

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Executive Summary

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) in 2016 witnessed a new Government and National Assembly; the implementation of the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) 2016-2020; and the successful discharge of the country's duties as rotating chair of the Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). A United Nations (UN) Partnership Framework 2017-2021 was signed between the Government and the UN Country Team during the ASEAN summit in September 2016.

The year 2016 was remarkable for UNICEF Lao PDR as the current Country Programme 2012-2016 ended with significant achievements reviewed and documented in cooperation with the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), other ministries and partners.

The headline statements were achieving Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets on poverty reduction, universal access and gender parity in primary education, maternal mortality reduction, and access to water and sanitation. The Government also recognised UNICEF Lao PDR's role in reducing child mortality and stunting, strengthening legal and policy frameworks for child protection, evidence-informed policy and advocacy, and mass media penetration through youth radio, early childhood development (ECD) TV, social media and mobile technology.

Key achievements

Following extensive consultations, the Letter of Agreement for the new Country Programme Document (CPD) 2017-2021 was signed between the Government and UNICEF Lao PDR. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) also signed their CPDs together for the first time, demonstrating the UN delivering as one.

UNICEF Lao PDR provided technical and financial support to the National Commission for Mothers and Children (NCMC) to develop the 3rd to 6th State Party Report on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). UNICEF also advocated successfully to include key development partners such as the European Union (EU) and the Australian Government, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs) and children in the process, which was participatory and consultative.

With support from the EU and UNICEF Lao PDR, co-conveners of the Development Partners' Group on Nutrition, the 2016 National Nutrition Forum, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, and attended by high-level Ministers and Deputy Ministers from Health, Planning and Investment, Agriculture, and Education and Sports, issued an outcome statement for priority nutrition actions in 2017. With the country experiencing a significant reduction in the stunting of children under five years of age, from 44 per cent in 2011 to 35.6 per cent in 2016, this high-level representation ensured a continued, dedicated advocacy space for nutrition.

Together with the Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) and key ministries, UNICEF Lao PDR led efforts to conceptualise, plan and mobilise resources for the Lao Social Indicator Survey

(LSIS) II, a national household survey covering all 18 provinces. UNICEF Lao PDR mobilised the UN system and development partners to secure funding of US\$ 2.3 million, as well as technical support from the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

No polio cases have been reported in Lao PDR since January 2016. During 2016, six high-quality national supplementary immunisation activities (SIAs) were conducted targeting children under 15 years of age nationwide, and the entire population in 42 districts. Polio immunisation coverage in each round was more than 95 per cent.

A significant partnership between the EU and UNICEF Lao PDR was further strengthened by adapting and signing the Outcome Document of the EU-UNICEF Partnership Dialogue to collaborate on nutrition, education, evidence generation and data, and support to the CRC. The EU and UNICEF Lao PDR agreed to monitor progress every six months. The first joint review took place in September 2016.

UNICEF Lao PDR strengthened its partnership with the Lao Front for National Construction (LFNC) to reach ethnic communities in response to the polio outbreak and the emergency.

The human resource (HR) exercise for the new Country Programme was carried out through a consultative, participatory and transparent process, and was facilitated by an independent external consultant. An HR mitigation plan was developed and implemented, resulting in minimal impact on affected staff members.

As part of the Greening Project, UNICEF Lao PDR installed energy efficient lights, and joined other UN agencies in a pilot fleet management initiative. Despite some challenges in carpooling, good progress was reported as transport management improved.

The preliminary findings of the violence against children study were launched in June 2016. However, due to the Government's restructuring, the NCMC was merged with the National Commission for the Advancement of Women to form a new commission, which led to a delay in finalising the full report and multi-sectoral action plan. This will be carried out in early 2017.

Despite the success in interrupting the polio outbreak, diphtheria cases in one ethnic community warranted integrated outreach services, as proposed in the new UNICEF Lao PDR Country Programme.

Humanitarian Assistance

Lao PDR experienced three humanitarian situations in 2016: floods, a cold wave and an outbreak of the circulating vaccine derived polio virus.

Heavy monsoon rain in August 2016 across Northern Laos resulted in flooding, worsened by tropical cyclone Dianmu. The flood affected 29 districts in eight Northern provinces, which killed four people and affected approximately 4,000 households. The flood damaged paddy fields, livestock and road access due to landslides. The flood also caused closure of seven schools for two weeks.

UNICEF Lao PDR's response included provision of life-saving water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and non-food materials (blankets) in three provinces for 10,000 people, including 4,700 children. As part of its disaster preparedness plan, UNICEF Lao PDR pre-positioned WASH items, such as water floc, coagulant and chlorine powder, in the Government warehouses in four main regions.

As WASH cluster lead, UNICEF Lao PDR organised quarterly inter-agency meetings and

updated WASH preparedness and response plans. The cluster also updated capacity-mapping and a 3W (Who is doing What Where?) matrix of partners. UNICEF Lao PDR participated in an emergency simulation exercise facilitated by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office together with the Government, to further refine responses in possible humanitarian situations. As a result, national and sub-national level action plans were developed to facilitate better coordination. UNICEF also updated the early warning early action and contingency plans.

Lao PDR experienced unusually cold weather during the last two weeks of January 2016, resulting in freezing temperatures and rare snowfalls in the mountainous Northern provinces, where children from the ethnic minorities were most affected. UNICEF Lao PDR provided 3,000 blankets to the most vulnerable children and women, targeting the hardest to reach areas of Phongsaly, Huaphan and Xiengkhuang provinces (1,000 blankets per province) through the LFNC. Their extensive nationwide network at the provincial, district and village levels enabled them to distribute blankets to affected families.

Lao PDR witnessed an outbreak of circulating vaccine derived polio virus, with 11 positive cases detected between September 2015 and January 2016. The cases were confined to ethnic minority communities with persistently low immunisation coverage. The initial outbreak response, in 2015, consisted of two polio SIAs in three affected provinces, followed by six high-quality SIAs in 2016 covering the entire country. The last positive case had an onset on 11 January 2016. In addition to polio vaccination and routine immunisation, health interventions such as Vitamin A supplementation, de-worming and measles vaccination were offered largely through outreach services, supplemented by mobile teams at marketplaces, rice fields, plantations and mining sites, and by house-to-house outreach in all high-risk areas. The final SIA round is planned for January 2017, targeting 902,272 children under five years of age.

UNICEF Lao PDR contributed to the design and implementation of the National Polio Outbreak Response Plan and the implementation of the nine rounds of SIAs. Staff were deployed, available budget was reallocated and technical and financial support was received from the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, UNICEF New York Headquarters (NYHQ) and the East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO).

UNICEF Lao PDR procured and delivered 21 million doses of polio vaccines worth US\$ 3.8 million and other logistics for the SIAs, and vaccinated approximately 20 million people (cumulative). Additional cold chain equipment was also supplied, including 1,001 vaccine carriers and 50 cold boxes.

UNICEF Lao PDR led the response through development and implementation of the communication and social mobilisation plan. UNICEF NYHQ and EAPRO provided technical support through weekly conference calls, and deployment of communication for development (C4D) specialists and consultants. UNICEF also recruited a national C4D consultant and national UN Volunteers to provide support at the provincial level.

UNICEF Lao PDR supported advocacy events with provincial administrators, mobilisation of communities through involvement of community leaders and mass organisations, such as LFNC, and strengthening of the interpersonal communication (IPC) skills of health workers. Mass media and IPC materials, including radio and TV spots, campaign posters, banners, leaflets and health worker flipcharts were produced, distributed and broadcast. Dissemination of these materials targeted underserved ethnic minority communities where most cases were reported in order to increase coverage in those locations.

UNICEF Lao PDR spent US\$1.7 million to support those activities. These campaigns were leveraged as opportunities to raise routine immunisation coverage through improved micro-

planning and integrated delivery of outreach services. Two polio outbreak response assessment missions that monitored the campaigns reported consistently high coverage.

Emerging Areas of Importance

UNICEF Lao PDR aimed to increase coverage and improve the quality of pre-primary education and early childhood care services for children three to five years of age in disadvantaged districts and communities as part of its early childhood education (ECE) programme.

As children build the social and emotional skills they need to succeed in school during the first five years of life, UNICEF Lao PDR supported the Government to strengthen the preschool curriculum; pilot a community-based school readiness programme in educationally disadvantaged communities that aligned with early learning development standards; and integrated the preschool curriculum into the TV series My Village.

In 2016, UNICEF Lao PDR developed seven storybooks based on the TV show My Village. The books were distributed to all primary schools (grade one) and ECE centres in five districts in Saravane province. A total of 329 early childhood educators were trained on the use of storybooks and DVDs of My Village, especially targeting language development, which is an issue in a country with 49 ethnic groups.

In order for this intervention to succeed, it is necessary for parents and caregivers to be involved. The parenting orientation initiative was done in cooperation with the Lao Women's Union (LWU), the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and the Ministry of Health (MoH). The main purpose of this initiative is to promote school readiness for children about to enter grade one. The parenting orientation and education was addressed to both mothers and fathers.

The most visible component of this ECE programme was the TV show My Village (Ban Khong Khoy in Lao). It is an educational and creative TV series aimed at young children between three and six years of age. Developed in cooperation with the MoES and Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, its centrepieces are Claymation and storytelling, which are supplemented with educational songs and music videos involving young children. Now in its fourth series, the programme was nominated at the Taiwan International Children Film Festival in 2016, an achievement for a low-cost production.

My Village includes characters, including children and caregivers who are the most marginalised, as well as those from various ethnic groups and individuals with disabilities. My Village is the result of pioneering efforts in nurturing and developing capacity for locally produced, developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, and inclusive communication for children. The TV series is unique in the area of holistic ECD, and truly Lao in terms of character, music, background and storytelling.

The show presents an innovative and creative way of communicating with children. With each weekly episode exploring a particular topic, the series in its entirety helps prepare young children for school and life, addressing their physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. While access to ECE is still highly limited throughout the country, TV makes an excellent outreach tool for preparing young children for school and life, while building capacity for child and youth participation. While TV is an excellent medium for outreach, combining it with strong interventions for parenting and bringing parents along as partners was critical to help build early childhood learning. In areas without access to TV, UNICEF Lao PDR is promoting the use of mobile DVD players and mobile phones.

Key initial findings of the evaluation conducted in 2016 showed that My Village has strong potential to improve children’s school readiness and caregiver practices, and to change social and cultural norms around gender, ethnicity and disability. It was also reported that the demand from Government partners, schools and communities for continuation of this intervention and their engagement is deemed crucial in reaching the most marginalised girls and boys.

In the new Country Programme, 2017-2021, a more holistic approach to ECD will address children’s developmental and learning needs. Parenting education will continue as part of the community-based school readiness programme.

Summary Notes and Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CLTS	Community-led Total Sanitation
CMT	Country Management Team
CPD	Country Programme Document
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCT	Direct Cash Transfer
EAPRO	East Asia and Pacific Regional Office
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESDP	Education Sector Development Plan
ESWG	Education Sector Working Group
EU	European Union
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GSSC	Global Shared Service Centre
HACT	Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers
HAPiS	Hygiene Action led by Pupils in Schools
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFEAD	Institute for Educational Administration Development
IPC	Inter-personal Communication
IYCF	Infant and Young Child Feeding
Lao PDR	The Lao People’s Democratic Republic
LFNC	Lao Front for National Construction
LSB	Lao Statistics Bureau
LSIS	Lao Social Indicator Survey
LTA	Long-term Agreement
LWU	Lao Women’s Union
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoH	Ministry of Health
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MMG	Minerals and Metals Group
MNCH	Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment

NCMC	National Commission for Mothers and Children
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NNC	National Nutrition Committee
NNF	National Nutrition Forum
NNS	National Nutrition Strategy
NPAN	National Plan of Action for Nutrition
NSEDP	National Social Economic Development Plan
NYHQ	New York Headquarters
RMNCH	Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIA	Supplementary Immunisation Activities
SWA	Sanitation and Water for All
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNJP	United Nations Joint Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
WinS	WASH in Schools

Capacity Development

UNICEF Lao PDR supported capacity building on polio for inter-personal communication skills of village chiefs, health providers, teachers, community health volunteers and members of mass organisations in 24 high-risk districts. They received training on both knowledge and communication skills to interact with caregivers. Eighty-one master trainers received IPC training leading to increased coverage of polio immunisation during the last six rounds in 2016.

UNICEF provided training on planning, designing and supervision of gravity-fed water supply schemes in mountainous provinces to support schools and communities. In addition, 113 new WASH committees were established in 2016; 36 government officials from eight provinces received training-of-trainers support for implementing hygiene activities in schools; and 181 government staff, 1,236 school management committee members and teachers from 312 schools were trained on operation and maintenance of WASH facilities in schools.

The capacity of the MoES in evidence-based sector planning and management at the national and sub-national levels was strengthened through standardisation of a costed annual planning and reporting mechanism, which was supported by updated and disaggregated education management information system (EMIS) data. The Institutional Capacity Development Plan of the Institute for Educational Administration Development (IFEAD) contributed effective implementation of the sector plans. Eighteen community ECE facilitators, 62 pre-primary teachers and 1,000 primary teachers increased their capacity through teacher training and pedagogical support, benefiting 21,809 children.

A manual for the Adoption Decree was developed to provide a step-by-step guide to the adoption process. UNICEF Lao PDR supported the training of trainers on the adoption manual for the central adoption team as part of the capacity-development process. Training on the adoption manual for members of the Provincial and District Adoption Committees

from 24 districts of 10 provinces (5 Northern and 5 Southern) was conducted, and 173 members of adoption committees participated, including 56 females.

Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

UNICEF Lao PDR invested significantly in strengthening the capacity of strategic partners to collect, analyse and use evidence to inform equity-focused policies, plans and budgets. In 2016, UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the National Economic Research Institute to develop the National Socio-Economic Research Framework. The Framework allows for Lao PDR's policymakers to better formulate evidence-informed policies, and design strategies and programmes to achieve the 8th NSEDP 2016-2020 and Strategy 2025, particularly the graduation from least-developed country status.

UNICEF together with the LSB completed and disseminated the Food and Nutrition Security Survey, which provided up-to-date information on food and nutrition security in the five provinces of Luangnamtha, Oudomxay, Saravane, Sekong and Attapeu. The survey served as an important baseline for the updated 2016-2020 National Plan of Action on Nutrition (NPAN), and provided estimates for provincial-level trend analysis for sub-national planning and monitoring.

With support from UNICEF, the Government of Lao PDR conducted the first national Violence Against Children Survey, which provided new data on the scale and scope of violence that children experience. The survey looked at experiences of physical, emotional and sexual violence of those under 18. The results were fed into the development of the state party report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2016.

Together with the Lao Statistics Bureau and key ministries, UNICEF Lao PDR, supported by the technical assistance from the Global Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) team, launched the LSIS II, a nationwide household survey to measure social development in Lao PDR. It will provide a baseline for the 8th NSEDP and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will also provide evidence for health and education sector planning and the nutrition strategic plan.

