

Update on the context and situation of children

South Africa has approximately 57.73 million people, with 19.7 million children under the age of 18 years. With a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of US\$ 7,193 in 2018, South Africa is ranked as a middle-income country, and its economy is the second largest on the African continent. The country has made remarkable progress in a number of social indicators since the end of Apartheid in 1994. Access to education is near-universal (98.9% for compulsory years to Grade 9). The child mortality Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target has already been achieved with the rate of 37 per 1000 live births. Access to basic services, such as drinking water and sanitation, remains high, and nine million children receive school meals. The child support grant reaches 13 million children. Child rights are enshrined in the Constitution and a progressive Children's Act; the Constitutional Court ruling confirmed that corporal punishment even in the home is unconstitutional.

However, South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world with Gini Coefficient being 0.67, and, compared to other countries with a similar Human Development Index (HDI), South Africa demonstrates poorer performance on key child indicators. Despite significant progress in the reduction of extreme poverty in recent years, millions of children are still poor or vulnerable to poverty, and child poverty is far higher than that of the general population. While income poverty affects about half of the entire population, two out of every three children, i.e. 12.7 million children are poor. These children are not merely affected by a temporary decline in their living conditions but locked into a complex web of cumulative deprivations in health, nutrition, education, shelter and protection. Poverty also intersects with other causes of vulnerabilities, including the country's devastating HIV/AIDS and TB epidemic with 20.4 per cent of the population (7.7 million) living with HIV in 2018.

There has been remarkable progress in preventing mother to child transmission (PMTCT). The mother to child transmission (MTCT) rate declined to 4.1 per cent in 2018 from 6.24 per cent in 2014, and nearly 87 per cent of HIV positive pregnant women access antiretroviral medicine for PMTCT, preventing 53,000 new HIV infections among newborns. However, young people, particularly adolescent girls and young women (AGYW), are still highly vulnerable to the HIV epidemic. Over a third of all new HIV infections in South Africa are within the 15-24 years old age group, and HIV incidence among AGYW 15-24 years old is three times that of their male counterparts. Also, only 56 per cent of children under 15 needing ART were on treatment in 2019.

The steep decline in under-five mortality from 85.2 per 1,000 live birth in 2002 to 37.1 per 1,000 live birth in 2018 is remarkable. However, in 2018 only, an estimated 40,000 children under five died in South Africa, and approximately one-third of these deaths occur during the newborn period. Compared to other countries with a similar HDI, South Africa has higher rates of under-five mortality and neonatal deaths and also a lower coverage of some key child health interventions. The country faced sub-optimal performance of vaccine preventable disease surveillance performance particularly for Polio and measles. Following a withdrawal of polio free status by the Africa Regional Certification Commission (ARCC) in late 2018, South Africa regained its polio-free status in 2019, but a third dose of DPT coverage of 82 per cent in 2018 was still below the global target of 90 per cent coverage; South Africa is one of the top 10 countries with the largest number of under-immunized children in the world.

South Africa is faced with the double burden of malnutrition among children under five; almost three out of every 10 children under five years are stunted, a much higher prevalence of stunting compared to other African nations, e.g. Gabon, Libya and Egypt, with similar HDI. Meanwhile, 13 per cent of children under five are overweight, more than two times the global average and the highest percentage in the Eastern and South Africa Region. The overweight in adolescents (26 per cent) is higher than the global prevalence (17%) as well. Even though exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life has increased to 32 per cent in 2016 from eight per cent in 2003, infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices are far from optimal; just a third of infants are exclusively breastfed under six months, while a quarter are not breastfed at all. Furthermore, only 22.9 per cent of young infants 6- 23 months received a minimum acceptable diet.

South Africa is moving to introduce two years of compulsory Early Childhood Development (ECD) education as a presidential priority. However, in 2018, only 38.4 per cent of children birth to four-years old were attending an early learning and development programme in an ECD center or pre-school, and additional 5.5 per cent are with child minders or day mothers that provide a mix of early learning opportunities and care. This trend remains consistent with only marginal changes since 2010.

