter of the year. The unpredictability of costs will remain a challenge in 2018, in addition to a political and social environment that might directly affect coordination and implementation.

**OUTPUT 2** UNICEF staff and partners are provided tools, guidance and resources for effective communication on child rights issues with stakeholders.

### **Analytical statement of progress**

The challenging context, defined by political polarization, civil unrest including violence affecting children, and families' limited access to appropriate services and sufficient goods to cover the basic needs of children, influenced a redefinition of priorities in people's minds, leading to an increase in vulnerability. To better contribute to advocacy, UNICEF Venezuela adapted its strategy by increasing its visibility to reach broader audiences and leveraging its public profile as neutral and trustworthy organization. Five key components were considered:

#### **Traditional media coverage:**

There was a 75 per cent increase in traditional media coverage compared to 2016. This was achieved mainly by the proactive dissemination of communication assets and by accepting media interviews at a technical level. The release of statements on child protection during the protests was especially relevant. These not only reached an audience of nine million people, but

also highlighted UNICEF's neutral position and placed its messaging at the centre of the public eye.

**Digital and social media:**

There was a 10 per cent increase of supporters in social media and the same increase in website visitors. Both platforms played a relevant role in positioning UNICEF's messaging among broader audiences by widespread dissemination of UNICEF's activities in the country, speaking out on child protection, and multiplying global initiatives such as World Children's Day which became national trending topic three times in November 20.

**Events:**

Around 10,330 people participated in training activities implemented by programme partners and about 1,200 attended three events, including the end violence concert in November, and presentations of the ECD report *Early Moments Matter and the State of the World's Children 2017: children in a digital world*.

**Partnerships:**

UNICEF Venezuela partnered with top national media organizations for World Children's Day. Among the initiatives there were video messages by children, children taking over a section of a digital platform, and full page in one national newspaper which included an op-ed by UNICEF's Representative and the World Children's Day global press release.

**Celebrities:**

Campaigns and messaging reached an audience of over one million due to UNICEF National Ambassadors and supporters who shared content through social media. The National Network of Youth and Children's Orchestras and Choirs (Sistema Nacional de Orquestas y Coros Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela), National Ambassadors since 2004 and programme partners since 2014, played an outstanding role when performing for the Convention on the Rights of the Child anniversary concert, which launched UNICEF Venezuela's end violence campaign.

The evolving situation brought the need to respond to emerging issues affecting children, which delayed progress in other areas, including the development of the communication for development and media strategies and its corresponding tools and mechanisms. The incorporation of a new staff member in the second semester of the year provided the support required to expand the section's priorities.

To extend communication and advocacy efforts and reinforce its effectiveness in 2018, it is essential to ensure the use of appropriate tools and mechanisms and the availability of sufficient funding qualified human resources.

**OUTPUT 3** Effective planning and monitoring of country programme results.

**Analytical statement of progress**

One of the effects of the economic crisis in a context of political polarization has been the lack of timely, disaggregated and reliable official data on children, limiting the evidence of the impact of the crisis. For example, the latest official data on malnutrition in children aged under five dates to 2009, while mortality indicators have not been released since 2013. In this context, UNICEF Venezuela adopted a strategy to ensure the timely monitoring of the situation of children and, in parallel, to increase the knowledge and dissemination of timely and reliable information on

children and adolescents.

UNICEF Venezuela combined data and information from diverse sources such as official data, studies from NGO and the academia, media reports and direct observation. While the information is not always robust and could be in many cases partial, it is timely, accessible and indicative of the situation. These data were compiled in a scorecard in a friendly format to provide easy access to key information for advocacy and programmatic purposes.

To increase the generation and dissemination of knowledge and disaggregated, timely and reliable data, UNICEF Venezuela worked in two ways:

- i. Advocating with key national and local governmental entities such as the National Institute of Statistics, MoH, MoE, the Supreme Court, the Ombudsman Office, the National Nutritional Institute, the National Institute for Children's Rights and local child protection councils;
- ii. Providing technical assistance to key partners, both public and civil society organizations in order to support capacity building and increase the generation of periodic information on relevant and emerging issues. UNICEF Venezuela, in alliance with local child protection councils, managed to put in place a monitoring mechanism for children in street situations, which is generating the only updated information available in the country on this issue. At the same time, the design phase of information systems on quality education and juvenile justice was completed with technical support from UNICEF. In addition, studies on the quality of neonatal care services, quality education and juvenile justice were completed. UNICEF Venezuela is promoting the use of these studies to design and monitor public policies.

Since 2015, UNICEF Venezuela has been advocating with the Government through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Planning, the Budgeting National Office and the National Committee for Human Rights to monitor public investment on children and adolescents. As a result, UNICEF Venezuela contributed to the advance of child rights policies. In 2017, UNICEF also continued to support the design of mechanisms to monitor public investment in children.

In 2018, the main steps will be to complete the actions started in 2017, advocating for the production and the widest dissemination of information, and to develop an internal update of the situation analysis using all studies completed between 2015-2017.

**OUTCOME 4** By 2019, UNICEF will have contributed to ensuring that pregnant women, children and adolescents (particularly the most excluded) are able to access health and nutrition services and programmes of better quality and greater relevance, particularly with regard to neonatal care, the prevention of vertically-transmitted HIV, the promotion and protection of exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding, and the prevention and care of teenage pregnancies, using a gender-based approach.

