

India

Update on the context and situation of children

India has emerged as the world's **most populous nation** in 2023, with an estimated population of 1.428 billion people (17.8 per cent of global population) [1]. 18.6 per cent of which are children aged 0-17 years, and 27.2 per cent constitute youth aged 15-29 years (projected) [2].

India has emerged as the **fifth-largest global economy**, projected to reach a GDP of USD 4.0 trillion by the end of the 2023-24 fiscal year. The first and second quarters of the fiscal year 2023-24 saw a staggering GDP growth by 7.8 and 7.6 per cent, respectively.

India continues to **show progress** in its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climbing up from the 121st position in 2022 to 112th in 2023 [3]. The Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023 reveals a marked decline from 24.85 per cent to 14.96 per cent [4] between the years 2015-16 and 2019-21, indicating 135.5 million people rising out of poverty.

India has shown impressive gains conducive to children's development for example in **health, water, and sanitation services**. Based on data up to 2021, the country is on track to meet the SDG targets on maternal mortality with an average annual reduction rate of 6.6 percent and adolescent birth rate [5].

India continues to show progress on immunization, access to safe sanitation and clean drinking water, and under-five mortality reduction with an average annual rate of reduction of 4.6 percent [6].

The **budget allocated to children** estimated 2.3 per cent for 2023-2024 [7] compared to 3.30 per cent in the fiscal year 2017-2018, while the benchmark established by the National Plan of Action for Children in 2016 is 5 per cent. Budgets allocated to the three flagship schemes for women and child development and empowerment under the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD)—Mission Shakti, Mission POSHAN, and Mission Vatsalya—have seen an increase from 2022-23 to 2023-24 [8]. India's investment in Education stands at 4.64 per cent of its GDP, which is higher than the global average of 4.2 per cent, and its healthcare spending is 2.96 per cent, compared to the global average of 10.89 per cent [9] [10].

Further acceleration is needed to achieve several other SDG targets **for women, adolescent girls, and children across multiple indicators**; for example, neonatal mortality, malnutrition outcomes, child marriage, safety, education and learning, and women's participation in the workforce [11]. The joint malnutrition estimates of 2023 show a 10 percent point decline in stunting prevalence over the last decade, nutritional wasting did not reduce as much, and anaemia rates have increased.

Latest data available from 2023 on **Education-related indicators** show that the net enrolment rate at the primary level is 88.6 per cent (90.0 per cent for girls and 87.3 per cent for boys) and drops to 34.3 per cent (33.5 per cent for boys and 35.0 per cent for girls) at the secondary level. The adjusted net enrolment ratio was 99.1 per cent at the primary level and 64.7 per cent at the secondary level [12]. As per National Achievement Survey 2021, 34 per cent of students in grades 3, 5 and 8 achieved targeted performance levels across all subjects, compared to 48 per cent in 2017.

Latest data published in 2023 indicates an increase of 8.7 per cent in the reported cases of **crimes against children**, between 2021 to 2022, with a total of 162,449 cases. The predominant types of crimes were 'Kidnapping & Abduction' (45.7 per cent) and offenses under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (39.7 per cent). Among the 78,443 children apprehended under Indian Penal Code and Special & Local Laws by courts in 2022, 47 per cent had their cases resolved with a final judgment. Similarly, the rate of reported crimes against women rose by 4 per cent between 2021 to 2022 with 445,256 incidents recorded [13].

Although India has made strong progress in some areas of SDGs, **inequities continue**. With significant geographic disparities across states, and between rural and urban populations. Additionally, enduring social and economic inequalities, rooted in geography, social groups, gender, and demographics such as tribal, caste and disability, continue to impact child development outcomes [14]. The Government of India launched the Aspirational Block Programme in 2023 to address the differentials in development trajectories between and within districts and blocks [15].

India's gender gap index has recorded an improvement, moving from 134th position in 2022 to 127th in 2023 [16]. While gender gaps have narrowed in some areas, the overall **gender inequality persists**. It is essential to address negative gender and social practices such as sex selection, child marriage, gender-based violence, lower economic opportunities, and the greater burden of care on women. Emerging areas of importance are **sustainable and inclusive urban development** (with over 36 per cent of India's population now residing in urban areas) [17] and **migration, disaster risk reduction and mitigating the effects of climate change**, with nearly 90 per cent of the disease burden attributable to climate change are borne by children under the age of five [18]. In 2023, parts of India were affected by floods, drought, hurricanes, and civil strife severely affecting especially women and children.

