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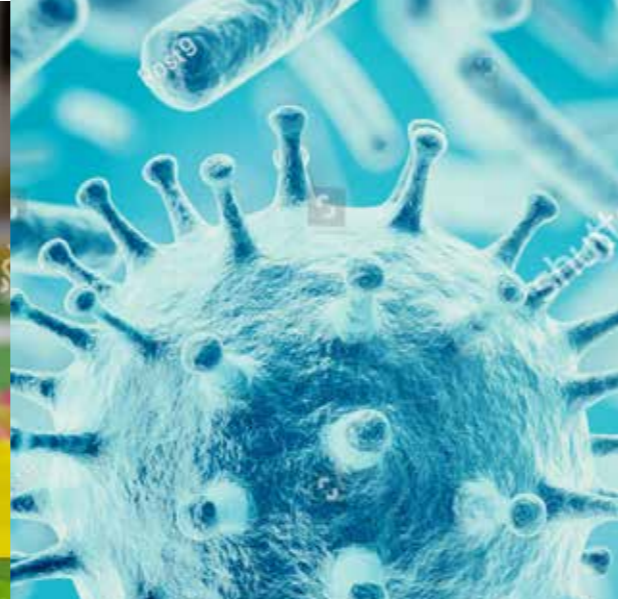
UNLOCKING A BETTER  
FUTURE FOR ASIA  
AND THE PACIFIC



COMMUNICATION  
FOR DEVELOPMENT

**PROMISING PRACTICES**





unicef   
for every child



# Introduction

Communication for Development (C4D) promising practices are dialogue-driven interventions that lead to the sustainable improvement of living conditions for children and their families, particularly the most vulnerable. This booklet brings together four outstanding examples from Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Viet Nam, where UNICEF-supported interventions by governments and civil society organizations are bringing about positive change.

In Cambodia, different child development interventions are embedded in a programme for improving social accountability of subnational administrative bodies and citizen voice. Improved communication and engagement between local leaders and caregivers are at the origin of better social services.

In Malaysia, the story tells of how children with disabilities are becoming better integrated within society through their inclusion in public sport events. UNICEF brought together local authorities and associations for children with disabilities on a shared platform to challenge biased perceptions, attitudes and behaviours towards children with disabilities with an emphasis on advocating for inclusion, putting their ability at the forefront through their participation in a high-profile sporting event.

In the Philippines, another C4D process of strengthening the social accountability of political and community leaders towards children and caregivers is featured, this time from the perspective of a village leader who points out that socially accountable leadership is a critical condition for the realization of children's right to be protected from disease.

Viet Nam is another example of a promising C4D practice, one that facilitates children's learning on climate change and environmental issues through board games. In the process, teachers are inspired to improve learning through dialogue and fun.

There are many more examples of successful dialogue-led social and behaviour change interventions in the region and beyond—even if not explicitly labelled C4D. However, for this first issue of *Communication for Development Promising Practices*, we will leave it at this, hoping that these accounts not only inspire practitioners but also encourage programme managers to more systematically integrate Communication for Development in people-centred programme design.

**Günter Heidrich**

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Bangkok

2018

## HELPING LOCAL LEADERS HELP VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS

**In a faraway corner of the Cambodian kingdom, a self-described illiterate mother of four children recovers from anaemia while working beside her mother on other people's farms to earn whatever income is possible because her husband is in prison for the violence he bashed her with.**

For the first time ever, she feels an unusual strength.

It comes from a newly minted understanding that her local leaders have a duty to look after the basic human rights and social entitlements of people like her.

"I can talk openly about the work of the commune in front of the commune chief without fear because I know that it is her role to take care of the needs of villagers," Sroul Phyum explained to a visitor.

She knows this because the commune chief told her.

And the commune chief believes this because a UNICEF officer spent days

with her, and other leaders like her, going into depth on what the country's laws mean for villagers and how commune leaders can apply them. The advocacy included learning how to budget for and deliver targeted social services for children and women.

"Previously we invited village chiefs and representatives from villages to make a commune investment plan, and it usually ended up focusing on infrastructure building or repair, like for roads and buildings," said Thvan Throl, who has been commune chief since 2012.

"Now we have been trained in how to identify and invest in the social needs of villages, and this has made the commune more aware about their health, children's health and the rights of children. More pregnant women now go for antenatal care and deliver at the health facility, more children are vaccinated, newborns are registered after birth and older children come to certify their birth.





The community has started to build toilets in their houses and more sick people seek treatment at the health facility.”

Sroul Phyum, her mother and her four young children obtained birth registrations with help from the commune leadership after a mapping of vulnerable households led to them, which in turn allowed her children to enrol in school.

“I can also complain to the commune about the performance of the teacher,” Sroul Phyum added after boasting that her two elder children are at last enrolled in primary school and the third child in pre-school. She hopes to have her eldest child become a doctor, so his ability to enrol now that he has a birth registration card is, in her view, the first and last hurdle.

THE PROMISING PRACTICE  
DRIVING SOCIAL  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
AND INVESTMENT  
IN HOLISTIC CHILD  
DEVELOPMENT  
WITH IMPROVED  
COMMUNICATION  
AND ENGAGEMENT  
BETWEEN LOCAL  
LEADERS AND  
CAREGIVERS

## What needed targeting in Cambodia

Too many children in Cambodia, particularly in poor and remote communities, do not experience proper caregiving and do not have access to the basic services and support necessary to nurture their development.

Cambodia is in the process of ambitious decentralization reforms that are moving administrative decision-making and social services closer to communities. The reforms promote a mandate for communes to engage more with citizens and deliver services and support in accordance with their needs.