Participation rates in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education stands at 99 per cent, 90.1 per cent and 86.1 per cent with gender parity in 2018 respectively. Nonetheless, the quality of education is of concern. Although recent assessments suggest an upward trajectory in the quality of education, albeit coming off a very low base, foundational skills

of reading, writing and counting point towards a learning crisis, with 78 per cent of Grade 4 learners unable to read for meaning. Repetition rates are high in primary (8%) and secondary school (15%), particularly for boys. The system loses 15 per cent of learners by Grade 9. Drop-out increases exponentially in Grades 10 (0.6%) and 11 (13.4%), resulting in only 40 per cent of learners completing Grade 12.

There is an evident inequality regarding girls' participation and performance in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) subjects and eventually careers. While (1) girls generally outperform boys in the early grades with no significant differences between the genders in later grades and (2) more girls than boys sit the Grade 12 examination in math and physical science, boys outperform girls in both subjects. Only 28.5 per cent of female graduates in STEM-related careers such as engineering, manufacturing and construction.

South Africa is the country with one of the world's highest murder rates against women and children in the world; it loses a woman every three hours to murder and an average of four children each day. South Africa's child homicide rate is double the global average, and the majority (almost 45 per cent) of child homicides were in the context of child abuse and neglect. School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) also affects millions of children, and it includes bullying; corporal punishment; and sexual violence and harassment.

External risks to children also further evolved. The impact of the El Nino has been increasingly putting children at risk of hunger, water shortages and disease. South Africa is also the country with the largest number of migrant children in Africa with 600,000 children on the move, posing multiple risks to them, as well as to communities that they leave, pass and arrive.

Yet, the year 2019 was marked by a political shift, as both Parliamentary and Presidential elections resulted in a new Cabinet and Parliament. Change in Government generated both challenges as well as opportunities, as new political leadership in Cabinet and Parliament has demonstrated great commitment to the plight of women, children and youth in the country, especially in terms of ending gender-based violence/ femicide, investing in better education and reducing youth unemployment rate.

Leveraging political momentum and opportunities, UNICEF South Africa operated at all strategic levels in 2019 to (1) reduce the pervasive inequalities across key child indicators, (2) reach the last mile by consolidating the achievements made to date in some of the key indicators and (3) mitigate emerging risks to children.

Major contributions and drivers of results

At the beginning of 2019, UNICEF South Africa set out the following annual priorities: (1) strengthening health systems for evidence-based planning and monitoring of a comprehensive package of health, HIV/AIDS and Nutrition services for mothers and children; (2) enhancing education systems for implementing a minimum package of interventions for improving learning outcomes; (3) strengthening prevention and early intervention programmes to reach more children at risk of violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect; and (4) locating child rights at the center of government policy and political agenda.

(1) Strengthening health systems for evidence-based planning and monitoring of a comprehensive package of health, HIV/AIDS and Nutrition services for mothers and children

UNICEF South Africa played a critical role in the development of the comprehensive essential Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) package, called Mother baby package for the First 1,000 Days. The package aims that all pregnant women and mothers with children below the age of two years are provided with all the health and development services at every visit to the health facility. The Department of Health (DOH) has rolled this package out in five out of the country's nine provinces with UNICEF support.

To have a comprehensive understanding of the quality and coverage of the health and HIV/AIDS services, UNICEF, together with other development partners, supported the National DOH in conducting the joint review of the HIV, STI, TB and PMTCT programmes to assess the progress against the national targets. UNICEF took the lead on the PMTCT and pediatric HIV programme, with a focus on (1) reviewing the PMTCT and pediatric assessment tools (National, Provincial, District and Health Facility Tools) and (2) collating the data required for the epidemiological review for PMTCT.

In 2018, South Africa had lost the polio-free status. To respond to this, UNICEF, together with WHO, strengthened routine immunization and overall vaccine preventable disease surveillance system, and finally South Africa re-gained the polio free status in September 2019. Also, UNICEF, together with WHO and DOH, developed and conducted an equity-based analysis and thereby identified the eight high-burden municipalities contributing most to the unimmunized. The findings were considered of strategic importance towards improving immunization coverage in South Africa and will inform the

development of the municipality-specific plans.

