Around the world, UNICEF is substantively engaging in upstream policy decisions to achieve results for children, particularly the most disadvantaged. Within the broad arena of social policy, the organization has focused its work on core elements necessary to breaking the inter-generational poverty cycle and strengthening social welfare systems for children. These include addressing child poverty, inequalities, migration, public finance, social services and social protection. Judicious social policies are critical to address global threats resulting from the economic slowdown, political instability, population trends, urbanization and climate change, among other pressing issues. Although the full impact of social policy work is often realized years after it is begun, investments in these areas will be the foundation of progress towards the MDGs, the post 2015 agenda and social transformation to realize children’s rights.

*Policy Matters*, a report by UNICEF’s Division of Policy and Practice, creates a platform to highlight new thinking on policy issues and showcase the results of UNICEF’s work in this area across the developing world. This second edition brings together nine cases that are illustrative of the wide-ranging impact of UNICEF’s child-focused social and economic policy work. *Insights*, a new feature introduced in this edition, includes articles by Sir Richard Jolly ‘Bringing Children into Development Strategies’ and by Roberto Benes and Enrique Delamonica ‘Refocusing on Equity for Children in Middle Income Countries’.

The first edition of *Policy Matters* is available at [www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/index_60100.html](http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/index_60100.html)
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Insights
Policies matter for children because they shape the environment in which children and their families live, work and play, and their well-being. Social and economic policies affect livelihoods, as well as the social and material situations of individuals and households. As a result, policies directly affect the situation of children.

UNICEF has a long history of engagement with helping governments design social and economic policy that supports children’s rights. As early as 1947, the organization sought the assistance of development economists in mapping out the importance of economic policy for children. By the late 1950s, UNICEF was convinced that children would never receive the priorities they deserved unless measures to meet their basic needs were fully integrated into national economic planning. This understanding paved the way for UNICEF’s transition from being a humanitarian welfare agency to development agency for children.

Over the years, several Nobel Prize winners in economics, including Jan Tinbergen, Amartya Sen and Joe Stiglitz, and many other notable economists have contributed ideas and advice to the organization. These ideas have highlighted several ways in which children can be brought into development strategies in three distinct ways: responding to their needs in crisis; incorporating a child rights perspective into national development strategies; and creating an enabling policy environment for programmatic work to help children survive, receive quality education, be protected from violence, abuse and exploitation, and participate fully in community and society.

Responding to children in the face of crisis

In the 1980s, it was clear that debt, recession and structural adjustments had the most serious and severe repercussions for the children of the developing world. This prompted the focus of UNICEF’s engagement with economic policy to shift from a long-term focus to short-term timeframe, and from development to protection.

It also led the organization to advocate for changes in policy to respond to the immediate and urgent needs of children. An agenda of specific actions – Adjustment with a Human Face – was developed in 1987. This landmark study prompted a global debate on how to protect children and women from the malign effects of the economic adjustments and reforms taken to reduce national debt in poor countries. By showing working models to improve the lives of people in the nations undergoing structural adjustments, the study was able to encourage the Bretton Woods institutions to pay more attention to poverty and human concerns in the formulation of adjustment policies.

Soon UNICEF broadened its engagement from adjustment with a human face to development with a human face. This was because the challenge was not just to provide short-term protection to offset the setbacks of structural adjustment but also to enable countries to return to a positive path of development in which concerns for children were fully incorporated into strategies for national social and economic progress. For UNICEF’s country programmes, this meant a strong focus on child survival and development, through priority actions in health, education and the provision of safe water and basic sanitation.

Broadening the development strategy

The pioneering work of the 1980s and 1990s to place children at the centre of economic policy broadened UNICEF’s development strategy in a way that is still important today. Several key innovations in policy were achieved. First, UNICEF developed the concept of First Call for Children, which stated that in bad times as in good, countries should ensure that children’s priority needs have a first call on resources – a principle accepted by most families for their own children but still only rarely recognized in national economic policy.

Second, given the desperate squeeze on resources faced by most countries in times of the crisis, the 20/20 approach was developed during the World Summit for Children in 1990. The 20/20 approach recognized that additional resources needed for children could be found by restructuring existing spending rather than from new resources. Following this approach, the additional resources needed to ensure basic services for all – primary health care, primary education, reproductive health and family planning
and the provision of safe water and sanitation – could be made available if each country allocated 20 per cent of its national public expenditure to these basics and each donor country, in parallel, allocated 20 per cent of its aid budget to the same priorities. In the 1990s, about 30 developing countries demonstrated their practical willingness to follow this approach, but the partnerships with donors and the donor commitments required for the package never came operationally together.

