

### Update on the context and situation of children

#### Economic and political context

Of the 14 Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTS), 11, including Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, registered average gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 3.1% in 2018 and are projected to grow by a modest 2.8% in 2019 and 3.0% in 2020 (IMF, Oct 2019). GDP increases in recent years have been spurred by growth in fisheries revenues, which increased from 5% of GDP in 2011 to approximately 30% of GDP in 2017. The region has registered steady improvements in social protection, health and education policies, including investment in schools and hospitals, as well as complementary investments in critical urban services infrastructure (ADB, July 2019). However, the recent measles outbreak in the region is likely to dampen other major sources of revenue, such as tourism. Overall, no major, short-term changes are expected with regard to resources for social sectors and children's issues in the Pacific. Of note, Cook Islands is slated to become the first PICT to achieve 'developed country' status.

During 2019, there were several changes of political leadership following the elections in six countries Kiribati, FSM, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu with no significant impact on the programme implementation. The 2019 Pacific Islands Leader Forum held in Tuvalu has urged for more coordinated actions to secure the health and wellbeing of Pacific people in light of the climate crisis.

#### Natural disasters and health emergencies

Although 2019 started with severe flooding in Kiribati and Solomon Islands, the year was relatively quiet in terms of natural disasters. Floods affected 23,000 people in Solomon Islands and 1,700 people in Kiribati. In late December, Fiji and Tonga experienced Tropical Cyclone Sarai, with no casualties and minimal damages to households and infrastructure. During the year, UNICEF Pacific was granted access to Australia's humanitarian warehouse space in Brisbane, enabling UNICEF to increase its caseloads for pre-positioned emergency supplies for disaster response across the Pacific. The prepositioned stocks are also being made available to other UNICEF country offices in case of major disaster events.

Several PICTs faced measles outbreaks in 2019, with more than 6,000 cases reported in Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Tonga. Of these, as of 2 January 2020, Samoa reported 5,695 cases, mainly among children under 5 years of age. The country reported 82 deaths, corresponding to a case fatality rate of 0.94 per cent, with an estimated 85 per cent of deaths occurring among children under 5 years of age. The high number of cases in Samoa was due to a dramatic decrease in immunization rates after the country suspended its immunization programme subsequent to an adverse event following immunization (AEFI) with mumps, measles and rubella (MMR) in 2018. With relatively small populations and frequent travel between PICTs, the Pacific is considered one epidemiological region. UNICEF and WHO identified Kiribati, Marshall Islands, FSM, Nauru, Tonga and Vanuatu as the PICTs with the highest risk of escalation of the outbreak or onset of an outbreak. The joint UNICEF/WHO response to the measles outbreak demonstrated efficient and effective coordination in working together on a Pacific response plan, situation reports, and common coordination meetings with governments, donors and stakeholders. UNICEF received timely funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the governments of Australia, New Zealand and Italy.

#### Situation update on children

Six PICTs exceeded the global coverage target of 90 per cent for the combined diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT3) vaccine, while the Marshall Islands, FSM, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu struggled to meet the target.

Neonatal mortality accounts for between one quarter and one half of all child deaths in Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, FSM and Marshall Islands. Up to 40 per cent of newborn deaths in the Pacific are attributable to complications related to low birth weight (LBW), and up to 15 per cent of babies weigh less than 2.5 kilograms at birth.

PICTs are facing an overlapping 'triple burden' of malnutrition (undernutrition; micronutrient deficiencies; and overweight/obesity). Five of the 14 PICTs have high or very high rates of stunting while all PICTs have high rates of maternal and childhood anaemia and very high rates of overweight and obesity among women.

PICTs are progressing well with regard to early childhood education (ECE). Pre-primary net enrolment increased between 2018 and 2019 in most PICTs where data is available (from 53 to 57 per cent in FSM; 90 to 97 per cent in Tuvalu; and 78 to 87 per cent in Vanuatu). Domestic investments in ECE also increased, including continued payment of ECE teacher salaries and per-capita grants in Vanuatu and Fiji, and the initiation of salary payments in Kiribati.

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The 2019 WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) reported open defecation in Kiribati has decreased at one of the fastest rates in the world based on the dataset for 2000-2017. However, it also showed that only 40 per cent of the population in the Pacific disposed of children's stools safely and that handwashing is not frequently practised.

