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unicef  | for every child

The EU-UNICEF Public Finance Facility in South and Southeast Asia

Supporting the best possible use of public social sector budgets in South and Southeast Asia by enhancing the adequacy, effectiveness, and efficiency of social sector spending for the realization of children’s rights, the EU-UNICEF Public Finance Facility in South and Southeast Asia was founded in 2019 and works with the following partner countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar* in Southeast Asia and Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in South Asia.

“While increasing budgets for social sectors is important, the efficiency and equity of the allocation is even more important”

– Dr Sithong Sikkhao, Deputy Director General, Department of Planning, Ministry of Education, Lao PDR**

“Social sector spending is crucial for human development. Investment in children paves the way for the future of a country. The time to act is now”

– Babu Ram Subedi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Nepal**

The facility has driven significant strategic alignment between the EU, UNICEF and other actors in the region. This has resulted in efficiency gains, the sharing of expertise, the leveraging of complementarities and considerable joint convening power. The Public Finance Facility in South and Southeast Asia has enabled the European Union and UNICEF to strengthen cooperation and meet challenges that are bigger than any single organization.

*Following the military takeover of February 2021, the facility does not interact with the authorities in Myanmar.

** Quoted during the Regional exchange on Protecting Social Sector Spending in Times of Shocks, Kathmandu, June 2023.



US\$ 6 million

fund the operations of the facility.



7 countries

have piloted the facility thus far.



56 knowledge products

published at the country and regional levels by the facility to date.



30+ million

people reached by the work of the facility – through training, evidence sharing and advocacy – in the seven countries in which the facility currently operates.

To date, the facility has:

Health

- Strengthened government-led nutrition initiatives for children in Bangladesh.
- Produced nutrition-focused budget briefs, reviewed the previous National Costed Plan for Nutrition in Lao PDR and costed the current plan.
- Worked to understand the impact of public funding for healthcare before the military takeover in Myanmar.

Education

- Conducted a public investment needs assessment for children, with a focus on education, in Lao PDR.
- Strengthened the business case for

investment in social sectors during a period of fiscal contraction in Sri Lanka.

- Assisted the newly defederalized local government in Nepal.

Social assistance

- Generated evidence around the impact of multidimensional poverty on children in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Sri Lanka.
- Reviewed strategic trends, shifts and priorities in social assistance spending in Pakistan.
- Supported cash transfers to pregnant women and women with young children in poor households in Cambodia.

Protection from external shocks

- Helped government officials to

understand how public money is being spent, and its impact on children and their families.

- Generated an evidence base and analytical tools to better understand the impact of budgets.
- Enhanced citizen – and, in particular, youth – participation in budget discussions to make the budget process more transparent and accountable.
- Advocated for equity to be built into budget planning to protect the most marginalized in society.
- Trained the region’s media to better understand the budget process and analyse a budget’s effectiveness.