2023 End of Year Results Summary Extended Narrative

EAPRO, Thailand

Update on the context and trends

The East Asia Pacific (EAP) region is home to a third of the world's population, including over a quarter of the global child population (600 million children – half in China). By 2030, it is estimated that the region would have the largest population in the world. Urbanization continues to be a defining megatrend in the region, with reaching urbanization levels of over 70 per cent by 2030.

According to the Global Effectiveness Review and SDG data analysis, 125 million children in the region live in countries where achieving the SDG goals by 2030 remains out of reach. On average, 75 percent of child-related SDG indicators in every country of the region either have insufficient data or show insufficient progress to be able to meet the global SDG targets by 2030.   Progress towards the achievement of child related SDGs in the region remains uneven: amongst countries making high level of progress are Malaysia, Philippines and several Pacific Island Countries (Samoa, Vanuatu & Marshall Islands. In the next category are countries such as China, Mongolia, Indonesia, and Vietnam which and are on the right track to meet their SDG goals with some effort. These countries have shown strong economic growth, post COVID-19, along with other contributing factors such as political will and stability, policy reforms and resources for socio-economic development. The last category of countries are those that are struggling to reach the SDG goals. They include Papua New Guinea, Laos, and some Pacific Island Countries (Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Nauru). Moving forward, these countries, as well as those that have insufficient capacity (like Laos and Cambodia which have good political will and coordination but lack capacity) and or are fragile (Myanmar, Papua New Guinea) will need prioritized support by the RO.

In 2023, most major economies in EAP have recovered from recent shocks and have shown growth, however most of the Pacific Island countries and Myanmar have been witnessing a slow recovery, with economic growth below that of pre-pandemic levels. The EAP region remains a key driver of global growth, with China projected to contribute to a significant portion of world growth in both 2023 and 2024. In 2023, the GDP (in terms of total value - purchasing power parity) of Indonesia was the world's seventh-largest economy - larger than that of France, Brazil or the UK. In spite of strong economic growth in the region, inequalities and poverty stopped declining for the first time in 20 years. 32 million people were prevented from escaping from poverty as a result, while pushing millions more who were previously not poor into poverty.

The region is making an important demographic transition, with rapidly aging population, declining fertility rates and increasing life expectancy of elders. Child population is rapidly declining, with an estimated 70 million fewer children aged 0-14 by 2030, and nearly 30 per cent decrease in the 0-14 population by 2050. Rising pension costs, health and long-term care spending are expected to exert pressures on public finances.   Two out of five international child migrants were born in the EAP region – more than any other region in the world. While migration can benefit children and their families, it can also place children in situations of risk. EAP countries have sound policies by and large but there would be a need for synergies across countries so that policies do not work in isolation but form a regional platform to better protect children.

The humanitarian situation in Myanmar continued to deteriorate in 2023, with 2.6 million people displaced as of end December 2023, with an estimated 18.6 million people expected to require humanitarian assistance in 2024. Grave child rights violations persist due to the indiscriminate use of heavy weapons and airstrikes, with increasing reports of children and schools being targeted or affected in clashes. The breakdown of the health system is an imminent threat, while critical

immunization for children have been disrupted in a country with the highest under-5 child mortality rate in South East Asia.

35 million children were already out of school in EAP prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and an additional five million children are projected to drop out of the education system. Education inequity is affecting some 50 million children, especially children of ethnic and linguistic minorities, children affected by conflict and migration, and children with disabilities. The resulting learning loss will be equal to five percent of the region's GDP. EAP is also the epicenter of the triple burden of stunting, wasting and obesity among children, with implications on their development and their ability to reach their full potential.

In addition to the setbacks in progress towards the SDGs and the growth in inequality caused by the COVID pandemic, there has also been a significant backsliding of civic, human rights and democratic space in the region, hindering the empowerment of children and adolescents. A worrisome trend since COVID-19 pandemic has been the uptick in new legislation limiting individual and civil liberties, placing restrictions on freedom of assembly, civil society and freedom of the press. The EAP region faces high rates of violence against girls and women, with persistently high child, early and forced marriage rates in certain countries, ranging from 33 percent in Lao PDR to 11 percent in Viet Nam.

