

## Maldives

### Part 1: Situation update in the country

The overall situation of children in Maldives has remained relatively stable during 2018. With net primary school enrolment rate of 95.9%, infant mortality and Under-five mortality rates of 8 and 9 per 1,000 live births respectively, immunization rate of 99% and with no exposure to sudden drastic emergency, the overall situation is not likely to change significantly from one year to the other.

Though there is no new data, the nutrition double burden, high (40%) unemployment among youth, wide spread use of drugs among young people coupled with no drug rehabilitation services for adolescents, and wide spread of street violence engaging young people continued to be key concerns in 2018. The HIES 2016 report published in 2018 confirmed the existence of income and quality of life disparity between the capital city Male' and the remote atolls.

The human rights and political situation took an unexpected turn in February 2018 when the then President declared a State of Emergency (SOE). The declaration suspended several rights guaranteed in the Constitution. The SOE simultaneously suspended the powers granted to the Supreme Court and to the Parliament on some matters, while leaving the judiciary and the Parliament dysfunctional. This resulted in stalling key bills in parliament which included the Bill on the Rights of Children. The arrest of the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court judges along with the Judicial Administrator of the Department of Judicial Administration in February largely affected the discussions UNICEF had initiated with the judiciary in late 2017 to strengthen justice for children. This also impeded the implementation of the interventions previously agreed with the Department of Judicial Administration.

The period also witnessed increase in gang violence in which young people were affected as perpetrators, victims and witnesses. Additionally, anecdotal evidence suggests an increase in recruitment of adolescent boys in gangs during this time.

Despite the political upheaval during the year, the situation of children in the Maldives were relatively unaffected. Schooling was uninterrupted, and health services and other social services continued amidst delays in implementation of programmes.

While the country experienced an upward economic growth, public expenditure exceeded state's revenue and resulted in increased foreign and local public debt. During 2018, the Government completed several mega projects including social housing schemes, construction of harbours, roads and airports which increased movements between islands and accessibility to services. The government heavily invested in the development of specialized medical services in the main tertiary hospital, ensuring the domestic availability of types of medical care previously sought abroad.

The Government's population consolidation policy was geared towards moving a large percentage of population to the greater Male' area. Up until the election of the new President, government policies favoured a centralized administration model at the expense of the local the councils' system. The weakening and disenfranchisement of the local councils as well as the communities initially impacted the UNICEF supported community based interventions in the islands, especially those aimed at reaching the most vulnerable. For instance, full functioning of the Community Social Groups (CSGs) were constrained due to the diminishing role of the local councils in the islands.

The Presidential election in September resulted in an unexpected victory for the Opposition Coalition, after a peaceful and unprecedentedly high voter turnout. The announcement of the final results of the

election led to sweeping overturn of disputed and politically motivated decisions of the judiciary and other legal institutions. The new President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih was sworn in on 17th November 2018 ushering in a renewed promise and commitment to restore justice, social harmony, human rights, empowerment of communities and nation building. A 100 Day Plan by the new government is in effect which stipulates key development priorities including development of a long-term national development plan.

UNICEF's advocacy with the 100 Day Planning Committee provided an opportunity to engage with the incoming government to discuss priority issues for children and young people. The engagement resulted in the incorporation of several strategic interventions for improving the status of children and young people in the 100 Day Plan and beyond.

The new government reinstated the moratorium on the death penalty, rejoined the Commonwealth, established commissions to investigate the unsolved murder cases and forced disappearances, and alleged state corruption and embezzlement. The new government restored powers and responsibilities to the local councils as per the Decentralization Act and set up a new ministry for national planning.

UNICEF is currently engaged with the new government to ensure and support the inclusion of children and young people agendas in the evolving new political agenda and national priorities for 2019 and beyond.