The first-ever Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) completed in Kiribati and surveys in Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu reaching data collection stage. This will provide a wealth of data related to children as baselines for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) monitoring. In 2020, Fiji, FSM and Nauru will start the surveys.

### External funding

External donors will remain an important source of funding for social sectors in the Pacific. Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the European Union (EU) were the dominant donors in social sectors. During 2019, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved the introduction of three new vaccines project in four Pacific countries while the World Bank launched a human capital project in the Pacific. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) increased its support to the education sector in PICTs. EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) was approved for Pacific region, Samoa and Vanuatu

### Major contributions and drivers of results

UNICEF Pacific multi-country programme has made achievement on key results for children in its second year of the multi-country programme with expansion of support to more countries in the Pacific across all programmes.

### Pacific countries' renewed commitment to escalating ECD efforts

UNICEF's advocacy on ECD has catalysed commitments from PICTs to improve ECD coordination and service delivery. UNICEF Pacific convened the 2019 Pacific ECD Forum, a gathering of 150 government leaders and partners from 15 countries in October 2019 in Fiji. In a historic announcement, the forum endorsed the Pacific Regional Council for ECD, comprised of ministers from education, finance, health and social welfare, with a steering committee comprised of permanent secretaries from the same sectors. The regional council leverages collective assets to achieve significant advances on ECD through a 10-year workplan, with specific milestones leading to the achievement of the SDGs in 2030. UNICEF will act as the secretariat of this council. Several Pacific governments have made significant progress in implementing the Pasifika Call to Action on ECD. For example, the Marshall Islands set up a cabinet-level ECD committee under the auspices of the President and mobilized US\$13 million through the International Development Association for a comprehensive ECD programme. The Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are in the process of developing multi-sectoral ECD policies through nationwide consultations. Samoa and Solomon Islands have increased budgetary allocations for several national programmes

### Improving child health and nutrition services and care practices

UNICEF focuses its support on developing quality, resilient services and care practices, with an intensive focus on Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), with targeted interventions in nine other Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs).

In response to the Pacific Measles Outbreak, UNICEF Pacific distributed more than 1.25 million doses of measles-containing vaccine (MCV) to 13 PICTs and more than 235,000 children were vaccinated against measles in 14 PICTs. UNICEF also provided technical assistance on immunization and risk communication and procured essential medical equipment. UNICEF Pacific, through its Vaccine Independence Initiative (VII), holds a buffer stock corresponding to three months' routine supply of all routine vaccines at its Fiji-based regional cold chain. This buffer stock enabled the immediate release of MCV stocks to Samoa, Fiji and Tonga, bolstering in-country stocks, enabling emergency response vaccination to occur while emergency orders were placed.

UNICEF mobilized US\$7.5 million for strengthening immunization systems for the effective introduction of new vaccines in Samoa, Vanuatu, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue and Tokelau. Leveraging these funds will enable governments to introduce life-saving new vaccines and strengthen immunization systems for routine vaccination.

Stunting remained a focus of the 2019 Early Childhood Development (ECD) Forum, where 14 PICTs reaffirmed their commitment to address the triple burden of malnutrition (stunting; micronutrient deficiency; and maternal and childhood overweight and obesity) and called for countries to take multi-sectoral action. UNICEF highlighted the interconnectedness of stunting, anaemia and maternal overweight and obesity in its paper, *The Triple Burden of Malnutrition in the Pacific*, highlighting the fact that five PICTs have high or very high rates of stunting, all PICTs have high rates of maternal and

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childhood anaemia, and women in all PICTs have very high rates of overweight and obesity. Discussions at the forum focused on the reporting role of multi-sectoral nutrition coordination bodies in ECD, non-communicable disease and food security.

Formative research on nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) conducted in Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Solomon Islands identified health workers as the most trusted source of health and nutrition advice for caregivers. In addition, a community engagement gap analysis reported that community engagement is widely recognized as a core frontline service and is often explicitly stated in primary health care (PHC) worker job descriptions. However, the analysis also found that community engagement has not been systematically undertaken or well understood, nor have the required skills formed part of PHC worker training. Drawing on these two findings, UNICEF and Kiribati's Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) are developing a "how to" guide for community engagement, with the aim of building PHC worker skills and providing practical guidance on community engagement. Four out of nine modules were drafted in 2019: How to: Do Community Mapping; Identify an 'At Risk' Child; Conduct a Home Visit; and Plan PHC Services. The guide defines the activities to be undertaken and the skills to be developed. The guide will also create a benchmark for PHC supportive supervision and on-the-job training. To further embed community engagement services as a core PHC activity, it was incorporated into the new role delineation policy in Kiribati.