With the country's data systems not routinely producing age-disaggregated data, UNICEF continued to support the generation of quality data to improve PMTCT/ Pediatric HIV programme implementation. One of the successes is that the data is incorporated in the nation-wide quality improvement programme (Siyenza) and utilized at the district- and national-level to monitor achievement of the 90-90-90 targets, which aim that by 2020, 90 per cent of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status, 90 per cent of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy and 90 per cent of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression.

UNICEF also supported the implementation of community dialogues with groups of mothers in Eastern Cape Province through the Sakha Esethu project, in partnership with the Nelson Mandela University. The end-line evaluation found that the project improved PMTCT, breastfeeding and child health practices and reduced the risky behaviors related to HIV/AIDS. Due in part to these community interventions, the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the targeted communities in Northern and Eastern Cape provinces increased from 10 per cent to 30 per cent. The evaluation also found that the mother mentors continued with community mobilization and reached additional people, indicating that the intervention continued to grow and strengthen naturally because of the initial participative training.

UNICEF developed the guidelines and key messages for promoting healthy eating, drinking and physical activity among school children and adolescents and developed the Guidelines for Integrated Management of Severe Acute Malnutrition (IMAM) and the Integrated National Food and Nutrition Security communication strategy, in support of the implementation of the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan (NFSNP). In addition, MomConnect, which uses SMS and WhatsApp to send targeted health promotion messages to pregnant women and mothers, is already operating at scale. Initiated by the Provincial DOH-KwaZulu Natal, UNICEF and Praekelt Foundation, it has been taken up by the National DOH, currently reaching 85 per cent of pregnant women and mothers with 3.2 million subscribers. At the request of the new Health Minister, UNICEF has been assisting the DOH to develop a single National Health Helpdesk for all MNCH, HIV/AIDS and Nutrition-related messaging, by expanding MomConnect platform and consolidating other small-scale helpdesks.

The draft National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill, recently introduced to Parliament, aims to provide universal health coverage. In addition, the NHI plans to strengthen the public health system through strengthening the district health system, including primary health care and community health services, to accelerate service delivery. However, the details of the benefit package, especially for children, have yet to be defined. Initial discussions with national DOH about UNICEF's strategic engagement with NHI programme recommended that UNICEF leads (1) defining and costing the benefit packages, particularly for MNCH interventions, and (2) district health systems strengthening. While these are well aligned with UNICEF South Africa's priorities and comparative advantage, it will necessitate further consultations and mapping out of concrete ways forward.

(2) Enhancing education systems for implementing a minimum package* of interventions for improving learning outcomes, including early learning and skills building (the minimum package of interventions for improving learning outcomes includes (1) Early Grade Reading; (2) Reading in African Languages; and (3) Early Grade Math

The critical foundations of learning are laid from early learning and development programmes and the first grades of formal schooling. Most critical for this period is improving (1) the knowledge and skills of the workforce to implement the most appropriate pedagogical approaches and (2) an enabling education system. To improve the capacity of ECD practitioners and Grades R to 3 educators, online in-service training was employed nationally with UNICEF South Africa's financial and technical support. The training had a cumulative enrolment of 214,647 users (143% of target), of which 61,049 were during 2019. It also demonstrated a cumulative course completion of 158,811 (106% of target), of which 46,664 were during 2019.

The year 2019 marked an historic milestone for the enabling system for ECD, as decades of policy conflict ended with the final decision to shift the responsibility for ECD provision from the Department of Social Development (DSD) to the Department of Basic Education (DBE). This is a significant game changer in the ECD landscape, as it not only coincides with an administrative change but also strongly emphasizes the importance of integrating ECD into the country's basic education system. UNICEF had advocated for this shift and is now supporting the transition process.