The EAP region is particularly exposed to climate risks, with 13 of the 30 countries that are most vulnerable to climate change and bears the brunt of 70 percent of the world's natural disasters. Pacific Island Countries have been particularly hit hard by climate-induced disasters. Vanuatu has been hit by two successive category four tropical cyclones and an earthquake in March 2023, while Myanmar has been hard hit by category four tropical cyclone Mocha in May 2023, which affected 1.6 million people.

Finally, the region is home to fast-growing digital economies with the widespread adoption of technology and opportunities for innovation. 72 percent of the population in EAP are using the internet, while over half of children and youth (435 million) have internet connection at home. On the other hand, 365 million children and youth do not have digital access and risk being left behind if the divide is not addressed.

Major contributions and drivers of results

Summary of Regional Office Results by Goal Area
2023 marked the mid-point of the UNICEF Strategic Plan (2022–2025) and the Regional Office Management Plan (ROMP) of EAPRO 2022–2025. In 2023 EAPRO continued to provide strategic and technical guidance to country offices to enhance programme excellence; generated and disseminated global and regional public goods; elevated normative rights-based approaches; and strengthened operational effectiveness and efficiency in all country contexts.

Goal Area 1: Health and Nutrition
In 2023, EAPRO supported UNICEF Country Offices to address maternal and child malnutrition by protecting diets, services, and practices in both development and humanitarian settings. EAPRO launched the regional Fix My Food Initiative on youth-led actions for healthier food environments in eight EAP countries. EAPRO also launched findings from the COMMIT Initiative to improve the quality of commercially available complementary foods in 7 EAP countries and supported related country-level actions. In overweight prevention, EAPRO attracted new private-sector resource partners, developed and applied a new tool to assess school nutrition environments, and advanced policies on marketing restrictions for unhealthy foods, supporting front-of-pack food labeling, designing taxes for sugar-sweetened beverages, and improving school food environments. EAPRO also supported improvements in treatment programs for child wasting, including through simplified protocols, community actions, and improved supply systems for therapeutic foods. Building on its

previous capacity building efforts, EAPRO completed a mapping of country-level actions and identified programmatic recommendations to improve public financial management for nutrition. To strengthen regional governance for nutrition, EAPRO completed ASEAN Guidelines and Minimum Standards on five priority nutrition issues and further strengthened the ASEAN platform for nutrition.

In 2023 EAP region continued to invest in health systems strengthening, albeit at an uneven pace. EAPRO has prioritized Primary Health Care (PHC) strengthening as the best investment to improve access to basic, quality and affordable health care, closer to the communities where they reside. EAPRO completed a PHC Landscape Analysis which identifies gaps as well as investment opportunities for 14 countries across the region. To further improve access, the regional office is supporting all countries to access evolutions in the digital health space. These include enhanced data systems for the routine collection and analysis of health service data and real-time sharing of health education and awareness messaging. HIV and other infectious diseases continue to rise among key populations in a few countries. Through the integration of services, countries are working to increase efficiencies and enhance opportunities to address multiple disease threats at points of service contact. EAPRO, in partnership with UNAIDS and UNFPA, completed a regional roadmap for the triple elimination of HIV, Hepatitis B and Syphilis.

Goal Area 2: Education and ECD
In 2023, EAPRO continued to prioritize supporting countries to tackle the foundational learning crisis with a focus on the most marginalized children. EAPRO provided technical expertise and assistance that supported countries to advance programming to promote early childhood development (ECD), early learning, inclusive education, foundational learning pedagogy and assessment and adolescent learning opportunities, climate-smart education and digital transformation, as well as education and ECD in emergencies responses, for example in Myanmar and Vanuatu.