### Improving access to WASH

UNICEF Pacific's WASH programme grew significantly in 2019, raising EUR 6.2 million for WASH in Kiribati, including an innovative financing feasibility assessment, conducted in close collaboration with the Pacific Community (SPC). New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) contributed US\$2.3 million to expand the benefits of improved WASH to babies by linking WASH and nutrition initiatives. The successful demonstration of community-led total sanitation (CLTS) in Malaita Province in Solomon Islands led to increased government investment of US\$1.6 million. European Union Development Fund (EDF10) funding will be used to expand the project to two additional provinces during 2020-2023. With technical assistance from UNICEF, under a bilateral partnership between MFAT and the Government of Vanuatu, the national Department of Water Resources (DoWR) continues to increase investment in improving access to safe drinking water through the national capital assistance programme, which finances infrastructure improvements based on drinking water safety and security plans (DWSSPs) developed by communities. Based on this success, UNICEF has supported the DoWR in the design of a Green Climate Fund (GCF) proposal to include WASH safety planning among climate resilience activities.

UNICEF, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and SPC, developed a Pacific WASH Strategy, which was presented at the Ministers of Health Meeting. With technical support from the regional office and headquarters, UNICEF successfully advocated for SPC to organize a high-level dialogue to accelerate the WASH agenda in the Pacific, with representatives from government and development partners. This has escalated WASH priority in the Pacific.

Significant advances in elevating WASH in Schools (WinS) were made in several countries. In Fiji, funding from Australia contributed to a partnership with local non-governmental organizations (NGO) and the Fijian Teachers Association on building the capacity of schools to improve WinS with minimal government investment. WinS improvement planning has been institutionalized in a mandatory professional development course for all heads of schools in Fiji. In Solomon Islands, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) launched WinS technical standards to improve the quality of infrastructure, with a pilot conducted in 42 schools. In Vanuatu, UNICEF has supported WASH facility upgrades and hygiene promotion with all in all 101 (100%) operational ECCE centres in Penama province, which benefitted 985 girls, 1,011 boys, and 155 teachers. In FSM, initial achievements include the incorporation of WASH indicators in the education management information system (EMIS) and the potential inclusion of WASH indicators in the school accreditation system. This will help identify schools that lack WASH services, providing information that can be used to prioritize budget allocations by the governor's office and Department of Education at the state level.

UNICEF has strengthened the capacity of national statistics offices and ministries of health (MoHs) in Tonga and Samoa through training on the water quality module of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), which provides valuable data on WASH-related indicators. With support from UNICEF and Australia, the Government of Solomon Islands started collecting WASH-related data in 335 healthcare facilities in November 2019, providing important baseline information for future interventions.

With the highest rate of open defecation in the Pacific (80 per cent), Solomon Islands is prioritized by UNICEF's WASH programme for sanitation improvements. Fewer people are now practicing open defecation in the country, with 50 communities in Malaita Province having been declared open defecation free (ODF). In 2019, 625 men and 125 women from these 50 communities were trained to monitor and support improvement plans in the community to sustain WASH services. Based on this success, the government plans to increase its investment to expand the same approach in two additional provinces in 2020.

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Responding to the latest data on stunting and early childhood development (ECD), a 'WASH for Babies' initiative was launched in Kiribati, with funding from New Zealand. The initiative is expected to demonstrate the effectiveness of intersectoral approaches that integrate health and nutrition, ECD, communication for development (C4D) and WASH in small island states.

UNICEF's contribution to gender and equity were further enhanced through the provision of gender-segregated WASH facilities and supplies in schools and healthcare facilities, and the provision of education around menstrual hygiene management. A study on the needs of adolescent girls with disabilities for WinS was undertaken in Fiji by CBM Nossal to identify innovative pathways to narrow inequities and improve WASH in special schools.

### Laying a stronger foundation for early childhood education

UNICEF plays a critical role as a lead agency for ECE in the Pacific, with the aim to ensure equitable access to quality early learning as a foundation for future educational success, and as a key component of multi-sectoral ECD.