UNICEF South Africa, together with DBE, further scaled-up the high impact early grade reading programme, evidence for which was established through the 2017 randomized control trial. The programme was extended to Grades 1, 2 and 3 in 300 schools in two districts of North West province, with the additional testing of the optimal dosage of on-site coaching (on-site vs. virtual coaching and formation of community of practice) among 60 of the 300 schools. This testing is to identify more efficient implementation modality for coaching, which will ultimately improve the cost effectiveness and sustainability of the model. UNICEF also provided technical and financial support to DBE to develop a coaching course on early grade reading in African local languages targeting external coaches and subject advisors in the interest of

sustainability. Other key achievements include a conclusion of a scoping study on early grade mathematics and an evaluation of the Magic Classroom Collective which focuses on bilingual literacy and numeracy in the foundation phase. Particularly, the evaluation found that the Magic Classroom Collective intervention contributed to a dramatic increase in the mean Grade 3 learner score in home language literacy from 11.7 per cent to 33.2 per cent.

An enabling condition for learning needs to be ensured throughout the child's education. Barriers, such as violence, alcohol and drug abuse, lack of opportunities to develop and grow, gender stereotypes related to certain subjects, compromise quality of teaching and learning. To address these challenges, UNICEF South Africa continued to support the implementation of interventions under the National School Safety Framework (NSSF), which included the targeted training interventions on the monitoring of SRGBV incidences; field testing of the manual to prevent and manage alcohol and substance abuse in schools; and the capacity development in all nine provinces for implementing national protocols for the management and reporting of sexual abuse, harassment and corporal punishment in schools.

Another key determinant to young people's quality education, particularly for girls, is the participation in STEM subjects in secondary education, which will increase the opportunities to enroll in post-school studies and subsequent job opportunities in STEM careers. The TechnoGirl programme, designed for adolescent girls from disadvantaged communities, benefitted 1,000 girls in 2019 through job shadowing in STEM careers. It also tracked the performance of 2,584 Alumni at Higher Education Institutions; nearly 78 per cent of the girls who benefitted from the programme are studying in one of three scarce skills fields, i.e. engineering, science and commerce. For those that have completed their education, their socio-economic status has improved drastically, from a household income of less than US\$ 5,000 to US\$ 36,000 per annum. The strength of the TechnoGirl programme lies on its Public-Private Partnership (PPP) driven model, constituting of various government departments and the private sector, as it is in synchrony with many participating companies' Corporate Social Responsibility agenda.

Physical Education and Sports for Development (PES4D) and the Girl's and Boy's Education Movement (GBEM) Youth Leadership programme provided a school-based response to inclusive and equitable quality education and developmental opportunities for young people. These programmes empowered young people with the essential life skills and provided a platform for social dialogue on the issues affecting themselves. In 2019 only, more than 3,500 educators and government officials received training on the delivery on quality physical education, and 300,000 learners benefitted from structured quality physical education. Approximately 350,000 learners actively engaged in dialogues on social issues through GBEM.

Access to basic water, sanitation and hygiene services in school is an important determinant for the improved learning outcomes. Starting with 15.1 percent (3,988) out of the about 25,000 primary and secondary schools in South Africa without the appropriate sanitation and WASH facilities, the Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) programme, spearheaded by the Office of the President, made significant progress, and the current estimates indicated that there are less than 2,000 schools remaining to be covered. UNICEF played a crucial role in rolling out this programme by bringing and bridging public and private sector partners together.

(3) Strengthening prevention and early intervention programmes to reach more children at risk of violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect

Throughout the year, UNICEF South Africa advocated for the investment into prevention and early intervention (PEI) programmes and called for Zero Tolerance to violence against children (VAC). UNICEF South Africa developed a costed investment case for child care, protection and youth empowerment, which was the basis to leverage commitment, platforms and resources to accelerate investments in PEI services. The investment case was presented at a number of regional and national platforms and events, including African Odyssey, Mbokodo, International Council of Philanthropies, Graça Machel Trust and the African Child Policy Forum. As a result, UNICEF South Africa forged new partnerships with the Influential Women Circle (IWC); foundations like Cyril Ramaphosa and Motsepe; companies like VIACOM, Telkom, the Guardian and Deutsche Bank; and High Net individuals/ celebrities, for the accelerated investment in PEI programmes. The investment case was featured in the outcome document of the Global Partnership meeting held in Kampala and the outcome document from the Africa Child Policy Forum held in Maputo in November 2019. VIACOM, Graça Machel and IWC are highly keen to take the investment case forward as of January 2020.