Third, UNDP’s 1996 Human Development Report demonstrated that it was possible to sustain and even to advance human development in situations of stagnant or declining economic growth. But it also pointed out unless economic growth could be resumed within a decade or so, the advance in human development would begin to slow or even fall back. This is an important point to emphasize, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and some other least developed countries, where conventional remedies for restoring growth have failed for two and sometimes three decades.

Creating an enabling policy environment for equitable outcomes for children

History shows that economic policy frameworks that focus on growth but not on equity and redistribution can result in widening disparities among subnational populations. This, in turn, can adversely affect long-term growth. Moreover, austere structural adjustments risk disrupting essential social services, which could have largely irreversible adverse repercussions on children’s survival and development. This focus on equity is more pertinent today, as nearly 70 countries reduced spending by nearly three percentage points of GDP during 2010, and 91 are planning cuts in 2012. Moreover, nearly a quarter of developing countries are currently undergoing fiscal contraction, defined as slashing public spending to below pre-crisis levels.

If history is any guide, these planned austerity measures risk removing essential support to the most vulnerable at a time when their need for public assistance is urgent and great, further exacerbating existing inequalities. It is thus critical for UNICEF and its partners to engage in international policy advocacy to highlight these risks and show the possibilities for policies that are inclusive and equitable.

Again, history may shed some light on how UNICEF can effectively engage in advocacy for equity in these key areas. First, the many links between children and development are deserving of more attention from economists, with concern for issues that go far beyond investment in human capital or social welfare. Second, although the MDGs are important international development priorities, concern for children even today must be set in a broader frame to reduce inequality and ensure fulfillment of children’s rights. UNICEF’s country programme approach provides a mechanism for exploring country-by-country what this should involve. And finally, human development provides a better frame for this analysis than orthodox development economics or neo-classical theory. Strengthening human capabilities in the first decade of life as a step towards broadening choices is essential for this analysis. Formulating policies that matter, for children as well as for societies and economies, is imperative for realizing children’s rights.

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This essay is adapted from UNICEF, Economists and Economic Policy: Bringing Children into Development Strategies, Sir Richard Jolly’s contribution to UNICEF’s Social and Economic Policy Working Briefs series. This Working Brief is available at www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/index_60140.html
Refocusing on equity for children in middle income countries

Roberto Benes and Enrique Delamonica

Middle income countries (MICs) represent one of the most challenging contexts to achieve equity for children. Income and social inequities in MICs are greater than in low- or high-income nations. Tackling inequities in MICs, which are home to almost 70 per cent of the world’s poor, necessarily implies addressing some conceptual, operational and political challenges.

MICs are often associated with emerging economies with rapid and sustained economic growth. Strong growth, however, does not imply that all children in the country are faring well. Take Algeria, for example, an upper-middle income country where 2.2 per cent of the children aged 7 to 17 years have never been educated.1 The incidence is higher among children in the poorest quintile who are 14.2 times more likely to be deprived of education than children in the wealthiest quintile. Or Peru, where an under-five child from the poorest quintile is thirteen times more likely to be underweight than a child from the richest quintile.2

Another challenge originates from the width of this category. GNI per capita among the 110 MICs, ranges from USD 1,005 to USD 12,270 (in 2010),3 making this a very heterogeneous group of countries in which children face very different circumstances depending on a number of factors: household income; geographic location; sex; ethnicity; and disability, among others. There are disparities hidden not only within but also among the countries. For instance, both Morocco and Lebanon are MICs, yet their under-five mortality rates are respectively 38 and 12 deaths per thousand live births.4 Similarly, Bolivia’s under-five mortality rate stands at 51 per thousand live births while it is as low as 9 per thousand live births in Chile.5

This is not surprising, as the MICs is an arbitrary classification for internal World Bank purposes related to the World Bank’s ‘Civil Works Preference’ (i.e. the cut-off at which the World Bank demands international competition in procurement for projects it assists). Utilizing MICs as a category can lead to an over-simplification of development challenges that can mask challenges experienced by children that are only revealed when national aggregates are unpacked.

For UNICEF, equity means that all children have an opportunity to survive, develop, and reach their full potential, without discrimination, bias, or favouritism. This interpretation is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which guarantees all rights of every child, regardless of gender, race, religious beliefs, income, physical attributes, geographical location, or other status. Consequently, one of the greatest added values of UNICEF’s presence in MICs is to engage in a disparities-reduction strategy that promotes equity with a human rights-based approach, and seeks to guarantee that all children will have equal access to the services that allow them to develop to their full capacity. This strategy does not operate in a vacuum and must take into account relevant factors that, over the years, have become bottlenecks in the reduction of disparities. In particular, it should be recognized that disparity reduction does not require a quick, technical fix but political mobilization and tackling distributional conflict.