But the reforms have been slow, with limited impact on actual decentralized investment in social service delivery targeting vulnerable communities and children. An acute challenge has been the absence among commune and district leaders of a clear understanding of the cross-sector mandate to coordinate and facilitate access to social services.

Another challenge has been the absence of tools and guidelines to help local leaders locate vulnerable households and deliver services in line with their needs.

“The situation is quite complex,” explained Tomas Jensen, UNICEF Chief of Community Development. “Over the past few years we had a

strengthening of focus on commune administration to invest in more services for the most vulnerable children and women. But we did not clarify what that looks like in practice, we did not link that to the budgeting framework at the commune level. There was, and still is, a gap between local needs and the opportunities for resolving them locally. Addressing this gap needs to align with the national framework for promoting and monitoring social accountability in social service delivery - and that is what we are now doing through this C4D initiative.”

## How the C4D investment began

Programme review findings indicated that decentralized service delivery was not supported sufficiently by existing training initiatives, policy guidance or frameworks for budgeting and action at the subnational level.

To improve commune and caregiver capacities to nurture holistic child development for every child—including social inclusion of the most vulnerable children and children with disabilities, UNICEF, in 2015, homed in on the need to concentrate support for decentralized capacity around improving communication between national and subnational authorities and their communication with caregivers regarding priority investments in specific result areas for children.

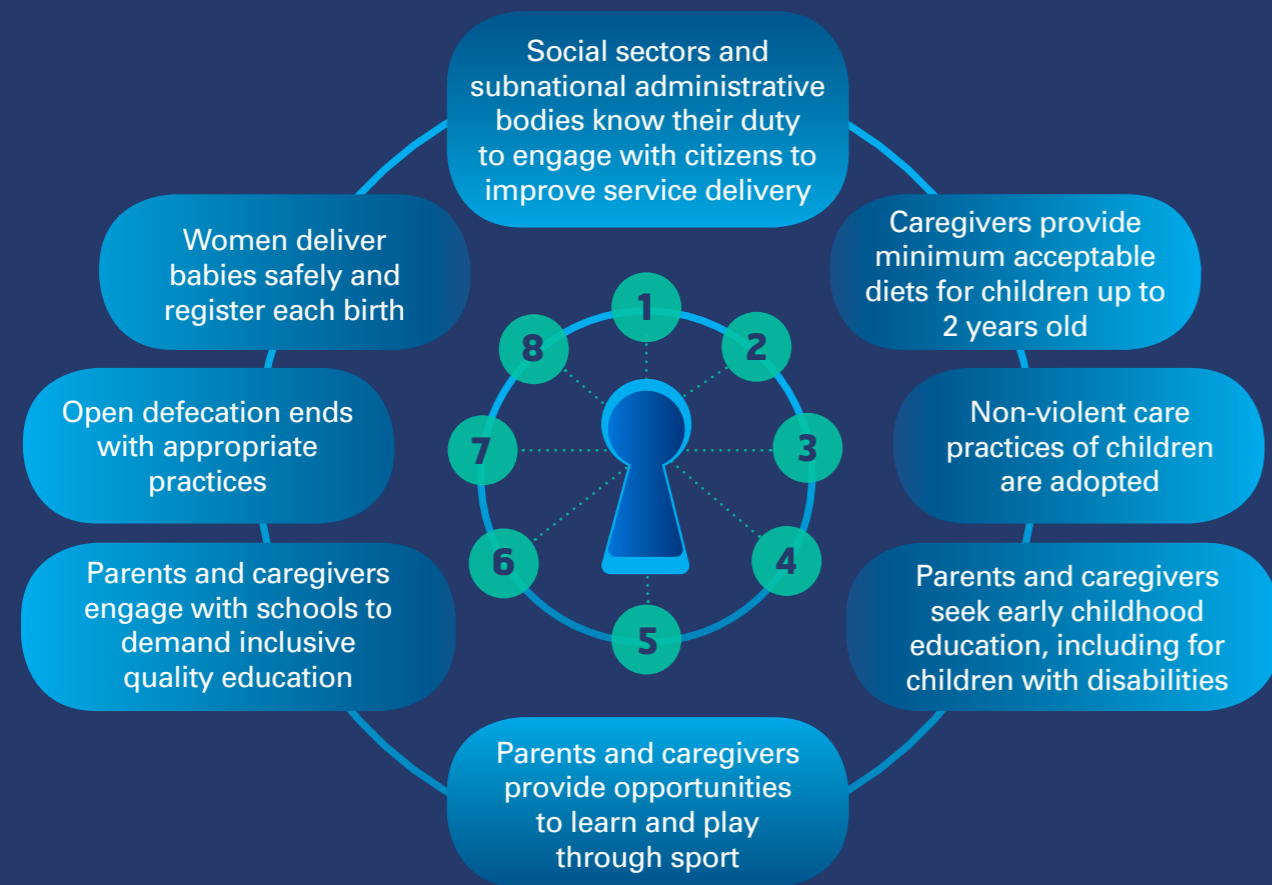
Using data from various UNICEF situation analyses and years of qualitative and quantitative data collection, UNICEF began in 2016 with advocacy. They convinced the National Committee for Subnational Democratic Development Secretariat (which is mandated to oversee the decentralizing reforms), as well as the Ministry of the Interior and other development partners, to prioritize investment in communication to strengthen the capacity of commune and district leaders.

The Government then initiated a social service mapping initiative for each

commune in a pilot area to physically sketch out household needs and improve targeted social service delivery.