PICTs increasingly include ECE in policies, plans and legislation. Solomon Islands included ECE in the Education Bill 2019, Tuvalu initiated a review of the Education Act to include ECE, and Vanuatu has completed an education sector strategy with dedicated attention to ECE and initiated a review of its Education Act No.9 to make ECE compulsory from 2020. Building on long-term advocacy by UNICEF, governments have increased domestic investments in ECE, including continued payment of ECE teacher salaries and per-capita grants in Vanuatu and Fiji, and initiation of salary payments in Kiribati.

ECE curricula, quality standards and implementation plans guide quality teaching and learning processes at scale. Tuvalu has developed and finalized a new locally-relevant and gender-responsive ECE curriculum, Kiribati has produced a draft that will be piloted and finalized in 2020, and Tonga has initiated the review and development of the ECE curriculum. Kiribati assessed and registered all 285 preschools with quality school standards, and Kiribati and Tonga are migrating quality standards to digital platforms that will eventually link to the EMIS system. Inspired by experience with ECE quality standards and centre improvement planning guidance, Vanuatu designed and initiated a process to strengthen evidence-based school planning based on quality standards for all levels (ECE through secondary).

To expand access to ECE, including for the most vulnerable, new ECE models were tested and plans for scale-up were defined. In Kiribati, the Accelerated School Readiness Program (ASRP) continued during school holidays into January 2019, providing quality pre-primary education to more than 1,100 children (reaching an estimated 50 per cent of children under 5; 47 per cent girls, 53 per cent boys) in five islands. Expansion of ASRP to additional islands in 2020 is planned. Solomon Islands trained 590 pre-primary year (PPY) teachers, funded over 70 per cent by government, completing the roll-out of training to all 10 provinces in advance of the nationwide launch of PPY in January 2020. A PPY communication strategy and tools were developed to build demand and awareness for early learning and right-age enrolment in PPY.

Holistic ECD parenting programmes were tested at the sub-national level and reviewed to strengthen design and implementation for scale-up. The Kiribati ECD Positive Parenting programme reached over 500 parents (70 per cent female; 30 per cent male). The Vanuatu Parent Support Programme reached caregivers of approximately 2,900 children (estimated 50 per cent under 2 years of age; 50 per cent between 3 and 5 years of age), and a series of reflection meetings secured stakeholder feedback on good practices, gaps and suggestions for improvements to the design and implementation planned for in 2020.

### Commitments gained on child protection system building

Child protection is under-resourced both financially and technically across PICTs. During 2019, the first-ever Pacific Regional Conference on Child Protection for the Social Welfare Sector brought together senior government officials and technical personnel from social welfare ministries in 12 PICTs. The objectives of the five-day conference were to raise awareness on child protection issues and the rationale and approaches to address them, as well as to strengthen the capacity of social welfare ministries to develop multi-sector child protection systems, policies, plans and procedures as a framework to deliver child protection prevention and response services. Lessons learned from different approaches used in other regions were discussed. As a result, the governments committed to establish/strengthen multi-sector child protection systems, with a particular focus on community structures, which are a strength of Pacific Island societies.

To address the human capacity gap among social workers, the first-ever training course on child protection for social workers was developed and implemented in the Pacific. The course was a practical, skill-based course designed for in-service training of social workers in child protection, contextualized to the Pacific. Forty social welfare officers from three countries, Kiribati, Nauru and Solomon Islands, reportedly found the training very practical and useful for their daily child protection case management work.

Significant progress was also made in the development of child protection legislation, policies and implementation plans in

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Fiji, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Child protection inter-agency guidelines that were developed or revised during 2018 in Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru and Solomon Islands were finalized and validated, with service providers oriented in their application. Work was initiated in Tonga to address the need for child protection legislation and systems, and in particular for social services and social workers. Progress was also made with other sectors. In Fiji, UNICEF worked with the judiciary on court procedures, with the police on training around the handling of children and forensic examinations, with the health sector on training medical officers in responding to and reporting child abuse, and with the education sector on policies around child protection in schools. In Kiribati, UNICEF is assisting with the revision of police operating procedures for child victims, the revision of legislation on children in conflict with the law, and the finalization of child protection in school policies.