#### **Analytical statement of progress**

Amidst social and economic instability, achieving country programme priorities and responding to emerging needs in a fragile health context required UNICEF Venezuela to adjust strategies to better serve the most vulnerable children. Civil unrest, political struggles and a deteriorating economic situation impacted on the health of women and children, leading to increased risk of outbreaks of epidemic diseases that had previously been eradicated, such as diphtheria and measles. The most vulnerable continued to experience lack of access to appropriate and

sufficient basic health products and services. This situation informed UNICEF's approach to achieving its health and nutrition outcomes in 2017.

According to the MoH's Official Epidemiological Report 2015–2016, more than 240,000 people were infected with malaria in 2016, a 76 per cent increase from 2015. No official figures for diarrhoea, diphtheria, pneumonia, HIV and measles were reported in 2017, but sample observations suggest marked increases in these potentially deadly diseases. The Government, with PAHO/WHO, put in place some measures during the year, and requested UNICEF partial support for supply delivery.

In response to emerging health challenges, and as negotiated with the MoH, UNICEF provided medical supplies. These included over 100,000 antimalarial treatments and antiretrovirals for 2,324 children (45 per cent girls) in 23 of 24 states. Over 63 per cent of HIV-treated cases were concentrated in three states (Bolívar, Capital District and Zulia). About 15,000 HIV rapid tests were provided to MoH to focus on pregnant women. UNICEF also supplied special formula for all children in the country registered with metabolic disorders.

UNICEF enhanced the capacities of local partners to bring services as near as possible to families in remote areas of the Amazonas state where access to health is difficult for indigenous communities. Through an agreement with SACAICET, UNICEF supported the full realization of an improvement plan for epidemiological surveillance of malaria in the Amazonas state. This alliance and the UNICEF cooperation with the MoH underpinned the supply of more than 100,000 antimalarial treatments by UNICEF at the end of the third quarter of 2017. A population of 108,750 in Amazonas state benefited from updated training provided to 435 health workers on the diagnosis and treatment of malaria. In partnership with SACAICET, a nutrition surveillance system began to be implemented in two schools of the Amazonas state.

During the second quarter of the year, UNICEF, together with the MoH and SVPP, completed an assessment on the quality of services in neonatal care, which was focused on compliance with protocols of care in the neonatal period. The assessment was carried out in 18 hospitals in 15 selected states (of 24), prioritizing those with higher birth rates and neonatal mortality. The assessment revealed potential areas of improvement particularly related to availability of medical supplies and sanitary conditions for deliveries. Based on these findings, during the last quarter of 2017, UNICEF engaged in a rapid response to reduce neonatal mortality due to antiseptic conditions. Support was mobilised through civil society allies and the private sector to provide antiseptics to the three main maternities that attend more than 33 per cent of deliveries in the Capital District.

The first phase of implementation of a nutritional recovery plan began at the end of 2017 in partnership with Caritas Venezuela, targeting 1,500 children under five at risk of acute malnutrition and 700 recovering from severe acute malnutrition. The intervention is aligned with national nutrition authority guidelines on the application of protocols for nutritional treatment of children under five, and pregnant and lactating women with nutritional deficiencies. UNICEF also contributed to strengthen the nutrition surveillance system in all 126 schools of Fe y Alegría and, with Caritas, in 16 parishes in Miranda, Lara, Vargas and Zulia states, relying on community promoters for the management of acute malnutrition and environmental sanitation.

Venezuela has amongst the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy in Latin America, with 101 live births per 1,000 adolescents aged 15–19 years, contributing to high maternal and neonatal mortality. During 2017, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the design of, and advocacy with, the national authorities to prepare the operational plan of the Policy on the Prevention of

Adolescent Pregnancy, working with UNFPA and a broad coalition of government institutions and nine CSOs.

**OUTPUT 1** Increased the number of children receiving care in the framework of the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, including quality complementary feeding in public maternal and child health centres prioritized.

#### **Analytical statement of progress**

Improvement of the quality of care in hospitals, and early attachment and exclusive breastfeeding are priorities in UNICEF Venezuela's cooperation programme with the Government. In partnership with the MoH and SVPP, UNICEF supported the strengthening of the capacity of its medical staff, nurses and administrative staff to implement the steps that facilitate a healthy start in life in centres with the highest birth rates.

With UNICEF support, the SVPP facilitated the training of teams designated as "godparents" in each health facility working towards certification by the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative by ensuring compliance with its recommended 10 steps, preparing hospitals for external evaluation and certification, and supporting medium and long-term monitoring.

During 2017, UNICEF trained 1,167 health workers for baby friendly hospital initiative implementation, providing 16 courses and facilitating other 18 training sessions along the country for breastfeeding promoters. These professionals work in 20 health facilities in 13 federal entities that collectively account for one-third of deliveries nationwide (about 160,000 births per year). In 2017 they managed to improve at least four of the 10 baby friendly hospital initiative steps. In addition, six sensitization workshops on the Initiative were conducted for administrative and other relevant staff members in five states (Anzoátegui, Capital District, Monagas, Falcón, Zulia). Nine maternity hospitals in five states have established breastfeeding committees to enhance the application of the 10 steps; however, 2017 posed challenges to some basic services at hospital level.

The partnership with SVPP also facilitated progress in the promotion of breastfeeding, supporting postgraduate studies in Venezuela in alliances with academic institutions. During 2017, 50 professionals obtained diplomas on breastfeeding from the Central University of Venezuela and the University of Zulia.