- Hard-copy guidance was created:
- Commune Budget Guidelines
  - Social Services Implementation Manual
  - Communication Plan for Citizen Engagement, Social Services and Accountability

Eight result areas were agreed upon, which, when the progress in each is combined, will contribute to more holistic early childhood development:



### What made a difference

Work was conducted under the cross-cutting umbrella of Cambodia’s national decentralization reform, which allocates a recurrent budget to investment in targeted social services. It mandates the need for greater citizen engagement and accountability monitoring, which drives administrators and caregivers to have mutual and better insight into each other’s needs and to have opportunities to collaborate and engage jointly for inclusive holistic child development.



Community members and commune leaders periodically re-engaged to discuss whether the social service delivery took place and what could be done better.

### The impact of the C4D investment so far

The initiative is in the planning and preparation stage. But it is fairly novel in terms of ambition and cross-sector focus in a national environment, in which there are few drivers of coordination and cross-sector collaboration. Pulling together sufficient resources and cross-sector buy-in for the initiative remain an ongoing work in progress. What has been achieved is that the concept is now firmly a priority in the implementation framework for decentralization—which is a key first step.



Coordination with line ministries and programmes responsible for child protection, water, sanitation, hygiene, health and education facilitated the matching sector-specific communication and parenting education.



The training covered practical guidance on how to take action on the eight results areas.



Grants were extended to 15 civil society organizations in the targeted communes to establish partnerships with commune administrations and provide disability-inclusive support services.

Bit by bit, more communes are investing in service delivery that responds to the needs of residents. Commune leaders say that because of the clarity they have through the communication initiatives, they are better able to understand the needs of vulnerable households and to locate those in their constituency.

### What we would do again

From the targeted communes where UNICEF has been working over the past decade, there is ample evidence to support the idea that when administrative-capacity strengthening is well linked to sector-specific initiatives, it leads to greater investment in social services and support that is conducive in promoting holistic child development in vulnerable households.

Investing in the social accountability of local administration is a promising practice for encouraging citizen voice and improving cross-sector development and procedures.

### What we might do differently

Household members do not yet have the language to hold the commune administration accountable in promoting and supporting initiatives that promote holistic child development. They do not know what is the practical value of a birth certificate—they've been told they should get one but not why. Communication that engages citizens and administrators in the country's vision, laws and procedures encourages households to develop that language and express their needs. There is a continued necessity to simplify and streamline training initiatives and technical guidance to enable even greater

autonomous subnational investment in social services with equity. This must go hand in hand with activities to articulate and effectively communicate the mandate, roles and responsibilities of commune councils and commune committees for women and children to the public.

Rather than working with subnational administrators exclusively as service providers, it may be more strategic to also work with them as influential

facilitators of civic engagement and behaviour change. It may also be more efficient to strengthen their capacity to link up with local partners that are better positioned and better resourced to take specific action.

More emphasis on the use of social and digital media and mobile phones is needed to increase visibility and cost-effectiveness of all the communication initiatives.





## MALAYSIA



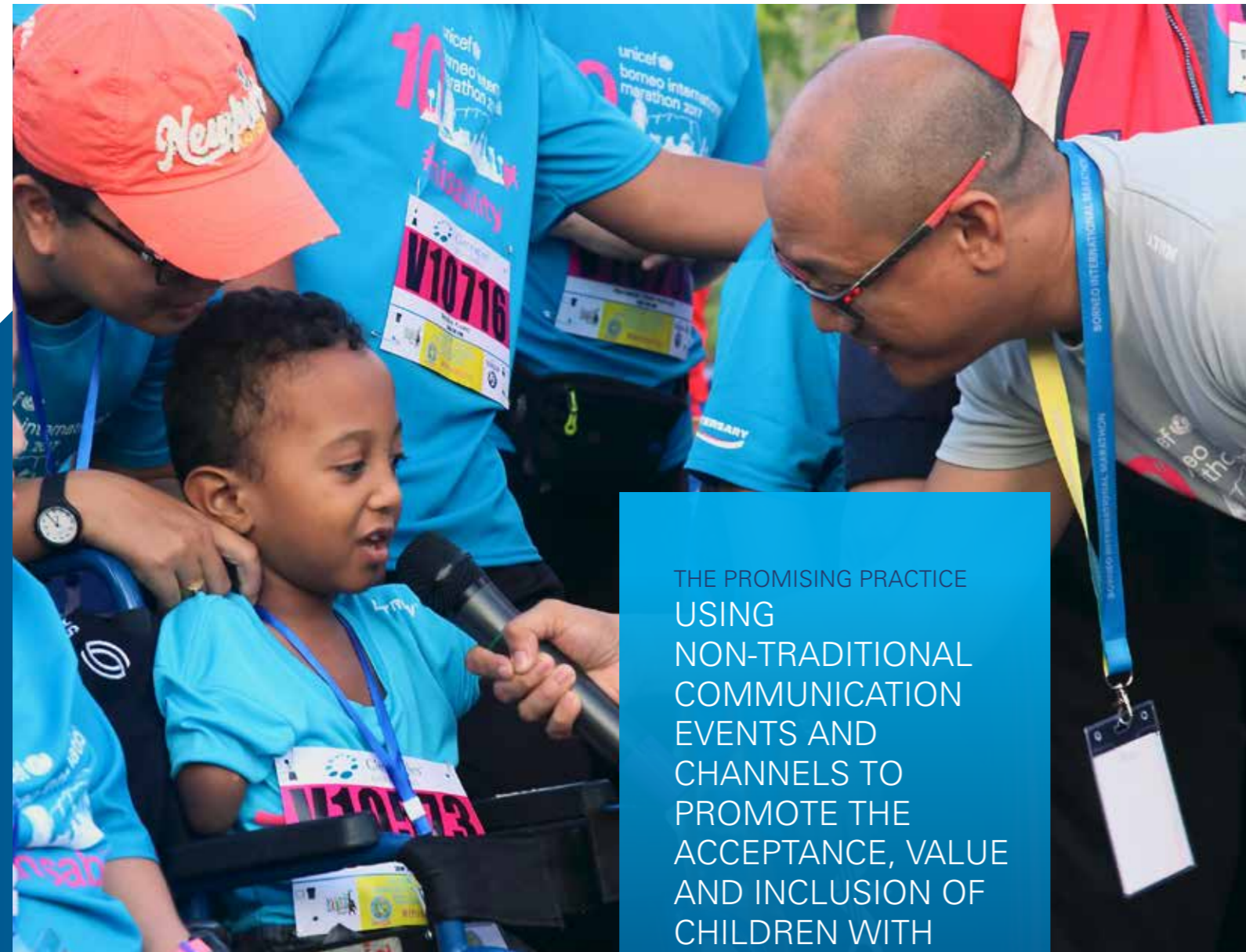
## #THISABILITY CAPTURES THE SPIRIT OF INCLUSION AND THE VALUE OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