Partnerships

UNICEF and EU supported the second National Nutrition Forum (NNF), which took place on 17 November 2016. The support from UNICEF made it possible to convene partners in nutrition from the central and provincial governments, development partners, UN, NGOs, CSOs, business, academia and media to report on progress against the National Nutrition Strategy (NNS 2016-2025) goals and implementation of the priority nutrition actions under NPAN 2016-2020.

The NNF 2016 strengthened accountability of key stakeholders and took stock of progress on those priority actions. This second NNF issued an outcome statement for priority nutrition actions shared during the Round Table Meeting, at which nutrition was tabled as one of the four priority discussion topics.

The NNF outcome statement called for the Government of the Lao PDR and partners in nutrition, including development partners, UN, civil society, businesses, academia and media, to enhance efforts for priority nutrition actions in 2017, and during the implementation of the NNS 2025 and NPAN 2016-2020.

The 2016 NNF was chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. Other attendees included the Ministers and Deputy Minister from Health; Planning and Investment;

Forestry; and Education and Sports. Support was provided by the EU and UNICEF, the co-conveners of the Development Partners' Group on Nutrition in Lao PDR. The high level of representation at the forum ensured a continued, dedicated political space for discussion on nutrition to allow stakeholders to review progress and meet those commitments in the future.

The social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) task force for nutrition, through a strong partnership between the World Bank, EU, USAID, Save the Children, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Plan International and UNICEF, reached an agreement to develop and implement one SBCC package to support the Government's nutrition interventions in Lao PDR.

External Communication and Public Advocacy

In 2016, high-profile events included the launch of two national nutrition surveys in the presence of high-level government officials and development partners such as the EU. Results were highlighted through clear and prominent messages from UNICEF Lao PDR, and picked up by the media to portray commitments made by the Government and partners towards policies and actions.

UNICEF's advocacy on immunisation successfully resulted in increasing the Government's domestic financing and political commitments.

The issue of violence against children was also raised in public, through the launch of a preliminary report, with the full report due in early 2017.

WASH issues were raised through a variety of events, including the International Learning Exchange event in Indonesia, in which a UNICEF-supported animation video was well received by participants.

Digital engagement was widely intensified, raising Facebook "likes" to over 8,650, adding an average of 1,000 blog visitors each month and increasing the number of Twitter followers to 1,250. The use of YouTube and Flickr channels was also increased. The platforms are used with different audiences, with Twitter, for example, being aimed at an international audience.

Several donor visits took place in 2016, including the Korean and Australian Committees for UNICEF. A launch ceremony for the second phase of cooperation with the mining group Minerals and Metals Group (MMG) and UNICEF Australia took place in Vientiane, resulting in national and international media coverage.

In addition to human interest stories and photo essays, numerous press releases and news notes were issued, resulting in strong visibility in local media for the work achieved by UNICEF Lao PDR and its partners. A significant role was also played in guiding foreign film/TV crews covering immunisation issues for Kiwanis and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI).

South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation

UNICEF provided technical support to the MoH to fulfil sector commitments of the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) high-level meeting. The Vice Minister of Health led the Lao delegation and participated in this ministerial meeting, a forum for exchange of ideas and sharing of lessons learned through South-South Cooperation, which was held in Addis Ababa in March 2016. The experiences from the SWA high-level meeting contributed to the finalisation of an overarching WASH policy.

Three members of the School Health Taskforce led by the Director General of the

Department of Preschool and Primary Education participated in the WASH in Schools (WinS) international learning exchange in Jakarta, Indonesia. Experiences from this international meeting included designing and planning of WinS interventions that are simple, scalable and sustainable. Lao PDR, Cambodia and Myanmar were grouped as one, leading to a good learning experience from countries in a similar situation on WASH.

The Technical Working Group and Taskforce on SBCC for Improved Health and Nutrition was supported by the World Bank, Alive and Thrive, and UNICEF to carry out a study tour to Vietnam, led by the Deputy Minister of Health. The experiences learned during this exchange visit played a critical role in developing one SBCC strategy for nutrition interventions in Lao PDR.

The Government of Lao PDR attended the 3rd Asia Pacific High-Level Meeting on Child Rights, A Billion Brains; Smarter Children, Healthier Economies, from 7 to 8 November 2016 in Kuala Lumpur. The delegation was led by the President of the LWU, and the Vice-President of the NCMC. The delegation actively engaged in sharing experiences and lesson learned in areas of violence against women and children and universal health care implementation in Lao PDR. It was also a good opportunity to learn from other countries on social protection, especially on child grants.

Identification and Promotion of Innovation

Interactive Voice Response (IVR), an initiative to improve real-time data collection in health, made it easy to create and run applications that interact via voice. Furthermore, an IVR monitoring system was used to ensure all village chiefs and village health volunteers were able to provide real-time data and information on essential health services.

In 2016, UNICEF collaborated with the company to expand the functionality of the monitoring system to enable voice messages to be recorded. The upgraded version of the system will be operational in 2017. Short phone calls were made by both the village chief and health centre staff to an automated, voice-guided system that asked for a report on the numbers of children planned to be immunised and those who were actually immunised in a particular village on a specific date. Users answered verbally and the system efficiently collected critical data that is otherwise not collected by routine health information systems.

UNICEF and the MoH updated the IVR voice script for outreach services, and the monthly infant and young child feeding (IYCF) activity reporting, to provide information on the numbers of IYCF counselling sessions conducted and topics covered in communities.

Northern and Eastern parts of Laos are largely mountainous. Installation of latrines in inaccessible communities has been one of major difficulties of WinS implementation. UNICEF innovation efforts resulted in an affordable design of lightweight steel structure (pre-fabricated) school latrines by simply adjusting the design in an innovative way to reduce cost and simplify transport to remote school locations. The pre-fabricated model was tested in a school in Vientiane and will be replicated in remote schools in focus provinces in the future. This cost-effective solution can both serve in remote schools and emergency situations. The pre-fabricated latrines cost 30 per cent less compared to conventional ones.

Support to Integration and cross-sectoral linkages

In 2016, UNICEF Lao PDR provided financial and technical as well as coordination support to the NCMC, a governmental body composed of focal points from 23 ministries and organisations, to develop the State Party Periodic Report on the CRC. UNICEF Lao PDR also identified internal focal points from different programme sections within the office to coordinate with their respective counterpart ministries in updating and validating available

data and information as major inputs to the CRC report.

Considering the comparative advantage in evidence-based data generation, UNICEF Lao PDR led the LSIS II, a national household survey covering all 18 provinces. UNICEF Lao PDR coordinated with the LSB of the MPI as well as key line ministries such as MoH and MoES to conceptualise, plan and mobilise resources in 2016. UNICEF Lao PDR mobilised within the UN system as well as among development partners to secure the total funding required of US\$ 2.3 million. Technical support from USAID was provided for the anaemia module of the LSIS II.

The high prevalence of stunting in children remains a development challenge in Lao PDR, and UNICEF Lao PDR intensified its efforts to integrate nutrition, education and WASH programmes in 2016. Joint reviews and planning internally as part of cross-sectoral linkages in education, nutrition and WASH programmes led to development and submission of joint funding proposals to donors.

Service Delivery

Equity-focused education programmes enabled programming to reach girls and boys in remote and disadvantaged communities. Eighteen community-based school readiness centres were supported in remote and poor communities in three districts in three provinces, benefiting 402 children (180 girls). The newly constructed ten pre-primary schools with WASH facilities covered 379 children (193 girls) in two rural districts in two provinces. In hard-to-reach communities in three provinces, 2,582 children (1,236 girls) received the primary equivalency education programme.

In 2016, an additional 39,078 people in rural areas gained access to improved sources of water through the construction of 172 water systems. WASH services including accessible and gender-sensitive latrines and hand washing stations provided to 102 primary schools. In addition, more than 5,452 girls and boys from 51 primary schools have access to and use group hand-washing facilities through the Hygiene Action led by Pupils in Schools (HAPiS) initiatives in Saravane province. Pupils practise daily group hand washing with soap and water before school meal or afternoon break, use and clean toilets, drink filtered water in the classrooms, and clean classrooms and school compounds.

Significant geographical disparities in immunisation coverage led to a polio outbreak. The response started promptly within the Global Polio Eradication Initiative framework, with UNICEF Lao PDR taking the lead in supporting the MoH with vaccine/supply management and communication/social mobilisation. During 2016, six high-quality national SIAs were conducted, targeting children under 15 years of age nationwide and the entire population in 42 districts. Polio vaccination coverage in each round was more than 95 per cent. In addition, health services such as Vitamin A supplementation, de-worming and measles vaccination were also offered. Services were largely provided through outreach services, supplemented by mobile teams for marketplaces, rice fields, plantations and mining sites, and by house-to-house outreach in all high-risk areas.

Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation

Lao PDR acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 8 May 1991, and 2016 marked the 25th anniversary of this event. The government remains committed to promoting and realising the rights of all children through further implementation of the Convention and the timely submission of its 3rd to 6th State Party Periodic Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The Government requested UNICEF Lao PDR to provide both financial and technical

support for the development of the State Party Periodic Report in early 2016. The NCMC, the focal point for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols, led the process. UNICEF Lao PDR advocated successfully to include key development partners such as the EU and the Australian Government, international NGOs, CSOs and children in this process to be participatory and consultative.

The 2016 periodic reporting process for the first time included consultations with children as part of the right to participation. Consultations were held in eleven districts in nine provinces with children 6-11 year age group in primary schools and 11-18 years in secondary schools. In total, 558 children (332 girls) between the ages of 6-18 were consulted. Consultations were conducted with selected child victims, disadvantaged children (children with disabilities), children from ethnic minority groups and mothers and fathers from target provinces and districts. Children were also asked to provide recommendations as to how they would tackle the concerns identified.

Three consultation workshops to obtain inputs from stakeholders, finalise provincial reports and present the results from the consultations with children were held in the provinces (central, northern, southern) with representatives from NCMC, provincial stakeholders from all 18 provinces and NGOs.

Final consultations with the key stakeholders including the Government, development partners and NGOs to review and provide inputs into a draft CRC report took place on 25 October 2016. The final draft was approved by the Prime Minister on 9 December 2016 and subsequently submitted to the CRC committee in Geneva.

Gender Equality

During the development of new Country Programme 2017-2021, a gender lens was applied throughout all programmes, addressing the barriers that undermine the realisation of children's rights. Indicators to measure the progress towards key programme outcomes and outputs were designed to report gender-disaggregated data and information.

With UNICEF support, national IYCF training and monitoring capacities were established, and a package was implemented in 26 districts in six provinces, mobilising 41 provincial and district authorities and building the capacity of 191 health workers, and most, importantly 1,302 members of LWUs to promote positive nutrition practices and care-seeking during pregnancy, postpartum and in the first years of a child's life. Through this partnership, UNICEF was able to build the skills of the LWU to increase the number of community orientation meetings on IYCF and as a result, created more demand for IYCF counselling and services from caregivers. The delivery of reinforcing messages from LWU about exclusive breastfeeding and the counselling support they provide directly to women to breastfeed reduced the influence of social and cultural norms that are known to hinder breastfeeding.

One of the key components of the WASH programme is the capacity building of local partners through training, and women's participation was ensured in training teams of all WASH interventions. At schools, female teachers and girls were involved in promoting the hygiene action led by pupils in schools (HAPiS) initiative. Student environment clubs also had a good representation of girls and boys.

The community WASH programme supported the integration of gender in a variety of ways, including WASH committees being required to include women in decision-making capacities. Women were also encouraged to participate in community dialogue to discuss the most suitable water systems and the community contribution. Furthermore, in 2016 UNICEF also partnered with the LWU to take the lead on a multi-sectoral team to introduce community-led

total sanitation (CLTS) in one of the focus districts. By creating an enabling environment and building their capacity, women and girls were given equal opportunity to be involved in decision making that affected them.

Environmental Sustainability

Lao PDR continued to experience the effects of climate change, and the population has been affected by the unpredictable weather patterns. The country experienced longer dry seasons that impact food production as well as scarcity of drinking water due to drying up of dug wells and springs, while the rainy season may occur in shorter, more intense intervals delivering unforeseen impacts to communities, flash floods, road destruction, temporary isolation and potential disease outbreaks. Deforestation, industrial activities, large-scale farming with high water demand and the use of pesticide are some practices that are contributing to the depletion of finite water resources, which needs careful management. Children are the most affected from the adverse effect of climate change, specifically the prolonged drought and the flood limiting their access to clean water and intake of nutritional food, affects health status and access to social services, as well as access to education and child-friendly environments and also level of protection.

In order to safeguard investments for children and their families, UNICEF Lao PDR adopted different strategies to cope with the current environmental conditions: (1) higher technical design scrutiny of water systems by considering the climate resilience aspect of service delivery; (2) hand pumps designed with raised platforms installed in flood-prone communities including schools to protect them from floods as well as to save energy as water from pumps flow to school tank by gravity; and (3) closed borehole systems used where water tables are deeper and soil is unstable. Wherever possible, school latrines are constructed 30 metres apart from boreholes if latrines are located upstream and at least 15 metres away if located downstream to avoid possible contamination of the groundwater sources.

UNICEF Lao PDR also participated in and contributed to Green Growth, Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness meetings organised by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in conjunction with development partners. UNICEF also introduced the Office Greening Policy. Staff are encouraged to save energy and resources by using less air conditioning, using office vehicles efficiently, and printing fewer documents and emails.

Effective Leadership

Following consultations with the Government and development partners, UNICEF Lao PDR submitted the draft strategy note, CPD and Country Programme Management Plan to UNICEF EAPRO and UNICEF NYHQ for review in early 2016. As part of the new Country Programme development, UNICEF Lao PDR conducted an HR review exercise through a consultative, participatory and transparent process that was facilitated by an independent external consultant with strong HR management experience. A plan to mitigate the impact of transition was developed and implemented, resulting in minimal impact on the affected staff members.

MPI, a focal ministry coordinating social sector development in Lao PDR, endorsed the new CPD 2017-2021 on 21 June 2016. UNICEF Lao PDR then convened a pre-Board briefing with UNICEF Executive Board Member Embassies on the new CPD on 24 June 2016. The CPD was officially approved by the Executive Board in September.

With the support of EAPRO, a results-based management workshop was conducted for programme staff from 22 to 25 August 2016. The four-day workshop was tailored to take the CPD forward by reviewing and revising outputs and indicators, outlining log frames and agreeing on key elements of rolling workplans, including monitoring and evaluation and

reporting. This workshop provided valuable inputs and charted the way forward to further develop new Country Programme elements, especially the two-year rolling workplans.

UNICEF Lao PDR used both programme and operations management indicators as key management tools for monitoring office performance. The performance management reports were shared weekly and discussed during weekly heads of sections meetings and monthly country management team (CMT) meetings.