The main challenge for 2018 is to increase not only the number of hospital practicing baby-friendly initiative but also fully applying the 10 steps, engaging and promoting other services such a human milk bank and mother-baby kangaroo beyond prematurity in cases where there are clinical reasons for the mother not to give breastfeeding to her baby. This needs a deeper work with doctors, neonatologist and paediatricians, as to accept early application of these resources. Protocols and guidelines to promote these practices in all maternities are needed.

**OUTPUT 2** Increased the percentage of newborns and their mothers who are treated in health centres that apply the protocol of comprehensive health care for children in the neonatal period, up to three months.

#### **Analytical statement of progress**

Strengthening exclusive breastfeeding is central to UNICEF cooperation in Venezuela. It is also of crucial importance as a key aspect of strategies to prevent malnutrition, chronic non-

communicable diseases and promoting early childhood stimulation in healthy conditions. Venezuela has a law promoting breastfeeding and is advancing in establishing operational standards. UNICEF is supporting national efforts to promote these, so as to enhance adoption of protocols that underpin the baby friendly hospital initiative.

Through strategic private sector alliances, UNICEF provided financial and technical support to pilot a kangaroo-mother programme at the Maternidad Concepción Palacios, Venezuela's largest maternity hospital. Through this initiative, timely care was provided to 100 per cent of premature children with low birth weight at this hospital during the second half of 2017. This programme is the first step in an expansion strategy, supported with funding from local corporate partners, to provide materials and equipment. Following the provision of technical support, UNICEF is expecting in 2018 an agreement with its national ambassador and partner Fundamusical to strengthen the activities of their hospital programme at neonatal wards of the hospitals of Capital District to include music as therapy for the rehabilitation of premature babies.

In view of the seemingly worsening nutritional situation of children under five, during the last quarter of 2017 the first phase of implementation of a nutritional recovery plan began. It targets at least 1,500 children at risk of acute malnutrition and 700 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition. This was accompanied by UNICEF's partnership with CARITAS to strength the capacities of community workers on the management of acute malnutrition and environmental sanitation. The intervention is aligned with the national nutrition authority guidelines on the nutritional treatment and recovery of children under five years of age and pregnant or breastfeeding women with nutritional deficiencies.

For 2018, UNICEF will focus on supporting several neonatal centres to improve quality, to apply protocols, and to have application the necessary resources to ensure adequate attention for newborn from the neonatal period up to the three months. UNICEF will support and advocate for an adequate control system from the beginning of pregnancy, including family and community support. A widespread campaign to give information on the steps, before-during-after the pregnancy, will help families and mothers to be aware of the development of their baby in utero and after birth. Finally, supporting expansion of methodologies such mother-kangaroo and activation mechanisms such breastmilk banks, will improve the possibility of babies with difficult births to survive. UNICEF anticipated extend these services to at least six neonatal facilities in the next 18 months.

**OUTPUT 3** 90 per cent of HIV-positive pregnant women receive antiretroviral treatment.

#### **Analytical statement of progress**

Establishing a baseline on mother-to-child transmission of HIV remains a high priority issue. However, whilst the methodology for a study was agreed in 2016, instability in the country and the prioritization of procuring antiretroviral treatment led to implementation delays. The study is being taken up by the joint UN team on HIV and AIDS as an inter-agency priority for 2018.

The country obtained support from the strategic fund administered by PAHO/WHO, and during 2017 UNICEF supported the MoH's capacity to provide services to children and women by providing antiretroviral treatment and 15,000 rapid tests for pregnant women. A direct request from MoH resulted in the treatment of 2,324 children in 23 states. Of these, 45 per cent were girls and 55 per cent boys. Of the cases under treatment, 63 per cent were concentrated in

three states: Bolívar, Capital District and Zulia.

The availability of HIV-related prevention and treatment supplies remained a major issue in the country. This was not only reflected in the shortages in antiretroviral therapy, but also in the health and nutritional conditions of pregnant women and women who have just given birth to a baby. UNICEF needs to increase support and advocacy to discuss and find, at national level, viable solutions under the saving lives criteria, with support of national authorities and local actors. This challenge needs to be based on evidence: as such, a rigorous study on the status of maternal to child transmission is urgently needed.

**OUTPUT 4** The adolescents of the country are attended by a national intersectoral program of prevention and care of adolescent pregnancy created, functioning and with a gender and intercultural approach.

#### **Analytical statement of progress**

Venezuela has among the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy in Latin America, with 101 live births per 1,000 adolescents aged 15–19 according to the 2016 report Accelerating Progress toward the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy in Latin America by PAHO, WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF. Adolescent pregnancy is an important contributor to maternal and neonatal mortality. During 2017, UNICEF advocated with national authorities and provided technical assistance to the design of an operative plan for the policy on prevention of adolescent pregnancy. This was undertaken in partnership with UNFPA and a broad coalition of nine civil society organizations and academia, led by governmental institutions, including the ministries of health, education, women, and government and justice.

In a joint intervention with UNFPA and MoH, UNICEF supported demonstration services in health centres of five prioritized states to enhance an intersectoral response. In partnership with SVPP, health workers from 35 centres in 12 states were trained to apply specific and appropriate care with a gender and intercultural perspective, prioritizing the prevention and care of adolescent pregnancy in accordance with the adolescent health protocol. This was achieved through 11 workshops on adolescent care protocols in five prioritized states (Capital District, Vargas, Carabobo, Guárico and Lara). Additionally, 336 health team members were trained in comprehensive health care for adolescents.