UNICEF leveraged partnerships and invited delegates for a successful global child and youth care conference held in Durban from 1-4 July, with 1,300 child care practitioners from 28 countries. Through UNICEF's advocacy effort, the corporates partially contributed to the funding of the conference, and the event was widely covered by media in the country, including MTV, ENCA and VIACOM. *Pro bono* participation by famous musicians and UNICEF Youth Ambassadors gave the plight of child care, protection and youth empowerment a more emphasis during the conference. The outcomes of the conference were the commitment by UNICEF, FICE (International Federation of Educative Communities) Africa and the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (1) to strengthen a child protection workforce on the continent, building on the role of child and youth care workers from South Africa and (2) to develop further training curricula for such. Additionally, other countries and organizations became interested in adopting the South Africa child and youth care model, including UNHCR taking the

model to Greece in response to the refugee crisis. The conference showcased the strategic partnerships that UNICEF South Africa has been strengthened, both in South Africa and globally, with governments, celebrities, NGOs and UN agencies to leverage resources and create further awareness on the importance of the child and youth care workforce, who plays a critical role in implementing PEI programmes.

To further strengthen the social welfare workforce and systems in South Africa, UNICEF South Africa also supported the Department of Social Development (DSD) Social Work Administrative Tools Taskforce. This taskforce streamlined and refined the generic case management tools, developed a case management workflow process and simplified reporting processes including piloting of digitization of the reporting process. The tools, standard operating procedures and accompanying training materials are being field-tested in two provinces.

With the murder rate of women and children at an all-time high, the government has developed the National Strategic Plan (NSP) of Action on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Femicide, which is managed and coordinated at the President's offices, demonstrating the highest political will and commitment to ending violence against women and children. UNICEF South Africa provided the high-level policy advice to the development of the NSP in the context of the one UN Gender Theme Group. UNICEF successfully integrated VAC into NSP and supported the Interim GBV Steering Committee in the development and budgeting of the NSP. To date, nearly USD 114 million has been set aside to resource line departments and civil society organizations to respond to survivors of violence.

UNICEF continued to advance the response to children affected by migration and displacement in South Africa. UNICEF strengthened the collaboration and partnership with DSD, UNHCR, IOM and civil society working for children on the move. UNICEF provided psycho-social and in-kind support to families and children affected by the violence in Durban, where up to 200 people, including 14 refugee children, were displaced. UNICEF also supported other 400 women and children that were affected by the violence later in the year. The Office is ready for emergency preparedness and response through a consolidated partnership with the South Africa Red Cross. Commitments to the plight of unaccompanied minors (UAM) became intensified at a Global Mayoral Forum in Durban, where UNICEF signed a Global Compact on UAMs, and funding was leveraged from the EU to work with partners like UNHCR, Save the Children, the Red Cross, provincial DSD and other civil society organizations to ensure every child has the right to identity, social protection, safety and education in border areas in four provinces.

(4) Locating child rights at the center of government policy and political agenda

UNICEF South Africa built support for child-sensitive policies through a multi-sectoral alliance that includes government, civil society organizations, media and the private sector. Implicit in this approach is a rejection of a public policy-making orientation that treats children as a niche area. By working with partners across sectors and disciplines, mainstreaming of children's issues into all areas of public policy-making delivers better traction. Examples include (1) UNICEF working strategically across all these partners to advocate for the Office of the Rights of the Child to be re-established in the Presidency, (2) DSD and other partners endorsing the model of linking cash assistance with care and protection services (cash-care), (3) growing support for regular poverty measurements by Statistics South Africa and sector departments and (4) continued independent budget advocacy work with a range of civil society actors that advocate for children and a wider cross-section of affected stakeholders.