The 2016 Annual Management Plan was submitted on time, and the annual management review took place on 14 December 2016. The CMT also reviewed and endorsed the guidelines on streamlining office management committees to an optimal committee structure.

Financial Resources Management

UNICEF Lao PDR continued to implement the internal finance policy by setting up indicators that are closely monitored and reported monthly to the CMT.

The Office Dashboard served as a tool to monitor key indicators and was shared with programmes weekly and with UNICEF EAPRO monthly. It included expiring grants, donor reports, utilisation rates, direct cash transfers (DCTs), contributions, etc. It was also monitored regularly to ensure the segregation of duties, and to identify and implement any immediate actions required. It also served to monitor budget utilisation, outstanding items (bank open items, GR/IR) and travel authorisations.

UNICEF Lao PDR for three consecutive years did not have any outstanding DCT amount for more than nine months, and had no DCT for more than six months in December 2016.

VISION role mapping was reviewed regularly, and the Table of Authority was updated in a timely manner and upon requirement. The delegation of authorities was acknowledged in writing by all concerned staff. A signatory panel was in place and updated in a timely manner. Monthly bank reconciliation was undertaken satisfactorily, and all open items were closed during the account closure period.

UNICEF Lao PDR used the internal audit exercise in June 2016 as an opportunity to enhance overall efficiency and effectiveness of internal controls, risk management and governance processes. Some follow-up actions were taken immediately to address some of the observations.

All partners were regularly assessed (spot checks, micro-assessments, audits) according to the level of risks. On-site training was organised during spot checks to improve partners' financial management and reporting skills. The harmonised approach to cash transfers (HACT) assurance plan was monitored closely, and progress was shared with EAPRO.

UNICEF LAO PDR also organised an enterprise risk management workshop in April 2016, and a country risk profile was produced. It is included in the annual management plan.

Fundraising and Donor Relations

UNICEF Lao PDR updated its resource mobilisation strategy in 2016, including identification of opportunities, proactive engagement with donors, and the development of funding proposals and concept notes. Field visits for the UNICEF National Committees of Australia and Korea were hosted in 2016.

During 2016, UNICEF Lao PDR effectively reached out to existing and new partners to

leverage resources for the children of Lao PDR. Due to the relentless efforts in mobilising of resources, UNICEF Lao PDR successfully raised funds as follows:

US\$9.7 million, EU - Partnership for Improved Nutrition in Lao PDR (2016-2020), agreement signed in December 2016;

US\$7 million, Luxembourg - UN Joint Programme (UNJP) on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) in Lao PDR (2017-2020) approved by the Government of Luxembourg;

US\$3.46 million received from the MMG in 2016 as phase II of Nutritional Improvement for Children of Lao PDR, 1,000 days project (2016-2018); and

US\$816 thousand, UNICEF Australia - Early Learning and Child Development in Lao PDR (2017-2019), agreement signed in 2016.

In 2016, 44 narrative donor reports and fund utilisation reports were due, and all were prepared and submitted on time. The internal monitoring and quality assurance system for ensuring quality and timeliness of reporting continued to be implemented.

In addition to financial contributions, UNICEF received technical assistance support through a fully funded Korea International Cooperation Agency Multilateral Cooperation Officer to the education programme, and a UN Volunteer to the WASH programme supported by the Government of Korea.

Evaluation and Research

Evaluation in UNICEF Lao PDR is guided by the Evaluation Policy, Plan for Research, Impact Monitoring and Evaluation (PRIME), and Integrated Monitoring & Evaluation Plan (IMEP) to ensure the planned evaluations are realistic, costed, supported by a budget for implementation, and able to be monitored.

In 2016, the evaluation of the WASH programme in Lao PDR (2015) was rated highly satisfactory by the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS). This evaluation generated substantial knowledge and learning on the results of the overall WASH programme and influenced the government's policies, strategies and funding priorities. The findings of the evaluation provided strategic opportunities to inform the WASH programme planning for the next Country Programme 2017-2021, the National Development Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and the UN Partnership Framework. The management response was prepared and presented in CMT meetings and monitored on a quarterly basis.

In November 2016, an evaluation of the My Village ECD TV programme was conducted and the report was being finalized at the end of the year. The purpose was to draw findings and conclusions on the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the programme to inform planning and decision making about its sustainability as UNICEF transitions into a new phase of its dissemination in 2017.

UNICEF Lao PDR also paid due attention to the development of a costed evaluation plan for the new CPD 2017-2021. The following costed evaluations were identified:

- Formative evaluation for scaling up of the equity-focused community-based school readiness programme as an entry point for holistic ECD; and
- Evaluation of UNICEF support to scaling up nutrition in Lao PDR.

Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

During 2016, one common long-term agreement (LTA) was signed between UN agencies and one internet company, providing information and communication technology (ICT) services resulting in savings of an estimated US\$5,000 for UNICEF.

UNICEF Lao PDR also renewed an LTA for one year with transport companies in all the provinces. The travel costs were significantly reduced in 2016 due to the fact that the prices obtained by signing the LTA is lower compared to the previous prices without one. By having the common LTAs with other UN agencies or an LTA signed directly by UNICEF Lao PDR, the efficiency gains as well as cost saving in terms of time and money were significant.

UNICEF Lao PDR replaced all fluorescent light bulbs with LED lights. By the end of December 2016, the office was equipped with occupancy sensors with significant savings expected, as electricity is one of the largest office expenses.

Lao PDR is one of the pilot countries for fleet management. The project started in September 2016, with UNICEF and other UN agencies (UNDP, World Health Organization [WHO] and the World Food Programme [WFP]) pooling vehicles. The UN Country Team reviewed the trend analysis on the fleet-sharing pilot project. There were a number of challenges but also good progress experienced since the launch of the pilot, such as improvement in the transport system, and reduction in number of vehicle movements.

UNICEF Lao PDR is planning to use solar panels for the server room. The use of electricity will be reduced significantly, as electricity is used 24/7. A funding application was submitted to Greening and Accessibility Funds.

Supply Management

The annual supply plan was developed during the first quarter of the year, with updates on a quarterly basis, as one of the key performance indicators for the CMT.

Support was extended from Procurement Services to the Government and to implementing partners via kick-off meetings, and through site visits with programmes, especially the WASH Section, for construction.

UNICEF continued its participation in the Common Procurement Team with other UN agencies. In 2016, significant progress was made on joint procurement activities such as an initiative on arranging common LTAs for travel, internet services and fuel with tax exemptions.

In 2016, UNICEF Lao PDR procured supplies, equipment and services for a total value of US\$9,616,838 as shown below:

Lao PDR 2016		Value of all supply input (goods & services)
1	Programme Supplies	US\$ 8,409,024
2	Operation Supplies	US\$ 68,364
3	Services (including construction)	US\$ 1,139,451
	Total value of supplies in 2016:	US\$ 9,616,838

This year, the value of procurement services amounted to US\$9,233,162, with US\$8,438,607 (91 per cent) consisting of procurement of vaccines funded by GAVI. Another

US\$794,555, funded by Lao Government, was for vaccine procurement, representing nine per cent.

UNICEF Lao PDR continued to build on the following good procurement practices: (i) engaging end users to provide detailed inputs for technical requirements and joining goods inspections, resulting in end users taking more responsibility; (ii) conducting public bid openings, enabling suppliers to participate and observe, and enhancing transparency; (iii) informing unsuccessful bidders in writing, to keep suppliers informed of the tender results and build trust in the efficiency and transparency of the procurement process; and (iv) continuing market surveys at the central and provincial levels to ensure the existence of and access to sufficient, appropriate and qualified suppliers and contractors.

Security for Staff and Premises

Lao PDR is a stable and peaceful country. Though the local security contractors have low capacity, the UN Department of Security and Safety (UNDSS) closely monitors the security situation. Daily routine checks were undertaken by UNDSS, with regular visits at international residences and offices, to ensure all security measures were in place, including confirming security guards were present and ensuring that all houses were minimum operating residential security standards (MORSS) compliant.

All drivers participated in refresher training to enhance their driving skills, and also underwent regular medical check-ups. All field vehicles and essential staff were equipped with satellite phones and VHF radios, and all staff travelling were requested to have approved security clearances.

UNICEF Lao PDR was equipped with 12 closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras surrounding the office and an alarm system in each office to reinforce security measures. The system functions 24 hours a day and the Operations Manager and ICT Officer are the two focal points.

Human Resources

In preparation for the new Country Programme 2017-2021, an HR exercise was conducted between February and March 2016 by an external consultant in an open, transparent and participatory way. This resulted in revision of the office structure and HR capacities against programme results, with a reduction in posts from 75 to 63 by the end of 2016, and to 59 by the end of 2017. The recruitment of seven newly established positions and another five vacant positions were successfully carried out during the second half of 2016. The on-boarding of selected candidates was ongoing at the end of 2016.

New HR tools were smoothly implemented: ACHIEVE, MyCase, OSF, Talent Management System, for online recruitment and on-boarding.

UNICEF PDR continued to ensure that the consultants' recruitments were competitive and in line with policy.

Throughout the year, UNICEF PDR continued taking actions to address all major issues from the 2014 Global Staff Survey, with close monitoring by the CMT on a quarterly basis.

In October 2016, an office retreat on interpersonal communication skills was organised with the participation of staff. The retreat was facilitated by an external facilitator.

The Performance Appraisal system functions ACHIEVE for work planning parts is completed by 98 per cent.

Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

The failure-over internet connectivity and high-availability firewall contributed to the success and sustainability of programme communication and exchange via cooperate applications, email and web conferencing. The availability of universal wifi provided wireless connections to the office corporate systems on the movement and cost-effective way. The UN Common LTA on ISPs contributed to cost savings of US\$ 5,000 in 2016.

With a compliant ICT infrastructure, all desktops/laptops with hardware capability were loaded with the latest Windows 8.1 Image, which provides new features of office automation tools and systems. The Hyper-V host platform holding multiple virtual servers for ICT functions was a key cost-effectiveness solution. A 5KVA uninterruptured power supply securing 24/7 power redundancy for servers and critical ICT equipment was in place. The solar energy system for the data centre and replacement of the office lights using LEDs, which is part of UNICEF's greening project, were underway at the end of 2016.

The IP telephony system built on the Elastic open source unified communications server is the in-house manageable telephony system and a low-cost change from the ordinary PABX system.

As part of the business continuity plan (BCP), one simulation took place in February 2016, consisting of testing of connectivity of internet-based applications, the Global Area Network (BGAN) and High Frequency (HF) Radio.

Programme Components from RAM

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 By end 2016, families and communities, especially in areas that are remote, poor and populated by underserved ethnic groups, have increased demand for, and better access to, quality social services, within a supportive public and media environment

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Lao PDR continued to support systematic, evidence-based approaches to communication to address political, social and behavioural issues across all sectors. In 2016, UNICEF continued to work closely with all programme sections and ministerial counterparts to support the entire office in its communication objectives, including community-level behavioural support, national advocacy objectives aimed at policies. At the international level, UNICEF Lao PDR worked to leverage funding and commitments on behalf of children in Lao PDR.

UNICEF Lao PDR's communication efforts stemmed from a mixed approach: the production of information materials for targeted audiences, in consultation with programme and social policy colleagues, and a broader, socio-ecological model that attempted to account for a diverse range of environmental and social influences, merging efforts between external communications, public advocacy and communication for development. Particularly visible in 2016 were the efforts to support public and official awareness on nutrition and the closer links with the LFNC, which were used during the emergency response to the cold spell in early 2016, and throughout the response to the polio outbreak.

The media environment is evolving thanks to a new impetus provided by the new government. UNICEF Lao PDR is well positioned to make the most of this supportive environment and accompany the renewal process through relevant media training for communication professionals, as was done with the LFNC in 2016.

In other areas in 2016, UNICEF continued its support of youth media, a combination of youth radio outlets and their Facebook pages. Initially, in 2004, UNICEF initiated youth radio in the rural Northern province of Oudomxay, and it expanded into 13 provinces, reaching a total of 14. In 2014, youth radio celebrated its 10th anniversary. In each province, at least 10 young people were expected to be trained yearly, however, the number grew to 15 as more young people expressed interest in being trained as young reporters. With limited funding from UNICEF, youth radio is still functioning and promoting child rights-related issues.

In a significant achievement, My Village, the first-ever television programme for young children in Lao PDR, which was created by UNICEF Lao PDR, was nominated for Best Television Programme at the 2016 Taiwan International Children's Film Festival, the main film and television festival in Asia dedicated entirely to children.

The nomination was apt recognition for the wider team behind the early learning animation series, which is produced in conjunction with the Government (Ministries of Education and Information) and local animators, with funding from Swedish retailer H&M. UNICEF Lao PDR provided secure digital cards for mobile phones, pre-loaded with the entire series as part of the dissemination to areas without TV coverage. The series is embarking on a fourth series in 2017.

Social media is also evolving quickly, and in 2016 UNICEF was regarded as one of the leading "brands" and organisations in this field in Lao PDR, although the reach, diversity and sophistication of the platforms does not yet compare with neighbouring countries.

Nonetheless, interest, especially among young people, is obvious and UNICEF Lao PDR is well positioned to engage with young people (girls and boys) through such platforms, which at the moment is mostly Facebook and to some extent YouTube. Social media statistics show that strong visuals and content in Lao language are essential to a successful engagement.

OUTPUT 1 By the end of 2013 adolescents and young people (boys and girls) have increased opportunities, confidence to participate in advocacy for their rights through radio and television

Analytical Statement of Progress:

More than a decade since it started to support youth radio, UNICEF Lao PDR is strengthening the links between radio and social media, using the same young people in 13 provinces. In 2016, more than 250 young reporters – more than half girls – improved their capacities to produce radio material and use social media to promote child rights in their own words.

In preparation for the next Country Programme, where Phongsaly will be one of the priority provinces, UNICEF Lao PDR worked with the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism to establish a youth media team in this province, including a youth radio component. This team in Phongsay as well as those in other provinces, was provided 30 minutes of free airtime and also given access to the equipment and studio of the provincial radio station. The youth media team included at least ten young people, and one supervisor from radio and the children's cultural centre. The topics discussed on youth radio included the CRC, violence against children, polio awareness and events in the provinces.

In late 2016, youth radio was re-established in Attapeu, which is another priority province where the new provincial authorities take a keen interest in youth media. The youth radio had stopped functioning in 2013 due to staff movement and lack of funding.

Overall, youth engagement is seen as a key pillar of the communication strategy in the next Country Programme. Recognising its importance as a conduit for youth participation, and following discussions between UNICEF and partners, the end-of year review recommended that UNICEF continue to find means of providing financial and/or technical support in its next

Country Programme 2017-2021.

While UNICEF-supported training was successfully completed in 2016, activities scheduled by some stations were hindered by a lack of funding, especially for items such as local travel expenses.

The sectoral programmes continued to explore how the youth media activities could benefit programmes and their project targets, and how immediate/minor funding gaps could be closed and stronger collaboration and content could be added to programming.