Under this intervention, the establishment of specific health facilities for adolescents progressed. Six specific facilities were established and assist over 3,300 adolescents every month: three in San Juan Guárico, two in the state of Bolívar, and one in Valencia. Three more are in the process of implementation (two in Vargas and one in Nueva Esparta). Additionally, one specific service for adolescents was strengthened at the Maternidad Concepción Palacios, and adolescent care was strengthened in the paediatric section of Dr Carlos Arvelo Hospital, both in Capital District.

The personnel in charge of these facilities were trained to enhance their skills to provide adequate and targeted medical care with a gender perspective and cultural sensitivity, as well as prioritizing the prevention and care of adolescent pregnancy according to the national protocols of adolescent health.

Suicide in ethnic communities in the state of Amazonas has been an evolving issue. This is particularly the case in the Ye'kuana community in the indigenous Alto Orinoco (south) where 16 deaths were registered between 2005 and 2017, peaking in 2010 at 2.1 deaths per 100,000

inhabitants. Factors influencing adolescent suicide in the Ye'kuana include economic conditions, alcohol abuse and loss of cultural values. To understand the barriers faced by adolescents in this community, during 2017 UNICEF supported a study conducted by SACAICET that underpinned the design of a comprehensive and participatory strategy to prevent and mitigate consequences for adolescents. This strategy brings together adolescents, elders and adults with the local authorities. It has already resulted in increased engagement of the community and authorities in dialogue on ways for adolescents to respect their culture and worldview.

**OUTPUT 5** System of administrative registers and integrated system of surveys improve the opportunity and statistical disaggregation of children and adolescents' data in terms of health, nutrition and HIV, and are used for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies.

### **Analytical statement of progress**

UNICEF's key strategic partners in achieving this output are the MoH, the National Statistics Institute and the National Nutritional Institute. In 2017 UNICEF and other UN agencies' dialogue with the authorities continued in order to take specific actions for the improvement of statistical information systems in health and nutrition. By the end of 2017, with support from UNICEF, the MoH had printed forms for the registration of administrative cases to strengthen the surveillance system and fill the gaps in disaggregated data collection. Implementation of these forms has begun. The National Health Survey had not reported progress after a pilot in 2016, and UNICEF is prioritizing support for this exercise in 2018.

Dialogue with the National Nutritional Institute moved forward slowly, posing challenges to an agreement on how to strengthen the Nutritional Surveillance System. In contrast, civil society organizations developed some sample studies on nutrition, including the bulletins released by Caritas Venezuela. Even though these bulletins were based on non-random sample surveillance, they are providing information on the nutritional evolution and risks of the most vulnerable children.

In this context, UNICEF modified its strategy to first capture primary information and initiated upstream dialogue with the national authorities, with a number of results achieved. Through its alliance with SACAICET, UNICEF supported the improvement plan for the epidemiological surveillance system of malaria in the Amazonas state. This was fully achieved and the findings of this surveillance, jointly with the MoH epidemiologic bulletins, informed UNICEF on the supply of more than 100,000 antimalarial treatments completed by UNICEF at the Government's request at the end of the third quarter of 2017. Implementation of a nutrition surveillance system in indigenous schools also began in partnership with SACAICET.

In September, UNICEF began its support to Caritas Venezuela to implement a nutritional recovery plan based on the expansion of the surveillance system and aligned with national guidelines. UNICEF is advocating for the inclusion of community surveillance with national services managed by the National Nutritional Institute and the MoH.

UNICEF closely monitored the nutritional situation through reports from its allies and co-designed with FAO a joint programme to support with prevention and attention strategies 18,600 individuals, including 44 per cent children and adolescents in 40 communities across four states. This will be a priority for 2018. A key component of the programme is community surveillance implemented with support, expertise and services from the National Nutritional Institute.

During the final quarter of 2017, UNICEF began the process to supply nutritional supplements to strengthen local capacities at community level through Caritas and from the Government with National Nutritional Institute and their nutrition rehabilitation centres.

**OUTCOME 5** By 2019, UNICEF will have contributed to ensuring that children and adolescents (particularly the most excluded) are attending and remaining within educational facilities and that these latter are improving their quality of teaching and educational content, using a rights, gender, adolescent development, intercultural and bilingual approach.

### **Analytical statement of progress**

Children and adolescents' school attendance and retention in the country's most excluded areas is affected by the lack of teacher professional development in the skills and competences that promote a more engaging teaching and learning process. In the case of out-of-school adolescents, the curriculum does not address the different dimensions of their development. Another issue is the absence of a quality education information system that could provide accurate information to find out what is working and what is not.

In 2017 UNICEF Venezuela contributed to:

- i. The increase in coverage of the national training plan for early childhood education teachers. This was through 6,519 teachers in ECD; developing teachers' basic skills for teachers of the three educational levels at Fe y Alegría schools; and training 80 indigenous teachers on the quality criteria for bilingual intercultural education. This will improve teaching planning in the indigenous children's mother tongue and culture, making it more meaningful due to the relevance of the learning content;
- ii. The improvement of the content of two assistance programmes for out-of-school adolescents and youth (urban and indigenous) with the inclusion of content on human rights, gender, adolescent development, and bilingual intercultural education.
- iii. The improvement of bilingual intercultural education in 76 indigenous schools using strategies to develop skills of indigenous boys, girls and adolescents. This included improvements in content, learning spaces and socio-cultural calendar, as well as the completion and implementation of two educational projects to ensure the cultural and linguistic relevance of the teaching and learning processes of children and adolescents from two indigenous groups (Wayuu and Warao). In addition, educational materials proposals were prepared for school children from nine indigenous groups. Two of these proposals are in the final review phase ahead of printing (Wayuu and Warao);
- iv. The identification of teaching barriers and bottlenecks and the drafting of a proposal for an integrated statistical system at Fe y Alegría schools.