- [1] State of World Population 2023, UNFPA
- [2] Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Youth in India 2022 report
- [3] <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings>
- [4] <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1895320>
- [5] Sample Registration System (SRS), 2018-2020
- [6] <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1861710>
- [7] <https://www.haqcrc.org/budget-for-children/haq-budget-for-children-2022-23-analysis/>
- [8] <https://prsindia.org/budgets/parliament/demand-for-grants-2023-24-analysis-women-and-child-development>
- [9] <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/economicsurvey/>
- [10] <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1895320>
- [11] SRS 2018-2020, National Family Health Survey-5 2019-2021, National Achievement Survey, Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), POSHAN Tracker, Crimes in India Report
- [12] <https://udiseplus.gov.in/#/page/publications>
- [13] Crimes in India Report 2022, National Crime Records Bureau
- [14] National Institute of Urban Affairs & UNICEF 2022 State Equity Analysis
- [15] <http://championsofchange.gov.in/site/coc-home/>
- [16] Global Gender Gap Report 2023, World Economic Forum
- [17] United Nations World Urbanization Prospects 2018 report
- [18] UNICEF 2021 Children's Climate Risk Index

Major contributions and drivers of results

In 2023, UNICEF India initiated a new Country Programme, which aligned with Government of India (GoI)'s priorities, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023-2027, and the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025. UNICEF provided critical support for efforts prioritising equity-focused and gender-transformative programming.

Every child survives and thrives

UNICEF worked closely with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), civil society organizations, professional associations, academia, businesses, and development partners to accelerate the implementation of flagship Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Nutrition Programmes across 23 states.

UNICEF played a catalytic role in convening partnerships to review the India Newborn Action plan (INAP) and develop its road map based on geographically tailored and equity-focussed bottleneck analysis with the aim of reaching single digit Neonatal Mortality Rate by 2030. With UNICEF support, GoI provided quality-of-care support to 14.5 million institutional deliveries across 23 states and labour room certification reached 90% in 112 Aspirational Districts, which are disadvantaged districts GoI aims to transform. The case fatality rate in Special Newborn Care Units across the country remained below 7%. In addition, together with WHO and other partners, UNICEF advocated for more focus on

newborn and early childhood development and on non-communicable diseases, including children with disabilities. More than 400,000 health and wellness messengers were onboarded under the national school health programme in the UNICEF programming states.

UNICEF continued its support to GoI towards improving immunization coverage, with special focus on reaching zero dose children in hard-to-reach areas [19]. Around 9.5 million children were vaccinated across the country under Intensified Mission Indradhanush 5.0, GoI flagship routine immunization campaign leveraging it as a platform for eliminating measles-rubella.

UNICEF teams supported the state governments in implementing interventions linked to the National Nutrition flagship POSHAN 2.0. 75 million children in the age group of 0-6 years were reached by Government led growth monitoring and promotion services in the 14 states supported by UNICEF. UNICEF partnered with National Centre of Excellence, Institute of Economic Growth, National Institute of Nutrition and Coalition for Food and Nutrition Security to provide technical support to state Centers of Excellence which are dedicated facilities for the treatment and nutritional rehabilitation of children with severe acute malnutrition. Through the joint efforts of the Department of Public Enterprises, Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and UNICEF, more than 100 public sector enterprises participated in a round table to influence their investment towards the achievement of a joint nutrition agenda.

In 2023, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) and MoHFW has launched the Protocol for Managing Children with Malnutrition. Across the 14 UNICEF supported states, government reports show about 1.7 million children with Severe Acute Malnutrition accessed treatment, which is an increase from about 830,000 children in 2022.

UNICEF continues to support GOI's efforts to expand Iron-Folic-Acid (IFA) supplementation. 34.4 million adolescents received weekly IFA in 12 states with no major difference between girls and boys. Similarly, 23.5 million pregnant women reported have received IFA, showing an increase compared to 22 million in 2022.

Additionally, with UNICEF technical and financial support, 6 states successfully initiated the integration of Early Childhood Development interventions in form of an action plan encompassing health, nutrition, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) systems.

UNICEF also convened a robust partnership with the National and State Rural Livelihoods Missions across 13 states to support implementation of community engagement on key behaviours for healthy diets using the platform of women's collectives.