OUTPUT 2 Capacity of Lao national and provincial journalists in reporting on children's issues improved through orientation, training and field visits to UNICEF-supported programme

Analytical Statement of Progress:

As Lao PDR continues to develop and open up, there appears to be a growing willingness to modernise and upscale media capacity in the country. Ministries, mass organisations (LFNC, LWU) and the National Assembly often commented on the support they need in communication expertise, and often requested technical support from UNICEF (media training, including social media). One example in 2016 was the media training organised for communication staff from the LFNC, with participants joining two separate sessions from all provinces of the country.

This investment in communication is more important due to the limited reach of NGOs and CSOs at the community level. UNICEF works with organizations such as the LFNC and the LWU to engage with communities on a variety of child right issues. UNICEF Lao PDR is already involved in communication work related to nutrition, education and WASH behaviours. An overall "parenting" package to address child survival, growth and protection is being planned for the next Country Programme.

UNICEF's successful support for the development and launch of the ECD initiative in 2013 resulted in the broadcast of the TV programme My Village, the programme is entering its fourth series in 2017. Despite numerous obstacles in reaching all the children in Lao PDR, research shows the programme continues to be popular and a useful tool to help younger children prepare for school. Preliminary results from an evaluation carried out in late 2016 show the programme is effective and creative, but will require stronger monitoring and dissemination to reach target audiences, especially in remote areas.

In early 2016, the teams focused on production after quick review and planning sessions, as by now the team members understand the concept and have gained experience in producing TV programmes for and with young children.

The final tranche of funding was received from clothing retailer H&M in 2016, with ten episodes being produced and more emphasis being put on dissemination and evaluation.

Because of its current popularity, UNICEF and partners highlighted the need for a long-term creative-support strategy that includes incentives for talent (such as fixed teams of script writers) and funding to be put toward local capacity wherever possible.

Some suggestions supported an expansion of the range of topics covered and for existing episodes to be translated/dubbed into the Hmong and Khmu languages to expand viewership and ensure equity.

OUTPUT 3 OP 3. Programme Support. 1. Staff are secure with salary and other entitlements from 2012 to 2015. 2. Periodic and timely field visits are conducted to monitor project

activities, organize National Committee visits, attend workshops and trainings. 3. Consultants are contracted to support graphic design, photography, translation, artwork, editing, video and radio production, story writing and data analysis to support project implementation

Analytical Statement of Progress:

1. Staff are secure with salary and other entitlements from 2012 to 2016.
2. Periodic and timely field visits are conducted to monitor project activities, organize National Committee visits, and attend workshops and training.
3. Consultants are contracted to support graphic design, photography, translation, artwork, editing, video and radio production, story writing and data analysis to support project implementation.

UNICEF Lao PDR provided HR support with funds utilised as intended to contribute to the achievement of communication and advocacy objectives identified across the programme as described in the Country Programme.

OUTCOME 2 The MoES has the capacity to plan, implement, and monitor the delivery of education sector targets, in line with decentralization policy goals

Analytical Statement of Progress:

According to EMIS, with a primary net enrolment of 98.5 per cent (boys/98.8; girls/98.3) achieved in 2015, Lao PDR officially met the MDG target of universal access to primary education with gender parity. The gross preschool enrolment rate doubled from 22.1 per cent (boys/22.0; girls/22.3) in 2010 to 49.1 per cent (boys/48.9 per cent; girls/49.2 per cent) in 2016. Between 2011 and 2015, both repetition and drop-out rates in primary education were reduced significantly, from 12.2 per cent (boys/13.2; girls/11.2) to 5.8 per cent (boys/6.5; girls/5.1), and from 7.8 per cent (boys/8.2; girls/7.5) to 5.2 per cent (boys/5.6; girls/4.8) respectively.

Despite these achievements, 40 per cent of five-year-old children are yet to have access to ECE, with significant inequities between urban and rural areas and the rich and the poor (LSIS 2011/12). This could explain the high repetition rate in grade one, at 13.5 per cent (boys/14.4; girls/12.6). Consequently, the primary survival rate, notwithstanding its steady progress, remained low at 79.6 per cent (boys/78.7; girls/80.7) in 2016, which supports the lower-secondary gross enrolment rate staying at 78.1 per cent (boys/80.2; girls/76.0) (EMIS 2015, indicated otherwise).

Throughout 2012-2016, UNICEF continued to support the MoES in enhancing equitable access and quality of ECE and basic education for better learning outcomes. With UNICEF's support in collaboration with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG), the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) 2016-2020 was developed and approved in 2015. UNICEF took a key role in this process as the GPE Managing Entity. UNICEF with Plan International advanced the equity agenda in the ESDP through strengthening the Gender, Inclusion and Disability Technical Working Group. South-South cooperation supported by UNICEF and the GPE helped ESDP development and implementation, through which study visits to Cambodia, Vietnam and Bangladesh were undertaken by the MoES.

UNICEF assisted with the development and operationalisation of Lao EduInfo, in which disaggregated, updated annual EMIS data were made available for use at the national, provincial and district levels. The capacity of the MoES was strengthened through the development of the IFEAD Institutional Development Plan, in partnership with the UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/International Institute for Education Planning in 2014-2016.

With the SDGs launched, UNICEF played a key role in the localisation of SDG 4. Together with UNESCO Bangkok, RC Office and ESWG, the first SDG 4 national workshop was held in 2016, and was chaired by the MoES Minister. The workshop engaged key national and sub-national stakeholders, including NGOs, ensuring national ownership and relevance.

UNICEF's commitment to measuring learning was enhanced through promoting evidence-based quality reforms of MoES. During 2015-2016, reviews were conducted of the primary curriculum and student learning outcomes, the student assessment system and the pedagogical supervision system. These reviews informed the ongoing revisions of the primary curriculum and assessments, and the teacher education and pedagogical support framework. UNICEF will continue to strengthen the student assessment system and practices.

Lao PDR has taken a leadership role in South East Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) under the ASEAN Education Framework. The SEA-PLM Field Trial, which will lead to the main survey in 2018, was completed in 2016 in collaboration with the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation and EAPRO. The out-of-school children study was advanced in collaboration with the National Economic Research Institute, EAPRO and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, and will be finalised, launched and disseminated in early 2017 for follow-up actions.

UNICEF's proven experience in school-based management towards the establishment of national education quality standards informed the GPE II project (2015-2019) for nationwide scale up, in which UNICEF takes a key role as the co-Coordinating Agency.

During 2012-2016, in partnership with the Lao Government, Australian Government and the EU, all grade one to five primary students – 850,466 (408,251 girls) – received textbooks to meet the national standard of one textbook per student/subject. Approximately 1,000 primary teachers enhanced their capacity through in-service training and pedagogical supervision outreach, benefiting 20,000 students (9,325 girls). A total of 227 primary schools developed and implemented school development plans with the active engagement of village education development committees.

With UNICEF's support, the curriculum for the community-based school readiness (CBSR) programme was developed. The CBSR programme was officially recognised by the MoES, and 33 CBSR centres were supported in three remote communities in three provinces, benefiting 955 children (467 girls). A formative evaluation of this innovative ECE model is planned in 2019 for sustainable scale up. A total of 3,410 children (1,557 girls) in 69 pre-primary schools enjoyed improved teaching-learning through teacher training and regular monitoring/coaching. A set of seven age-appropriate storybooks, which incorporated cross-sectoral ECD messages, was developed and distributed to 15,367 pre-primary and grade one children. UNICEF partnered with the LWU to deliver parenting orientation using the storybooks in the next Country Programme. UNICEF's high-level advocacy resulted in an agreement with the MoES to hold a national ECD forum in 2017 for enhancing high-level awareness and cross-sectoral coordination.

Key bottlenecks remain in terms of limited institutional and human capacity of MoES at all levels, gaps between policy and practice, weak coordination among different departments, and between the national and sub-national levels, and limited and inefficient education finance. Keeping learning at the forefront, UNICEF's programme will continue to support strengthening of both policies and systems, and grassroots-level work focusing on most-disadvantaged girls and boys, supported by enhanced linkages of the upstream-downstream work.

OUTPUT 1 Effective and efficient management of the education programme

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Lao PDR efficiently mobilized the necessary technical expertise through staff and partnerships to provide effective strategic technical advice, strengthen partners' capacity, engage in partnerships, and effectively and efficiently manage the implementation of this programme component of the Country Programme.

OUTPUT 2 The MoES has the capacity to plan, implement and monitor the delivery of education sector targets, in line with decentralization policy goals

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Following the government's approval of the ESDP 2016-2020 in late 2015, UNICEF, in partnership with GPE and coordination through the ESWG, continued to take a key role in assisting the MoES with its implementation in 2016. The ESDP Implementation Matrix was developed and disseminated at a national workshop in January 2016, which involved national and sub-national level MoES officials as well as development partners. The ESDP Implementation Matrix informed the costed annual workplan to meet the sector targets.

Based on the ESDP, UNICEF assisted the system strengthening of annual planning and management through a bottom-up approach. The district education sector planning process (including costing) was reviewed and consolidated to inform national sector planning. In partnership with GPE and coordinated through ESWG, UNICEF supported a study visit to Bangladesh, through which MoES key officials from different departments gained hands-on knowledge of the annual planning processes. Based on these, the Instructional Guideline for annual sector planning and reporting was developed and approved by MoES at the Annual Education Administration Conference in June 2016.

UNICEF continued to support evidence generation and its effective use. Based on EMIS, disaggregated data from 2007 to 2016 was stored and made ready for use in Lao EduInfo, including national, provincial and district-level information. National, Provincial and District Education Profiles were finalised and distributed among MoES and development partners at the Annual Education Administration Conference 2016. These profiles presented disaggregated annual data as well as the five-year trends between 2011-2015 to inform planning and monitoring. Furthermore, UNICEF worked to strengthen district school data management. Key MoES district officials as well as school principals and teachers in the four target districts (Phalanxay, Phouvong, Sing and Ta Oi) were trained on the recording, reporting and monitoring of the standardised sets of student and school data, which helped reinforce the linkage between schools and districts.

UNICEF played a leading role in advancing the localisation of SDG 4, in coordination with UNESCO Bangkok and the Regional Coordintaor Office in Lao PDR. The first SDG 4 national workshop was held in June 2016. It was chaired by the MoES Minister and engaged high-level government officials from MoES and line ministries. The workshop was held in a participatory manner, involving national and sub-national level officials as well as development partners, including NGOs and CSOs. This helped ensure the SDG 4 initiative will be a country-owned and led, and locally contextualised initiative. The workshop reached a consensus to use the existing ESWG mechanism for SDG 4 coordination under the overall national SDG Framework, as well as SDG 4 alignment through streamlining of EMIS and other existing sector data systems, which UNICEF will continue to support from 2017 onwards. A group of 30 senior specialists from MoES and the National University of Laos completed the ESP distance course. To make this effort more sustainable, the IFEAD Institutional Development Plan 2016-2020 was developed with cost projection aligned to the ESDP.

OUTPUT 3 Innovative models for ensuring preschool-aged (four and five years of age) girls and boys are better prepared for school, are tested and validated in four educationally disadvantaged districts, to inform national policy and practices by 2016

Analytical Statement of Progress:

In 2016, UNICEF continued making focused efforts to enhance equitable access to quality ECE programmes. A total of 18 community-based school readiness centres were supported in remote and poor communities in three districts in three provinces, benefiting 402 children (boys 222; girls 180). Training for ECE facilitators and regular monitoring and coaching was provided by the trained provincial and district education officials. ECD toolkits were also procured and distributed. In the new Country Programme 2017-2021, a formative evaluation of this innovative community-based ECE model will be conducted to inform national policy and practices, and encourage MoES to invest in community-based school readiness.

The construction of ten pre-primary schools (classrooms) with WASH facilities was completed in two rural districts in two provinces, benefiting 379 children (boys 186; girls 193). A good community engagement materialised, through which the communities contributed playgrounds made from local materials. As the education programme is phasing out from classroom construction activities under the new Country Programme starting in 2017, experience on the pre-primary facilities construction was documented and presented to MoES. As a result, MoES and UNICEF agreed to develop ECE facility construction standards, including WASH facilities. Quality improvement was further advanced through teacher training, provision of ECE toolkits, and regular monitoring and coaching support in 62 pre-primary schools, benefiting 1,407 children (boys: 626; girls: 781). Seventy-four per cent of the targeted ECE programmes in four districts demonstrated marked improvement against the ECE Environmental Rating Scale. To ensure a comprehensive, standardised quality assurance mechanism, the development of national ECE minimum quality standards was initiated with UNICEF support. Together with the planned revisions of the Early Learning Development Standards and the pre-primary curriculum, UNICEF will continuously enhance its support for quality improvement in 2017.

To promote a holistic ECD approach, a set of seven age-appropriate storybooks was developed aligned to the ECE curriculum, and distributed to 256 preschools and 432 primary schools (grade one) in five districts in Saravane province, benefiting 15,367 children. Training on the use of the storybooks was organised for 329 early childhood educators. These storybooks are linked with the UNICEF-supported ECD TV series My Village, and the key ECD messages, including education, nutrition, health, WASH and protection, were incorporated. UNICEF also partnered with the LWU to deliver parenting orientation using the storybooks. Training workshops were conducted for the LWU facilitators, who will deliver the orientations from January 2017 to cover 280 parents and caregivers in Saravane province. Based on this, a cross-sectoral parenting education package will be developed and implemented as a key holistic ECD intervention in the new Country Programme from 2017 onwards.

UNICEF also supported the participation of a high-level delegation, headed by the MoES Vice-Minister, at the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on ECCE in Malaysia. Upon their return, UNICEF continued its high-level advocacy, engaging the MoES Minister. As a result, an agreement was made to hold a national cross-sectoral ECD forum in 2017 for raising awareness among decision makers and enhancing coordination across sectors.

OUTPUT 4 District educational structures in four educationally disadvantaged provinces have the technical capacity to deliver primary education services that meet national quality standards by December 2016

Analytical Statement of Progress:

To meet the ESDP's key objectives, UNICEF in collaboration with development partners worked with MoES for evidence-based quality reform. The Situation Analysis on Student Learning Outcomes in Primary Education in Lao PDR was finalised, which comprehensively studied different existing learning outcome results and associated teaching-learning systems and practices, including curricula. The Review of the Pedagogical Support System in Lao PDR was also completed, which provided insights for effective pedagogical supervision and support systems to achieve better results of teaching-learning. UNICEF also supported the undertaking of the Review of the Primary Student Assessment System in Lao PDR. The review comprehensively analysed the existing primary assessment system, covering international, regional, national, sub-national, school and classroom levels. Such a holistic review is the first of its kind in Lao PDR.