Nearly 1,700 caregivers engaged in a community dialogue on child development and child maltreatment, acquired parenting skills and set up community-led child protection prevention and response mechanisms in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. An important partnership with the Pacific Conference of Churches will integrate child protection in church activities. A situation analysis of child protection and the internet, and existing responses in the 14 PICTs, was conducted and will provide concrete recommendations for action. Through the European Union (EU)/United Nations (UN) Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls, UNICEF collaborated with UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNDP, with UNICEF focusing on prevention, including community dialogue, multi-channel communication campaigns, church partnerships and child online protection in Samoa and Vanuatu, with a regional/multi-country component focusing on Fiji, Marshall Islands and Solomon Islands.

### Improving evidence and social protection for children

Subsequent to their 2017 commitment to improve data availability, PICTs established a set of 132 Pacific Sustainable Development Indicators (PSDI) to monitor progress against regional and global priorities. Previously, PICTs were able to monitor less than half of these priority indicators. Following the 2018 adoption of MICS as one of the core surveys to support monitoring of PSDIs, Kiribati completed a national MICS in 2019. The survey will help fill data gaps for up to 25 PSDIs and 33 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators, providing improved evidence for programme and policy planning and for voluntary national reporting (VNR). Three national MICS surveys (Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu) were underway in 2019, with reports expected in early 2020. UNICEF is leading partners, including UNFPA and SPC, in the provision of technical support for the implementation of MICS in the Pacific.

The availability of disability-related data was further strengthened in 2019. In Tonga, the National Disability Report was finalized. In partnership with SPC, UNICEF supported capacity building around the analysis of disability data generated from censuses in Fiji, Tonga and Tuvalu. With support from SPC, the Washington Group (WG) module on disability was successfully tested for inclusion in the Marshall Islands' household income and expenditure survey (HIES) experiment. This will enable poverty data to be disaggregated by disability, allowing for improved targeting of policies and programmes.

In 2019, Cook Islands extended the child benefit social protection programme to include children under 16 years of age (up from 14 years of age). This extension will benefit an additional 560 children and demonstrates the government's commitment to protect children. The Government of Cook Islands, with UNICEF support, commissioned the first-ever independent, formative country-led evaluation of five social protection schemes (newborn allowance, child benefit, infirm and destitute benefit, old age pension and caregiver allowance). The evaluation will guide government decisions to strengthen social protection programmes and will contribute to the knowledge base around social protection in the context of Small Island Development States (SIDS). In 2020, part of the US\$3 million received from the Joint SDG Fund to strengthen social protection in Cook Islands, Samoa, Niue and Tokelau will be invested to implement the recommendations from the evaluation.

To advocate for improved investments for children, budget briefs on the health and education sectors were shared with parliamentarians in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. The briefs included analyses assessing the consistency of government budgetary allocations, commitments to national/sector development plans and gaps in prioritization. Public expenditure tracking for ECD was completed in Kiribati and Vanuatu, including suggestions for the governments to routinely track multisectoral expenditure in ECD.

All PICTs except Niue are on track with their Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) reporting obligations. Kiribati cleared its outstanding periodic report in 2019, while Tonga completed its first constructive dialogue with the Committee on the Rights of the Child (both supported by UNICEF). However, Niue failed to submit its periodic report as planned in 2019 as it is yet to be approved by Cabinet.

### Lessons Learned and Innovations

**A unique Pacific regional multi-sectoral coordination mechanism on early childhood development (ECD) and its linkages with climate change**

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The high-level and multi-sectoral Pacific Regional Council on Early Childhood Development is an innovative model of coordination. Comprised of ministers and permanent secretaries from the finance, health, education and social welfare ministries, the council helps drive a collective agenda for ECD in the region, with plans to explore reporting to the Pacific Leaders Forum (the highest inter-governmental forum in the Pacific) through the Forum of Economic Ministers. In a first for the region, Pacific governments discussed the linkages between ECD and climate change at the 2019 Pacific ECD Forum. The Pacific is extremely vulnerable to the impact of climate change and Pacific leaders have taken a prominent role on the global stage to advocate for urgent climate action. Forum delegates recognized the critical role of ECD for climate change risk mitigation, resilience-building and adaptation strategies, in line with the call by 2019 Pacific Islands Leaders Forum focusing on climate changes, health and wellbeing of Pacific people.