In the tenth anniversary of the Borneo International Marathon 2017, 10,000 runners made a three-kilometre space for JoyJoy, a boy with no arms or legs. For Abel, an 18-year-old with learning difficulties who yearns to be a national football player. For Sharone, a teenager with cerebral palsy. And for more than 300 other children with and without disabilities. They all ran to prove one message: **All Different, All Able, All In.**

The children, their families, other caregivers and many civil society advocates ran with the likes of Felicia Mikat, the Sabah Association of Southeast Asian Nations Para Games gold medallist, and Katrina Webb, Australian Paralympian, in a run

that has become a symbol of solidarity and inclusion.

For many children with disabilities and even regular marathon runners, it was their first time participating in such an event. In videos, web stories and during the closing ceremony, the children talked of their dreams and hopes of inclusion. Many of the marathoners remarked on what they had learned about the 'ability' of children with disabilities and how they saw the power of inclusion through sport activities. The parents of the child participants saw them active and involved and felt supported in their efforts to build an inclusive society, which breaks the sense of isolation they too often face.



THE PROMISING PRACTICE  
USING  
NON-TRADITIONAL  
COMMUNICATION  
EVENTS AND  
CHANNELS TO  
PROMOTE THE  
ACCEPTANCE, VALUE  
AND INCLUSION OF  
CHILDREN WITH  
DISABILITIES IN  
SOCIETY

## What needed to change in Malaysia

To overcome the barriers that prevent children with disabilities from accessing their rights, UNICEF needed to understand how they are perceived and how they perceive themselves. UNICEF commissioned the first-ever study in Malaysia on childhood disability in October 2017. Nearly 800 people were involved—children with and without disabilities, parents, community members, caregivers and service providers. The study led to many insights on the knowledge, attitudes and practices surrounding childhood disability in Malaysia.

The findings indicated that knowledge regarding childhood disability is low. There is shame attached to living with a disability and there is a perception that basic services are out of reach for children with disabilities. Six in ten people surveyed admitted that they thought they did not have enough information about children with disabilities. For example, 13 per cent of respondents think children with disabilities needed less food to survive than children without disabilities, and 43 per cent of respondents think it is disruptive for their children to be in the same school with disabled children.

“Children do not feel disabled. In drawings, children with disabilities depict themselves as whole and healthy,

free from any disabilities. It is we who disable them—separating them from society, giving them labels and placing limitations on what we think they can or cannot do. We need to shift our mindset and become enablers. Not disablers!” said Marianne Clark-Hattingh, UNICEF Representative in Malaysia who also ran in the marathon. “There are many positive steps we can take to change hearts and minds towards children with disabilities. It starts with us—seeing them, valuing them, including them. Each of us can contribute in building a more inclusive society.”

## How the C4D investment began

UNICEF brought together local authorities and associations for children with disabilities on a shared platform to challenge biased perceptions, attitudes and practices towards children with disabilities. The emphasis for UNICEF was to advocate for ability and inclusion, ensuring that children with disabilities are at the forefront in the drive for solutions. The message and hashtag #ThisAbility was used to capture just that, and three intertwined strategies of social mobilization, advocacy, and behaviour and social change were utilized throughout the communication for development work around disability. In the process, a multitude of diverse collaborations emerged that have since spun into productive and enduring partnerships.

For starters, UNICEF targeted sports as an entry point to showcase the athletic abilities of children with disabilities. In Sabah, far from the capital city, thousands of runners gather every year for the Borneo International Marathon. With UNICEF help, local organizations providing disability-related services met with the marathon organizers, who were delighted to open up the marathon race to include 330 young people with and without disabilities, as well as their parents, in a shorter run within the event to help demonstrate what is possible.

Because media has a salient role in helping to break barriers, influence perceptions and build a more inclusive society in Malaysia, UNICEF collaborated with the Malaysian Press Institute to organize three one-day workshops for 80 journalists in three cities. The workshops' objectives were to raise awareness on the ways in which children with disabilities are portrayed,

provide technical and factual knowledge on the subject and build up journalists' understanding of children's rights and life with a disability.

The launch of the Childhood Disability Study was synchronized with the #ThisAbility Makeathon, which was designed in collaboration with Petrosains Discovery Centre (a new private sector UNICEF partner). The event brought together children with and without disabilities, parents and a range of technical specialists, such as inventors, designers, doctors and therapists, to develop prototypes of an assistive device to help solve problems experienced at home, during play or in school. The winning team, led by 7-year-old Branden, who has spinal muscular atrophy, developed a prototype of a gripping aid device used to help hold a pen, paint brush or spoon. The team was awarded a grant to manufacture the prototype for distribution.