The results of all these reviews informed the ongoing revisions of the primary curriculum, teacher education and pedagogical support framework. These will help ensure the alignment of policy, learning standards, curriculum and materials, teacher education, classroom practices and quality assurance. UNICEF will continue supporting MoES for the improvement of the student assessment system as an integral part of the overall curriculum and quality reforms from 2017 onwards.

The South East Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), carried out in collaboration with the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation and UNICEF EAPRO, reinforced UNICEF's commitment to measuring learning, which serves for monitoring SDG 4 and applying the equity lens to learning. The SEA-PLM field trial was successfully conducted with MoES in the sampled six provinces with the engagement of national Teacher Training Colleges. This will lead to the main survey planned in 2018. Through a practical refresher training workshop, 36 district staff, including 21 pedagogical advisers from the four target districts (Phalanxay, Phouvong, Sing and Ta Oi) increased their capacity. Approximately, 1,000 primary teachers in the districts received in-service professional support by attending a training workshop and through district pedagogical supervision outreach, benefiting about 20,000 students (boys: 10,675; girls: 9,325).

In partnership with the Lao Government, the Australian Government and the EU, all 447,256 students in grades three through five (230,156 girls) received a set of textbooks in 2016 in accordance with the national standard of one textbook per student per subject. Appropriate textbook care and utilisation was promoted through a wide range of communication channels, including posters, and TV and radio spots. UNICEF also provided support to strengthen the monitoring and tracking system of the distributed textbooks.

Equity in access and participation was enhanced both through policy advocacy and service delivery. In partnership with the National Economic Research Institute, EAPRO and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, a national workshop on out-of-school children was held, chaired by the MoES Vice Minister. Barriers and policy analysis was undertaken in a participatory manner, engaging line departments of MoES. The ASEAN Declaration on Out-of-School Children and Youth 2016 will facilitate turning key recommendations of the study into actions once the study is finalised in early 2017. In hard-to-reach communities in three provinces, 2,582 children (boys: 1,346; girls: 1,236) benefited from the primary equivalency education programme. All 93 mobile teachers' capacity in multi-grade teaching techniques was strengthened through training and monitoring support.

OUTCOME 3 By 2016, the programme will achieve an enhanced policy environment, increased coverage of quality services (MNCH, nutrition, HIV), and improved practices by

individuals, families and communities, with particular emphasis on the most remote and vulnerable populations, resulting in healthier children and mothers

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Lao PDR made significant progress in maternal and child mortality reduction, as well as improvements in the nutritional status of children and women in Lao PDR. UN data showed that the maternal mortality rate declined from 1,100 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 220 in 2013. UN interagency estimates also showed a 59 per cent decline (or 3.6 annual rate of reduction) in the under-five mortality rate from 162 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 67 in 2015. This decline surpassed the national target of 80 deaths per 1,000 live births. Despite this progress, the maternal and child mortality levels in Lao PDR remain among the highest in the region. There are significant variations in health and nutrition outcomes and utilization of essential services, with children living in rural areas without roads, those from certain ethnic groups and those living in poor families being affected the most.

The 2015 Lao Child Anthropometric Assessment Survey showed a reduction in child stunting from 44 per cent in 2011 (LSIS1) to 36 per cent in 2015.

Building on the national policy development processes, UNICEF contributed to capacity building for coordinated support in implementation of priority child health and nutrition interventions and evidence-based actions from the 2016-2020 National Plan of Action for Nutrition, the Health Strategic Plan and the National Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) Strategy and Plan of Action.

UNICEF continued to advocate for securing sufficient and predictable resources for core service delivery inputs such as essential commodities and operational costs for integrated health outreach, the main delivery platform for health and nutrition interventions to children and families living in remote, hard-to-reach areas. Sufficient resources for vaccines and nutrition commodities were mobilised for 2016 and 2017, including increasing domestic budget disbursement for vaccines and nutrition commodities (US\$ 1,224,915).

Gaps in outreach financing in Southern provinces were promptly closed through reallocation of UNICEF funds and mobilising additional donor resources.

Partnerships with the LWU, LFNC and the National Assembly were further capitalised upon to disseminate critical information on polio outbreak response and nutrition, and to stimulate positive health and nutrition-related social and behaviour change. The partnership with the World Bank and the EU that was established in 2015 enabled improved coordination and resource allocation for commencing the development of a National Communication Strategy and a Plan of Action on Nutrition 2016-2020.

UNICEF along with other partners provided strategic and technical inputs into the policy dialogue on primary health care and integrated MNCH/nutrition service delivery at the community level using outreach by health providers and community-based services by trained community workers/volunteers. Furthermore, UNICEF introduced the MoH District Health Systems Strengthening Approach (DHSS) with the aim of building district and health facility management teams' capacity for evidence-based planning, implementation and frequent monitoring. It was agreed with MoH that in 2016, UNICEF will support the update of the existing Primary Health Care Policy (2000), the harmonisation of operational guidance on outreach and community health agents, and the DHSS approach adaptation in two UNICEF focus districts. This work will be done jointly with WHO and UNFPA in the framework of a one-year costed extension of the UNJP on MNCH.

In 2016, UNICEF supported the MoH to develop a proposal for the second phase of the UNJP on RMNCH (2017-2020), which was successfully submitted to the Government of Luxembourg. UNICEF also strengthened the governance, management and coordination of the current UNJP on MNCH, through MoH-UNJP meetings and the recruitment of a UNJP Coordinator. UNICEF acts as the convening and administrative agent for the current and new phase of the UNJP.

UNICEF continued to invest in strengthening the capacity of new nutrition institutions by providing international technical advisors and supporting national staff positions for the National Nutrition Committee Secretariat and the Nutrition Centre of the MoH. These inputs led to increased capacity by the National Nutrition Committee (NNC) Secretariat office to manage and monitor efforts to strengthen multi-sectoral coordination for nutrition. The technical assistance provided by UNICEF to the Nutrition Centre resulted in improved capacity of staff to gather and use data for planning nutrition programmes, for developing and managing budgets, and for overseeing and monitoring the status of implementation of nutrition-specific interventions. In the framework of the joint EU-UNICEF nutrition security initiative and with inputs from all development partners, UNICEF supported the Government to implement the Nutrition Stakeholder and Action Mapping, which informed the progress report provided at the second national nutrition forum.

Some progress was made on strengthening the legal framework on the Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes. The MoH agreed to upgrade the current Agreement to a Decree.

MMG and UNICEF Australia support was instrumental in expanding the home fortification programme and the integrated, community-based IYCF package. Programme coverage of micronutrient powder supplementation was 73 per cent for 2016, with 1.4 million micronutrient powder sachets distributed.

The EU and UNICEF, as co-conveners of the Informal Development Partners Group on Nutrition, continued to call quarterly meetings, and supported the NNC secretariat to organize the second NNF. The UN Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) network at the country level met twice to ensure harmonization of support given to the NNC and the secretariat.

OUTPUT 1 effective and efficient management of the health and nutrition programme

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF efficiently mobilized the necessary technical expertise through staff and partnerships to provide effective strategic technical advice, strengthen partners' capacity, manage partnerships and effectively and efficiently manage the implementation of UNICEF Country Programme of cooperation.

OUTPUT 2 OUTPUT 1 (OP1). Strengthened organizational and systemic capacity in health sector to deliver immunisation and other high-impact child survival interventions for hard-to-reach children and their families as part of integrated MNCH services

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Health systems were strengthened at the provincial and district levels, including capacities on data use and analysis from HMIS/DHIS2 for MNCH planning, monitoring and review in Loungnamtha and Phongsaly provinces. In 2016, there were no stock outs of vaccines at the central level due to improved supply forecasting and budgeting. Lao PDR further increased domestic disbursements for vaccines to US\$ 1,224,915 in 2016, 26 per cent more than in 2015 (US\$ 975,346) and nine times more than in 2013. UNICEF-supported advocacy and technical advice for supply forecasting, financial gap monitoring and resource mobilisation

were instrumental to these achievements.

Other UNICEF-supported 2016 achievements includes: development of the 2017-2021 vaccine forecast; endorsement of the costed vaccine improvement plan 2016-2021; successful switch from tOPV to bOPV, and introduction of Japanese Encephalitis in the routine immunisation programme. The measles 2nd dose application to GAVI was approved, and as a result, Lao PDR will introduce a measles/rubella second dose starting in May 2017.

The national and sub-national capacity for cold chain maintenance and vaccine management was further augmented with 90 per cent of health facilities reporting using the second generation of 30-day monitoring fridge tags provided by UNICEF. Two vaccine cold rooms (30 cubic metres each) were procured. One has been installed and the second will be installed by the end of 2016.

Lao PDR successfully implemented the two rounds of Vitamin A and deworming, reaching 96 per cent and 98 per cent of targeted children respectively during round 1, and 98 per cent and 97 per cent during round 2.

Significant geographical disparities in immunisation coverage represent a major challenge leading to substantial immunity gaps as manifested by a polio outbreak in October 2015 that necessitated immediate SIAs. The polio outbreak response started promptly within the Global Polio Eradication Initiative framework, with UNICEF taking the lead in supporting MoH with vaccine/supply management and communication/social mobilisation.

The last positive case onset was on 11 January 2016. During 2016, six high-quality national SIAs were conducted, targeting children under 15 years of age nationwide and the entire population in 42 districts. Polio vaccination coverage in each round was more than 95 per cent. In addition to polio vaccination and routine immunisation, health services such as Vitamin A supplementation, de-worming and measles vaccination were also offered with the support of UNICEF. Services were largely provided through outreach services, and were supplemented by mobile teams for marketplaces, rice fields, plantations and mining sites, and by house-to-house outreach in all high-risk areas.

OUTPUT 3 OUTPUT 2 (OP2): Strengthened individual, organizational and systemic capacity in UNICEF focus provinces and districts to deliver immunisation and other high-impact child survival interventions for hard-to-reach children and their families as part of integrated MNCH services

Analytical Statement of Progress:

As of December 2016, four of five annual targets under Output 2 were met or on track. Progress against one other result could not be assessed due to lack of data at the time of reporting.

UNICEF led efforts in the development and implementation of the communication and social mobilisation plan for polio outbreak response. UNICEF supported a range of activities that included advocacy with provincial administrators, mobilisation of communities through the involvement of community leaders and mass organisations, such as the LFNC, and strengthening the interpersonal communication skills of health workers. UNICEF, in collaboration with the Centre for Information and Health Education within the MoH, produced and distributed/broadcast a range of mass media and IPC materials, including radio and TV spots, campaign posters, banners, leaflets and health worker flipcharts. Emphasis was given to increasing coverage among underserved ethnic minority communities, which have reported most of the cases.

A real-time outreach monitoring system and service/information delivery platforms for MNCH and immunisation were successfully tested in Sing district of Loungnamtha through the use of mobile phone technology. This system provides data on outreach services in almost real time to MoH at central, provincial and district level and allows communities to gain access to high quality health information.

UNICEF supported four rounds of integrated MNCH outreach – the main delivery platform for preventative and promotion services, including immunisation, antenatal and postnatal care, micronutrient supplementation, deworming, health promotion – in four UNICEF focus provinces, Saravane, Savannakhet (Vilabouly district only), Luangnamtha and Phongsaly.

The 2016 micro-planning and implementation of integrated health outreach activities by all 39 health centres in Luangnamtha and 20 out of 29 health centres in Phongsaly (80 per cent of total health facilities) were guided by the Micro-planning Guidelines developed and tested with UNICEF and WHO support in 2014 based on the Reaching Every Community principles. The implementation experience in the two provinces informed the review of the national Micro-planning Guidelines to strengthen the MoH operational guidance on equity-focused and integrated RMNCH service delivery. The revised guidelines were finalised and MoH has agreed to a nationwide roll-out.

The management capacity of provincial and district health teams in Luangnamtha province was further consolidated through the provision of technical and financial support to the quarterly monitoring and supervision meetings, as well as management reviews on MNCH service delivery indicators and systemic bottlenecks. These review meetings enabled the province to identify and respond to programme implementation bottlenecks.

UNICEF's work on the development of ICT-supported models and platforms for monitoring and service delivery at the community level in Luangnamtha province enabled a more effective process for development of the first National e-Health Strategy.

OUTPUT 4 OUTPUT 3 (OP3): Improved organizational and systemic capacity of the Government for multi-sectoral nutrition coordination, planning, monitoring and evaluation, including coordination with development partners such as UN, donors, civil society

Analytical Statement of Progress:

In 2016, UNICEF along with other UN agencies consolidated progress to strengthen the institutional arrangements for the NNC and provided support for the establishment of provincial coordination committees and secretariats. The NNC and NNC Secretariat were supported to conduct biannual progress review meetings and to produce six monthly reports.

The second national nutrition forum was conducted. A key achievement was the development of an Outcome Statement on nutrition that reaffirmed commitments by government and development partners for supporting the processes needed to scale up nutrition actions at provincial and district levels. The nutrition forum provided the space for sharing information and strengthened the willingness of sub-national stakeholders to commit to follow-up actions at the provincial level that support scaling up of nutrition interventions.

The EU and UNICEF as co-convenors of the Development Partners Group for food and nutrition security convened three out of four quarterly meetings to share information updates on multi-sectoral coordination with other development partners to ensure harmonisation of support to the implementation of the national nutrition strategy.

UNICEF provided technical support for strengthening the capacity of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) focal point within the MoH for the regular SUN meetings. Support was also provided

for the update of the Lao country profile in the Annual 2016 SUN progress report, ensuring quality external information dissemination on the nutrition situation in Lao PDR.

The NNS and Plan of Action M&E framework were reviewed and the Common Results Framework was presented to the NNC Secretariat office for approval. A reporting format for use by the Secretariat was developed to facilitate consistent high-quality reporting of NPAN intervention implementation progress. New data generated from the 2015 Lao Child Anthropometric Assessment Survey (tag-on to the national immunisation coverage survey) and the sub-national Food and Nutrition Security Survey provided information about the decreasing prevalence of stunting and underweight among children under five years of age.

The NNSPA operational guidelines were developed to support decision makers, planners and technical specialists to improve joint planning and monitoring processes. The guidelines provide tools and templates that can be used by the various sectors to facilitate joint planning and monitoring. They provide clear steps for sectors to work together to plan for and monitor implementation of nutrition interventions.

Support was provided by UNICEF for the annual stakeholder mapping exercise. Programmatic and financial information was used to inform the progress report presented by the MoH at the second NNF. Data on financial gaps was used to advocate to the Government of Laos for increased allocation of domestic budget to nutrition for 2017 and beyond.

Despite these achievements, progress remains slow in the following areas, which may result in delays in implementation of nutrition actions at the sub-national level:

- Establishment of coordination mechanisms at all provincial and district levels to oversee the multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder plans at sub-national levels; and
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities of different sectors and national and sub-national level agencies.

OUTPUT 5 OUTPUT 4 (OP4): Strengthened individual, organizational and systemic capacity of the MoH to plan, deliver and monitor the implementation of nutrition-specific interventions, such as IYCF and micronutrients, in the most effective, efficient and equitable way

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Significant progress was made in national budget allocation for nutrition commodities, including Vitamin A and iron folic acid. Advocacy for a national system to monitor essential commodities for public health programmes including nutrition commodities was supported by UNICEF and other development partners.