Our equity approach in social policy in MICs must be built on a very reliable base of disaggregated information, which brings to the surface the reality of children at the subnational level. In operational terms, its approach to policy and programming should be flexible, and adapted to the country context and its situation analysis. Many MICs, however, present a similar profile with clustered marginalization, particularly along geographical lines. In many instances, national governments have both resources and capacity to ensure adequate service delivery for children, but are not utilizing these as effectively as they could. UNICEF’s comparative advantage in achieving equity for children lies in influencing national policies and budgets and building strategic partnerships while leveraging national resources and capacity. Equitable outcomes can therefore be achieved by promoting policy options, supported by technical capacity and solid evidence.

Our core business in all MICs should include a set of minimum and common functions to sharpen the equity focus of our programmes. This implies that country programmes should support governments and civil society in collecting and analyzing data.

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1 UNICEF MENARO, Algeria Equity Profile, author’s elaboration based on MICS3, 2006
3 The World Bank, World Development Report 2010: Development and Climate Change
5 Ibid
and information on the situation of children. Country programmes should review national plans on development and budget allocations for children’s issues; support governments to present a report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and to follow their recommendations; and promote good practices and international standards in the context of children and policies.

Collecting and analyzing disaggregated data is not a solution by itself. Involving a committed society in the reduction of disparities entails a strong advocacy agenda to raise awareness that inequities are an impediment to progress. Today, we have sufficient evidence to demonstrate how inequities accelerate social tension and undermine social cohesion. The combination of non-redistributive growth models, together with weak governance systems and corruption, fuelled by underlying and persisting inequities, have shown dramatic outcomes during the Arab Spring.

At the same time, it is essential to convey that there are several ways to address inequities. UNICEF must provide (in different ways for different audiences) the elements for this solution. In other words, the organization should provide advice and advocacy on pro-equity policies that reduce disparities in areas such as economic policy, access to services and legal and cultural issues.

Effective policy to reduce disparities includes a broad set of redistributive approaches, including full employment strategies and appropriate wages to support a minimum standard of living as well as incentives to increase formal jobs. This also allows workers and their children to benefit from employment-based social programmes. A sound fiscal policy that ensures an appropriate redistribution through progressive taxation, investment in basic social services, and social protection schemes is also vital. Social protection is an essential area of pro-equity engagement in MICs, with a particular focus on advising governments of effective approaches to reach the most disadvantaged families and children, including removing financial barriers to access to services and support to monitoring and evaluation.

An essential component of this disparities-reduction strategy is to guarantee that all children have access to social services. In this regard, it is necessary to assess the level, efficiency and distribution of public spending in basic social services. The goal is to achieve universality so that all children can benefit from these services regardless of their socio-economic condition, physical attributes, gender, geographic location, ethnic origin or religious beliefs. Universality of basic social services is a step in the right direction. However, these should be further enhanced through implementation of social protection instruments, such as cash transfers, health insurance, school meal programmes among others. Additional measures include birth registration campaigns and care systems for children who have been left behind by migrant parents.

Social, legal and cultural issues (such as discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, disabilities, both legally sanctioned and traditional) often perpetuate disparities. Countries should work to reduce biases and discriminatory behaviour, attitudes, and practices among their population as in many MICs economic progress is not matched by progressive change in social norms. A major way to bring about this change is through anti-discriminatory/segregationist or affirmative action-type laws.

Finally, finding new and different ways of fulfilling children’s rights in MICs will be critical to the achievement of the MDGs and the post 2015 agenda. While UNICEF must work to eliminate deprivations faced by the poorest children, whether they live in high, middle, or low-income countries, its approach will depend on the country’s context, its capacity and resources.

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Country Experiences
Bangladesh
Cash transfers encourage family care solutions for vulnerable children
Context
Poverty has a profound impact on the lives of Bangladesh’s 26 million children who live below the national poverty line. Economic realities and social norms mean that child labour and early marriage are widely accepted and common in Bangladesh, making children extremely susceptible to violence, abuse and exploitation. Moreover, the natural disasters that Bangladesh experiences almost every year leave millions of people dead or displaced. In such circumstances, weakened family structures can cause a breakdown in traditional caring arrangements, leaving already marginalized children more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Approach
UNICEF is strengthening national child protection systems in Bangladesh along with supporting change in social norms towards children. In 2008, to address concerns regarding the welfare of orphan and vulnerable children (OVCs) in the wake of Cyclone Sidr, UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW) launched a conditional cash transfer project for OVCs. The pilot supports the Government to reform the current system, which is centred on institutional care, and place a new emphasis on family and community-based solutions and proactive social work.