## What made a difference

The meaningful participation of children before, during and after the Borneo International Marathon was carried out with parental consent and in alignment with ethical guidelines and the 'no harm' policy. In the weeks prior to the event, testimonies of children with disabilities taking part in the marathon were distributed via email to marathon participants and video testimonies by the children were featured on giant screens before and after the marathon. Additionally, the child participants talked of their aspirations and hopes of inclusion on stage during the marathon's closing ceremony.

A constructive approach showcased the positive contributions of children with disabilities and promoted positive behaviour and social acceptance instead of highlighting any negatives.

The UNICEF report Childhood Disability in Malaysia: A Study of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice was developed into a reader-friendly booklet that used a dyslexia-friendly font and is also available as an audiobook to help ensure that the information is accessible to a wider audience.

Partnerships were established with media houses to develop participatory videos in collaboration with a group of children and youths with disabilities. The short videos were featured on social media as well as on an outdoor media display as part of a campaign to shape the public perception of children with disabilities in a constructive manner.

## The impact of the investment so far

Through the #ThisAbility initiatives, exposure of inclusiveness on the public agenda was raised and the impact has been evident through the increased confidence among parents and children with disabilities to meaningfully participate in public activities. Over a 20-day period, the Borneo International Marathon attracted significant media exposure, with around 45 print stories covering the event. On social media, close to 6,000 posts on Instagram included the hashtag #ThisAbility, while the Borneo International Marathon had more than 3,000 mentions. UNICEF was tagged in more than 900 Twitter posts and upwards of 20,000 people were reached through Facebook, with more than 1,000 posts shared of the event. Additionally, around 7,000 people

running or watching the event used the hashtag in their posts in support of inclusion to combat stigma and discrimination.

The Borneo International Marathon will henceforth be accessible to people with disabilities in future races.

A post-marathon evaluation indicated that 85 per cent of the runners surveyed said interacting with children with disabilities was an interesting experience. "Finally, there is a refreshing change among society whereby they are more open to being aware of children with disabilities and not staring at them, which is something my family used to experience with my sister who has cerebral palsy," applauded one runner.

Testimonies indicated that the Borneo International Marathon led to a positive impact on children by increasing self-esteem, and parents felt new pride and less isolation. "The day my son was diagnosed with autism, yes I mourned for him ... I don't know what his future will bring for him but I'm pretty sure there is hope," said one parent.

A preliminary assessment of the media training found that 70 per cent of reports reflected a change in reporting towards more positive spins. The country's major daily newspaper, The Star, ran a front-page story with the blaring headline: 'See the ability not the disability'. Children reported being interviewed more decently and respectfully.

## What we would do again

UNICEF Malaysia established 'disability' as its flagship, channelling resources and a cross-collaborative approach. A full-time consultant under the UNICEF Child Protection section also coordinated collaboration across the sectors within the organization and outside, which proved to be extremely beneficial.

UNICEF tapped into existing platforms to connect different partners to strengthen each other's efforts.



In Sabah, for example, the local associations working with children with disabilities required a platform to help amplify their efforts and advocacy. The Borneo International Marathon helped do just that as well as initiate collaborations that continue to be sustained.

The underlying UNICEF approach is not to make 'disability' the entry point to changing mindsets and behaviour. Tapping into mainstream events that involve people with and without disabilities by using different channels, such as innovation and sports, is essential.

## What we might do differently

UNICEF will do more targeting of influencers on Instagram, train volunteers and partners on disability equality, ensure accessibility and inclusion measures are standard at events (ramps, toilets and sign language interpretation), and increase the focus on broadcast media and international publicity, as well as encourage political support for changes in accessibility within stadiums and playgrounds.



## PHILIPPINES

## CHILDHOOD DISEASES DON'T STAND A CHANCE WHEN LOCAL POLITICAL LEADERS ARE SOCIALLY ACCOUNTABLE

**There is a maxim that women leaders will put women and children first. And while there is a predominance of reality in that, it doesn't always pan out as needed. For instance: Michelle Odevilas is 40 now, a mother of three teenagers. She has been a political leader for nearly 20 years. In her early days a few years ago as the newly elected Metro Manila barangay captain (village head) of South Signal, she noticed a crowd of mostly women and children waiting under an obstinate ball of sun to visit the one doctor or the one nurse. She did indeed see a need for improvement.**

And she vowed to make a change. While soliciting her congresswoman for funds to build a bigger clinic that her own budget couldn't cover, she installed fans and a tent to create shade. But she missed something huge. She missed who wasn't there in that crowd.

It was a lot of children needing immunizations.

It takes data and dialogue to see many gaps, oversights, shortcomings, problems. Michelle didn't know to ask for the data. Plus, there were political sensitivities weighing in on the situation, which had created a distance between her and the health workers. She admits she trusted the health officials, with their mandate for protecting the public's health care rights, to look after services to women and children, such as immunization. But when there's only one doctor and one nurse for nearly 40,000 people, and a huge crowd at the door every day, everyone is too overworked to look out for people, in this case children, who are not showing up. card games are a great way to teach while encouraging fun and social engagement.

An outsider's view can help. So when UNICEF gathered data and organized seminars with local officials and barangay health workers to show them that South Signal is a major contributor to the high default rate on immunizations for the country and globally, people like Michelle

and the health workers in her barangay sat up and took it personally. “It was an eye-opener,” she recalled.

A year later, she looks back on the series of workshops and one-on-one discussions she had with UNICEF Philippines and Department of Health officers as the “trigger” to her heightened sensitivity on what it is to serve her constituency.