UNICEF provided technical assistance to the design and implementation of training, the update of teaching programmes and the production of educational materials. Specifically, UNICEF supported the Teacher Training National Plan prepared by MoE and Fe y Alegría schools by designing and implementing the teacher training programme in basic and core skills. These were the key strategies to develop cooperation with schools in the most deprived areas of the country through established alliances with the MoE and civil society organizations, such as Fe y Alegría and the Apostolic Vicariate in Puerto Ayacucho, Amazonas state.

In 2018, UNICEF Venezuela's main challenge will be to continue strengthening its collaboration with its education partners and to expand the network of strategic allies on quality education aimed at the country's most vulnerable communities.

**OUTPUT 1** At least 20 per cent of basic education schools applies pertinent and quality pedagogical contents, with focus on human rights and equity, according to the guidelines of the MoE.

#### **Analytical statement of progress**

Despite the high levels of education access, a percentage of educational facilities at all levels of education in deprived urban areas do not have teachers trained in the development of educational content relevant to the children and adolescents' life cycle, socio-economic context, interests and needs. This has an impact on student attendance and retention.

During 2017, UNICEF Venezuela reached 11 per cent of the prioritized educational facilities by providing teacher training at 3,273 educational institutions: 3,170 of the system's three levels (3,000 MoE schools and 170 Fe y Alegría centres) and 103 care institutions for out-of-school adolescents and young people.

To achieve this, UNICEF provided technical support for the improvement of the curricula and accessibility aspects of out-of-school youth and adolescent care programmes. Technical assistance was also provided for the design and implementation of plans and training programmes for teachers of the three educational levels. A focus was on early childhood education, aimed at developing competencies for the care of children and adolescents using a human rights and equity approach.

The contribution of the MoE and Fe y Alegría was important to achieve progress, which resulted in openness, interest, commitment and presence at national level in areas with vulnerable communities and in funding for the activities developed.

In 2018, UNICEF Venezuela's main challenge is to promote the development of demonstration projects and to work with new allies in order to reach more educational centres and improve the educational quality for the most disadvantaged children and adolescents.

**OUTPUT 2** At least 50 per cent of the Basic Education schools in indigenous environments of prioritized states applies the IBE with quality.

#### **Analytical statement of progress**

Bilingual intercultural education for indigenous children in Venezuela is one of the educational modalities still to be included in the process of curricula transformation promoted by MoE. Despite the legal progress in terms of educational rights for indigenous groups and the important experiences in this area, there is a high percentage of educational centres that don't provide teaching and learning in the child's mother tongue, don't provide learning spaces and don't adapt the school calendar to the children's culture and identity. As a result, indigenous children and adolescents face learning difficulties and often feel discouraged, impacting on school enrolment and attendance.

During 2017, UNICEF Venezuela contributed to improve eight per cent of educational

institutions in indigenous areas of the states of Amazonas, Bolívar, Delta Amacuro and Zulia. UNICEF Venezuela provided technical assistance for the design and implementation of training plans, the preparation of educational projects, the development of assessments and the production of educational materials for nine indigenous groups. In addition, it supported the capacity building of teachers and the school directors on teaching planning in the native language and culture of indigenous children and facilitated the elaboration of proposals for the attention of out-of-school indigenous adolescents. To achieve this goal, UNICEF Venezuela worked jointly with MoE, Fe y Alegría schools and the Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Ayacucho, Amazonas state.

In 2018, UNICEF Venezuela's main priorities are to:

- i. Strengthen its support to MoE, in particular the National Directorate for Indigenous Education;
- ii. Continue technical assistance to Fe y Alegría schools and the Apostolic Vicariate, and;
- iii. Identify new allies in states with indigenous populations in order to expand the network of institutions aimed at improving the implementation of bilingual intercultural education and reaching its goal in the number of educational institutions.

**OUTPUT 3** System of administrative registers and integrated system of surveys in educational matters incorporate the monitoring of quality of education, taking into account the indigenous peoples and communities attended, territorial criteria (municipal and parochial), by sex and life cycle.

#### **Analytical statement of progress**

Given the lack of updated official data on the situation of children, evidence generation was relevant to identify and implement adequate activities. In 2017 UNICEF Venezuela promoted studies and information systems' proposals with allies that have national presence and provide assistance to vulnerable populations such as indigenous communities and those living in deprived urban areas. To achieve this, UNICEF Venezuela provided technical assistance to Fe y Alegría to undertake a study on education quality and supported the preparation of a proposal for the integrated statistical system. The system will be implemented in 2018.

UNICEF Venezuela's priorities for 2018 are to:

- i. Support the design of programmes and actions to improve educational quality in Fe y Alegría schools, based on the study produced in 2017;
- ii. Support Fe y Alegría in the implementation of an integrated statistical system, and;
- iii. Resume dialogue with MoE in order to expand the educational information system at national level.

