

## Macedonia (The former Yugoslav Republic of)

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### Executive Summary

In 2014, significant progress was made in the advancement of the rights of children with disabilities. Building on the ongoing efforts in promoting inclusive early childhood development (ECD) and education, the programme gave a greater focus to cross sectoral linkages for a more holistic and complementary approach to children with disabilities. The approach moved away from the prevailing traditional medical approach to a social model based on the International Classification of Functioning - Children and Youth (ICF-CY) methodology. In order to better understand the barriers and bottlenecks faced by children with disabilities, the programme supported several key studies whose findings will inform UNICEF and partners' future priorities in this area.

A capacity gap analysis in legislation, policies and service provision for children with disability was conducted and initial findings were discussed in depth in a national consultation with all stakeholders. A Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice (KAP) Survey on inclusion of children with disabilities was conducted. It provides a wealth of information on the general public's awareness of disability and the rights of persons with disabilities, and their attitudes towards inclusion of children with disabilities in various settings including kindergarten and schools. The findings point to the need to develop a longer term strategy to address stereotypes and negative attitudes that prevent social inclusion of children with disabilities. The current national model of assessment of children with disabilities was revised to be in line with the ICF-CY approach.

With UNICEF support, the number of children accessing ECD continued to increase in 2014. Newly released data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MoLSP) revealed that the rate of children under six enrolled either in kindergartens or ECD centres increased from 34 per cent in 2013 to 40 per cent in 2014. The majority of these new centres were established in Roma communities and poor rural areas to provide more learning opportunities to the most marginalised children.

UNICEF helped the Mohr develop a methodology for audit of child mortality cases. The methodology allows systematic and peer review of mortality cases, alongside disaggregation per cause, ethnicity and other relevant determinants. It guides policy makers to advance the medical practice and to improve planning of equity-focused public health interventions, to further reduce gaps in child mortality.

There was no significant shortfall in the results achieved compared with the expected key results for the year.

In line with UNICEF's core roles in Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS), the programme continued to enable knowledge exchange between national institutions and other European institutions and academia. In health, a partnership with the United Kingdom's leading medical universities led to the strengthening of the home visiting system that aims at improving early detection and referral of children with developmental needs by the home visiting nurses. ECD professionals benefited from the knowledge and best

practices of Belfast University and other leading experts in ICF-CY in the area of multiculturalism, respect for diversity and inclusive education.

A partnership with the World Bank was strengthened in the area of social protection. An inter-ministerial committee was established to review the current cash benefits system. UNICEF and World Bank are closely supporting this important initiative.

Despite advocacy efforts to engage the newly elected Parliament in the promotion of child rights, no progress was made this year. This could be explained by the boycott of Parliament by opposition parties and the delays in the establishment of key Parliamentary committees. As reported last year, engaging with the Parliament remains a complex and challenging process.

## Equity Case Study

### Early Childhood Development

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has a strong tradition of state-funded preschool care and education. This legacy continued after country's independence although investments in the sector were low. Expectations were that kindergartens should support working parents by providing full day care. The enrolment rate remained static until 2010. It started increasing at national level, but not among the most marginalized children. Many children from rural areas, ethnic Albanians, Roma and children with disabilities were excluded, with no opportunity to access ECD services. The 2011 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) showed that the enrolment rate among children aged 36-59 months increased at national level from 11 per cent in 2006 to 22 per cent in 2011, while the increase for marginalized groups of children was very limited: among ethnic Albanians from 1.5 to 3 per cent, ethnic Roma from 3.5 to 4 per cent, and rural from 1.5 to 6 percent.

To address these equity gaps and to increase ECD opportunities for the most excluded children, UNICEF piloted ECD centres as low-cost alternatives which modelled flexible and child-centred arrangements that also engaged parents. In 2008, UNICEF supported the development of the first national early learning and development standards (ELDS) to facilitate common understanding of holistic child development, development of teacher training modules and manuals, in-service training programme, and instruments for monitoring child outcomes based on ELDS. The ELDS were tested in the pilot ECD centres and public kindergartens.

In 2010, the UNICEF supported study "Fair Play" highlighted inequities and system bottlenecks, such as urban concentration of preschools and state funding subsidizing children from better off families. It also found that the country had the highest cost per child in kindergarten in the region and major system inefficiencies. The study made the case for ECD centres piloted with UNICEF support as cost-effective alternatives for the most marginalized that could be scaled-up with savings if inefficiencies are addressed.