Every child learns

Ensuring children are acquiring the basic skills and competencies in literacy, numeracy and skills for life remained a focus, especially for language minority, disabilities, and most vulnerable children.

UNICEF collaborated as knowledge partner on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy for the G20 Education Working Group, raising concerns on learning poverty post-Covid-19 and highlighting global and Indian good practices for learning recovery.

UNICEF continued to strengthen the system for the enhancement of education service delivery by capacitating 1,156 (46 per cent male) education officials on the use of evidence including from national learning assessment, leading to more qualitative and equitable plans for enhanced education provision in 12 states. At the national level UNICEF also convened a roundtable with partners to document lessons learnt and recommendations to strengthen the next national learning assessment in 2024.

Taking a life cycle learning approach to address the right to education, 12 million preschoolers (50 per cent girls) benefited from improved Early Childhood Education services through the capacity enhancement of 185,000 workers with UNICEF supported digital course in eight languages, and counselling of parents to promote play-based learning. Additionally, nearly 300,000 children (42 per cent girls) with disabilities were provided inclusive learning worksheets, audio lessons, and 800 resource teachers (25 per cent female) capacitated enhancing their learning. 750,000 out-of-school children of whom 14,131 with disabilities were enrolled into formal education thanks to the support of out-of-school tracking system developed in three states.

Approximately 5.3 million (50 per cent girls) grade 1 and 2 students accessed improved learning materials for foundational literacy and numeracy designed in collaboration with UNICEF.

More than 2 million (49 per cent girls) adolescents benefitted from 21st century skills learning opportunities and 3.3 million students (44 per cent girls) in 16 states were supported to make informed decision about their future and careers thanks to the capacity development of 24,387 teachers (36 per cent female) on career guidance. UNICEF and YuWaah's joint engagement with government contributed to 30 million adolescents to receive support on career guidance through the recruitment of 8,000 block level career counsellors from increased national funding (USD 25 million) to improve career guidance services for adolescents. UNICEF India supported three states to initiate a digital roadmap for the education sector and leveraged digital technology to reach adolescents on career guidance.

Every child empowered and protected

UNICEF's strategic support to GoI, Judiciary, and other stakeholders contributed to improved preventive child protection, prioritization of family-based care, strengthening of child protection workforce, and adolescent empowerment.

In 2023, UNICEF in partnership with GoI and other stakeholders have engaged 3.7 million adolescents (55 per cent girls) on civic issues through platforms like Advika, National Service Scheme, National Yuva Kendra Sanghathan, and Yuvoday. Child-friendly consultations and platforms enabled the integration of adolescent priorities such as ending child marriage and violence against children into village plans in 195 districts across 12 states. UNICEF supported state governments in the registration of 200,000 girls supporting their school attendance and 3 million girls to access social protection schemes. UNICEF supported safe-spaces, provided life-skills, and learning activities to empower adolescents and children's agency, aspirations, and future pathways in hard-to-reach areas.

In 17 states, UNICEF engaged closely with GoI and community members to strengthen prevention of family separation, family-based alternative care, and aftercare, reaching 126,973 children. UNICEF played a pivotal role in shaping 84 District Action Plans in four states, with a total of 144,709 at risk children linked with social protection services, contributing to an amount of over USD 145 million being allocated under the state sponsorship and benefiting around 700,000 children.

UNICEF's technical partnership with upper judiciary resulted in the first pan-India data collection and reporting effort across indicators for children in conflict with the law and a corresponding focus on data-driven programming to strengthen practices for diverting children from formal judicial proceedings. Milestones in improved access to justice include the Supreme Court's order to recruit support persons for survivors of sexual violence nationally; and Legal fellowship and legal aid performance management framework rolled out in 5 states. 600,000 children & teachers (56 per cent female) were engaged in violence prevention and response. 3.96 million children, adolescents and caregivers were provided community based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support.

Every child lives in a safe and sustainable climate and environment

In 2023, India saw significant progress in the provision of safely managed water supply and sanitation services reaching 124 million and 17.3 million people, respectively. 500,000 villages are now reported to have achieved open defecation free-plus status (ODF+) by not only maintaining ODF status but also implementing robust solid and liquid waste management systems and ensuring a clean environment for children. Regarding WASH in institutions, a total of 933 healthcare facilities gained access to sustainable WASH services and a further 168,340 schools implemented climate-smart clean and green school improvement plans including menstrual hygiene management services to ensure girl-friendly school environment in target states. As GoI significantly expanded the provision of WASH services through the national water and sanitation flagship programmes, UNICEF strategically scaled up its policy engagement and technical support on monitoring and quality assurance for sustainable implementation of WASH action plans. Technical support focused on the development of implementation guidelines and training of implementing partners at various levels as well as community engagement for sustained behavioural change and professionalization of water and sanitation workers at community level for sustainability.