The project further uses cash transfers as an instrument to modify household behaviour around social norms concerning children and childhood. The pilot provided a monthly cash transfer of USD 20 to nearly 2100 OVCs affected by the Cyclone for an average of two years on the provision that the child must regularly attend school, have access to other basic services (health care in particular), and not be subjected to early marriage or be engaged in child labour. Participatory tools such as community mapping were also used along with parent gatherings to educate caregivers on child development and child rights issues. These efforts also serve to change social norms towards children and childhood.

Results
By providing economic resilience and regular case management to foster families and OVCs, the pilot has successfully demonstrated the effectiveness of cash transfers in eliminating child labour and lowering the incidence of early marriages in the project area. As the project helped the households to acquire productive assets, about 48 per cent of them graduated out of extreme poverty within 18 months of cash transfer support, while 96 per cent of the households moved out of extreme poverty within an average of 24 months. The innovation in the project involves matching the cash transfer amount to the cost per month per child in an institution, thereby demonstrating the affordability and cost effectiveness of the scheme. The pilot has been further replicated in urban slums and in other disaster prone areas. The evidence generated by the pilot has supported advocacy around de-institutionalization in Bangladesh. These efforts are visible in the Government’s National Child Policy 2010, followed by a new Children Act (yet to be enacted), which endorses family support services and social protection for OVCs.

Lesson Learned and Next Steps
To ensure smooth scaling up of the project, the implementation guidelines developed for the pilot are under revision to serve as a common framework for all child-sensitive social protection initiatives. These projects continue to provide evidence supporting the benefits of increased social protection to OVCs and their families. It further demonstrates that by extending practical, cost-effective incentives, it is possible to modify social norms concerning children in an incremental way.

Challenge
While the prevailing approach for protection of orphan and vulnerable children (OVCs) in Bangladesh has been the provision of institutional care, this is rarely a desirable arrangement. Direct family support services are very limited, however, and alternative family-based care programmes for OVCs are generally lacking. In addition, vulnerable children in extended family care may also be prone to higher risks of violence and abuse, as a result of increased household poverty and food insecurity of foster families following a disaster.

Policy Matters
Benin
Marginal Budgeting for Bottlenecks analysis leads to improved health budgets and plans in favour of vulnerable children
**Context**

In recent years, Benin has made significant progress in improving children’s health and nutrition status. There has been a significant reduction in under-five mortality rate from 160 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2001 to 125 per 1,000 in 2006. During the same period, infant mortality dropped from 89 deaths for every 1,000 live births to 67 per 1,000. But these rates still remain among the highest in the world.

**Challenge**

Given these recent successes, Benin is considered among the few African countries that can make significant progress towards achievement of several health-related MDGs. A major challenge to further gains will be the development of instruments, tools and methods that can overcome the remaining bottlenecks to the coverage of essential services and protection.

**Approach**

UNICEF proposed that the Government of Benin adopt Marginal Budgeting for Bottlenecks (MBB) analysis as a powerful tool for analyzing bottlenecks in the health sector. MBB is an analytical costing and budgeting tool developed by UNICEF, the World Bank and WHO. By estimating the marginal/incremental resources required for overcoming bottlenecks in the health sector, and relating these resources to the country’s macro-economic framework, the tool particularly helps in the achievement of MDG 4 on child mortality. A particular strength of the tool is that it helps simulate the potential impact as well as cost and budget implications of alternative health service delivery strategies.

UNICEF strengthened the capacity of key Government officials on the use of the tool in the budget planning process. In 2007, the first MBB analysis for Benin was designed and subsequently reviewed during various technical gatherings among the Government and donors. Mobilizing the Ministry of Health led to the Government committing itself to become a member of the International Health Partnership and Related Initiatives (IHP+). The IHP+ brings together donor countries and other development partners around a single country-led national health strategy. This was a critical milestone in institutionalizing MBB analysis as a key part of the budget planning process in the Ministry of Health.

**Results**

In 2010, the Ministry of Health adopted the MBB analysis to develop a Health Triennial Development Plan (HTDP) 2010–2012 which simulated three investment scenarios to reduce child mortality. Currently, six health districts covering 15 deprived municipalities are using the MBB analysis to detail their development plans. This is expected to benefit more than 300,000 under five children in these municipalities.