## **Part 2: Major Results including in humanitarian action and gender, against the results in the Country Programme Documents**

### **GOAL 1: Every child Survive & Thrive**

The double burden of undernutrition and overnutrition is the current challenge facing some children and women in reproductive age in Maldives. UNICEF worked with the health sector to address the double burden among pregnant women, children under two years and school age children. UNICEF supported the development of a Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) Strategy on nutrition in the first 1000 days of life. This strategy addresses malnutrition among children under five years. A formative assessment of the situation of child nutrition and feeding practices was undertaken to inform the development of the strategy. The assessment identified three key immediate causes of malnutrition: complementary food choices are inappropriate for child age, limited knowledge of proper food preparation methods, and poor nutrition responsive feeding skills. Obesity among pregnant women was also identified as an emerging issue. The assessment identified opportunities to utilize the SBCC to improve maternal, infant, and young child feeding and caring practices. The SBCC strategy and action plan was endorsed in mid-2018 and is currently rolled-out in 12 target communities. Health workers from these islands and the capital Male' were trained on the strategy, and baseline data on nutrition indicators of maternal and children under two years were collected in all the 12 communities. Since the initiation of the community level SBCC in November, some activities in the SBCC action plan such as awareness sessions to parents and food demonstrations have been conducted in target islands. The nutritional and feeding messages developed under the strategy are being imparted through the anti-natal care and growth-monitoring promotion platforms. An Information Education Resource (IEC) package including leaflets, recipe books and informative videos are currently under development. Early childhood development messages on care and stimulation are also included in the key messages.

UNICEF contributed to the enhancement of the institutional capacity of health centers on provision of nutrition services and growth monitoring promotion. Health workers from all 20 atolls were oriented on the new growth monitoring and promotion protocols, which include early childhood components. Furthermore, the capacity of 49 health workers from Male' and islands were increased on Infant Young

Child Feeding (IYCF) practices. These health workers are now providing information to caregivers on IYCF and improving skills of mothers on exclusive breastfeeding, as well as appropriate and responsive complementary feeding. Following the training this year, 400 pregnant women and mothers and fathers of 9,713 children under two years have been reached with improved messages.

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education (MoE) to design nutrition interventions to address the findings from the 2017 School Health Screening Programme. According to this data, obesity and overweight among students aged six to seven years was 11.7 per cent and 10.4 per cent respectively. UNICEF supported interventions included development of a School Nutrition Policy, a food-based dietary guide and a manual for school health officers for conducting nutrition sessions in schools. UNICEF in partnership with the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), Society for Health Education (SHE) is piloting these tools in five schools in different regions. The partnership will help in demonstrating how the tools can be adapted to the context. Once adapted, the tools will lead to promotion of more nutritious meals that are available in the island and contribute towards addressing nutrition issues.

UNICEF advocated with the new Government on the importance of improving child nutrition and on the link between nutrition and learning. The 100 Days' Plan of the new Government now includes the provision of healthy breakfast for school children starting from January 2019, with UNICEF supporting the design of nutritious breakfast options and recipes.

UNICEF's contribution to the child health programme focused on developing institutional capacity of front line health staff in specialized areas identified in the Child Health Strategy. Working with WHO, UNICEF continued to promote simple interventions that save preventable deaths in newborns. As such, UNICEF supported capacity building of 90 doctors and nurses working in four atolls from different regions on essential newborn care. The training helped increase their knowledge and skills in attending to newborns during delivery – stimulating breathing, delayed cord clamping, preventing hypothermia and facilitating early initiation of breastfeeding.

With support from UNICEF regional office in South Asia, a team from Maldives was trained on Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) for preterm babies. This increased capacity is enhancing the quality of care in the main tertiary hospital, where over 40% of the deliveries of the country takes place. UNICEF is further supporting the set-up of comfortable chairs in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit, where mothers and fathers can maintain the skin-to-skin care contact with the pre-term babies, while being closely monitored. From 2019, all pre-term babies born in both tertiary hospitals, including those referred from the periphery, will benefit from the set-up.

In addition, breast-feeding corners are being established in the outpatient areas of the tertiary hospital to encourage breastfeeding. UNICEF and partners supported the implementation of other components of the new Breast Feeding Hospital Initiative (BFHI), such as training of hospital staff on breastfeeding, which is continuing to next year.

UNICEF supported the training of health professionals on disease surveillance, strengthening of the immunization programme, the introduction of Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus (DPT) booster dose, and the introduction of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine. The training increased the capacity of immunization focal points at national and subnational (atolls and districts) levels. The trained staff are playing an instrumental role in orienting the immunization focal points on the ground, in time for the introduction of DPT booster and HPV vaccine.