In 2011, UNICEF supported a study on Roma Early Childhood Inclusion which shed light on the system's barriers that prevented inclusion of Roma and children with disabilities in the ECD services and kindergartens. The study argued for system changes, but also suggested targeted and integrated interventions for the most marginalized children.

In 2012, UNICEF followed up with an in-depth functional and financial analysis of the preschool system which highlighted bottlenecks, including a dropout rate of 40 per cent and inconsistencies in planned and actual expenditures. The study showed that allocations of funds

to kindergartens are based on the reported number of children enrolled and not on the actual number attending; some parents were paying for a full day stay although children attend a half day programme. It also found the lack of a national in-service training system, and an inactive inspection service.

The evidence from the studies and the lessons learned from piloting of initiatives was the trigger for the Government to initiate major reforms. In 2013, with UNICEF support, a new ECD law and sub-laws were adopted which addressed key bottlenecks related to supply (allowed diversified provision) and quality (ELDS as the basis for quality, and quality assurance mechanisms). UNICEF continues to support capacity development for implementation of the law and generate evidence about their application in local context, such the recent study on the influence of ELDS on child learning. UNICEF also supports communication for development campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of ECD, and fundraising with the private sector for opening of new ECD centres.

In 2013, the country participated in the regional multi-country evaluation in the result area 'children's right to early learning/school readiness' as part of the Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda and in-depth national report was developed. The evaluation findings, finalised in 2014, confirmed the important progress made in the past years by the country with UNICEF support, at different levels:

At impact level (changes in the lives of children):

- An increase of preschool education/ECD coverage. There was an upward trend for three to five year olds from 21.8 per cent to 29.1 per cent over the period 2007-2013. This rate does not include enrolment data from ECD centres as they were officially registered in 2014. When including this data, the MoLSP calculates 40 per cent enrolment. At the time of the evaluation, progress in closing the equity gap was not yet evident, but with the ongoing system changes, such as registration of new ECD centres, the equity gaps is narrowing. Inclusion of children with disabilities remains low.
- Improved child learning- based on evidence from the progress assessment of child learning based on ELDS.

At outcome level or in addressing system bottlenecks:

- Legislation and policy - the law described above addressed major bottlenecks.
- Supply - the network of ECD providers has increased. The Government opened 14 kindergartens in 2013 and 20 in 2014, and 15 new ECD centres, primarily in rural areas and Roma communities.
- Quality - ELDS is recognized as a framework for quality and is implemented as such through the new in-service training, licencing system, curricula and record keeping.
- Funding – a new funding formula is being developed based on the findings of the financial study. It will ensure support for the most marginalized children;
- Coordination – a new data collection system is being established to monitor enrolment, attendance, and quality of early learning. It will provide disaggregated data by municipality/ ethnicity/ language of instruction.

The evaluation provided the following recommendations:

- Focus on the most marginalized children: continue ongoing work to analyse and address system bottlenecks for inclusion of children with disabilities and other marginalized children.

- Address social norms as a major obstacle in enabling environment, but especially demand and the need for change of parents' beliefs and practices in relation to young child learning and development. There is a need to challenge stigma and discrimination attached to the most marginalized children, Roma and children with disabilities.
- There is a need for institution building. Capacity development in the past has mainly focused on individuals. Governance issues need to be addresses, including the functioning of institutions and how they collaborate among themselves.
- There is a need to address capacities for decentralized management and improve cross-sectoral cooperation since the inclusion of the most marginalized children requires integrated support at primary level services.

## Summary Notes and Acronyms

### Acronyms

ADA – Austrian Development Agency  
 AMP – Annual Management Plan  
 BED – Bureau for Education Development  
 CMT – Country Management Team  
 CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child  
 CRPD – Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  
 CSW – Centres for Social Work  
 DCT – Direct Cash Transfers  
 DPO – Disability Person Organisations  
 ECD – Early Childhood Development  
 ELDS – Early Learning and Development Standards  
 FACE – Funding Authorization and Certificate of Expenditure  
 HACT – Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers  
 ICT – Information and Communication Technology  
 ICF-CY – International Classification of Functioning –Children and Youth  
 IMEP – Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan  
 IPA – Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance  
 ISA – Institute for Social Activities  
 KAP – Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice  
 MCH – Mother and Child Health  
 MoES – Ministry of Education and Science  
 MoH – Ministry of Health  
 MoLSP – Ministry of Labour and Social Policy  
 OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  
 PBR – Programme and Budget Review  
 PPP – Programme Policy and Procedure  
 RCSA – Risk Control Self-Assessment  
 SSO – State Statistics Office  
 UNDAF – United Nations Development Assistance Framework  
 UNDSS – United Nations Department for Safety and Security

## Capacity Development

In child protection, in the absence of a cross sectoral mechanism to address violence against children, UNICEF supported training aimed at strengthening skills of the professionals in providing coordinated responses and care to children victims of and witnesses to violence. This included training of regional multi-agency teams in 12 out of 85 municipalities. These teams

were composed of front line professionals, including police officers, public prosecutor's office, social workers, education and health.