In the area of climate change action, UNICEF provided technical support to GoI to address water scarcity, exacerbated by climate change. This included youth engagement in water and environmental conservation, water quality monitoring, and operation and maintenance approaches for sustainable service delivery. UNICEF successfully engaged with National Council of Education Research and

Training, Ministry of Education, in incorporation of climate change and environmental sustainability into National Curriculum Framework 2023.

UNICEF also played a more strategic role in strengthening WASH results monitoring in line with SDG/Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) indicators, by facilitating consultations with multiple Ministries and the global WHO/ UNICEF JMP team. This engagement gave UNICEF the opportunity to expand its evidence-based engagement and strategic guidance, as well as strengthen monitoring of WASH results for children, including the most vulnerable in hard-to-reach communities.

Every child has an equitable chance in life

In 2023, UNICEF supported evidence generation based on grass root level interventions to influence policy and programme design with multiple national ministries, including the Ministries of Finance (MoF), MoWCD, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj and Social Justice & Empowerment. An analysis, UNICEF supported, for the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme across four states, contributed to a policy dialogue with the Ministry of Rural Development and the state governments, for strengthening the provisions on creches, social protection clinics, and anticipatory measures in the public works programme, like advance wage-payment during emergencies.

Evidence of girl child 'cash plus' social protection programmes initially supported by UNICEF in 4 states was examined through a study and its transformative potential was used to influence the expansion of programmes in 4 additional states benefitting over 12 million girls. The review of UNICEF supported child friendly village pilots in 4 states, informed key GoI advisories and guidelines, issued to all 28 states towards institutionalizing child, adolescent and women friendly participatory mechanisms in village level planning and budgeting processes; over 66,000 rural local governments (Gram Panchayats) committed to child friendly villages under the national flagship Localization of SDGs programme. Over 250,000 elected representatives in over 25,000 Gram Panchayats were trained on child and women responsive village local planning and development processes. Moreover, continued technical support to state governments, including through South-South exchange programmes for MoF, and a review of the child budget experiences of 8 state governments were used to formulate and advice for improved child budget methodology at the national level. With UNICEF support in one state, green budgets and resilience budgets were developed by the government.

UNICEF provided technical assistance as knowledge partner to several Ministries such as the National Disaster Management Authority, Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs and the MoWCD during high-level G20 processes related to think tanks (T20), Disaster Risk reduction (DRR) and urban and women-led development. Through advocacy and engagement in various consultations, priorities on children, such as shock responsive social protection including childcare and child and youth friendly urban local governance were reflected in the G20 New Delhi Declaration.

Change strategies and enablers

In 2023, several change strategies were deployed to accelerate the 6 programme outcomes outlined in the GOI-UNICEF County Programme Document by integrating the child rights, gender, equity, climate change, disaster risk lens in the programming, enhancing the quality and use of data and evidence, advocating child rights, and enhancing partnerships with the private sector and children and youth.

Through strong collaboration and co-creation with partners including young people, YuWaah (Generation Unlimited India) engaged 23 million young people, especially the most vulnerable, by providing opportunities into leadership for sustainability, economic growth and building blocks of equity and dignity through innovative digital solutions such as Passport 2 Earning (P2E) providing skilling opportunities, FunDoo providing life skills, and Youth Hub connecting young people especially girls and marginalised youth to future job opportunities.

UNICEF provided technical assistance to strengthen gender-responsive and gender transformative approaches, for example: supporting the roll out of the Adolescent Empowerment Strategy in Bihar State; supporting the drafting and revision of the Gender Policy for Gujarat and Rajasthan; supporting pilots of Gender Transformative Approaches (GTA) with adolescent girls in Banaskantha district in Gujarat; supporting the review of the cash transfer schemes in four states, which led to a policy brief for utilization of the cash benefits by adolescent girls and their families. For the rights of children with

disabilities, UNICEF engaged with various stakeholders such as the National Institute of Urban Affairs, Ministry of Social Justice, and Empowerment on revision of policies and guidance notes related to protection of disability rights and supported a state government in development of a tool for early identification of disability among children from 3- 6 years. UNICEF engaged technically in the discussion and implementation of Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) as part of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and strengthened capacities of staff and implementing partners.