In 2018, Maldives applied for Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission (EMTCT) of HIV and Syphilis. UNICEF Maldives Country Office was a member of the National Verification Committee (NVC), and UNICEF Regional Offices in South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific took part in the regional validation team. The country verification process is complete, and the Government is awaiting the global level decision on certification.

## GOAL 2: Every Child Learns

UNICEF supported the National Institute of Education (NIE) to strengthen the monitoring of the new curriculum implementation. Data on the implementation of the national curriculum was collected from all the 212 Government schools across the country. The data showed that there were no major bottlenecks on the supply side and that all schools had access to the new Curriculum Framework, the resource guides and teaching / learning materials. The data also showed a high level of readiness of teachers and parents to embrace the shift towards a learner-centered approach. However, the findings revealed a major capacity issue among teachers that is preventing this shift from taking place. For instance, out of the total 2,324 teachers observed as part of the classroom monitoring exercises, approximately 50 per cent of the teachers could use diverse instructional strategies to deliver the lessons, while only 23 percent demonstrated the integration of competencies and content. Moreover, close to 50 per cent of teachers required additional support to conduct classroom assessments.

UNICEF convened a forum for teacher training institutes and the NIE to share this data and discussed ways of addressing the capacity issues. This forum enabled the stakeholders to reach consensus to improve the quality of teacher training.

The findings from the curriculum monitoring data will also be presented at the National Symposium on the National Curriculum, that is included in the 100 Days' Plan of the new Government. UNICEF also supported the Ministry of Education (MoE) in enhancing the enabling environment for improved learning assessment. In this regard, a review of the National Assessment System was conducted. The review showed that the system has several strengths, including a committed leadership, a defined policy framework and has consistently held National Assessments for the last three years, demonstrating the ability to handle large scale assessments. The limitations appeared to be in test design and development, and data analysis, which are limited in method and scope. Further, the dissemination and use of assessment findings were less than desired, coupled with limited in-house capacity of the Quality Assurance Department (QAD) for conducting large scale national, assessments. Overall, the system was found to be at the 'emerging' stage requiring stability and strengthening of its quality and impact. Based on the recommendations of the review, the Ministry of Education is now working on identifying priorities for policy reforms. In addition, this review informed a working paper for the MoE, on the Maldives' readiness to participate in international large-scale assessments.

UNICEF supported the revision of the National Assessment policy and framework. Gaps and weaknesses in the policy and framework were addressed to make them more comprehensive. The revised policy and framework will be implemented in 2019.

UNICEF contributed to enhancing the capacity of the MoE and the schools to implement the Maldives Education Management Information System (MEMIS) in schools. A core team of ten super-users were trained at the central level (at MoE) to roll-out the MEMIS and to build capacity of the schools for MEMIS. These super-users trained the MEMIS focal points in all the 212 Government schools, enabling the schools to issue report cards and student vouchers through the MEMIS for the academic year 2018. Student learning data at classroom levels are now available through MEMIS, in addition to student attendance and enrollment data.

UNICEF supported the development of a policy on MEMIS, which further enhanced MEMIS implementation at school level. The policy provided schools with clarity on the data requirements, accountabilities, frequency of reporting and the use of the data. Schools have reported that MEMIS increased the efficiency of data management and provided a one-stop place for accessing all the data, previously collected manually on different sheets and books.

UNICEF provided significant support to build the institutional capacity of the NIE to implement the

National Strategy on Literacy and Mathematics. The core team at NIE leading the Literacy and Mathematics Strategy was trained on Emergent Literacy through a regional training organized by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia. This training enabled the NIE core team to improve the guiding documents developed for Literacy and Mathematics interventions. Subsequently, end of grade standards in English, Dhivehi literacy and mathematics were finalized following this training. Additionally, a leadership guide for schools and a parental engagement strategy on strengthening English, Dhivehi Literacy and mathematics was developed. These documents are expected to be endorsed and implemented in 2019 in all schools across the country.

UNICEF further supported the development of literacy materials in Dhivehi language (mother-tongue), for the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 of the National Curriculum. Currently, lack of quality literacy materials in Dhivehi is one of the major challenges teachers face in teaching language and literacy in these two stages. To address the issue, a reading scheme for early grade Dhivehi language was developed and a total of 30 teachers were trained on developing reading material as per the reading scheme. Subsequently, approximately 100 literacy products were produced by these teachers, which are currently being quality checked. The best literacy materials from these will be approved for use in the class rooms in 2019. The availability and use of well-designed literacy resources in schools will significantly improve Dhivehi literacy among students in early grades.