In ECD, the capacity of 80 national and local stakeholders from 49 municipalities out of 85 was enhanced in the implementation of the new ECD law. A total of 295 teachers and educators from all 57 kindergartens and 40 educators from 14 ECD centres working with the most marginalized children were trained on implementation of ELDS, new curricula and record keeping. A specific module on inclusive ECD based on ICF-CY was developed and case studies from two pilot kindergartens published. These will be used as a basis for nationwide implementation of multicultural and inclusive ECD.

In education, all 6,500 early grade primary education teachers from all 335 primary schools were trained and then implemented innovative approaches for early numeracy instruction. Three thousand early grade primary education teachers from 250 primary schools were trained and then used innovative approaches for early literacy instruction. Representatives from the Government and NGOs participated in the international Afflatoun conference to introduce the initiative on Social and Financial Education.

The participation of the country delegation from key education institutions in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNICEF workshop on student learning was key in planning future support to education system reform. It resulted in a consensus to support system alignment, specifically in relation to assessment and evaluation and change management.

The capacity of home visiting nurses was strengthened. UNICEF supported the development of a training package on developmental disabilities that will be used by nurse educators in both in- and pre-service training courses. An evaluation of the initial stage of the training package implementation through a "train the trainer" approach, showed potential for further application in the region, as well as among other health and non-health community personnel.

### **Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy**

The assessment of children's outcomes in ECD conducted in 2013 showed that early learning programmes based on ELDS had a positive impact on children's developmental and learning outcomes. The assessment compared developmental and learning outcomes for three groups of children: (1) children attending ECD centres; (2) children attending kindergartens that were trained in implementing ELDS, and; (3) children attending kindergartens that were not trained in ELDS (control kindergartens). The assessment showed that children attending ECD centres achieved the best results, which could be due the fact that ECD centres have greater flexibility in planning and realization of activities in line with children's needs. In general, girls performed better than boys and Macedonian children better than Albanians. Children who had attended the programme for three years showed significantly higher outcomes than children who attended the programme for one year. The findings are key in further implementation of ELDS and in identifying specific support to be provided to marginalized children.

The 2014 KAP survey conducted among children and their parents in kindergartens provided the baseline on children's learning and behaviour with regards to respect for diversity and multiculturalism. The findings confirmed that children have little exposure to and understanding of diversity. They are mostly influenced by their parents in developing prejudice and stereotypes with regards to different types of diversity, such as ethnic, language, ability, socio-economic background, and especially in kindergartens which cater for children from one ethnic/language

group. Parents and educators show highest resistance to have their children exposed to the language of the 'others'.

In the area of child rights monitoring, the capacity for child rights monitoring institutions was assessed. It provided information on the current status and needs for future UNICEF involvement in developing capacity for child rights monitoring of the institutions.

A comprehensive study on the situation of children with disabilities, KAP survey on attitudes and practices towards children with disabilities, and a mapping of civil society organizations and services available to children with disabilities were conducted in 2014. Findings and conclusions from these various studies will be used in developing the next country programme.

## Partnerships

The office continued to facilitate joint work between the Ulster University from the United Kingdom and the National Association of Nurses in the development of a training package for home visiting nurses on detection of developmental disabilities of newborns, infants and children. The training framework was built on the current teaching programme for nurses, and will be integrated at the pre-service and in-service education levels. The planning framework of this initiative however, aimed at reducing further dependency on international experts. By ensuring significant contribution and empowerment of the national health personnel in design and ownership in initial stage of training implementation. This approach has the potential to ameliorate the aforementioned constraint on short-term, although, the real test will only become apparent in the years ahead by conducting a formal evaluation.