UNICEF supported the procurement and distribution of nutrition commodities. As of September 2016, 1,784,827 children one to under-five years of age benefited from mebendazole tablets, and 170,833 pregnant and lactating women benefited from IFA tablets. Three hundred and fifty children benefited from ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) for the treatment of severe acute malnutrition. The provision of nutrition commodities through UNICEF prevented stock outs and ensured uninterrupted service delivery.

UNICEF supported an assessment of the Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition programme in Lao PDR, which resulted in a number of recommendations to improve the services for treatment of severe acute malnutrition, especially for provinces prone to natural disasters. A training-of-trainers workshop was held in September 2016 on the Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition interim guidance note. Fifteen MoH staff were trained as trainers, and 90 health workers across three provinces were trained. The result of this guidance note and the associated training was increased capacity of health centres in these three provinces to respond to and treat children who present with severe

acute malnutrition. Implementation of the guidance will be monitored in 2017 for indications of enhanced capacity and impact on services.

One of the 2016 achievements was the revision of the IYCF promotion and counselling package at the community level. Its implementation involved a mix of communication approaches: interpersonal communication through health providers and LWU volunteers; sustained nationwide media campaign using radio, TV spots and talk shows; and mobilisation of national and local authorities and opinion leaders. With UNICEF support, national IYCF training and monitoring capacities were established and the package was implemented in 26 districts in 6 provinces, mobilising 41 provincial and district authorities and building the capacity of 191 health workers and 1,302 LWUs to promote positive nutrition practices and care-seeking during pregnancy, postpartum and in the first years of the child's life. Data on breastfeeding from the 2015 sub-national food and nutrition security survey indicates that in Attapeu and Saravane, where UNICEF had been supporting the implementation of the IYCF package, the rates of exclusive breastfeeding had increased compared with 2011 LSIS data.

MMG and UNICEF Australia support was instrumental for expanding the home fortification programme and the integrated, community-based IYCF package. Programme coverage of micronutrient powder supplementation was 73 per cent for 2016, with 1.4 million micronutrient powder sachets distributed.

UNICEF, in collaboration with the Food and Drug Department of the MoH, supported the development and implementation of the universal salt iodization quality assurance and monitoring web-based system in two salt factories.

As a cluster lead for nutrition, UNICEF coordinated the update of the related preparedness and response plan under the framework of the UN Interagency Contingency Plan.

OUTCOME 4 By 2016, children in the Lao PDR are protected against abuse, exploitation, violence, neglect and discrimination through the development of a legal, regulatory and social welfare system

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Lao PDR continued to strengthen the child protection system in Lao PDR. Efforts were made to strengthen laws and policies related to child protection and the data and evidence to inform the development of child protection system. The capacity and skills of professionals and institutions were improved to implement newly approved laws/policies and provide child protection services. UNICEF also strengthened the working mechanisms and partnerships leading to a more coordinated and sector-wide approach to child protection the establishment of family support and community-based child protection services.

Key results with UNICEF support were the availability and utilisation of a package of user-friendly Implementation Guidelines for the Law on Juvenile Criminal Procedures by legal professionals. Newly approved laws such as the law on Juvenile Criminal Procedures and its implementation guidelines, the Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Children, the Adoption Decree etc., were disseminated among service providers, and awareness was raised among key stakeholders through UNICEF Lao PDR's continuous technical and financial support.

With UNICEF Lao PDR support, the first national survey on violence against children, covering physical, emotional and sexual violence was completed in 2016 to enhance evidence to inform the future direction of the child protection system and programme

planning for prevention and response to the issue of violence against children. The report on the Analysis of the Justice System as it relates to Children in Contact with the Law and the report on Assessment of the Child and Family Welfare System were endorsed. The Social Work Practice Review also provided a set of recommendations for the Government to strengthen the institutionalisation and quality of justice and social work functions at the different levels over the short and long term. The enhancement of the coordination and cooperation among different actors in child protection including the Government, UN agencies, international NGOs and CSOs was supported by UNICEF Lao PDR through capacity building of the established coordination mechanisms such as the Juvenile Justice Coordination Committee and its Secretariat, the Committee for Protection and Assistance of Children.

The capacity of the Secretariat to the Juvenile Justice Coordination Committee was considerably strengthened, and it was able to coordinate and cooperate with other sectors, including the social welfare sector and civil society. Joint monitoring trips with UNICEF Lao PDR and partners were conducted, which brought all concerned agencies and officials in the justice sector together to share information and lessons learned on and find solutions to child protection issues.

The capacity and institution-building efforts to respond to child protection issues were further strengthened by the Child Protection Programme through new training modules on child rights and child justice that will be developed based on the recommendation of the training needs assessment of justice professionals working with children in contact with the law, which was completed in 2016. With technical support provided by UNICEF, the para-social work training course for children and their families was revised and updated, and will be finalised and used for strengthening of skills and knowledge necessary for social welfare staff to fulfil their role in responding to situations of child protection concern. In addition, to support for the community-based child protection services, the project on Legal and Social Assistance to Children in Contact and in Conflict with the Law and Community-based Diversion and Alternative Option for Children in Conflict with the Law were initiated.

The Government requested that UNICEF Lao PDR provide both financial and technical support for the development of the State Party Periodic Report in early 2016. The NCMC, the focal point for the CRC and the Optional Protocols, led the process. UNICEF Lao PDR advocated successfully to include key development partners such as the EU and Australian Government, international NGOs, CSOs and children in this process to be participatory and consultative. The periodic reporting process for the first time in 2016 included consultation with children, which took place in 11 districts in 9 provinces with children aged 6-11 in primary schools and 11-18 in secondary school. In total, 558 children (332 girls) between the ages of 6-18 were consulted. The final draft was approved by the Prime Minister on 9 December 2016 and subsequently submitted to the CRC committee.

As the current Child Protection Programme is in its last year of implementation under UNICEF's 2012-2016 Country Programme, support for implementation of the newly developed laws and decrees and the recommendations from the assessments that have been conducted under this project will continue to take place within the next Country Programme (2017-2021). The Child Protection Programme will continue to strengthen the legal, policy and institutional framework on child protection and improve the availability and delivery of and access to quality family support and community-based child protection services. The Programme will also focus on raising awareness and changing perspectives and attitudes to the protection of children from violence, neglect and exploitation including early marriage, disability and trafficking, as well as birth registration.

OUTPUT 1 By 2016, a child-sensitive and gender-appropriate child justice system established in line with international standards better protecting children in conflict with the law, victims and witnesses of crime

Analytical Statement of Progress:

With support from UNICEF, the Implementation Guidelines for the Law on Juvenile Criminal Procedures were developed in 2016, which consist of guidelines for investigating agencies, public prosecutors, judges, lawyers, social workers, village child mediation committees, children in conflict and in contact with the law, child victims/witnesses and their parents. The implementation guidelines were disseminated and orientation sessions were conducted for local officials and authorities. The guidelines substantially helped those law enforcement officials and other concerned actors to carry out their roles in protecting and assisting children during legal proceedings at all stages. The guidelines for children in conflict and in contact with the law, and child victims/witnesses and their parents provided a simple explanation to mothers, fathers, girls and boys about the process and children's rights as well as their rights and responsibilities during legal proceedings.

A comprehensive analysis of the justice system was finalised and endorsed by the Juvenile Justice Coordination Committee. Recommendations from the analysis will be used for the improvement of the justice system to ensure that the rights of children in contact with the law are protected.

A training needs assessment of child justice professionals was completed. Based on the findings of the assessment, a training plan and training modules for juvenile justice officials will be developed and integrated into the regular curriculum of the Police Academy, provincial police schools, the Research and Training Institute for Prosecutors, and the Research and Training Institute for Judges.

The pilot project on Legal and Social Assistance to Children in Contact and in Conflict with the Law brought together the justice sector, social welfare sector, UN organisations, international NGOs and CSOs to share information and discuss the support and assistance for children in contact with the law. This is considered a best practice in terms of cooperation and coordination between the justice and other sectors. The close cooperation, collaboration and information sharing will improve the protection and promotion of the rights of children who come into contact with the law.

The Ministry of Justice, with support from UNICEF Lao PDR, initiated a community-based diversion initiative and other alternative measures for children in conflict with the law to assist children's rehabilitation and reintegration. This focuses not only on the victims, but also addresses an offending child's behaviour and efforts to prevent future offending.

Key constraints/bottlenecks remain the limited availability of funds allocated to child justice by the Government, limited services for children in contact with the law, and a lack of professionals specifically trained to handle cases involving children.

In 2017, the programme will continue its support to strengthen the child protection system in Lao PDR, particularly the justice system for children, including capacity to implement the newly approved policies and legislation for child protection, and to strengthen service delivery for children who come into contact with the justice system, whether as victims, witnesses or suspects of a crime.

OUTPUT 2 By 2015, the most vulnerable and marginalized children and their families are better protected by a child and family welfare system

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Following the development of the Adoption Manual, training on adoption was conducted for members of Provincial and District Adoption Committees from 10 provinces and 24 districts. A total of 173 members of the local Adoption Committees, including 56 females, benefited from training. Three orientation programmes on the new adoption procedures for health workers, and labour, social welfare and justice staff were also conducted.

The Child and Family Welfare System Assessment was endorsed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. It provided the analysis of core system elements such as the legal and policy framework, existing key structures and institutional organisation, child welfare and protection services and support and child and family welfare system capacity and resources. The recommendations included the need for a national agreement to guide the design and development of the child and family welfare system and define roles, responsibilities and coordination of all those involved in child protection in order to ensure capacity for practical implementation.

The Government, with UNICEF support, completed the first-ever national survey on violence against children, covering physical, emotional and sexual violence. The preliminary findings were launched on 2 June 2016. The survey provided an overview of the situation of physical, emotional and sexual violence against children in Lao PDR as well as the commonly reported perpetrator of each type of violence, which will help the government in planning and programme design for prevention and response to the issue of violence against children.

With support from UNICEF, a rapid assessment of children without parental care was initiated. This assessment will inform the development of the Alternative Care Guidelines for children in Lao PDR and will also provide vital information to strengthen coordination and collaboration with other sectors, especially education, health and public security. The para-social work training course was revised and updated in 2016 to strengthen skills and knowledge necessary for social welfare staff to fulfil their roles in responding to situations of child protection concern.

A major challenge in child welfare remains translating laws and policies into practice, largely due to limitations in budget, services and human capacities to protect and assist children who are at risk of or experiencing harm. Significant work remains to be done to build the institutional and human capacities to deliver family support and community-based child protection services.

Due to the Government's restructuring, the NCMC was merged with the National Commission for Advancement of Women to form a new commission. This delayed the finalisation of the violence against children full report and its multi-sectoral action plan, which will be finalised and disseminated in first quarter of 2017.

In 2017, the programme will focus on follow-up actions of the key recommendation from the violence against children survey and related Government action plan, finalizing and accepting the report on rapid assessment of children without parental care, and finalizing and delivering para-professional training to key child protection stakeholders and service providers.

OUTPUT 3 Effective and efficient management of the Child Protection Programme**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF Lao PDR efficiently mobilized the necessary technical expertise through staff and partnerships to provide effective strategic technical advice, strengthen partners' capacity,

engage in partnerships and effectively and efficiently manage the implementation of this programme component of the UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation.

OUTCOME 5 By 2016 children's health and development will benefit from equitable and sustainable access to, and use of, safe water and basic sanitation, with particular emphasis on reaching rural remote areas

Analytical Statement of Progress:

According to WHO/UNICEF (JMP update 2015), 76 per cent of people in Lao have access to an improved source of water and 71 per cent have access to improved sanitation. Sixty per cent of primary schools have both water and latrines. UNICEF continued to play an important role in improving the WASH enabling environment. Technical support was provided to the Government to fulfil the SWA high-level commitments. An overarching WASH policy was drafted and was in the endorsement process at the end of 2016. UNICEF is also a key player in the WASH technical working group, which brings together WASH partners from government, UN organisations and international NGOs, and meets bimonthly. In addition, UNICEF is also the lead for emergency WASH Cluster Coordination.

With UNICEF direct support in 2016, an estimated 39,078 people in remote rural areas gained access to improved sources of water in three provinces (Xiengkhouang, Saravane and Phongsaly). A total of 10,318 primary school children, including 5,145 girls, in 102 primary schools in three provinces of Oudomxay, Saravane and Savannakhet directly benefited from the WASH services in schools, which included the provision of gender-segregated and accessible school latrines for boys, girls and disabled children equipped with hand washing stations, and access to an improved source of water.

An additional 5,452 school children in 51 primary schools practise daily hand washing with soap and water in groups before school meals, use latrines and clean them after use, drink filtered water in the classrooms and clean the school compound as daily routine behaviours in Saravane province under the HAPiS initiatives. A total of 181 government front-line staff and 1,236 village education development committee members were trained on operation and maintenance to own, operate and maintain their WASH systems. An additional 113 new WASH committees, responsible for managing water schemes in their communities, were established with increased women's participation. Water safety plans were initiated in rural water supply schemes, and aligned with CLTS interventions in Saravane.

UNICEF contracted Emory University in 2014 to conduct a longitudinal study to measure the impacts of WinS in 100 sample schools (50 intervention and 50 control schools) on reduction of absenteeism. In 2016, three rounds of data collection were conducted from the target schools and the data was analysed. Five main parameters were measured, which included enrolment, absenteeism, pupil characteristics, use of WASH facilities and practice of hygiene behaviours. The latest findings showed that there is a positive correlation between absenteeism and seasonal events, such as plantation and harvesting periods, in both intervention and control schools.

UNICEF adjusted the design of WASH facilities in simple but innovative ways in order to reduce costs and be able to reach remote school locations. The use of pre-fabricated latrines is one example. Northern and Eastern parts of Laos have largely mountainous terrain so that construction in those inaccessible communities has been one of the major difficulties of WinS implementation. A UNICEF effort resulted in an affordable design of light-weight steel structure (pre-fabricated) school latrines that can be easily assembled at sites by substituting brick walls and reinforced concrete elements (columns) by smart-boards and steel elements respectively. The total weight of the structure has been reduced and the flexibility for transportation has significantly increased compared to the conventional latrine

construction. UNICEF continues to introduce innovative technology to make the facilities more climate-resilient. For example, 12 boreholes were installed with raised hand pumps to make them more resilient to flooding in Saravane province, and boreholes were closed (provision of casing pipes) to prevent them from collapsing due to flooding.

UNICEF took the lead and used global platforms such as World Water Day, Global Hand Washing Day, and World Toilet Day as opportunities for advocacy on the importance of WinS communities. Media coverage resulted in increased public awareness and support for government investment in WASH. Other platforms for advocacy included participation in the WinS International Learning Exchange and the SWA Ministerial meeting in Addis Ababa.