“UNICEF taught me to be a more effective leader, to be more sensitive and to dig deeper into the situation—not only what you see but how to gather data to see the real situation. UNICEF taught me how to develop myself in public service. What I can do with data and its value and as a tool for planning in my next programme.”

Michelle rearranged the priorities for spending her limited budget. Immunization was given a place in her priorities—ahead of livelihoods and sports activities, which still get funding (but less).

THE PROMISING PRACTICE  
TALKING SOCIAL  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
WITH LOCAL  
POLITICIANS AND  
COMMUNITIES ON  
EVERY CHILD’S RIGHT  
TO BE PROTECTED  
FROM DISEASE



**What needed targeting in the Philippines**

Data analysis in the Philippines revealed a decline in full immunization coverage among children aged 1 to 2 years, from 80 per cent in 2008 to 62 per cent in 2013.

The analysis further revealed that for some families, taking their children to the health centre for immunization meant lost time at work or other income-earning activity, especially if they had to wait for hours or pay for transportation because they live in a remote area.

Health centres are often overwhelmed with patients, particularly in highly populated areas, like Metro Manila. Barangay health workers, who are usually volunteers, are overworked and sometimes running low on patience, which some parents find irksome and thus refuse to return.

The South Signal clinic is about 30 square meters; usually a line of patients snakes outside and parents may wait up to 90 minutes with their children. When clinic staff become grumpy or the temperature becomes too hot or the wait too long, some parents end up leaving or do not even bother to show up on the specified immunization day.



There is also lack of communication and coordination between local officials and health centres, with few if any meetings, between them and no discussion of health statistics, indicators or problems. Immunization is also not a priority for local officials, which results in low investment. “Before, my priorities were peace and order and the sports programme. I thought immunization was covered by the health clinic and I thought it was their priority,” explained Michelle.

There is also lack of communication and coordination between local officials and health centres, with few if any meetings, between them and no discussion of health statistics, indicators or problems. Immunization is also not a priority for local officials, which results in low investment.

### How the C4D investment began


Urban health systems remain a challenge in the Philippines. A communication strategy was designed to promote awareness and accountability among local officials and health workers on immunization. This included expanding the capacity of local officials, health workers and other volunteers to promote immunization in their communities and improve service delivery. Engagement with these people was needed to increase immunization coverage.


The intervention, which has a strong emphasis on governance, was designed for 44 urban poor


communities and 28 health centres in Metro Manila, encompassing the cities of Manila and Taguig. To engage with local officials, UNICEF used various communication platforms and materials, such as an advocacy video for local officials and copies of laws and policies on immunization, to highlight the importance and urgency of full vaccination coverage and prompt decision makers to take action. Regular face-to-face dialogue with the local officials during community visits and workshops helped sustain the focus on the immunization issue and its solutions.


The communication materials were used during planning and monitoring workshops, events, and training.


Among these activities were:

- 

**/1**  
Community visits, which helped to facilitate regular dialogue between groups and officials.
- 

**/2**  
Micro-planning workshops, which created opportunities for partnerships between local officials and health workers.
- 

**/3**  
Inter-sector governance and leadership training and the Barangay Health and Leadership Management Programme.
- 

**/4**  
World Immunization Week, which highlighted the role of local officials in increasing immunization coverage and awareness.
- 

**/5**  
Immunization outreach and assessments with the barangay council and regular monitoring by UNICEF staff and the Department of Health.

The highlight of the intervention is the behaviour change at the service providers' and local administrators' levels—making them accountable for their duties, influencing their attitude towards client-friendly engagement and building local capacity in communicating and engaging with communities on immunization.

### What made a difference

The joint planning workshops for local officials and health workers created opportunity for dialogue between them. UNICEF and the Department of Health organized such meetings. In South Signal, this helped bridge the political gaps and overcome partisan politics to reveal the necessity of partnership and a forged alliance in the spirit of public health and children's rights.

Before we had the chance to have heart-to-heart discussion when UNICEF invited doctors, nurses and other health care providers and analyses all the gaps that they encountered. UNICEF brought us together to overcome the political barriers," Michelle explained.

Regular dialogue with local officials and further monitoring visits reiterated the critical messages (through different formats). Barangay leadership and management training led local officials

to launch other activities as a result of the UNICEF and Department of Health advocacy. Michelle also expanded the one-day immunization schedule to every weekday (rather than once a week) after the UNICEF and Department of Health training.

Now, the barangay periodically reminds residents of the importance of immunization with public address announcements.

"We had a meeting with health providers and we formulated how to reach out to children not yet vaccinated. We went door to door, house to house. Then we had partner mobilization meetings with the private sector and private clinics with the health centre and barangay officers to trace defaulters," said Michelle.

Michelle enacted the Barangay Ordinance for the Mandatory Registration of All Inhabitants, which requires the registering the names and immunization status of all children up to age 12. This information is forwarded to health centres, which follow up individual cases if an immunization gap is detected.

New residents, such as migrants coming for work, are now tracked by each neighbourhood barangay leader. The policy enabled the barangay to create a vital database of village residents. Private health clinics are now also required to pass on their records to the health clinic.

### The impact of the C4D investment so far

Overall results of the C4D interventions in all targeted areas:



More than

**300**

local ordinances or resolutions were passed to support immunization.



Some

**143**

health workers were trained on interpersonal communication and counselling. Michelle said that in her barangay, the training impressed on health workers the importance of treating each family with dignity.



Some

**167**

barangays hired new health workers. In addition to the eight volunteers, Michelle hired more health clinic staff.



More than

**4,200**

community members were reached through awareness-raising activities led and funded by the barangays.

### What we might do differently

Promoting immunization should be contextualized within the broader childcare and development framework so that other practices are not processed as less important but rather as integrated and complementary.