UNICEF South Africa has been instrumental in driving an agenda around the centrality of child rights and advocating for a centralized and coordinated child rights structure. UNICEF provided a facilitative role, exposed key child rights advocates to international best practice around child rights programming and worked closely with DSD on supporting the voices of children through the Children's Parliament. UNICEF provided technical assistance to DSD in the development of a new National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC), which will be finalized and approved in 2020. NPAC will present an opportunity to consolidate the quest to develop centralized coordinating structures, which will ensure that children's issues receive the highest technical and political support.

The cash-care agenda continues to enjoy a high level of priority within and outside of the government. To increase the overall impact of social grants for children, UNICEF actively supported DSD to develop a policy that integrates beneficiaries of cash transfers with a range of complementary services. UNICEF contributed its (1) M&E expertise by facilitating the workshop on the Theory of Change and (2) conceptual expertise by visualizing the model of the extensive cash and care linkages.

The completion of the technical phase of developing a Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analyses (MODA) tool means that (1) children's poverty will now be regarded as multi-dimensional, (2) the National Treasury will have considered a shorter time-period to do poverty and inequality surveys and (3) child-sensitive issues will be foregrounded in the release of MODA reports every three years. Statistics South Africa made the entire Poverty and Inequality Directorate available in undertaking MODA. By incorporating MODA into the government reports, a further administrative contribution will be made to realizing the socio-economic rights of children.

National Parliament continues to play a facilitative role in enabling UNICEF to influence broader public finance policy and outcomes; UNICEF recommendation to the Appropriations Committee in the national Parliament was accepted. The recommendation addressed the growing spending arrears problem in provincial social sector departments and required the National Treasury to devise a plan to trim and eventually eliminate the arrears. If this recommendation is delivered, it will bring greater predictability and stability for programmes that serve children. This kind of policy action remains a vital avenue for UNICEF, especially in view of the size of social policy funding in South Africa as an upper middle-income country. UNICEF will continue its effort and focus on keeping the social sector spending agenda high on national and provincial policy-makers' priorities.

(5) Enablers

All these achievements would have been impossible, if UNICEF South Africa did not have strong operational support. An operational functional review conducted in 2019 led to more effective use of staff time that has yielded better results, as more efficient ways and processes were adopted since then. Streamlined SOPs were introduced, and these have also aided in more effective processes. The various trainings held allowed staff to feel empowered to navigate difficult conversations and to speak up, and this has resulted in more participatory staff meetings and improved morale. Private sector partnership was also instrumental in advancing child rights. UNICEF has continued to engage with corporates through the CEO Network, a gathering of business leaders and Corporate Social Investment managers from 15 South African companies. The group has proven an effective platform to leverage influence on business for children. The office has secured commitment from 11 companies, through the CEO Network, to participate in the global survey on Family Friendly Workplace Policies and a follow-up deep-dive analysis for South Africa. Regular engagements with media by Programme Leads to provide independent, factual and child rights focused interviews also contributed to raising the profile of UNICEF in a robust, and sometimes complex, media environment.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

Given the outcome-level changes driven by the output-level achievements, the theory of change underpinning UNICEF South Africa's country programme still seems highly relevant. Nevertheless, to carry the theory of change forward more effectively and efficiently, UNICEF needs to further build on the useful lessons that were learned or re-confirmed: the importance of (1) securing the highest political commitment; (2) aligning behind the government priorities and (3) considering government's capacity and timeline for policy making.

UNICEF South Africa once again realized that the commitment and buy-in at the highest political level is instrumental for UNICEF to address the bottlenecks in moving children's agenda forward. One of the main reasons for UNICEF South Africa's great progress in ECD and GBV is the fact that those were Presidential priorities. The leadership provided by the Office of the Deputy President and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in the implementation of the multi-sectoral NFSNP has helped re-position the issue of nutrition as a national priority. There is now heightened interest in nutrition, right from Parliament to Cabinet, which will provide a more enabling environment for nutrition for children.