UNICEF initiated a district-wide approach of scaling up sanitation, considering the whole district as one unit. As a result, Lao PDR is making significant progress in sanitation coverage with two entire districts, Thapabhath and Paksan Districts of Borikhamxay Province, the first of its kind in the country, declared open-defecation free. With this significant step, over 81,500 rural people including 40,635 girls and women in two provinces (Borikhamxay and Saravane) lives in open-defecation free societies. However, there are still significant gaps between access to and use of facilities in rural communities. The elimination of open defecation is the bottom line for UNICEF-supported sanitation interventions.

Sector partners such as Water and Sanitation Program of the World Bank, the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) and PLAN worked together to promote positive behaviours in sanitation and build the capacity of government partners to scale up rural sanitation. This resulted in the development of behaviour change communication tools to address sanitation issues. Increased demand along with access to sanitation products by poor communities will lead to sustained sanitation of poor households in rural areas.

In 2016, as in the past, UNICEF Lao PDR updated its Early Warning early Action and Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Contingency Plans. Through the government system, UNICEF responded to more than 10,000 people, including 4,700 children affected by floods and cold weather with life-saving WASH and non-food materials (blankets) in Luang Prabang, Phongsaly, Houaphan and Bolikhamxay provinces. UNICEF, as lead for the WASH cluster, organized regular cluster meetings.

OUTPUT 1: National and sub-national line ministries and departments have strengthened political commitment, accountability and capacity to develop and adopt evidence-based equitable and gender-sensitive policies, budgeted plans for scaling up of WASH interventions to promote safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and good hygiene practices

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF continued to provide technical support to the MoH to fulfil sector commitments of the SWA high-level meeting. The Vice Minister of Health led the Lao delegation and participated in the SWA ministerial meeting in Addis Ababa in March 2016. Key action points as take home messages included the need to: i) finalise an overarching WASH policy; ii) establish a National WASH Committee; iii) conduct an innovative financing strategy with all stakeholders after completion of each sector strategy; iv) continue to conduct a joint sector review (JSR) annually; and v) carry out an HR/institutional capacity assessment. Further, the meeting enabled government partners to better strategize and act on the WASH SDG. Regular thematic working group meetings were supported to improve coordination in the sector. The draft overarching WASH policy for urban and rural settings was finalised and in the government's endorsement at the end of 2016. It was a challenge to bring different line ministries and departments together for the consultation meetings as they were heavily

engaged in preparation of the ASEAN Summit.

UNICEF actively supported its partners to raise awareness on the importance of WASH through celebration of global events, namely World Water Day, Global Hand Washing Day and World Toilet Day. Media coverage and school-based events helped raised the profile of WinS. This was further reinforced by distribution of the Raising Clean Hands booklet in the Lao language to local partners, including NGOs working in the education and health sectors.

Three members of the School Health Taskforce led by Director General of the Department of Pre-school and Primary Education under the MoES took part in the WinS learning exchange in Jakarta. A video presentation was produced for the meeting and is being adapted for advocacy purposes to promote scaling up of hygiene behaviour in schools. The video summarises key achievements and priorities for sustainable services and hygiene behaviour promotion in schools.

UNICEF contracted Emory University in 2014 to conduct a longitudinal study to measure the impacts of WinS in 100 sample schools (50 intervention and 50 control schools) on reduction of absenteeism. In 2016, three rounds of data collection were conducted from the target schools and analysed. Five main parameters were measured, including enrolment, absenteeism, pupil characteristics, WASH facilities and hygiene behaviours. The latest findings from the field showed that there is a positive correlation between absenteeism and seasonal events, such as plantation and harvesting periods, in both intervention and control schools.

A water supply guideline was finalized and will be made available for all partners delivering WASH services in rural areas. The WASH sector-co-funded activity on the development of behaviour change communication tools and capacity building to promote rural sanitation was completed.

OUTPUT 2 WASH partners use strengthened coordination mechanisms to better plan, budget, implement and monitor activities related to the humanitarian situation and disaster risk reduction

Analytical Statement of Progress:

At the beginning of 2016, the northern parts of Lao were hit by an unusual cold weather front and snowfall in some regions, which is uncommon. The country also experienced flooding. UNICEF responded to the victims of flood and the cold wave through the Government systems in the reporting year. Approximately 10,000 affected people including 4,700 children received life-saving WASH materials (jerry cans, water purification tablets, buckets, soap bars, chlorine granules etc.) and blankets in the four provinces of Luang Prabang, Phongsaly, Houaphan and Bolikhamxay.

UNICEF as WASH Cluster lead organized regular cluster coordination meetings to improve and strengthen coordination to prepare and respond to humanitarian situations in an effective way. The WASH preparedness and response plan was developed and updated, the capacity mapping and the 3W (Who is doing What Where?) matrix of cluster members was updated. To respond to the humanitarian situation, the government with support from the UN Regional Coordinator Office organized a two-day simulation exercise in June 2016. Government and UN organizations participated in the exercise and developed action points specifically to improve the coordination at the national and sub-national levels.

UNICEF supported the Centre for Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation (Nam Saat) under the MoH to produce the WASH Chapter of the SPHERE Hand Book in the Lao language. The document was being prepared for printing and distribution to relevant

partners at the end of 2016.

Furthermore, WASH items such as water buckets, jerry cans, water purifying tablets, coagulant (alum), chlorine granules, soap etc. were pre-positioned in four main regions: Central Nam Saat's store in Vientiane Capital; Provincial Health Department, Luang Prabang for the northern region; Provincial Health Department, Savanakheth for the central region; and Provincial Health Department Pakse in for the southern region to ensure a faster response to the affected population in the provinces.

OUTPUT 3 Effective and efficient management of the WASH Programme

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF provided HR support through this output to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of programme components in the Country Programme of Cooperation. UNICEF Lao PDR efficiently mobilised the necessary technical expertise through staff and partnerships to provide effective strategic technical advice, strengthen partners' capacity, engage in partnerships, and effectively and efficiently manage the implementation of this programme component of UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation.

OUTPUT 4 Focus provinces/districts have increased capacity and deliver child-friendly, gender-sensitive WASH services in schools and communities including primary health institutions

Analytical Statement of Progress:

More than 39,078 people in 61 remote communities have access to improved sources of water through construction of 172 water points (137 boreholes, 32 gravity-fed water supply systems and 3 dug wells) in Saravane, Xiengkhuang and Phongsaly provinces. Generally, UNICEF provided non-local materials for gravity-fed water systems and the communities provided labour and local construction materials (sand, gravel, timber, etc.), which covered about 30 to 35 per cent of the cost. An additional 113 new WASH committees were established and trained in 2016. Water safety plans were established in 20 villages that are also included for CLTS interventions in Saravane province.

A total of 10,318 primary school children, including 5,145 girls in 102 schools in Oudomxay, Saravane and Savannakhet provinces have access to gender-sensitive and accessible school latrines equipped with hand washing stations, and improved sources of water in school. Standard designs and drawings for WinS were developed and shared with the MPI for advocacy with external partners.

A total of 5,452 primary school children including 2,718 girls in 49 primary schools in Saravane and 2 schools in Vientiane Capital received hygiene education and practised daily routine behaviours under the HAPiS intervention. The four key behaviours are: 1) wash hands with soap and water in a group before the school meal, 2) use and clean latrines, 3) drink filtered water in the classrooms, and 4) clean the school compound. School Environmental Health Clubs in 15 primary schools in 5 districts of SRV were established with the training of teachers. The Lao version of the three-star approach for WinS was developed.

Over 36 government officials from districts of eight focus provinces received training-of-trainers for implementing hygiene activities in schools. Knowledge and skills to operate and maintain WASH facilities in schools were provided to 181 government frontline staff and 1,236 school management committee members from 312 schools. The Operations and Maintenance Manual was developed and distributed to provincial education and health departments and school management committees.

UNICEF adjusted the design of WASH facilities in schools in a simple but innovative way in order to reduce cost, taking into consideration the transportation of materials to remote locations in the mountainous provinces. The use of pre-fabricated latrines is one example. UNICEF continued to introduce innovative technology to make the facilities more climate-resilient. For example, 12 boreholes were installed with raised hand pumps to make them more resilient to flooding in Saravane province.

UNICEF initiated a districtwide approach of scaling up sanitation, considering the whole district as one unit. As a result, the provincial government of Borikhamxay declared two entire districts, Thapabhath and Paksan, the first of its kind in the country, open defecation-free. Over 81,500 rural people from 96 communities in two provinces (Borikhamxay and Saravane) live in open defecation-free societies. However, there are still significant gaps between access to and use of facilities in rural communities. The elimination of open defecation is the bottom line for UNICEF-supported sanitation interventions.

OUTCOME 6 By 2016, children, young people and women have their rights fulfilled through a strengthened knowledge, policy, legislative and budgetary environment

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Significant evidence was generated, including equity-focused research and studies conducted to inform policy, planning and monitoring of the situation of children. Some of these studies were Child Well-being and Disparities, Economic Consequences due to Malnutrition, an Out-of-School Study, and a National Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA).

In 2011/12, UNICEF Lao PDR supported data collection and monitoring efforts of the government in conducting the Lao Social Indicator Survey I, which was used to establish a baseline for the 7th NSEDP and reporting on the MDGs. In 2016, UNICEF Lao PDR led the Lao Social Indicator Survey II, which will serve to monitor the 8th NSEDP and will be used to establish a baseline for the SDGs.

UNICEF also provided support for the first National Survey on Violence against Children and Nutrition Survey at the sub-national level. In addition, UNICEF supported the National Economic Research Institute in the development of the National Socio-Economic Research Framework. The framework will support evidence generation to inform policies and programmes to achieve the 8th NSEDP (2016-2020) and Strategy 2025, particularly the graduation from least-developed country status.

UNICEF also successfully conducted high-level advocacy and policy dialogue with key policymakers, including members of the National Assembly (parliamentarians) through the development of policy briefs, issue-based sectoral meetings and a workshop on Strengthening Parliamentarians' Involvement on Better Actions for Children. This part of its work mainly focused on off-track MDG indicators, such as stunted and underweight children, low immunisation coverage, survival rates from first through fifth grade, low early childhood education coverage and related disparities, low utilisation of latrines, high open defecation, violence against children and social budgeting for children.

Partnership for children was strengthened with traditional partners, and new partnerships established with key mass organisations such as the LFNC and the LWU. The partnership with MPI enhanced the availability and accessibility of disaggregated data through surveys and research and use of findings for policy dialogue, supporting the development of the 8th NSEDP including a national monitoring and evaluation framework. New partnerships with the LFNC and LWU contributed to reaching ethnic groups in remote areas to address inequity and gender issues. UNICEF Lao PDR ensured that children are at the centre of

development through the 8th NSEDP and UN partnership framework development processes.

UNICEF supported the Lao Statistics Bureau for the development of provincial databases and dashboards for planning and monitoring of the National and Provincial Social Economic Development Plan at the sub-national level. This was done through capacity-building workshops for the provincial Lao Statistics Bureaus, and provision of technical assistance. Based on this experience, other provinces are developing such provincial databases with their own resources but with technical assistance from UNICEF Lao PDR.

National Assembly members and MPI were equipped with skills as well as checklists to monitor the situation of children at the local level. With financial and technical support from UNICEF, National Assembly members conducted several field visits to assess the situation of children as well as the challenges in implementation of development programmes for them. MPI, being an inter-sectoral ministry, also conducted several joint field visits with UNICEF programme teams. The findings from those visits were discussed with Parliamentarians and partners during annual programme review and planning meetings.

UNICEF Lao PDR conducted several programme evaluations, namely Evaluation of the Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition, Evaluation of the WASH Programme and Evaluation of My Village TV Programme, which provided sufficient strategic information and knowledge to inform the government's plans, policies and strategies, including the development of the new Country Programme Document 2107-2021. In addition, UNICEF also supported the government for the development of an overarching WASH Policy and the finalization of the Convention on the Rights of the Child Report.

The main constraints faced during this period were the workload of Government counterparts to handle multiple demands from development partners and the Government's priorities at the same time. Due to competing priorities and limited HR capacity, some activities could not be completed, such as the child poverty analysis.

Some of the key priorities for 2017 will be completion of LSIS II, strengthening of sub-national planning and monitoring in priority provinces, a child poverty analysis and child-friendly budgeting, and orientation workshops for National Assembly Members and other key decision makers on child rights.

OUTPUT 1 OP 3. Programme Support social policy programme

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Lao PDR efficiently mobilized the necessary technical expertise through staff and partnerships to provide effective strategic technical advice, strengthen partners' capacity, engage in partnerships and effectively and efficiently manage the implementation of this programme component of the UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation.

OUTPUT 2 OP 1. By 2016, disaggregated data from surveys are available and accessible for evidence-based sub-national planning

Analytical Statement of Progress:

The main achievement in 2016 was support to the Government to implement the LSIS II. This survey is very timely and strategic for providing up-to-date information that will assist the key social development indicators to monitor the SDGs and establish a baseline for national development plans and priorities including the 8th NSEDP and provincial core social development indicators data. It will also support the data for least-developed country

graduation.

Together with the LSB and key ministries, UNICEF is leading the survey and providing all technical support through the Global MICS Team, mobilising resources from other development partners and providing on-the-ground support through the development of a survey plan, sampling design and training on the major steps of the survey. LSB staff were equipped with knowledge of the MICS 6 modules and its methodology during an MICS 6 design workshop in Kenya. UNICEF is also coordinating with USAID for technical support for anaemia testing, which will be part of the LSIS II together with water quality testing. The data collection is planned to be conducted in early 2017 and key findings will be available at the end of 2017.

To strengthen sub-national capacity, UNICEF supported the LSB for the development of provincial databases and dashboards in three provinces (SaravanInfo, AttapeulInfo and SavannaketInfo) for planning and monitoring of the National and Provincial Social Economic Development Plan at the sub-national level. This was done through capacity-building workshops on database management and utilisation of LaoInfo for 50 key staff from the central LSB, the provincial statistical offices, and key line departments, such as health, education and sport, and agriculture and forestry, and the district statistical office. The databases are in both the Lao and English languages. The dashboards will be used by decision makers to monitor the progress of provincial development plans.

Based on this experience, three more provinces used their own resources with some technical support from UNICEF for strengthening their provincial databases for sub-national planning and monitoring.

In 2016, dialogue on a child poverty analysis initiated with LSB. However, due to competing priorities, the analysis will be conducted in 2017.

OUTPUT 3 By 2016, disaggregated data from key selected equity-focused research and studies are available to inform advocacy, social inclusive, and economic development strategy that benefit children and women

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Together with the National Economic Research Institute, UNICEF supported the development of the National Socio-Economic Research Framework, which provides the overall framework for key research, study and analysis in supporting the implementation of the 8th NSEDP, the national strategy 2025, and vision 2030.