EAPRO contributed to high-level advocacy with regional partners, including Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), ASEAN, UNESCO, World Bank that led to policy commitments and shifts. EAPRO supported countries to advance national commitments on advancing foundational learning. EAPRO co-led regional events, including conferences on multi-lingual education, young people's skills and employability, and also participated in events related to digital skills, artificial intelligence and digital learning, the comprehensive school safety, and contributed to the Southeast Asia Policy Dialogue on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) which resulted the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on ECCE.

EAPRO continued to assist countries in the region to use the Learning Passport programme, a global initiative with Microsoft, to support most disadvantaged children, including the first global pilot of offline technology to bring digital learning to the most remote schools in the region. EAPRO generated new regional public goods and evidence on emerging areas of priority and innovation, which further supported advocacy and partnerships. With regional partners, SEAMEO, ASEAN, EAPRO continued to improve access to data on learning outcomes by co-leading the regional large-scale student learning assessment, Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics, which, in 2023, welcomed Timor Leste for the first time, completed field trials in seven countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Timor and Viet Nam), produced three secondary analyses on key policy topics. EAPRO produced new evidence on girls' digital literacy in the region, on strategies for promoting safer, more nurturing school environments and on improving teaching practices in the early years.

Goal Area 3: Child Protection
EAPRO continued to prioritise technical support and capacity building for staff and partners, and advocacy, as well as strengthening regional frameworks, for child protection and justice systems strengthening, violence against children, child online protection, and public finance management, contributing to significant achievements and progress of country offices.
Lao PDR - the first country in ASEAN and the second in EAPR to achieve full prohibition. Laos and

Thailand recorded a decrease in the prevalence of physical discipline in all settings. Progress was recorded in child protection systems maturity - Indonesia became the first country in the region and the second globally to obtain maturity. Timor-Leste advanced to Level 3 System Integration. Eight countries progressed in the sub domains. There was a 27% increase in the number of cases being handled by UNICEF supported child protection systems. Technical support was provided on Child Protection Information Management Systems/PRIMERO and one additional country – Timor Leste – went live. EAPRO hosted the Global Primero conference, during which the innovative approach of Cambodia in utilizing data generated from the system was recognized as best practice.

ASEAN guidance was endorsed on the role of the social service workforce in justice and health sectors, and on delivering quality services for women and children experiencing violence, supported by UNICEF, UN Women and UNFPA. Through support for strengthening public finance management, Indonesia, Mongolia, PNG, and Fiji reported increases in public resource allocation to child protection, despite the trend for shrinking resources in the social welfare sphere.
The 2nd ASEAN-ICT Forum on Child Online Protection, hosted by Thailand, attracted over 250 participants from 13 countries, creating a constructive forum for engagement with industry actors. The ASEAN Industry Working Group, supported by UNICEF, resulted in the first joint industry recommendations on regulatory reform, presented at the 2023 Forum.

Goal Area 4: WASH and Climate
In 2023 WASH focused on technical support and capacity building, focusing in particular climate-resilient WASH, solar powered water systems, climate resilient urban sanitation, strengthening the link between water resources management and WASH, and menstrual health and hygiene which reached over 700 partners. EAPRO co-convened Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development Roundtable on SDG 6 with UNESCAP and FAO and together with DFAT, established UNICEF's thought leadership at Water & WASH Futures Conference in Feb 2023. Developed high quality studies and guidance on climate resilient WASH, use of frontier technologies in WASH, and initiating new work on community resilience and menstrual health.

UNICEF country offices in the EAP Region have started climate action initiatives, concentrating their efforts on health, education, youth empowerment, evidence generation/research, partnerships, and renewable energy/ climate mitigation. Many countries conducted systematic advocacy around COP28 to ensure the Global Goal on Adaptation was child-sensitive. Several countries (for example, Indonesia, Cambodia and Pacific Countries) conducted evidence generation on climate and environmental risks, and developed Climate Strategies, laying the groundwork for executing prioritized actions.