UNICEF strengthened its leadership and technical capabilities in research & evaluation, data, and knowledge management through the Evidence Section. The office prioritized 19 evidence activities and completed 3 independent evaluations, which incorporated innovative approaches such as contribution analysis, most significant change, and real-time evaluation techniques. Internally, UNICEF India conducted field office evidence diagnostics, supported staff capacity building through workshops and webinar series, and organized its second Learning-from-Failure Festival. Externally, UNICEF engaged with Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office, NITI Aayog, as well as some central ministries and state governments, focusing on strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation systems. In 2023, UNICEF India convened its first partners' roundtable on evidence for children, which helped identify key priorities for investment, and expanded partnerships with academia and civil society. Initiatives by UNICEF India were also highlighted in regional and global fora such as gLOCAL, Asian Development Bank evaluation week and Asia Pacific Evaluation Association. During 2023 UNICEF India had visits of UNICEF Executive Director, Goodwill Ambassador David Beckham along with global, regional, national celebrity engagements, pivotal initiatives including ICC World Cup for equal opportunities for every child, G20, and World Children's Day. In 2023, UNICEF counted social media reach exceeding 1.58 billion, 61.4 million engagements and 800 million video views. Media coverage peaked with 90 per cent positive UNICEF mentions. India's Youth delegates advocacy at the UN climate change conference (COP 28) marked UNICEF's commitment to the climate change agenda.

This was the first year of the country programme implementation and monitoring mechanism of country programme has been strengthened with robust indicator methodology notes with special focus on qualitative indicators and its roll. Throughout the year, the office conducted series of Results Based Management capacity building trainings as a foundation for the better programming and linking programme implementation to higher-order results. This all contributed to improved data driven reporting and programme planning and adjustments.

With regards to Social & Behaviour Change, strengthening evidence-based demand creation and positive behavioural change, six behavioural insights labs were initiated. A Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices survey gathered social data on priority behaviours across sectors and the report is expected in 2024. For more effective community engagement, partnerships with faith-based organisations across multiple faiths have mobilised 5,000 leaders to use positive child and mother messages across their platforms. Partnerships with Community Radio Alliances has enabled promotion of programme priority behaviours across 90 radio stations in 120 languages.

UNICEF supported the State Emergency Operations Centre and the State Disaster Management Authority in providing essential services to affected population by Cyclone Biparjoy in Gujarat, Glacial Lake Outburst Flood impacted northern West Bengal and Cyclone Michaung in Tamil Nadu through technical support to Rapid Needs Assessment and provision of supplies. UNICEF also supported post-disaster needs assessments (PDNAs) in three states. Subsequent at-scale allocations by governments against PDNAs have created an opportunity for resilient, child-responsive recovery actions in these increasingly disaster-prone states. To enhance the preparedness at state level, UNICEF worked with state government authorities in issuance of preparedness guidelines and setting the standard to enhance the resilience of school facilities.

UNICEF Supply team forged a strong relationship with Global Compact Network India, Indian chapter of United Nations Global Compact, a special initiative of UN Secretary General for advocacy with private sector organisations to align their operations and strategies with Ten Principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption. In person supplier conference was attended by over 90 participants from 60 different organizations. This event also provided a platform to advocate

for adoption of sustainable practices. UNICEF Supply Division procured over \$450 million worth of goods and services from Indian suppliers. This is a growing area of UNICEF work in the country and collaboration with the private sector.

[19] The 2023 WHO-UNICEF estimates show substantial reduction in the number of zero-dose children from 2.7 million in 2022 to 1.1 million in 2023.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

UNICEF continued to work closely with wide range of partners such as the national ministries, state departments, academia, research institutes/think tanks, professional associations, Civil Society Organizations, UN agencies, and the private sector for child rights.

The G20 hosted by GOI in India September 2023, demonstrated the power of the partnership between GoI, UNICEF and beyond. In support of GoI, UNICEF mobilized its partnership and engaged around the inclusion of important elements of the child rights agenda, including shock responsive social protection, foundational literacy and numeracy, adolescent girls at the heart of women-led development, and on the world's largest child and youth population that lives in India as the driver on all themes of the agenda. A summary of the G20 Leaders Declaration showed many of these priorities reflected, particularly the outcomes on foundational learning, skilling, focus on girls, social protection, and primary healthcare.