What is also re-confirmed is the effectiveness of influencing the government's priority-setting processes by either providing expertise or playing a convening role as a trusted partner. With a clear vision on what working solutions are available to prevent VAC, UNICEF developed an investment case, detailing how much is needed and how much can be expected as return on investment (ROI) and used it for high-level advocacy for ending VAC. A clear sense of feasibility and ROI expressed in the investment case has inspired the government and multiple partners, and they are adopting those solutions. In addition, UNICEF's convening role in bringing together internal DBE stakeholders and external partners for ECD was critical in focusing technical and financial resources on common priorities, thereby broadening the reach and quality of evidence-informed interventions for ECD.

What UNICEF South Africa further learned is that there needs to be a full awareness of (1) government's own policy development calendar and (2) the capacity of departments with whom UNICEF engages to deliver results for children. UNICEF's attempt to complete the development of National Plan of Action for Children in 2019 did not materialize, because the indicators and targets for the plan could not be determined, due to the delay in the finalization of the government's medium-term strategic framework, from which those indicators and targets were to be drawn. UNICEF should have considered government's own calendar before making its own plan. Furthermore, considering the technical complexity of the budget analysis, UNICEF South Africa packaged its recommendations on the budget in an accessible and easy-to-understand format. This led to Parliament readily utilizing such recommendations and adopting them for its own reporting, which attests to the importance of considering the capacity of the partners.

Furthermore, to further operationalize the theory of change, UNICEF South Africa deployed both technology-driven and non-technology driven innovations. One of the most powerful innovations was involving children in UNICEF programming

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and advocacy, not merely as a beneficiary but also as a co-creator. UNICEF partnered with DSD and civil society organizations in institutionalizing child participation through the child protection week, where 3,500 children discussed issues affecting them with duty-bearers, building on the Children's Manifesto. The children also had a chance to dialogue with Parliamentary chairs of Budget Portfolio Committees during the event for the 30th anniversary of adoption of the UN Convention of the Rights of Child, CRC@30. UNICEF also heard the voice of youth through U-Report in the development process of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and UNICEF Country Programme Document, to ensure that the voice of youth was adequately addressed by UN and UNICEF in South Africa.

In addition to U-Report for youth engagement and participation, UNICEF South Africa deployed the mobile technologies for different thematic areas – MomConnect for Health; ECDmobi for Education; and Child Well-being Tracking Tool for Child Protection (still being developed)– to improve the programme effectiveness and efficiency. To better manage the Technology for Development (T4D) projects, UNICEF South Africa developed the T4D Index, a matrix for strategic alignment and prioritization T4D projects. The Index is now used for initial assessment of the strategic value of a new T4D Project and for the continuous assessment/ determination of the value and "fit for purpose" for T4D projects undertaken by UNICEF South Africa. This index has raised interest both regionally and globally and was showcased in a number of events, including workshops and webinar.

Notwithstanding the achievements, there were challenges as well. A shrinking economy, a growing budget deficit and fiscal prioritization made a few social sectors for children a victim of political prioritization. When coupled with uneven capacity of government and implementing partners, it may significantly militate against the realization of results. Additionally, while lack of quality data is a known impediment to effective programming, some sub-sectors or thematic areas fare much worse. For example, although there is an increase in reporting of SRGBV incidences owing to improved knowledge and attitudes, quality of data collection at the school level remains challenging. In most schools, the reporting system is still paper-based, and thereby some of the data get lost in the system. Finally, there remain significant implementation gaps between progressive policies and actual investments and execution in social sectors.

In 2020, UNICEF South Africa will continue to chart a path of working at national-, provincial- and local-level to address these challenges and advance the child rights and well-being in South Africa. Particularly, the year 2020 will mark the first year of the new country programme for the next five year, which will focus on (1) child health and well-being; (2) early childhood, primary and secondary age education; (3) adolescent development and participation; (4) social and child protection; and (5) social policy and child rights. The new Country Programme will be fully aligned with the government's Medium-Term Strategic Framework for the National Development Plan 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which will provide an opportunity to UNICEF to address deep-rooted and emerging challenges. In so doing, UNICEF South Africa will consolidate and leverage the partnerships and platforms built to date to strategically bring child rights and well-being to the center of national policy agenda.