In South Signal, Michelle sees this solution as sustainable. “I believe a system is in place now. Even if I’m not the barangay captain tomorrow...the access of health services is in place.” And she says the work with UNICEF opened her eyes to other issues, such as children with disabilities. “I have become sensitive of this vulnerable group. Before, I just saw the mother carrying them and taking good care. Because of UNICEF, I approach the mother and talk with her and ask how I could help with taking care of her child. That is applying what I have learned. When Save the Children came in, I approached them to ask for a rehabilitation programme, and we now can offer physical therapy and speech therapy. And we are reaching out to people with disabilities to know their situation and conditions.”

### What we would do again

It is important that people who are legally mandated to serve communities feel accountable and take action. Behaviour change must take place at this level too, not just among parents.

Recognize the expertise of local partners—their familiarity with their situations when delivering specialized knowledge or skills from outside specialists.



## VIET NAM



## GAMES YOU CAN PLAY, THINGS YOU CAN LEARN

**If you want to change the world or a child's behaviour, try moving three spaces Or five spaces. Try to avoid Heat retention, which traps you on Earth. If you get lucky, Heat release can put your Orange Sunshine back on a brighter path. The thing to fear the most, though, is the Grey Smoke, which blocks all three exits. If that occurs, the Orange Sunshine must go to another zone or wait for the Earth to rotate.**

Winning may be all about releasing the Sunshine and losing is the trapping of Sunshine, but for thousands of Vietnamese children, it is board game fun. And yet, it is indeed moving them to a new space of awareness.

Eight-year-old Le Quoc An certainly thinks so: "I learned that we should not cut down trees. Because the trees—our friends—will be sad and the Earth will become very hot," he said of this new board game, with its climate change-related messages.

Thanks to Eat-Poo-Wash, 9-year-old Dinh Thi Doan, now better understands the destructive impact of environmental and sanitation problems and the need to "rescue my commune, my planet from rubbish and dirty water". She also knows that to protect herself from diseases, she must "wash my hands after going poo-poo".

With natural disasters and climate change impacts severely affecting children's well-being and potential, UNICEF wanted to 'talk' with children about important development issues. This 'talk' took the form of games that would reach out to children, helping them to learn about hygiene and climate change-related behaviours. The idea recognizes that play is a way to learn and connect with one another. Children in Viet Nam love to play games on their smart phones but tend not to play more physical games at home or in school. The board and card games are a great way to teach while encouraging fun and social engagement.



THE PROMISING PRACTICE  
Board games with  
environmental  
messaging for children

### What needed targeting in Viet Nam

In March 2016, the Government of Viet Nam declared a state of emergency in 52 of its 63 provinces due to severe saline intrusion and drought. It was the worst natural disaster event in more than 90 years. At least 2 million people, including 520,000 children and 1 million women, experienced acute water shortages and required humanitarian assistance.

The emergency response included life-saving interventions but also tackled the need to build the resilience of the population and to help them withstand future shocks. It was clear that better communication for development and behaviour change was needed.

In addition to life-saving skills, including hygiene practices, to help children cope with or prevent risks or illness associated

with a disaster, interventions taught them how climate change impacts their well-being and potential.

For instance, the 2016 El Niño-induced drought and saline intrusion emergency negatively affected children and women by causing shortages of water and food. Reduced access to potable water and water for other domestic uses led to poor hygiene and sanitation (open defecation), which exacerbated the prevalence of malnutrition and communicable diseases.

Information, education and communication interventions in Viet Nam tend to overemphasize the development of materials. In schools, there is still a heavy practice of top-down talking, with little space for the participation and creativity of students.

### How the C4D investment began

TOHE, a Vietnamese social enterprise with expertise in using participatory art for communicating with disadvantaged children, was contracted by UNICEF to produce educational games for primary and secondary school children. With technical guidance from UNICEF, TOHE conducted a rapid needs assessment that would inform the development of possible board games for conveying important information to children.

The rapid needs assessment revealed a lack of knowledge on climate change and the need to promote positive personal, household and public hygiene behaviour among children. The assessment also looked into children's playing experiences and found that many young people were not in the habit of playing board games.

The findings indicated children need a learning model with a more participatory, self-learning approach—not the one-way information-transfer model often used in schools.

For most of the 200 children (aged 6–11), 45 parents and 24 teachers who participated in the assessment, an educational board game seemed an innovative solution to equip children with vital knowledge and to internalize a better understanding of climate change and important hygiene practices.