**OUTCOME 6** By 2019, UNICEF will have contributed to ensuring that children, adolescents and families from the country's priority municipalities have access to improved programmes and services for the care of victims of violence, including gender-based violence, care for adolescents in conflict with the law, promoting a culture of peace and good treatment, and the timely registration of births among indigenous populations, with the support of relevant, good quality monitoring and statistical information systems.

#### **Analytical statement of progress**

The crisis and the difficulties faced by the most vulnerable in accessing basic goods and services contributed to increase vulnerabilities and violence against and around children and

adolescents. Although no official figures are available, more children and adolescents appeared in the streets to try to earn a living or were involved in demonstrations during the first half of 2017. Many in this population are vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, negligence, drugs, sexual exploitation or various forms of criminal behaviour. However, very few programmes exist to address this situation and there has been a heavy reliance on institutionalization as a solution.

In 2017, UNICEF Venezuela and its partners helped to ensure that in two prioritized municipalities at least 45 per cent of children, adolescents and their families in highly vulnerable conditions due to poverty received care through programmes of localization and family strengthening, as well as by services protecting their rights. To monitor the situation of children on the street, a mechanism was established with the participation of staff working in child rights councils, child protection councils and child care programmes of municipalities.

More than 70 per cent of children and adolescents in 15 programmes to prevent and address violence against children were reached through the establishment of new alliances with two national NGO networks and with protection councils and councils of the rights of children and adolescents in prioritized municipalities. Training programmes reached 100 per cent of child protection judges, 30 per cent of multidisciplinary teams at protection courts, 50 per cent of protection counsellors and all educational defenders with updated knowledge on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international protection doctrines.

To achieve results in 2017, UNICEF focused on the provision of specialized technical assistance on enhancing knowledge on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other legal instruments. In addition, UNICEF generated knowledge and evidence on the situation of children on the street, adolescents in conflict with the law, child sexual abuse, border movements and armed violence. This included the creation of new information systems with adequate levels of disaggregation by age, sex, municipality, type of violence, and ethnicity, UNICEF also supported actions to promote the right to good treatment and the right to identity from birth.

UNICEF contributed to the development of follow-up mechanisms and the production and dissemination of information and training materials. With UNICEF support, coordination between actors in the protection system was strengthened leading to improved analysis of the situation of children in street situations. Partners contributed with staff and equipment and supported information gathering in the field, the creation of inter-institutional support networks, and roundtables to analyse information. They also contributed with expertise for the follow-up of the recommendations of the Ombudsman's Office, mobilized national and local networks, and deployed the cultural and linguistic expertise required for indigenous and border communities. Their logistical support for mobilization in remote areas and the provision of birth registration materials in community activities was instrumental to progress against this outcome.

Ongoing identification of bottlenecks highlighted the major barriers to be:

- (i) A context marked by the economic crisis;
- (ii) Four months of civil unrest that included deadly episodes;
- (iii) Another three months with substantially decreased direct cash transfers due to changes in national mechanisms of currency exchange;
- (iv) Inadequate internal coordination within the child protection system;
- (v) Social norms;
- (vi) Weak statistical culture;
- (vii) Little visibility of public investment in childhood and adolescence; and;

- (viii) Low prioritization of national policies and programmes that protect children in street situations and adolescents in contact with the law using means other than the deprivation of liberty. In national and local institutions and services, staff turnover increased, and there were also difficulties with supplies and infrastructure. The financial costs of the protection system, as well as costs to users, increased.

The year 2017 showed that in critical situations it is effective to reinforce the local level, continue advocacy on the implementation of the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and especially to improve coordination within the child protection system.

In 2018, it will be necessary to advance on two levels: (i) promoting and advocating protection policies and; (ii) promoting strengthening of programmes nationwide and reinforcing local initiatives. In this second level, it will be pertinent to achieve an ever-greater articulation between the organizations of the state and society to have improved protection programmes and services that effectively contribute to the prevention and attention of violence against children and adolescents, as well as with the promotion of the fundamental rights of children and adolescents. Additionally, in a country with so little information available around child protection, it will be critical to complete the information systems initiated on the protection received by children and adolescents.

**OUTPUT 1** At least three national institutions and 20 per cent of institutions, programs or services in prioritized municipalities within national protection system of children and adolescents, know international child protection doctrine and implementing and monitoring policies and integrated services for prevention of and response to violence, with quality and in accordance with international standards.

### **Analytical statement of progress**

Recent studies completed in 2016 by governmental entities and NGOs have shown that the officials in the child protection system need capacity development to achieve better prevention and attention to violence, to overcome a reliance on punitive measures and institutionalization, and ensure child rights principles inform decisions.

UNICEF supported the child protection system through advocacy and capacity building to promote greater knowledge and implementation to international standards. In this regard, 100 per cent of protection judges, 30 per cent of multidisciplinary teams in protection courts, 50 per cent of protection counsellors and all educational defenders had updated knowledge of international protection doctrines. This capacity development emphasized the best interests of the child, the right of children and adolescents to grow up in a family, and Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment 21 on children in street situations.

This year, the child protection system paid special attention to children and adolescents in street situations. With UNICEF support, at least 45 per cent of children and adolescents in street situations in two prioritized municipalities received improved services and quality of care.

UNICEF also provided technical assistance for the analysis of the determinants of armed violence involving children and adolescents. Additional technical support was provided to produce and dissemination the children's version of the national human rights plan and a translation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into some indigenous languages. Partners such as National Council of Human Rights, Ombudsman Office, AVESA, Fundacion Luz y Vida and National Association of Child Protection Counsellors, contributed to gathering

information in the field, the creation of inter-institutional support networks and the organization of roundtables for the analysis of relevant information and the design of new training courses for child protection officials.