**Lessons Learned and Next Steps**

The actual budgetary allocations have not been in line with the projected resources by MBB analysis. Low budget implementation rate by the Ministry of Health and limited financial resources due to the global economic crisis are some of the reasons for this discrepancy. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance use different tools to develop their Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, and consequently arrive at divergent budgetary projections. It is therefore critical for UNICEF to strategically engage other line ministries such as the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Development to adopt MBB analysis as well. In the coming years, UNICEF will focus on scaling up the use of MBB analysis as a planning tool in all the municipalities, including working closely with the National Institute of Statistics to produce disaggregated data at the local level. In 2012, UNICEF plans to introduce MBB analysis in the education sector.

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6 Demographic Health Survey 2006
Brazil
Shaping public policies to promote literacy among impoverished children
Context
Among the 13 million children that live in Brazil's impoverished semi-arid region, about 8 million children live in poverty. Literacy, infant mortality and water coverage in this region is well below the national average. For instance, in 2009, about 24 per cent of ten-year olds in the semi-arid region who were completing their fifth year of primary school were still unable to read, write or understand simple text appropriate to their age. This figure was almost double the national average of about 13 per cent.7

Challenge
Achieving children’s literacy in the initial three years of primary school is a main challenge for the poorest municipalities of the semi-arid region where communities suffer from high illiteracy levels due to poor quality schooling, lack of trained teachers, and limited adequate basic infrastructure and services.

Approach
In 2004, an assessment was undertaken in the semi-arid state of Ceará to diagnose the level of children’s literacy. This assessment involving 205 municipalities provided information on the status of reading and writing comprehension of 150,000 students. This helped municipalities to identify the children, teachers and schools that were most in need of support. Following the assessment, Literacy at the Right Age programme was developed and coordinated by UNICEF, the Legislative Assembly and Government of Ceará in 49 municipalities, with the purpose of ensuring children’s literacy in the initial three years of elementary school. The programme helps municipal professionals develop monitoring systems in schools to ensure adequate teaching hours, planned classes, continuous training of teachers and individual assessment and analysis of each child’s level of literacy.

Building on lessons learned from the Ceará experience, in 2008, UNICEF rolled-out the Palavra de Criança (Word of Children) initiative in 25 municipalities of the state of Piauí. This initiative was designed as a second phase of the Literacy at the Right Age programme. Elements of the previous programme were built upon by ensuring engagement of families, continuous capacity development of teachers and improved coordination at the municipal level. This made the literacy programme more sustainable and appropriate to the needs of the municipalities. The programme is also linked to the UNICEF Seal initiative that awards municipalities in the semi-arid region with the Seal of Approved Municipality, if it meets certain goals related to increasing the quality of life for children.

Results
In 2007, the State of Ceará adopted the Literacy at the Right Age programme as a public policy. This led to a drop in illiteracy by 56 per cent among eight year olds in Ceará from 2006 to 2009. The regional disparity between the State and the national average dropped from nearly 28 to 6 percentage points. In 2011, the State of Piauí adopted Palavra de Criança as a public policy, with a budgetary allocation of nearly USD 906,000 (R$ 1.6 million). This will support the expansion of the initiative to include 150 of the 226 municipalities in the State benefiting nearly 130,000 children. Further, the Federal Brazilian government has announced that a national literacy programme for children on the lines of UNICEF’s literacy initiatives in the semi-arid region will be implemented in 2013.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps
This experience highlights the value of building initiatives on the ground to create an enabling policy environment that is based on collaboration and synergy between state and municipal governments. Such efforts result in municipal ownership and their capacity to provide quality primary education. The focus is now on scaling up the Palavra de Criança initiative in all parts of the semi-arid region, linked to the national implementation of the public policy on literacy at the right age in 2013.

7 IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) 2009
East Asia and the Pacific
UNICEF and ADB join hands to advance child rights
Context
The East Asia and Pacific region encompasses one-third of the world’s population or around 2 billion people. It also contains over one-quarter of the world’s children, around 580 million children, many of whom have limited access to education, health, water and sanitation. While Governments are obligated to provide these services to all, public spending on services too often does not reach poor people, who suffer from high rates of child mortality, and low rates of school attendance, relative to wealthier segments of society.

Challenge
In this scenario, non-state providers (NSPs) such as NGOs, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and both formal and informal private enterprises have assumed a critical role in providing access to key services to the poorest households. While NSPs involvement in the delivery of social services can improve efficiencies and service coverage, the process of contracting NSPs can be challenging. This is because their involvement is often informal and falls beyond the purview of government regulation, leaving communities vulnerable to poor quality services, inconsistent supply and high consumption prices.