Climate action and environment programming expanded in the region, with new country programmes (Cambodia, Philippines and Papua New Guinea) incorporating result areas focusing on climate and environment sustainability. Cambodia launched a Sub-national Children's Climate Risk Index, offering insights into children's exposure, vulnerabilities, and capacities for resilience to climate and environmental shocks. a focus on climate-resilient WASH services and a shift to climate-smart programming across sectors. 'Healthy Environments for Healthy Children' that addresses environmental determinants of child health has been expanded to four countries. Over the Tipping Point', a pivotal evidence piece was published, highlighting the magnitude of children facing intersecting climate and environmental hazards in the region and emphasizing climate change as a driver of inequality. The region inaugurated its first Solar Hub, supporting renewable energy needs for WASH, health, and education programs. This hub collaborates with UNICEF country offices, government partners, and civil society organizations. With EAPRO support, China CO has created an online platform dedicated to the dissemination and visualization of children's environmental health indicators and has contributed to the drafting of China's inaugural report on children's environmental health.

Goal Area 5: Social Policy and Protection

Regional strategies on Social Protection in Emergencies and on Child Rights-Based Public Finance for Children were developed through co-creation with all country offices, with an aim to elevate UNICEF's leadership in these areas of work and guide UNICEF's efforts in the development of coherent and sustainable strategies in the areas of shock-responsive social protection and public finance for children.

In 2023 research was conducted in the areas of social protection, public finance, and local governance. The results and impact of the Social Protection Support Initiative were documented, providing valuable insights into social protection measures for children. Research on disaster risk financing and social protection offered a comprehensive review of pre-arranged finance for government support in disasters. Additionally, a study on empowering children with disabilities and families through social protection and care aimed to generate debate and support regional work on the topic. Public finance, analysis of social sector budget allocations in selected countries identified gaps for the period 2017–2021. A Regional budget tracker for social sector budgets in EAP was developed for continuous monitoring of the social sector budgets. Finally, research on child-friendly cities provided a regional overview of modalities, practices, and instances to shape inclusive and sustainable urban environments for children and engagement of cities and municipalities.

In 2023, a key focus was made on promoting policy dialogues across all areas of work with policymakers, stakeholders, and partners to collaboratively address challenges. Key topics of these dialogues included protecting social sector spending for children and families in South and Southeast Asia, strengthening social protection systems in Asia and the Pacific, and advancing child-sensitive and adaptive social protection systems. Additionally, the first UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Interregional Exchange between East Asia and Europe was organized to promote child-friendly cities and urban development Finally, an intergenerational dialogue between children and policymakers was organized, highlighting the importance of inclusivity and child participation in decision-making processes. This event, focusing on Child Friendly Cities, provided a unique platform for children to directly engage with decision-makers, voice their concerns, and contribute their perspectives on issues affecting their lives.

Cross-sectoral and cross-cutting priorities

UNICEF adopted the Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2022-2030 (DIPAS) and the region is finalising the regional action plan that will serve as a roadmap to strengthen cross-sectoral strategic priorities for disability inclusion in the region. 13 COs have initiatives in place that target children with disabilities (all except DPRK). Much of this is achieved through cross- and multi-sectoral engagement within the CO. Opportunities for acceleration and scale up of disability inclusive programming exist across sectors and are most available within the social policy (including social protection), child protection and education sectors.

Support for organizational accountable to 'do no harm' was strengthened through technical assistance and capacity building on PSEA and GBViE. Ten countries were supported to strengthen integration of GBViE in their Emergency Preparedness Plans. Ten countries (up from eight) reported safe and accessible reporting channels for sexual exploitation and abuse, reaching 27,811,119 children and adults (up from 5,883,206 in 2022 – 300% increase).