An Education Sector Analysis (ESA) for Maldives was developed in 2018 by the MoE. Worth noting that the last similar exercise was conducted 25 years ago. The 2018 ESA was supported by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). UNICEF provided key support as the Coordinating and Grant Agency for the development of the sector analysis. The analysis identified successes, achievements besides key areas of weakness and gaps in the sector. The ESA identified inequities in access to education for children with disabilities regardless of their gender. While there were no major gender disparities found, boys dropping out of school at the secondary level and lack of non-formal education and skills development for girls and boys who cannot be catered for through formal schooling were highlighted as concerns that need to be addressed. The Sector Analysis informed and guided the development of a new Education Sector Plan (ESP). The draft ESP identified four goal areas; (1) Improving learning for all through equitable access to quality education; (2) Skills for youth and adults; (3) Equitable access to life-long affordable quality education; and (4) System strengthening for efficiency and quality schools. The ESP was complemented with a comprehensive results framework and a monitoring and evaluation framework. The ESP was positively appraised and has completed the quality assurance process of the GPE. The ESP is now pending final approval of the newly elected Government.

UNICEF Maldives Country Office appreciates the technical support provided by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) in the finalization of the ESP. The ESP will provide effective resource mobilization and efficiency in aid coordination for the education sector. Additionally, it will provide clear goals and targets for the realization of the right to education for all children, especially the most disadvantaged.

UNICEF supported the monitoring of the implementation of life skills education in schools following the training of school principals in 2017. In 2017, UNICEF had supported training of a total of 137 school heads out of 141. Monitoring conducted with the MOE and the schools found that life skills programs were not held as planned. Out of the 212 Government schools in the country, a total of 154 schools conducted minimum 6 sessions of life skills since the principals' training. Schools reported numerous challenges in implementing life skills, such as unavailability of designated facilitators, lack of space and resources to conduct the classes and lack of time in the school time table to slot in life skills sessions. After-school life skills classes were found to be ineffective. It was also found that the life-skills curriculum was implemented by some facilitators after omitting sessions on puberty, sexual and reproductive health and drugs; topics which they were not comfortable taking about with the

students. Also, that life skills sessions did not necessarily included or targeted the most vulnerable students. With this information, UNICEF and UNFPA, who is also supporting the Ministry of Education with the incorporation of life skills into the new national curriculum, engaged in close collaboration to address gaps in LSE and a wide range of issues pertaining to young people. Following a two-day joint consultation and strategizing between UNICEF and UNFPA country and regional teams (including advisors from ROSA), a joint desk review of available information on young people was completed and gaps were identified. The desk review report was shared with national stakeholders for feedback. UNICEF advocated with the new Government on the importance on institutionalizing life skills in the schools and for vulnerable children who are out of school. Interventions for strengthening life skills are currently being planned with the Ministry of Education.

### GOAL 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

UNICEF continued to strengthen the Community Social Groups (CSGs) as the key component of the national child protection system at community level. CSGs work with vulnerable families for preventing and responding to violence against children (VAC) and gender based violence (GBV). By end of 2018, a total of 39 CSGs were initiated, out of which 19 CSGs updated their data on vulnerable families in the islands. In addition, three CSGs are working closely with identified vulnerable families. A positive change in attitudes towards the victims of abuse was observed in most communities where CSGs are active, helping to protect children from violence. The government has recognized CSGs as an instrumental mechanism to address VAC and GBV as seen in the policy decision to expand it across the country.

UNICEF continued its engagement at community level in the island of Fuvahmulah where the CSG was most active. In collaboration with the CSG, UNICEF supported interventions for raising awareness on violence against children, with a special emphasis on including fathers in the program. The programme reached a total of 340 fathers, 1,613 students and 70 pre-school teachers.