Inadequate coordination within the child protection system, the absence of valid and reliable information systems with sufficient disaggregation, and the economic situation decreased the planned scope and posed barriers to support for integrated programmes and services for prevention and response to violence. A lesson learned was that when supporting specific situations at the local level, alliances with NGOs such as the National Association of Child Protection Counsellors, which gathers more than two-thirds of the child protection counsellors (local decisions makers) in Venezuela, are more productive. This is because they have technical knowledge, work locally, and have strong relationships with the state and other local NGOs.

Based on the lessons learned in 2017 and the findings of the studies mentioned above, the main challenges going forward are to:

- (i) Ensure that Convention on the Rights of the Child principles are implemented in the national child protection system;
- (ii) Move forward with compliance with the recommendations from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, as set forward in the National Human Rights Plan, and;
- (iii) Continue to strengthen programmes and protection services that effectively contribute to the prevention and attention of violence against children.

**OUTPUT 2** At least one program or service other than deprivation of liberty for adolescents in conflict with the law functioning adequately at the national level.

### **Analytical statement of progress**

In 2017, actors in the juvenile justice system used studies carried out in 2016 with UNICEF support to implement training policies, design training programmes and manuals, and enhance coordination and monitoring of juvenile justice programmes that are alternatives to the deprivation of liberty for adolescents in conflict with the law.

UNICEF provided specialized technical assistance and generated and disseminated knowledge and evidence. Advocacy was undertaken to avoid further setbacks regarding child rights provisions and the international doctrine of protection, and for the implementation of strategies aimed at sharing the experience of officials who participated during 2016 in international congresses on juvenile justice. The Ombudsman's Office contributed with its expertise in following up on recommendations to various state institutions (as presented in its public reports) and provided quantitative and qualitative information gathered through inspections of entities and services caring for adolescents in conflict with criminal law.

The socio-political context in Venezuela prevented progress in UNICEF's planned advocacy on determining coordination of the juvenile justice system, on providing extensive training, and for reporting on key populations. In 2018, substantial progress will be required in the design, implementation and follow-up of programmes that do not rely on the deprivation of liberty for adolescents. This will require overcoming bottlenecks related to the lack of clarity regarding which organization executes programmes and to ensure that, if legislative reforms materialize, these remain compliant with international protocols.

A lesson learned in 2017 is that the dissemination of studies demands space for discussion and

debate, accompanied by specialized technical assistance. A challenge is the implementation of a coordinating body that effectively brings together the entire juvenile justice system (judicial, inspection and programme execution bodies) that deal with non-custodial programmes with special priority and respect for the international standards. Until this occurs, UNICEF expects to continue to provide support for the generation of an information system on juvenile justice with disaggregated data.

**OUTPUT 3** At least one national institution implements and monitors policies and programs to promote the right to good treatment and reduce violent disciplinary practices in homes, schools and communities of prioritized municipalities.

### **Analytical statement of progress**

According to UNICEF's 2017 report *A familiar face: violence against children and adolescents* and to civil society reports, violence against children has increased in Venezuela. UNICEF has supported selected schools and communities in prioritized municipalities identified as the most violent in the country to implement and monitor programmes to promote children's right to good treatment. At least 15 educational communities with over 4,000 children, adolescents, their teachers and their families received technical support from UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and *Fe y Alegria* in 2017 to promote the right to good treatment. This contributed to changing knowledge, attitudes and practices towards and among children and adolescents in homes, schools and communities.

This strategy aims to increase the proportion of parents and caregivers who:

- (i) Know that the right to good treatment means abstaining from shouting, hitting and humiliating a child or an adolescent (currently 11 per cent);
- (ii) Are aware of the existence of the institutions of the national system for the protection of children and adolescents (40 per cent);

Use shouting and humiliation as a disciplinary measure (41 per cent).

It also aims to decrease the proportion of caregivers who are willing to use and inadequately justify the use of physical punishment (currently at 71 per cent).

Basic documents on standards and protocols for prevention and attention to violence against children and adolescents in schools and hospitals were developed. This was in partnership with the National Human Rights Council, the Ombudsman's Office and other social organizations. They are being validated with the participation of the health and education sectors, communities, children and adolescents.

UNICEF contributed specialized technical assistance, evidence generation, advocacy, logistic support, production of training materials and dissemination of information in schools and training centres (using billboards, music, and murals), and through social networks and online. The key allies (*Fundamusal Bolívar*, the governing body of the Network of Youth and Children's Orchestras and Choirs of Venezuela; schools of the MoE; and *Fe y Alegria*) contributed to organizing and recording activities, calls to families, teachers and students, and dissemination of training and information materials.

The evolving context of the economy and civil unrest affected UNICEF Venezuela's achievements. In 2018, the main priority is to implement programmes and ensure that they effectively modify knowledge, attitudes and violent practices towards children and adolescents in the prioritized municipalities, with the full participation of the population under 18 years.

**OUTPUT 4** Six prioritized states increase to 80 per cent birth registration within three months of birth in rural and indigenous communities.

**Analytical statement of progress**

The national rate for civil registration within three months of birth is 80 per cent. Universal birth registration depends on prioritizing states with dispersed communities and indigenous peoples.