Child rights-based programming was strengthened in Cambodia and the Philippines, aligning the programme with the concluding observations of the Committee of the Rights of the Child, and ensuring meaningful participation of children and young people in country programme development. A region-wide capacity building on child rights reached over 1,100 staff, including CO senior management. UNICEF in EAP collaborated with treaty bodies and special representatives for high level advocacy, with CRC Committee members visiting Cambodia, Thailand, the Philippines, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa, and Tuvalu. Joint advocacy on priority areas, such as freedom of expression and civic participation, has been elevated. General Comment no.26, which addresses the climate emergency and related obligations to protect the lives and wellbeing of children, were launched with the Committee for South East Asia and the Pacific in November.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

In Myanmar, UNICEF in collaboration with partners, provided life-saving assistance, humanitarian leadership, cluster coordination, and strengthened protection against sexual exploitation and abuse. Notable achievements by the end of November include vaccinating 534,983 children under one against measles and rubella, offering WASH supplies and services to 477,543 affected individuals, ensuring 625,800 children continue accessing formal and non-formal education, and providing community-based mental health and psychosocial support to 198,390 children, adolescents, and caregivers. The Government of Indonesia adopted a Child-Centered Contingency Planning guideline as part of a revised national contingency planning standard. In the Pacific, UNICEF assisted 50,000 people affected by three tropical cyclones in 2023. Focusing on enhancing community resilience, the response aimed to help communities cope with recurring cyclones and ongoing climate change impacts. In DPRK, UNICEF maintained life-saving programs, delivering $10.24 million of supplies (vaccines, therapeutic foods, and materials for water system construction and repair) in 2023 compared to $7.15 million in 2022 and $5.4 million in 2021. UNICEF also prioritized building emergency preparedness and response capacity in all countries in the region, including for National Disaster Management Authorities in China, Malaysia and Mongolia. The EAP Accountability to Affected Population Roadmap was rolled out to operationalize the Global AAP Strategy 2023-2025. The focus is on strengthening country-level leadership, skills and partnerships.

Adolescent Girls

UNICEF has scaled up programming to combat child marriage in Southeast Asia, with Malaysia, the Philippines, and Laos prioritizing ending child marriage in their country programmes. Through a DFAT-funded initiative, the capacity of service providers in Laos has been strengthened to deliver gender-responsive adolescent-friendly services. In the Philippines, the programme supported legal reform addressing child marriage and online sexual abuse. UNICEF has also strengthened collaboration with UNWomen and UNFPA, such as through a joint programming on ending violence against women and children in Viet Nam, on addressing drivers of violence against girls and women, ensuring a joined up response by front line workers, integrating gender-based violence in the end violence in schools agenda, and engaging with industry actors to tackle online violence. To empower adolescent girls in skills development and transition to decent work, initiatives like the Skill4Girls program in Vietnam and Lao PDR are equipping girls with crucial life and digital skills. The ASEAN Skills Forum, with representatives from all Member States, including youth delegates, has agreed on joint recommendations to empower young people, especially girls, with inclusive, flexible, and meaningful opportunities for employable, digital, and green skills.

Digital Transformation

The EAP region has developed an operational framework on digital transformation to deliver results for children, including through the USD 19 million contribution from the Government of Japan to strengthen digital health systems benefitting 6.5 million children and their families. In Lao PDR, an electronic immunization registry has been adopted to the level of district health centers to track immunizations effectively and provide better healthcare services. In Malaysia, the Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malays platform, a partnership with Google, Microsoft and Apple, strengthened inclusive digital transformation and future skills development in the country. The EAPRO Frontier Data Technology Node expertise supports applications of artificial intelligence (AI) in the region, drafting industry standards for AI and children in China, and enhancing Malaysia's early warning system using Machine Learning. Advocacy efforts secured digital inclusion in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank, and UNICEF leverages digital solutions through partnerships with the EU's Global Gateway strategy and the ASEAN ICT Forum to defend child rights in a digital world. In Indonesia, a digital campaign on prevention of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse reached 44 million people online.