UNICEF has programmed with other UN agencies to contribute results outlined in UNSDCF, which was launched this year. UNICEF's work with other UN agencies emphasized gender transformative and equity-based programming. UNICEF, in partnership with UNFPA, MoWCD, and other allied ministries, supported the global programme to end child marriage in 15 states with the highest prevalence of marriage and reached marginalised adolescent girls to avert child marriage and enabled them to achieve their aspirations through education and alternative pathways and supported communities in demonstrating positive attitudes. The partnership with UNFPA included support to GoI in institutionalising women and child friendly gram panchayats so their voices are heard in planning and delivery of programmes and the Joint Programme across 15 states which reached 14 million adolescents (70% girls) providing them access to transformative services.

In partnership with UN Women, UNICEF supported GoI in providing Gender Based Violence response services including referrals to mental health and psycho-social support services which reached 15,099,916 children in 17 states; promoted a convergent approach towards child and gender budgeting with the objective of financial management targeted towards women and children; UNICEF, UN Women and UN-Habitat collaborated to integrate women, children and adolescents' priorities in urban planning, municipal budgeting and city management.

UNICEF is partnering with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and UNDP on a disability Programme to analyse the social protection schemes for persons with disabilities, to undertake a situational analysis of persons with psychosocial disabilities and understanding the impact of climate change on persons with disabilities.

UNICEF collaborated with UNESCAP Asia Pacific regional office on the strengthening of the Civil Registry & Vital Statistics systems through South-South exchange programmes and joint missions to Jharkhand; UNICEF is jointly working with UN Women, ILO, UNFPA and UN teams jointly to support MoWCD on putting the care economy agenda focused on childcare and family friendly practices as part of a core pillar of a gender transformative social protection system.

UNFPA and UNHCR continue to serve as founding partners of YuWaah and have committed financial resources towards strengthening YuWaah. In December, UNFPA, UNHCR, and UNICEF made a joint case for deepening engagement of the most marginalized youth from Tribal, refugee, queer and care leaver communities, by co-creating contextual pathways to skilling, jobs, and social impact opportunities. UNFPA and UNDP were also critical in identifying YuWaah's Call for Solutions, which is a joint initiative with Dasra Adolescents Collaborative to identify and support scalable solutions for young people. UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF and YuWaah jointly supported Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in organising the 'Health of Youth, Wealth of Nation' summit and ensuring significant youth

participation in the same.

UNICEF in India continues to build on its longstanding experience and history of working with the private sector around the world to mobilize more resources for children. Private sector has enormous power to improve children's lives by leveraging their resources, consumers, expertise, products, and innovations. UNICEF through its partnership with the government and the private sector, brings these resources where they are most needed for long term, sustainable impact. For example, UNICEF worked with Department of Public Enterprises, GoI as a technical partner in advising public sector enterprises on their Corporate social responsibility investments towards child rights. In Assam, working alongside the Indian Tea Association, UNICEF supported education for children in tea estates. In close partnerships with foundations such as Bill Melinda Gates Foundation and CIFF, UNICEF mobilized the resources for health and nutrition systems strengthening. With Divis Foundation Health, UNICEF supported in creating awareness and strengthening systems for birth defects and developmental disorders.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

Under the new GOI-UNICEF Country Programme Document 2023-27, UNICEF strengthened the partnership with GoI at national and state levels, academia, CSOs, other UN agencies, and private sectors and leveraged the resources and actions to accelerate results for children. Lessons learned will be used to adjust the programme in 2024 and beyond.

Leveraging partnerships for programming at scale

The strategic engagement with the Government and different partners was used as one of the key strategies to programme at scale. For example, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health in galvanizing support from all stakeholders in reviewing and implementing strategic interventions for acceleration of INAP and Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality (EPMM) 2030 goals. UNICEF supported undertaking bottleneck analysis which will be rolled out nationally by the Ministry to achieve the required reduction in maternal, newborn mortality and still births equitably across states and districts. In area of Child Protection, together with National Legal Services Authority, UNDP and International Legal Foundation, UNICEF organized the first regional legal aid conference with judiciary, government and practicing agencies in 62 Global South countries to successfully built consensus on legal aid provision including child centric legal aid. This lays a foundation for stronger legal empowerment interventions for children. As a key result of this endeavour Chief Justices' and Inter ministerial consensus documents have been released laying out the proposed legal aid framework for the Global South.