UNICEF contributed with specialized technical assistance on vital statistics and on determinant analysis, training indigenous officials and leaders on the right to identity of children immediately after birth, supporting the inspection of hospital units for birth registration, and establishing alliances within prioritized states. Partners within these alliances (Ministry of Health, Ombudsman's Office, National Statistics Institute, Children's Rights Council in prioritized municipalities) contributed with the mobilization of their national and local networks and with cultural and linguistic knowledge required for the registration of the people belonging to indigenous communities. They also provided logistical support in the most distant areas, and with the dissemination of registration booklets in community activities.

These joint efforts have contributed to significant progress. By the end of 2017, three of the six prioritized states exceeded their average of 70 per cent of opportunity of the civil registration of birth. Zulia state achieved 80 per cent timely registration of births, with Bolivar at 78 per cent and Monagas at 76 per cent. Of the remaining states, Apure was at 66 per cent, Delta Amacuro at 56 per cent and Amazonas at 53 per cent.

An analysis of the causes of low birth registration was undertaken, based on information from users, indigenous leaders and officials. It found that the main bottlenecks were lack of economic resources of the users to return to the civil registry units in urban centres, scarce public transport, low value perceived of the need for identity documents and a lack of office supplies and equipment at centres.

The experience of the hospital units of civil birth registration has shown that mechanisms should be implemented to ensure that mothers do not leave the health facility without having made the civil registration of the birth of their children. It is also a lesson learned that the necessary coordination is needed between the various involved agencies. These are the

- National Electoral Council – the governing body that leads the policy in civil birth registration
- National Statistical Institute – responsible for optimizing the quality of statistical data;
- MoH – responsible for generating the certificate of live birth;
- Ombudsman Office – responsible for monitoring the services of the civil registration of births.

In addition, better collaboration is required with the civil society organizations that promote the right to identity from birth.

In 2018, UNICEF, will continue contributing to the goal of achieving 80 per cent of registration in the priority states, considering the bottlenecks identified and the lessons learned.

**OUTPUT 5** Integrated information system that incorporates at least two new statistical operations for child protection system and producing timely and regular nationwide data, with adequate levels of disaggregation.

### **Analytical statement of progress**

Traditionally, very little information has been available with adequate levels of disaggregation in the child protection sector. UNICEF's technical support to the Supreme Court was a key element in progress made this year, with two information systems initiated. These will provide timely information on the decisions taken by courts nationwide to protect children and adolescents whose rights are violated, as well as to protect adolescents in conflict with the law. As a result, an information system on judicial procedures and decisions in protection courts is now producing timely and regular nationwide data, with adequate levels of disaggregation.

A similar initiative was initiated in the Ministry of Education, with Educational Defenders' Offices, however progress was affected by changes in senior personnel and technical staff in the ministry.

In all three cases, UNICEF contributed specialized technical assistance in the areas of information systems, statistics and technology, ensuring that data was appropriately disaggregated by age, sex, location, type of violence, ethnic group and protected rights, among other variables. Partners provided logistical support, equipment, staff and links with other state organizations when necessary.

It is expected that from 2018, official data on judicial protection of children and adolescents will be published periodically. This will contribute to the design and execution of effective judicial policy, protection policy decisions that correspond to other sectors and/or powers of the state, and attention to recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

A barrier in national institutions is that several information systems coexist, which collect partial data and lack adequate levels of disaggregation. In 2017, progress was made on addressing these through alliances with decision-makers and conducting multidisciplinary and inter-institutional roundtables.

Effective information system design requires a multidisciplinary team with strong leadership.

## **Document centre**

### **Evaluation and research**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Sequence Number</b>	<b>Type of Report</b>
Diagnóstico sobre la aplicación de la educación intercultural bilingüe (Diagnosis on the application of intercultural bilingual education)	2017/003	Study
Diagnóstico defensorial de las medidas no privativas de libertad del Sistema Penal de Responsabilidad de Adolescentes (Diagnosis of the non-custodial measures of the Criminal System for the Responsibility of Adolescents)	2017/002	Study
Venezuela: Una mirada global para la inclusión escolar (Venezuela: A global perspective for school inclusion)	2017/001	Study

## Other publications

Title
Estado Mundial de la Infancia: Los niños en un mundo digital - State of the World's Children: Children in a digital world (brochure)
Convención sobre los Derechos de la Niñez – Convention on the Rights of the Child
Convención sobre los Derechos de la Niñez – Convention on the Rights of the Child (friendly version)
Guía para niños, niñas y adolescentes: El Buen Trato entre panas ¡Asumimos el reto! - A guide for children and adolescents: Good treatment among peers. We take the challenge!
Guía para docentes: Hablemos del Derecho al Buen Trato - A guide for teachers: Let's talk about the right to good treatment
Solo huellas de #BuenTrato - #GoodTreatment prints only (brochure)
Guía para padres: Hablemos acerca de Crianza y Buen Trato - A guide for parents: Let's talk about nurture and good treatment
La violencia marchita - Violence withers (brochure)
Niñez y adolescencia en situaciones de calle - Children and adolescents in street situations (brochure)
La primera infancia importa para cada niño - Early moments matter for every child (brochure)
UNICEF Venezuela. Resumen de actividades 2016 - UNICEF Venezuela. Summary of Activities 2016

## Programme documents

Document Type	Title	Name
Annual Report	GSS Action Plan Venezuela	Action Plan GSS 2017-2018 UNICEF VENEZUELA.pdf
AWP/RWP	AMP 2017	Venezuela_(Bolivarian_Republic_of)_AMP 2017.pdf