Approach
Recognizing the need to broaden knowledge and understanding of NSPs and the role they can play, UNICEF’s East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) held a joint workshop in 2010. The workshop set the stage for UNICEF’s more elaborate engagement with the ADB on engaging NSPs, and developing Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in the delivery of basic services. UNICEF and ADB’s collaboration was formalized in 2010 through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that ensures joint technical assistance, programmes and projects in selected sectors and countries in Asia and the Pacific. This has further strengthened UNICEF’s substantive engagement with the ADB at the country level, particularly in the education sector.

Results
Across the region, UNICEF and ADB are individually engaged in various governmental working groups or technical bodies. The MoU provides a pretext for stronger collaboration around common goals, and in many cases, better alignment in providing policy advice to Governments. For instance, over the past two years, ADB has supported the Government of Lao PDR towards developing a new five year secondary education plan. UNICEF provides support to the Ministry of Education to implement child-friendly holistic approaches to schools at the primary and secondary level. Following the MoU, ADB has consulted with UNICEF to provide harmonized support for secondary education in Lao PDR. This regular dialogue has also created space for UNICEF’s involvement in other areas of ADB’s work such as in social protection and climate change.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps
This collaboration has allowed UNICEF to build and strengthen technical cooperation with ADB, governments and other development partners in areas where UNICEF does not traditionally engage (such as finance). In the coming years, at the regional and country level, cooperation among the two agencies will be strengthened in areas of statistical analyses, MDG monitoring, expanding child-friendly investments and strengthening social protection.
Kyrgyz Republic
Removing barriers to access cash transfers for vulnerable families with children
Approach

In 2008, UNICEF undertook an analysis of the effectiveness of the cash transfer programme to reduce child poverty and proposed certain changes to its design. The findings were presented to policymakers and the national parliament to generate political buy-in. This sparked the beginning of a policy dialogue and reform process around the cash transfer programme. A pilot project supported by UNICEF and the EU tested new selection criteria and procedures aimed at improving coverage and size of the benefit which would reduce extreme child poverty. To ensure that the reforms were owned by the Government, UNICEF advocated for the key features of the pilot to be endorsed in a legal code. Further, institutional reforms were undertaken to strengthen the position of Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, which had been earlier downgraded to the level of an agency with limited authority. To ensure that the social protection system reached out to the most vulnerable children, in 2011, a complementary project was developed to address bottlenecks in access to benefits and services at the local level in the most deprived regions.

Results

The Law on State Social Benefits which endorses the key features of the UNICEF-EU pilot project was adopted in 2009. With UNICEF’s support, regulations, implementation guidelines and training packages have been developed to enforce the new law. As a result of the reforms, an additional 20,000 vulnerable children received cash transfers nationwide following one year of the implementation of the law. Following the institutional reforms, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has been reinstated with additional responsibilities to strengthen child protection and child care services. In 2011, the Ministry with support from UNICEF, EU and the World Bank, developed its first National Strategy on Social Protection Development (2012-2014), with an explicit focus on vulnerable children.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

This experience demonstrates the interaction of multiple determinants to overcome bottlenecks and barriers for equitable outcomes for children. By integrating demand and supply interventions at the subnational level with an enabling policy and legal environment, UNICEF has paved the way towards lasting impact on vulnerable children in the country. In the next phase, UNICEF will continue to monitor the provision of existing cash transfers and their impact, and support the institutional reform of the social protection system with tailored capacity building activities to ensure the equitable inclusion of vulnerable and poor children and their families.

Context

Child poverty has been high and is still on the rise in the Kyrgyz Republic. In 2010, more than 900,000 Kyrgyz children were living in poverty, with about 14 per cent of children under-five suffering from chronic poor nutrition and stunting.

Challenge

The only national programme specifically targeting poor families with children is the monthly cash transfer scheme. However, the design, coverage and the level of cash transfer limits its impact on poverty reduction. Much of the debate around cash transfers in the Kyrgyz Republic has focused on targeting efficiency: i.e. how many of the current beneficiaries belong to the poorest groups of the income distribution? Far less attention has been given to how many poor households receive their benefits to which they are entitled, or whether cash transfers are effective in reducing child poverty.

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8 Kyrgyz Integrated Household Survey, National Statistical Committee 2010
9 Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities, National Report Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF, Institute of Strategic Analysis and Evaluation under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2009
Mali
Scaling up social protection in response to the economic crisis
The global economic crisis and the sharp rise in food prices from 2006 to 2009 have threatened food and nutritional security of many households both in urban and rural areas in Mali. The combined effect of these crises has resulted in an increase of food poverty by 10 per cent, a near 9 per cent rise in malnutrition and a 1 per cent fall in school attendance.