UNICEF also conducted an out-of-school children study aimed at analysing and quantifying the impacts of key determinants affecting out-of-school children (pre- primary, primary and lower secondary educational levels), and by so doing, developing concrete policy recommendations for targeted interventions. The initial findings from this study will be a useful source of information for policymakers in formulating the necessary policies to address the issues of out-of-school children in Lao PDR as well as feeding into regional overviews, a global study and a global conference to leverage resources for equity. The preliminary findings of the study of out-of-school children highlighted key barriers such as distance from schools, the age factor, some were considered too young to go to school, financial issues, as parents did not have money to support their schooling, and working children as they have to do for family work.

The policy briefs on children related to immunisation, nutrition, hand washing, open defecation, violence against children and ECE were widely disseminated through high-level meetings of the LFNC.

Discussions on the child poverty analysis were held, a concept note was drafted and consultation meetings were organised. The purpose of study is to generate an analysis on child poverty and most-deprived children in Lao PDR (who are they and where do they live) based on data from the Lao Expenditure and Consumption Surveys. The findings of this study will help provide the trend analysis of the child poverty level in Lao PDR. The child poverty analysis will be completed in 2017.

OUTPUT 4 By 2016, partners are better able to support the programme planning, coordinate the implementation, review of progress and facilitate the Country Programme of Cooperation between the Government of Lao PDR and UNICEF

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF established a strategic partnership with MPI, which played an important role in coordinating and facilitating the preparation of a new Country Programme of Cooperation between the Government of Lao PDR and UNICEF. Several strategic meetings were organised in a timely manner, including the CPD development strategy meeting. A pre-Board briefing meeting with the Embassies of UNICEF executive board member states was also organised to orient them on the key programme priorities of the new Country Programme.

MPI, being an inter-sectoral ministry, played key role in coordinating meetings on implementation, progress review and planning, and also strengthening the HACT. Several progress review and planning meetings were successfully organised to assess the results achieved and discuss lessons learned. Several field monitoring visits were conducted jointly. The visit to one of the seven priority provinces for the 2017-2021 programme cycle, Bokeo, was organised, leading to high-level commitment from the provincial authorities and an opportunity to discuss implementation modalities.

OUTCOME 7 Effective and efficient programme performance

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Lao PDR submitted the draft strategy note and CPD to EAPRO in early 2016 for quality assurance followed by an HR exercise as part of the new country programme development process. The exercise was carried out through a consultative, participatory and transparent process, and was facilitated by an independent external consultant with strong HR management experience.

MPI, a focal ministry coordinating social sector development in Lao PDR, endorsed UNICEF's new CPD 2017-2021 on 21 June 2016. Subsequently, UNICEF Lao PDR convened a pre-Board briefing with UNICEF Executive Board Member Embassies on the new CPD on 24 June 2016.

With the support of EAPRO, a result-based management workshop was conducted for programme staff from 22 to 25 August 2016. The four-day workshop was tailored to UNICEF Lao PDR requirements of taking the CPD forward by reviewing and revising outputs and indicators, outlining log frames, and agreeing on key elements of rolling workplans, including monitoring and evaluation and reporting. This workshop provided valuable inputs and charted the way forward for further developing new country programme elements, especially the two-year rolling workplans.

UNICEF Lao PDR used both programme and operations management indicators as key management tools for monitoring office performance. The performance management reports

were shared weekly during heads of sections meetings and monthly at CMT meetings.

The Annual Management Plan 2016 was submitted on time, and the annual review, with participation of all staff, took place on 14 December 2016 to assess progress against planned targets and results. The CMT also reviewed and endorsed the guidelines on streamlining office management committees in UNICEF Lao PDR to an optimal committee structure.

In order to attract more funding, UNICEF Lao PDR took extra steps in 2016 to arrange donor briefings, regular and coordinated communication on emerging issues, and joint field visits for key development partners, including the EU, Australia and the US. UNICEF Lao PDR utilised 100 per cent of funds from expiring grants in 2016 as well as from non-grant funds with a high utilisation rate at year's end. Donor reports were submitted on time. DCTs were kept to a minimum and there was no DCT more than nine months at the end of 2016, despite large disbursements in the second half of 2016. UNICEF Lao PDR also responded to emergencies, such as extreme cold weather, floods and polio outbreaks.

OUTPUT 1 Strengthen Programme Coordination

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Regular programme coordination was done through monthly meetings as well as weekly heads of sections meeting to coordinate programme work, and to ensure efficient and effective programme implementation.

The high prevalence of stunting in children remains one of the development challenges in Lao PDR, and UNICEF Lao PDR intensified its efforts to integrate nutrition, education and WASH programmes in 2016. Joint reviews and planning internally as part of cross-sectoral linkages in education, nutrition and WASH programmes led to the development and submission of joint funding proposals to donors. During the annual review processes in November and December 2016, UNICEF Lao PDR carried out joint annual review sessions together with the Education and Health Ministries to ensure WASH contributions to nutrition and education outcomes targeted the same child through UNICEF Lao PDR's interventions.

The second NNF took place on 17 November 2016. It is the only event that brings together partners in nutrition from the central and provincial government, development partners, UN, civil society, business, academia and media to report on progress against the NNS 2016-2025 goals and implementation of the priority nutrition actions under the NPAN 2016-2020.

The NNF 2016 aimed to strengthen accountability of key stakeholders and take stock of progress on those priority actions. The second NNF also served as the pre-consultative meeting preceding the Round Table Meeting, at which nutrition was tabled as one of four priority discussion topics.

UNICEF Lao PDR provided financial and technical as well as coordination support to the NCMC, a governmental body composed of focal points from 23 ministries and organisations to develop the State Party Periodic Report on the CRC in 2016. UNICEF Lao PDR also identified internal focal points from different programme sections within the office to coordinate with their respective counterpart ministries in updating and validating available data and information as major inputs into the report.

Several donor visits took place in 2016, notably from the Korean and Australian Committees for UNICEF. A launch ceremony for the second phase of the cooperation with MMG and UNICEF Australia took place in Vientiane, resulting in national and international media coverage.

OUTPUT 2 Effective & Efficient management of the Programme Coordination Unit

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF provided HR support through this output to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of programme components in the Country Programme of Cooperation.

OUTCOME 8 Effective and efficient programme management and operations support

Analytical Statement of Progress:

The three Operational Management Priorities, namely: (i) effective and efficient governance and systems; (ii) effective and efficient management and stewardship of financial resources and risk management; and (iii) effective and efficient management and stewardship of HR, were fully achieved in 2016.

The roll-out to the Global Shared Service Centre (GSSC) in Budapest started in May 2016. UNICEF Lao PDR was fully compliant with the new system. Training activities and webinars were organised by the EAPRO and NYHQ to strengthen the capacity of key staff in finance, HR and master data management. This was a significant achievement, as the number of transactions was reduced in the office, giving more opportunities for staff to focus on analysis.

UNICEF Lao PDR made a great contribution to the Operations Management Team. Common LTAs signed between the UN agencies and service providers contributed to significant savings for all agencies (for air transport, ICT service and fuel).

The Business Operation Strategy was also an achievement. Lao PDR is one of the pilot countries starting joint fleet management through a carpooling system, with a significant decrease in the use of vehicles.

UNICEF Lao PDR made great strides in recruitments by finalising all recruitments within 90 days. Also for consultant recruitment, the process approved in 2015 was followed, from advertisement, shortlisting, interview, and reference check to signing contracts.

In preparation for the New Country Programme 2017-2021, UNICEF PDR organized an HR exercise with the participation of all staff in February and March 2016. The exercise was facilitated by an external consultant.

UNICEF PDR had a large number of recruitments in 2016, as part of the new Country Programme 2017-2021 development process. All 19 planned recruitments (new positions and existing vacant positions) were completed in a timely manner, and on-boarding processes were ongoing with the GSSC, as all recruitment processes are now centralized.

There was close follow up on the HACT Assurance Plan, with quarterly reports to EAPRO. An effort needs to be made to ensure that there are proper follow ups on recommendations from programme visits, micro-assessments, audits and spot checks.

Capacity building of partners in finance to improve the quality of documents and reporting, during spot checks and/or separated trainings. UNICEF Lao PDR invested to support staff development, with external training, online training and group training, such as results-based management and enterprise risk management.

UNICEF Lao PDR is still monitoring closely the recommendations from the Global Staff

Survey. Proposed measures on those recommendations submitted by the ad-hoc committee to the CMT and approved by the Representative were implemented and progress was monitored monthly during the CMT meetings. The Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) held quarterly meetings, with management and the Staff Association discussing issues related to the staff and the office.

OUTPUT 1 Governance and Systems

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Lao PDR continued to sustain best practices after the closure of previous audit recommendations. In June 2016, UNICEF Lao PDR was audited by the Internal Auditors. Although the draft audit report was shared on 15 December 2016, the Observations requiring immediate actions were promptly addressed and actions taken. UNICEF Lao PDR revised and updated the indicators for monitoring the progress made by programmes and operations. Those indicators were monitored monthly during operations meeting and CMT meetings.

The HACT assurance plan was closely monitored. Progress was shared with sections on a weekly basis during meetings of section chiefs, on a monthly basis with the CMT and on a quarterly basis with EAPRO. Using the global LTA, partners receiving more than \$US 100,000 were micro-assessed and one partner receiving more than \$US 500,000 was audited by an external audit company.

The 2016 Annual Management Plan was developed in March 2016. Six office priorities were defined: finalization of the new Country Programme 2017-2021, HR exercise, implementation of the last year of the programme and summarizing achievements of the current country programme, staff security and staff development, partnership strengthening, and efficiency and effectiveness of the programme.

Significant achievements in 2016 were noted. The new Country Programme 2017-2021 was finalized and approved by the Board during its September 2016 session. An HR exercise was completed with the support of an external consultant and all staff participation, and a new Country Programme Management Plan and office structure were developed and approved by the Programme Budget Review in March 2016. As part of the implementation of last year of the programme and summarizing achievements of the current Country Programme, sectoral annual review meetings were carried out. In terms of staff security and staff development, all staff were informed about security and minimal operational security standards (MOSS) and minimum operating residential security standards (MORSS) were updated and shared with staff. Individual, online courses and group training were organised as per the HR Development and Training Plan, especially for staff affected by the office restructuring. In addition, UNICEF Lao PDR continued to strengthen good working relationships with donors, government counterparts and other development partners to achieve its goals. Finally, to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of the programme, with a focus on key priorities, supply monitoring and recruitments, especially consultant recruitments, were carried out.

UNICEF Lao PDR continued to apply rules and regulations and Office Standard Operating Procedures for consultant recruitments to enable the selection of the best candidates and to avoid sole sourcing. UNICEF Lao PDR also used rosters from EAPRO and NYHQ to select candidates when necessary.

The Business Continuity Plan was updated taking into account new systems (use of the cloud, Outlook) after the training organized by EAPRO with the support of an external audit

company. The Annual Management Plan was updated after the training, taking into account effective risks identified by UNICEF Lao PDR.

OUTPUT 2 Financial Resources and Stewardship

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Lao PDR joined the GSSC in May 2016 with significant improvement in many areas, especially on DCT processes and other payments, bank reconciliation, and salary payments. The two first months were difficult, but with training, webinars and other means of communication with EAPRO and NYHQ, the operations were handled smoothly. The move of some finance functions and master data management to GSSC was a good opportunity for staff to concentrate more on quality documentation, spot checks and quality assurance activities in support to the programme and counterparts. Some HR tasks were also moved to GSSC starting in October 2016, with new applications such as MyCase and online recruitments, which also was a significant achievement globally.

The county HACT Assurance Plan was approved during the first quarter of 2016, with very clear targets for all HACT activities for the year, comprising number of spot checks, micro-assessments and audits in relation of the amount to be transferred and the risk level of each partner. UNICEF Lao PDR continued to invest in capacity building by organizing formal training activities all over the country, and on-the-job training during spot checks and micro-assessments. The risk mitigation plans were in place to ensure that the funds disbursed were used as planned by selecting payment methods according to the risks and close field monitoring visits.

UNICEF Lao PDR's performance indicators were monitored, reviewed and followed up regularly. The Performance Management Report was used for monitoring all indicators: timely DCT liquidation (less than six months), open Travel Authorizations for more than 15 days, open commitments (purchase orders) and segregation of duties. The UN HACT Task Force with UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP is functional with the participation of UN Division, Department of International Cooperation of MPI for all joint HACT-related activities. There are also HACT taskforce meetings every month to review HACT-related issues and report monthly to the CMT, and weekly during section chiefs meetings.

OUTPUT 3 Staff Costs

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Lao PDR continued to institute a successful programme of Friday Learning Sessions, which are one-hour sessions designed to provide key hands-on skills with a focus on improving staff performance, and also sharing with staff all online training.

Two important training activities were organized by UNICEF Lao PDR in 2016, with the participation of all staff: (i) a risk management workshop from 20 to 22 April 2016 and (ii) results-based management training from 22 to 26 June 2016. Another important event organised, with all staff participation, was an office retreat. It was organized from 3 to 4 October 2016, facilitated by an external consultant, and emphasized team building and interpersonal communication skills.

Achieve, the new performance appraisal system, was initiated in 2016. UNICEF Lao PDR will ensure that 98 per cent of staff complete the end-year performance on time. The Joint Consultative Committee held four meetings between the staff association and management in 2016 to discuss issues related to staff and proposed solutions. With the Global Staff Survey results in 2014, UNICEF Lao PDR put together all recommendations from the ad-hoc group for close follow up by the CMT.

UNICEF Lao PDR performed very well in terms of staff recruitments. In 2016, the office finalised the recruitment of 17 positions that were either related to the new Country

Programme or vacancies. Only one position was re-advertised, as no suitable candidate was available.

OUTPUT 4 Management and Operations support from RR/OR funding

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Management and operations indicators were monitored in the CMT meetings.

Document Centre

Evaluation and research

Title	Sequence Number	Type of Report
Review of the Pedagogical Support System for Primary Education in Lao PDR	2016/001	Review
LAO PDR FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY SURVEY	2016/002	Survey
Review of the Pedagogical Support System for Primary Education in Lao PDR	2016/001	Review
Measuring the Impact of WASH in Schools (WinS) in the Lao People's Democratic Republic	2016/001	Study

Lessons learned

Document Type/Category	Title
Lessons Learned	United Nations Joint Programme on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (UNJP-MNCH)

Programme documents

Document Type	Title	Name
CPD	Costed Evaluation Plan 2017 - 2021	2016-PL16-Lao_PDR_CEP-EN-21Jun2016.pdf
CPD	Country Programme Document 2017-2021	2016-PL16-LaoPDR-CPD-ODS-EN-8Aug16.pdf
CPD Results Matrix	Lao PDR CPD Results Matrix	LaoPDR_CPDMatrix_2012-2015.docx
CPD	Lao PDR Country Programme Document	LaoPDR_CPD_2012-2015.docx