UNICEF continued enhancing the capacity of the social workers with a focus on further improving the supervision of the social workers for case management processes and procedures. A total of 10 out of the 19 Family and Children Service Centers (FCSCs) in the atolls were monitored. The monitoring included the review of quality of risk assessments, individual intervention plans, and application of the processes as per the procedure manual. The issues identified from the monitoring was addressed through refresher training, whereby 22 social workers from across the country underwent the training. Furthermore, UNICEF supported the establishment of Child Friendly Interview and Counselling Rooms in selected FCSCs, enhancing safety and security for children while their being interviewed.

To strengthen justice for children, UNICEF supported the Prosecutor General's Office (PGO) to develop an in-service training module on "Treatment of Child Victims and Witnesses, and Juvenile Offenders for the Prosecutors". The training provided an opportunity to look at the current practices in attending to cases where children are involved as victims, witnesses or offenders. The training provided critical skills and knowledge to build stronger cases for prosecution. A total of 94 prosecutors and 8 investigation officers covering the regional branches and the PGO were trained. Furthermore, to institutionalize the capacity for training and to increase sustainability, 19 prosecutors underwent the Training of Trainers (ToT) programme. Those who completed the ToT programme conducted numerous training sessions that scaled up the training of prosecutors across the country. The training resulted in increased cooperation and collaboration between the prosecutors and investigation officers working on children related cases.

UNICEF supported the Maldives Judicial Academy to orient magistrates and other stakeholders on new approaches to juvenile justice practices including diversion and alternative sentencing. A total of 53 stakeholders from different agencies including 27 magistrates, 13 law enforcement officers, three

social workers and 10 school management staff were oriented. As a result, there is wider agreement between stakeholders on the importance of continuity of school enrolment and to the application of diversion and restorative justice for children who commit minor offenses.

The discussion with the magistrates and other stakeholders identified the need to develop a specific in-service module on child rights, violence against children, juvenile crimes and restorative justice for practicing magistrates, which will be supported in 2019.

UNICEF continued its contribution to strengthen capacity of Maldives Police Service (MPS) for investigation of violence against children girls and boys, juvenile crimes and for prevention of violence against children. A total of 20 investigation officers have increased capacity on child-focused suspect interviewing skills, and additional 68 officers were trained on child sensitive interviewing techniques with a focus on children as victims of abuse.

The various capacity building opportunities UNICEF supported for prosecutors, police, and social workers, collectively and separately, resulted in increased multi-sectoral discussion on cases of children as victims, offenders and witnesses leading to more holistic interventions to address these issues. The training sessions also explored the vulnerabilities, risks and challenges faced specifically by girls and boys as victims, or as offenders.

UNICEF in partnership with MPS, Ministry of Tourism, Guest House Association of Maldives and Live Aboard Association continued with the orientation on Combating Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism Sector and Promotion of Child Safe Tourism. This orientation reached a total of 36 local guest houses and safari boat operators. Furthermore, a total of 30 officers from the Department of Immigration were trained on their role in ensuring child safe tourism. The intervention will minimize the potential risks of exploitation of children created by the rapidly expanding local tourism in the Maldives.

UNICEF facilitated consultations on the draft Child Rights Bill which included adolescent girls and boys and young people as well as NGOs. In addition, UNICEF actively contributed to the bill through participation in the consultation with the government agencies led by the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM).

Overall, these initiatives further strengthened the child protection system in preventing, protecting and responding to violence against children.

#### GOAL 4: Every Child lives in a safe and clean environment

UNICEF's long-term support to the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) was instrumental in establishing eight new Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in selected islands in 2018. These CERTs were established in four islands selected from the North Region and an additional four islands from the South Region. The islands were selected for their vulnerability to climate hazards such as seasonal sea-surge flooding. With the addition of these eight islands, the total number of CERTs at island level is currently 14. UNICEF provided, through NDMC, eight dewatering pumps and accessories for the 4 islands in the North Region. With these critical interventions, CERTs are now able to respond timely and effectively to local emergency situations, ensuring that basic services at island level such schooling, health care and markets are continuing to function smoothly and uninterruptedly.

UNICEF Maldives Country Office has a small WASH program that focuses on strengthening the enabling environment for provision of quality WASH services. As such, the office supported the Maldives attendance in the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Conference held in New Delhi from 29th September to 2nd October 2018, and the 7th SACOSAN Conference held in Islamabad, Pakistan in April 2018. The Islamabad declaration, which was the outcome document of the

conference reflects most of the targets that are included in the Maldives Water and Sewerage policy. Hence, the participation in this conference, enabled the Maldives delegation to recommit to implement the Maldives Water and Sewerage policy.