Partnership

Partnership with ASEAN entered the fifth year under the ASEAN-UNICEF Framework Agreement of

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Cooperation, covering the areas of environment, climate change, gender equality, women, youth, good governance, disaster risk reduction, and digitalization. Partnership with Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS): Despite a decline in public sector funding due to global ODA trends, the EAP region continued to receive substantial public sector contributions of around USD 142 million. Notably, high-quality government donors from neighboring countries, including Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea, alongside external aid from influential players like the European Commission and the USA, have provided crucial support. Additionally, UNICEF EAP has strengthened its strategic position to tap into growing development funding from regional International Financial Institutions such as the Asian Development Bank and emerging financial institutions in China, including the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank and New Development Bank. Innovative Finance Study has been completed, and innovative finance mechanisms are being discussed with Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Timor Leste country offices. Climate finance has started off strongly with new windows from the Republic of Korea and the Green Climate Fund.

Private Sector Fundraising
China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam have achieved a total gross revenue (based on the latest Q4 estimates) of USD 154 million, raised thanks to the support of 1.34 million individuals donating monthly to our cause. Equally important is the support of high value partners including companies, foundations and major donors who contributed USD 10.6 million through 23 signed agreements.Growth has also been seen in the number of country offices activating fundraising in emergencies with the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia actively supporting appeals for Syria-Turkey and with the addition of Indonesia also supporting the continued public appeals on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Of the total gross revenue of USD 154 million, OR for country programme represents USD 89 million (58%), Regular Resource (RR) USD 12 million (7%) and contributions to the Regional Thematic Fund reached USD 1.5 million (0.9%).

Governance and Management
EAPRO and 14 Country Offices benefitted from increased high quality technical support and guidance resulting in fully functioning internal systems and mechanisms and strengthening of internal capacities and talents to support effective programme delivery. The region demonstrated positive results in the 2022 Global Staff Survey (GSS) across all areas (ranging from 70-86%), with lower results only for Office Efficiency and Effectiveness (59%) and Management Response to GSS and Independent Reviews (62%). 2023 Q4 Pulse Check demonstrated an overall high office culture score across the region of 72.5%.

EAPRO continued to focus on bringing in diverse talents to the organization and supporting professional growth and career development for staff. RO and COs not only made use of current outreach channels but also expanded them to attract more diverse candidates. Across the region, 339 recruitment cases were completed in an average duration of 67 days, with 58% female and 42% male. 26 cases were completed in 83 days on average, due in major part to the long time taken by hiring units in various steps.

Seven out of 14 COs completed formal reviews on digital transformation. Eight have aligned their digital capacities in line with ICT/T4D capacity guidance. A governance committee was created at the RO level, the Regional DX and Innovation Committee, designed to look at digital transformation and innovation initiatives in a holistic way to ensure alignment with regional priorities and best practices to maximize strategic impact.

Over 2023, there was a positive increase in security engagement and collaboration between the regional and CO teams, demonstrating an improved security culture across the region. This led to improved planning and preparation for Elections in Timor Leste, Cambodia and Thailand as well as increased collaboration with UNDSS for contingency and emergency preparations in Indonesia and Myanmar.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

LESSONS LEARNED

The ROMP mid-term review conducted in 2023 identified lessons learned to inform adjustments for the second biennium of the Plan, given that the 2022-2025 ROMP was developed at a at a time when countries in the region was balancing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine rollout, whilst navigating a pathway to recovery from the economic and social impact of the pandemic. The region has also been witnessing significant deterioration of human rights as well as increased obstacles to gender equality, both of which have negatively impacted on the enabling environment for UNICEF to accelerate results for children.

During the second year of the ROMP, risks in the region have become progressively multi-dimensional and complex. In line with the 2022 audit finding for EAPRO, the MTR confirmed the need to improve regional oversight of risks, and to coordinate all risk mitigation work underway in the RO and amongst COs in the region, in order to strengthen overall risk management.