### What made a difference

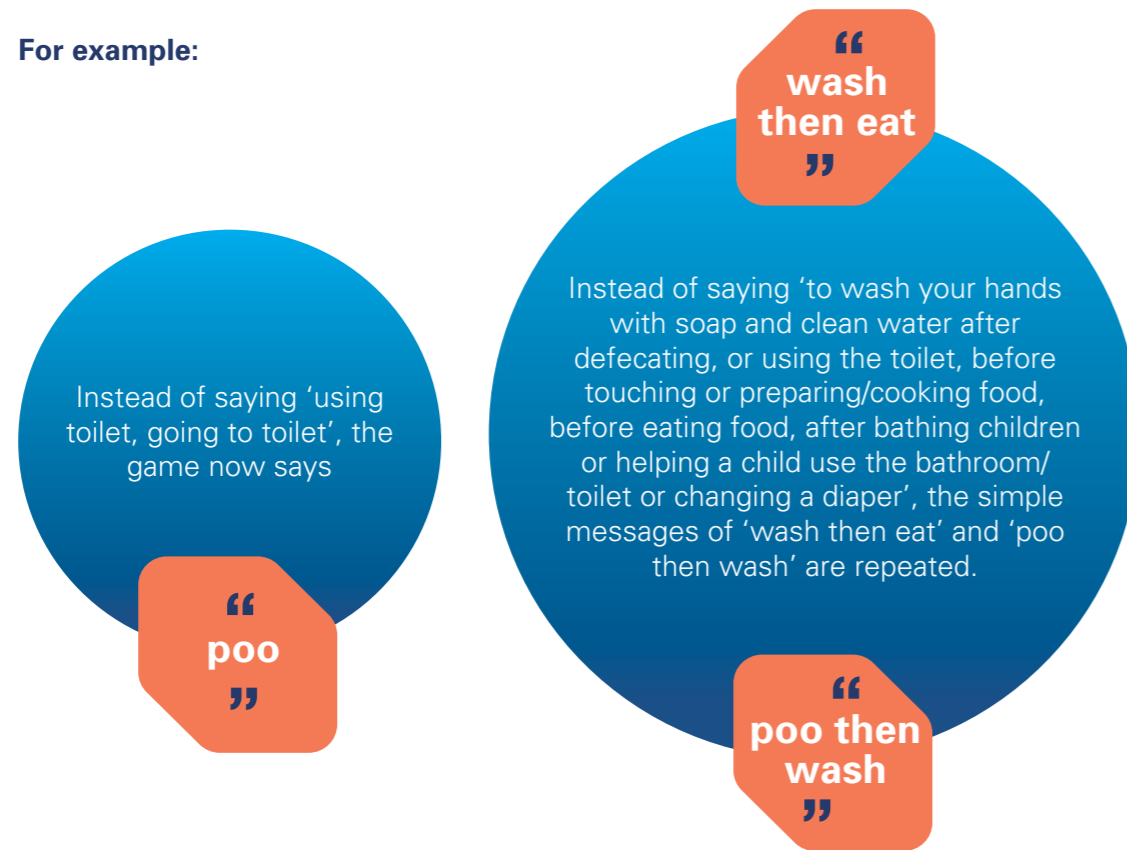
Children were encouraged to participate in the assessment. They were assigned to a team called the Planet Rescuing Crew and asked to pick a role for themselves as captain, photographer, writer or crew member. The Planet Rescuing Crew then investigated their commune to locate problem areas that could affect their future well-being. The crew then interviewed commune members and mapped out evidence of trouble spots, such as garbage around the school and dirty water. They were asked to propose solutions to "save our planet". Many creative solutions flowed, including handwashing as a crucial behaviour in an emergency situation.

Based on findings of the needs assessment, UNICEF opted to design the climate change game with no text but easy-to-understand drawings on the board, cards and tokens. Children learn the message through each situation. For example, in the climate change game, positive action cards depict a wind turbine, a bicycle and tree planting to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Negative action cards depict deforestation, industrial production and a motorcycle, all of which emit hazardous gases.

Five game options were designed for testing. The same schools involved in the rapid needs assessment were revisited. Children were then randomly selected to play the five games while being observed. Focus group discussions followed with the children for their feedback on game preference.

Two board games were finally selected by the children: Cool Down the Earth and Eat-Poo-Wash. Based on their feedback, the messages in the board games were reworded in a more appropriate way for primary and secondary school children, taking into account issues of gender, ethnicity and language barriers.

For example:



These board games are the result of collaborative effort of various partners across sectors, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the

Ministry of Health, the Viet Nam Red Cross and provincial Department of Education and Training.



### The impact of the C4D investment so far

Cool Down the Earth is a collaborative board game that provides a fundamental understanding of how human action affects climate change. It also encourages positive actions and raises awareness about the consequences of negative actions on the environment, climate and human life.

The Eat–Poo–Wash board game is a way for children to repeat simple messages in a natural, active and funny way, helping them learn about the importance of regularly washing hands with soap as a habit.

When children play these board games as extracurricular activities, teachers can then facilitate group discussion with children on the issues.

A second rapid assessment to assess the impact of the board games is planned. The final step of the initial strategy, which is considered crucial, is to advocate with the Ministry of Education and Training to incorporate the board games within the extracurricular activities for students in all schools.



Based on the laughter heard in classroom after classroom, the board games are proving the positive impact of an innovative communication method for children on climate change and hygiene behaviour promotion, encouraging creative, participatory and self-learning approaches.

Says Dinh Thi Doan, “My most favourite moment is when I see the ‘hammer’ because that’s when I can beat the other player’s game. It’s very funny. I have now learned that I need to wash my hands after going poopoo and wash my hands before meals.”

### What we would do again

The board games are proving successful in shifting from traditional didactic teaching to a more participatory and self-guided approach to learning. Reports from teachers and students indicate that the board games help improve knowledge and attitudes towards climate change and hygiene. The impact assessment will provide more insight into the extent to which the games contribute to any reported changes and indicate how they can be improved and used at scale.

The board game development process, which involved children in all stages, illuminated student’s capabilities.



It has also encouraged teachers to apply more child-centred approaches and has empowered the participating children to use creative processes in learning and communicating. Board games are part of the communication campaign and strategy. They can also work as a single project to communicate and encourage participation of children and adolescents.

### What we might do differently

The needs assessment should be carried out in more provinces to be representative of the county’s different regions, geography, ethnic minority groups and diversified levels of education.

Due to limited resources, only two games per school could be created. A fundraising campaign would enable more games be made available and sent to more schools.

The government counterparts, partners and private sector players need to be involved from the planning stage. Media, especially social media platforms, also need to be incorporated into the process of development, production and the evaluation of the board games because they contribute to advocacy and fundraising purposes. Social media is also a good way to raise public awareness of more innovative and creative communication methods.

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