### **Innovative media partnership on raising awareness around healthy eating habits**

An innovative advocacy partnership between UNICEF and celebrity chef Robert Oliver's reality television series "Pacific Island Food Revolution (PIFR)" using TV cooking challenge as a stimulating, evocative and entertaining medium to communicate healthy eating using locally available foods. This represents an innovative strategy to engage with audiences in the Pacific on healthy eating.

UNICEF provided technical information on healthy eating and weight management during pregnancy and appropriate complementary feeding, while PIFR transformed the information into 'edutainment'. The season one finale was dedicated to 'Foods for the First 1,000 Days'. Contestants competed to cook the best foods for pregnant mothers and children under 2 years of age. The programme was free-to-air in 12 PICTs, with preliminary data indicating that women exposed to the programme were 146 per cent more likely to choose healthy food options.

The success of season one prompted the continuation of the partnership, with season two including a challenge on healthy school lunches. In parallel, UNICEF produced the 'Pacific Youth Food Revolution', featuring three cooking teams comprised of children led by celebrity chef Robert Oliver and UNICEF Pacific Ambassador Pita Taufatofua. The production shows Pacific children teaching other children how to cook clean, simple, inexpensive and nutritious foods. This production highlighted the importance of establishing good health during school as transition to adulthood and parenthood. Filmed in an instructional format for use by ministries, schools, health workers and communities, the production is aired during advertisement breaks of the reality TV show across more than 20 networks in PICTs

### **Beyond training: systems-based capacity building for PHC**

To improve the quality of primary health and nutrition services, UNICEF is adopting a systems approach to building capacity in three countries: Kiribati, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. The approach has three elements: a continuous professional development system linked to accreditation/professionalization of the primary health worker, supportive supervision and accompaniment of PHC workers in their daily work to help translate learning into practice by solving problems in situ using the available equipment, medicines and skills at the PHC facility, and community engagement and accountability creating a dual platform for behaviour change and for communities and local governments to play a role in improving the quality of health and nutrition services. As seen in Kiribati, this approach is proving powerful in its potential for positive change and inclusive engagement.

### **Reaching out to furthest behind and marginalized children**

UNICEF Pacific explores innovative solutions to address equity and to overcome challenges faced by children in the region. For example, UNICEF piloted the Vanuatu Drone Trial, designed to increase vaccination coverage by delivering vaccines by remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS). UNICEF formed a consortium with Vanuatu's MoH and Civil Aviation Authority, with support from DFAT and the Global Fund. During 2019, phase two was successfully completed, demonstrating the potential of drones to improve vaccines delivery to the remote islands. A final report of the first two phases was launched in September 2019 by the Government of Vanuatu followed by a national workshop to compile lessons learned and to reflect on the planning of phase three for scale-up to wider coverage and service provision.

In addition, UNICEF started installing disability-friendly handwashing facilities at schools, designed and developed by Field Ready, an international civil society organization (CSO) with strong humanitarian innovation and engineering skills. Field Ready also designed a gender- and culturally-appropriate emergency latrine package.

### **Financing facility for evidence generation in the Pacific**

UNICEF is collaborating with the South Pacific Community (SPC) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to support evidence generation in the Pacific. In 2019, a joint proposal was developed for a *Pacific Statistical Collections Financing Facility* and presented to the Donor and Development Partner Group meeting and the Pacific Statistics Standing

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Committee (PSSC). This facility aims to support the implementation of the five-year regional statistical collection plan, 2019 to 2023 including censuses and surveys (MICS, Household Expenditures Survey, etc.). The facility will support PICTs to fill budget gaps related to data collection and will provide additional resources to technical partners (UNICEF, UNFPA, SPC, etc) to support PICTs to produce high quality and timely data collection. The PSSC directed the technical partners to propose a governance and financing architecture, which will be further discussed in 2020.

### **Addressing human resource gaps in multi-country context through volunteer partnership programmes**

During the first two years implementing the current UNICEF multi-country programme, it has become clear that all 14 PICTs require long-term, in-country technical assistance to improve human resource capacity. To this end, partnerships with Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) and Volunteer Services Abroad New Zealand (VSA) have been developed on child protection. Seven volunteers from AVID have been placed in 2019 and one volunteer from VSA will be placed in 2020 in the social welfare ministries in six PICTs to provide technical assistance and on-the-job coaching to social welfare officers and managers. This approach is cost-effective to bring essential expertise to support the 14 countries.