UNICEF provided support to update the data to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP). In 2018, the JMP estimates for Maldives for WASH in health Care facilities and WASH in Schools was provided in collaboration with WHO. Moreover, UNICEF supported the development of country snap-shots in Menstrual Hygiene Management for Maldives, in collaboration with the MoE.

#### GOAL 5: Every Child has an equitable chance in life

UNICEF supported the further development of a national level data system and three sectoral data management systems. The MaldivInfo database was upgraded to fit to “data-for-all” version and was updated with additional information from administrative sources and newly-released survey data. Maldives Child Protection Database was expanded to cover all atolls and FCSCs for better management of reported violence against children (VaC) cases. UNICEF with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) developed the first country estimate on Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) for the Maldives. The disaggregated data from these three databases are assisting with the identification of vulnerable children, facilitating targeted interventions to ensure that no child is left behind.

UNICEF in collaboration with the NBS developed the institutional capacity to establish the child focused national MPI for the country with technical support from UNICEF ROSA. The MPI investigates poverty beyond income and builds the understanding of how people experience poverty in multiple and simultaneous ways. It identifies how children and people are left behind in education, health and standards of living using 11 key indicators. A joint stakeholders exercise furnished consensus on the indicators most relevant to Maldives which are linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national priorities. Furthermore, the process led to building capacity among key stakeholders on calculating a national MPI. The MPI will be finalized using data from the soon-to-be-released Demographic Health Survey (DHS) 2016-2017.

In 2018, UNICEF embarked on two studies, namely study of Child Marriage and on adolescent issues. The desk review on adolescent issues identified areas for further interventions and programmatic actions. Data collection is underway for the Child Marriage study and is hoped to be made available by end of January 2019. The findings from the study will provide much needed updated data about child marriage in the country.

The assessment of infant and young children’s feeding practices indicated that fathers need to be more engaged in matters related to feeding. It also indicated that this is a matter solely left for the females. The tasks of feeding were seen as a responsibility of the females in the households. The designing of the Social and Behavioral Communication Change (SBCC) strategy for the first 1000 days of life considered the specific roles of fathers and mothers, and incorporated aspects that minimized the stereotypical roles. For instance, fathers were identified as a key target group, and messages to fathers on their role in enabling mothers to breast-feed are included. Similarly, it includes nutrition counselling information, and BCC messages for working mothers on continuing breastfeeding when returning to work. Furthermore, UNICEF disseminated early childhood care and messages used in the global movement #earlymomentsmatter, which include messages for fathers and mothers.

Programme implementation saw two periods of slowdown in 2018. The unpredicted State of Emergency declared in early February impeded the implementation of activities especially with the judiciary and the law enforcement agencies. The second period was in the run up to the presidential

election and in the following weeks until the new government took office in mid-November. There was heightened sensitivity in the run up to the presidential elections. Some partners became extra cautious regarding information sharing such as research findings and reports, as the information could be interpreted in different ways. This situation impacted some key activities. For example, Household Income and Expenditure Survey Report was published without the chapter on poverty, and data on juvenile crimes that were regularly published were not available for public use.

The office had expected a slowdown during the peak of political events from mid-year onwards, and unpredictable turn of events following the elections affected the programme implementation beyond our control.

At a time of political tension between the local councils and the central authorities, UNICEF could influence and coordinate some of the multi-sectoral initiatives such as the activation of the CSGs, alternative learning programmes for children in conflict with the law and multi-sectoral trainings for stakeholders. The lesson learned is for UNICEF to maintain impartiality and to remain a trusted interlocutor and to continue to focus on the results for children, especially for those most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

To minimize the affect of the slowdown in programme implementation, UNICEF worked directly with service provision agencies. For example, UNICEF worked directly with the main tertiary hospital in Male' to deliver interventions on child health. In addition, UNICEF opted for direct payment and reimbursement modalities when the implementation and reporting back on cash advances to official bodies was slowed down. For some of the government partners who were not able to recruit for some critical vacant positions, UNICEF was able to assist through the placement of short-term consultants.

### Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

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