Challenge
While Mali has taken important steps to safeguard vulnerable populations in recent years, it has fallen short of providing critical social protection for nearly half of its population entrenched in poverty. The national social protection sector covers less than 15 per cent of the entire population of Mali. Limited fiscal space, along with lack of political clout and technical capacity of the Ministry of Social Development, Solidarity and the Elderly (MSD), the lead agency for social protection, exaggerates the issue.

Approach
UNICEF conducted four joint studies with the Ministry of Social Development, focusing on child poverty and disparities; social protection of children; income and cash transfers; and the impact of high food prices in Mali. Building on the results of the study, the Ministry and UNICEF jointly organized a high profile national forum on child poverty and social protection in 2009. The final declaration adopted by the forum included a number of recommendations, including the development of a new five-year National Action Plan for the Extension of Social Protection; strengthening the existing health insurance programmes; and the launch of a national cash transfer programme for poor families with children. Following the forum, UNICEF was invited to join the inter-sectoral working group set up by the Government to prepare the new national action plan.

Results
In August 2011, the five-year National Action Plan for the Extension of Social Protection was adopted for 2011-2015. The action plan involves four strategic interventions: extension of the formal contributory approach (such as the social security system); development of a non-contributory approach for the poor (such as social safety nets and cash transfers); development of micro-insurance institutions; and reinforcement of the institutional capacity on social protection. These interventions are expected to decrease child poverty from 45 per cent to 25 per cent and overall extreme poverty from 16 per cent to 4 per cent between 2006 and 2015. Three-quarters of the total funding of the action plan will be directed towards eliminating inequities by financing social safety nets and cash transfers. The adoption of the action plan has also triggered support for social protection for the poorest, particularly from the World Bank, EU and SIDA.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps
By speaking in one voice with other partners such as the World Bank, UNICEF was able to convince the Government to invest in mechanisms that cover the poorest populations. A critical strategy here was to use evidence and other advocacy tools such as training and information sharing to prove that social protection, particularly cash transfers, can have an immense impact on the entire economy in terms of poverty reduction, political stability and economic growth. In the next phase, UNICEF will focus on strengthening institutional capacity and resources for social protection. Advocacy will be undertaken with the relevant authorities to significantly increase funding from the state budget towards the new action plan.
Morocco
Child friendly municipal planning benefits more than 300,000 rural children
of interventions and implementation—lies at the heart of these reforms. Using this approach, a pilot project was launched to build capacities of five municipalities to develop Municipal Development Plans with a strong focus on children and women’s rights. Following the success of the pilot, the Children and Youth Friendly Municipalities (CAEJ) initiative was launched in five additional pilot sites, based on UNICEF’s Child Friendly Cities initiative. The CAEJ consolidates and sustains the gains made by child-focused local situation analysis and planning approach by strengthening child and adolescent participation in the municipal planning process.

Results
In 2009, the child-focused local situation analysis and planning approach was enshrined in the Communal Charter, the law regulating the powers and duties of municipalities. This has prompted the Ministry of Interior to scale up the project with UNICEF’s support from five to 106 municipalities in 2010-2011, benefitting more than 300,000 children. An additional 400 municipalities supported by other national and international agencies have also adopted this approach. The child-focused local situation analysis and planning approach brings together all social development projects, previously scattered among various ministries (water, electricity, rural development), into a cohesive plan for local development. It also provides for the first time genuine needs assessment of the population at the local level as well as a better approach for identification of bottlenecks in implementation of reforms and services launched at the national level. Further, it provides the Government with a concrete model for potential decentralization in Morocco.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps
The Moroccan experience highlights the value of UNICEF engaging at the sub-national level to ensure concrete implementation of the rights of children and women. Since the implementation of nationally issued policies takes place at the district/territorial level, it is critical that the lowest governance layer (such as municipalities in the case of Morocco) is supported to create an enabling environment. Given the global economic downturn and the lingering political tensions in the region following the 2011 Arab Spring, higher demands are being placed on the Government and local administrations. This experience demonstrates how a local planning process can guarantee more transparency, accountability and develop democratic approaches. In the next phase, UNICEF will focus on institutionalizing the gains made in this work, strengthening child participation and child protection, aligning sectoral strategies and analyzing budgets of the Municipal Development Plans.
Republic of Congo
UNICEF-IMF collaboration leads to increased government health spending for Congolese children
Context
The Republic of Congo is a lower-middle-income country, largely dependent on oil revenues. The high value of oil exports inflates national GDP in US dollar terms, leaving Congo with a relatively high per capita GDP (USD 3000 approximately) for the West and Central Africa region. This, in turns, understates the level of poverty and inequity within the country. Infrastructure and service delivery remains poor, and the constraints to human development and economic growth remain substantial. About 51 per cent of the Congolese population lives in poverty.11

Challenge
Having qualified for approximately USD 1.9 billion of debt relief under the IMF’s Highly Indebted Poor Country initiative, the Government of Congo has a marked opportunity to redirect revenues from debt repayment to human development. Until now infrastructure development was the key government priority however there is now an increasing awareness to diversify the economy and to strengthen the social sectors (health, education, social protection).