At the sub national level, Gujarat government in collaboration with UNICEF hosted National Conclave on best practice on Beti Bachao Beti Padhao national scheme, enabling 13 States showcase successful interventions. Subsequently, the department developed the activity calendar on safety, non-traditional livelihood and skilling options reaching approximately 100,000 adolescents.

Leveraging resources

UNICEF promoted through government planning processes for more public finance allocation for children. This approach yielded positive results, for example, UNICEF field-based nutrition teams are increasingly leveraging resources through state budgets to support the implementation of POSHAN 2.0 and Anemia Mukht Bharat. In 2023, close to USD 80 million was leveraged to improve nutrition outcomes in Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh. UNICEF's successful policy engagement with Government of Bihar resulted in the development of a USD 13.6 million action plan for management of children with acute malnutrition in 2024. Similarly, UNICEF successfully supported the private sector platform IMPAct4nutrition and the Department of Public Enterprises to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to mobilize Corporate Social Responsibility funds from public sector players. Additionally, IMPAct4nutrition leveraged USD 174,000 from seven private sector corporates. For the Child Protection, UNICEF strengthened the functioning of community structures leveraging funding opportunities from non-traditional partners including government Rural Development in 6 states. This expanded focus on identification of vulnerable families for linkages with

social protection schemes preventing family separation, demonstrating the importance of investing in community prevention of child separation with participation of community facilitators and influencers, advocacy, and dedicated community funding lines. Further acceleration at the National level is needed, as seen with institutionalization of the Localization of SDGs agenda, especially the focus on child friendly and gender responsive village plans.

Accelerate the equity programming

India is a diverse country to which UNICEF needs to tailor its priorities and approaches. Going beyond aspirational districts, the launch of Aspirational Block Programme by NITI Aayog in convergence with Government Ministries was a major milestone in accelerating equity agenda across the country. The forty indicators across five sectoral themes of Aspirational Block Programme, which aligned well covering priority programmes such as Health, Nutrition, WASH, Education and Social Policy of UNICEF. UNICEF's support to NITI Aayog in development of the Leadership Module and technical select thematic modules was well acknowledged.

Use of technology for better programming

In the area of Nutrition and Early Childhood Development, UNICEF engaged GoI in the use of digital approaches and blended outreach strategies to reach the last mile. GoI's investment to digital technology platforms like Tarun Suposhit Manch, a tele-counselling initiative to engage parents in responsive care, reached 11.7 million users in Maharashtra with age-appropriate nutrition information and dissemination of videos to prevent all forms of malnutrition. Hello Didi in Uttar Pradesh is used to counsel parents of children on wasting. Around 100,000 parents receive messages on parenting and optimum feeding practices through Dulaar Interactive Voice Response System in 7 districts of Uttar Pradesh and another 30,000 parents across 10 districts in Jharkhand.

Participation of children and youth

UNICEF continued to promote the participation of children, adolescents and women in village local planning and development among village level officials and elected representatives, which helped in institutionalising participatory governance. This has resulted in demand driven improvement in the access, coverage, and uptake of all social sector programmes. In addition, through YuWaah, as a Public Private Youth Partnership, UNICEF mobilized this platform to expand and diverse youth participation beyond governance meetings such as taking them on field visits to gain first-hand experience of programmatic impact, engagement through smaller focus group discussions to solve common problems youth face.

Climate change and youth

UNICEF considers youth engagement is one of the keys in successful Climate Change Action. In support of GoI scheme, UNICEF conducted studies on youth perception on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability, perception of communities on waste management and insights for strengthening Village Water & Sanitation Committees. YuWaah with partnership with Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change launch of the Green Rising India Alliance at COP 28 which promote the youth engagement further. YuWaah and UNICEF supported the Ministry to develop Meri LiFE, a digital innovation platform for young people, to hone their green skills, climate sensitivity and leadership towards combating climate change. In addition, with a significant national budget for WASH infrastructure, UNICEF will continue strengthening its advocacy effort with partners for allocation and utilization of resources for Operations & Maintenance as well as sustainability of WASH services through introduction of climate resilient approaches.