Advancing child rights has been reiterated as a priority for the region, especially in the face of a rollback on human rights in many countries, the limited staff capacity and knowledge to engage in critical advocacy, limited resources as well as the dearth of data available on child rights. EAPRO is the only region with a dedicated ROMP Outcome on child rights. New country programmes developed in 2023 effectively and strategically integrated child rights into its programming, through engagement with the CRC committee and using the CRC concluding observation as a foundation for analyses and prioritization. Timor Leste and PNG have conducted disability and gender programme reviews, which helped reveal areas where advocacy and action on gender and disability can be more powerful, and can help establish linkages between stakeholders through the review. Challenges are the difficulty of finding the right team to conduct reviews and that analysis of each area may be limited compared to separate review. Moving forward, EAPRO will further strengthen coordination and integration of child rights approach with the Goal Areas and change strategies at the RO level to provide rights based and strategic guidance, advocacy and technical assistance to COs.

The ROMP MTR highlighted that, while EAPRO has been providing technical assistance and quality assurance support to all COs (and countries) in line with RO accountabilities, EAPRO's approach needs to be more tailored, evidence based and less driven by demand. In line with the RO accountability, EAPRO must also play a more prominent and proactive role in identifying transnational issues such as migration, climate change and digitization and their impact.
The ROMP MTR also reiterated the importance of RO's role in the next biennium in helping bridge the data gap at the CO level, including, improving contribution to global SP data analyses, increasing national statistical capacity, enabling the use of frontier data technology, direct support for administrative data collection and national surveys.

While the regional framework in ASEAN has been strengthened across key protection issues, there remains some disconnect between regional commitment and national action. Enhanced efforts are being made to connect technical arms of relevant national Ministries with regional dialogues and commitments, and to sensitise country offices to the value of utilizing regional frameworks for advocacy. As a result of the MTR, EAPRO's public partnership function has been strengthened to bolster public sector engagement with governments, regional bodies and academia.

CONSTRAINTS ENCOUNTERED

The cumulative impact of year-on-end reduction of RR allocation (as high as 10% reduction per year) to country offices such as Viet Nam, Cambodia, Indonesia and Lao PDR has been a key constraint for CO's capacity to deliver for children. Programme funding shortfalls, particularly for staff capacity, due

to decreased global thematic funds, have particularly affected under-funded sectors such as social inclusion, education and child protection while the need to accelerate SP results in these areas continue to be significant. Continuous, diverse, multi-year flexible funding to ensure SP and SDG acceleration is needed through a diverse set of strategic approaches, while positioning under-resourced sectors strategically as complimentary agendas vis a vis digital transformation, disaster preparedness and climate action.

The humanitarian crisis in Myanmar remains underfunded (only 15% of the HAC as of end 2023) and receives little attention in spite of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and access, requiring concerned needs to advocate for additional support for the crisis. Climate and environmental crisis response and resilience building are hampered by inadequate funding while countries are facing more frequent small and medium sized emergencies.

INNOVATIONS
EAPRO has scaled up digital innovation and technology solutions across the region, including strategic initiatives to enable digital transformation such as UNICEF's common data platform to enable collection and management of survey data in real-time; the Frontier Data Tech Node to support the use of frontier data technologies, and ICT and Digital Innovations Operating Model to guide UNICEF offices in ensuring they have the right technology capabilities to achieve the results for children. The full potential of these initiatives, however, could only be reached when UNICEF could streamline its approaches with clear accountabilities across businesss owners in the digital space (ICTD, OoI, DAPM, and PG) with clear accountabilities at regional and country office levels.

Increased awareness of and concern for the environment, has deepened research and investments in ways to better dispose of health care waste management. Through a combination of the use of renewable energy sources and safer incineration of medical and biological waste, health facilities can now function with a lower carbon footprint, operate off-the-grid using low consumption devices, while benefiting from battery-stored energy.

UNICEF's work on assessing national legislations and then benchmarking the quality of more than 1600 commercial complementary foods from 7 countries was the most comprehensive assessment of this kind conducted worldwide. The methodology developed is already serving as a guide for work unfolding in the ESAR and WCAR regions. The work will also inform different global processes. The work shows that UNICEF has a strong role to play to transform food systems for better child-related outcomes. UNICEF's launch of the Fix My Food Initiative was the result of a powerful partnership involving the organization's expertise in youth engagement, advocacy and communications, and nutrition.