Approach
Given this new economic context, partnership with the IMF offers a unique opportunity to engage in discussions with the Government from both a macro and micro perspective. To this end, UNICEF collaborated with the IMF on elaborating Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks and annual budgets prepared by Ministries, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and the preparation of a Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) for the health sector. UNICEF participates in all IMF’s debriefing missions on budget support to the Government, as well as in discussions with the IMF and the Presidents’ Office on improving social expenditure (health, education, social affairs) and monitoring and evaluation. The IMF has supported UNICEF and WHO in gaining access to the Ministry of Finance, which in turn has supported successful advocacy on the removal of barriers to health spending for vaccination programmes. The cooperation with the World Bank is also being strengthened in this context particularly around the roll-out of the PETS in the health sector, and in the implementation of the newly adopted national social action policy.

Results
UNICEF’s collaboration with the IMF contributed to 66 per cent rise in the 2012 budget of the Ministry of Health. Specifically, the Government has released an additional USD 92,000 for routine vaccines and USD 240,000 for a measles campaign. The Ministry of Energy and Water have also received an increased budget for 2012, and have agreed to expand the national budget for water and sanitation activities.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps
UNICEF’s partnership with the IMF and World Bank is critical to increasing its direct access to the Ministry of Finance and influencing the budgetary process. This relationship also provides UNICEF additional strength when negotiating policy recommendations. In the next phase, the three agencies will work together on the implementation of the PETS. The World Bank and UNICEF will also provide long term support to the Government to develop capacities in the roll-out of the national social action policy.

11 ECOM Household Living Standards Survey 2005
Tanzania
Advocating for a comprehensive children’s code to strengthen child protection and social protection systems
Approach
In response, UNICEF developed a multi-tiered approach to developing national legislation. The first strand generated evidence to inform decision makers. The second promoted advocacy for legal reform and policy change. Finally, the third strengthened capacities and systems to respond to the needs of the most deprived and vulnerable children through well-selected programme interventions on the ground. With supporting data and evidence, UNICEF engaged with key ministers and Members of Parliament who then advocated for the passing of a comprehensive law in line with the provisions of the Convention. This law lays the foundation for a comprehensive child protection system in the country. In parallel, a pilot was modeled at the district level to develop capacities of multi-sectoral teams to respond to child protection issues. Further, in the absence of an overarching social protection policy, UNICEF secured a place in the discussions on the design of a national social safety net programme, supported by the World Bank and DFID.

Results
In 2009, UNICEF’s contributions culminated in the adoption of the Law of the Child, a landmark legislation that codified the fundamental rights of children in mainland Tanzania in a single, consolidated Act. After further advocacy, this Law was followed by the passing of the Children’s Act in Zanzibar in 2011. UNICEF is currently supporting the elaboration of rules and regulations around the two pieces of legislation. To simultaneously address economic vulnerabilities, UNICEF has been instrumental in ensuring that the new safety net programme has a strong focus on families with pregnant women and children. It has also successfully advocated for a basic, non-conditional transfer within the social safety net programme that will benefit all participating households regardless of their size or the existence of social services in the proximity of their residence.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps
This experience highlights the value of using evidence and analysis to create an enabling policy and legal environment that further strengthens systems and services for children on the ground. Building on this work, UNICEF is tracking government expenditures on child protection and costing the roll-out of a national child protection system. The office will further support the development of a National Social Protection Policy for Zanzibar. It is further exploring the possibility of linking public employment under the safety net programme with social service provision as a means of filling existing service and human resource gaps, which are particularly critical at district, ward and village levels.

Context
While Tanzania has made significant progress towards achieving global and national targets in health and education, large inequities leave nearly half of all Tanzanian children severely deprived. For example, half of all rural people eat only two meals per day, compared with 10 per cent in the capital, Dar es Salaam. The rate of skilled attendance at delivery among women in the poorest quintile is 33 per cent, compared with 90 per cent for women from the richest quintile.

Challenge
Despite being among the first countries in the world to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991, 20 years later Tanzania still lacked an overarching piece of national legislation to enact the international treaty. An array of often contradictory legal norms to legislate on children’s rights were in place, which taken as a whole did not afford adequate protection to Tanzanian children.

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12 Household Budget Survey 2007
13 Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey 2010
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