UNICEF and T-Mobile continued the partnership for the ECD awareness raising and fundraising campaign 'The First Five are the Most Important' ([www.prvite5.com](http://www.prvite5.com)). As part of the campaign, eight new ECD centres were opened in rural and disadvantaged communities. T-Mobile supported the renovation and supplies, UNICEF provided training and materials and municipalities covered running costs and costs for educators' salaries. The campaign contributed to increased awareness of municipalities about the importance of ECD, and they continue to demand participation in this partnership.

UNICEF engaged in a partnership with national expert NGOs for implementation of mainstreaming respect for diversity in ECD, inclusive ECD and education. The partnerships were facilitated with the support of high level international experts hired by UNICEF, such as experts from Queens University, Belfast Northern Ireland, University of Zurich and University of Basel to build the capacities for the national institutions, such as the MoES, MoLSP, Bureau for Education Development (BED), State Education Inspectorate, and national NGOs such as ECD CoR, the Centre for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution, and the Macedonian Centre for Civic Education.

UNICEF and Aflatoun started a partnership for implementation of Social and Financial Education. A group of national education stakeholders attended the regional Aflatoun Conference and Aflatoun experts supported in-country efforts for implementing the initiative.

## External Communication and Public Advocacy

The programme used traditional and digital media to reach and engage audiences around ECD, children with disabilities, end violence and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC@25).

Highlights included a social mobilization campaign launched in December 2013 and rolled out in 2014 to increase awareness on the importance of ECD and engage partners in increasing access to quality ECD services. It reached around 93,000 people and engaged more than 1,090 users each month through the campaign's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/prvite5>); and has generated 18,225 unique visitors to learn more from the campaign website [www.prvite5.mk](http://www.prvite5.mk). This has already resulted in mobilising municipalities to open ECD centres contributing to the increase in the enrolment rate from 34 to 40 per cent in 2014.

In November and December, UNICEF organized a series of events to bring attention to and advocate for new ways to reach out the most marginalized children. This was through using both global (CRC@25 essays, "Imagine" song, State of the World's Children report, Activate Talks) and local initiatives (new online game developed by the CO to engage children in learning and promoting child rights [www.detskiprava.mk](http://www.detskiprava.mk)). The events fostered new dialogue and commitments to advance the rights of all children. This triggered a new collaboration with the President of the country, a renewed partnership with the Ombudsperson Office and local European Union (EU) Delegation. Children were moderating or engaging at events, sharing their own stories, and showing that their voice counts.

More communication assets contributed to an increase in media coverage with a mention of UNICEF, from 287 news stories in 2013 to 442 stories in 2014, with no negative mentions. The Facebook fan base increased to 8,352 fans, reaching on average 6,200 people each month, with a peak in November where 17,033 people were reached during CRC@25 related posts, and engaging on average 1,000 users per month.

UNICEF brought together six inspiring change makers on Youth and Child Participation, using Activate Talks as a tool to focus on inclusion of children with disabilities, girls in information and communication technology, and youth in policy making. The activists presented their unique ways on how young people are actively engaging to bring about change in their own lives and their communities.

### **South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation**

In the area of programming for children with disability, the training package of home visiting nurses on developmental disabilities was acknowledged by the CEE/CIS regional experts' group, as a good practice with potential to be replicated regionally and internationally. The training package and experience of its early implementation were presented by the national team of trainers at the regional meeting of home visiting nurses held in Belgrade, Serbia. Following this meeting, a few countries from South-Eastern Europe expressed interest in adapting the training package, while most of its components are considered for integration under the regional training portfolio for home visiting nurses.

Regional and cross-country cooperation in the area of children with disability was also pursued through exchange of "best practices" in early detection and early intervention programmes, which is becoming an important focus of Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda item seven. Under the coordination of UNICEF Regional Office, a training programme of multi-disciplinary national professionals was organized in partnership with the University of Ankara. The purpose was to bring an understanding of the model of services provided to children with disabilities in Turkey, along with various tools and trainings offered to developmental specialists in screening and comprehensive support to children with developmental problems and their families. As a follow up, the national team of experts is in the process of country adaptation of

the guidelines for monitoring and supporting child development, produced and standardized by the University of Ankara.

### Identification Promotion of Innovation

With UNICEF support, Regional Learning Teams (RLTs) were first set up in 2013 in three regions as a professional networking platform to offer teachers an opportunity to deepen their professional competences in the area of early numeracy and literacy instruction to adequately address the learning needs of the most marginalized students. The RLTs were established as a follow up of the nationwide implementation of a programme aimed at improving teacher instruction and student learning in the early numeracy and literacy subjects.

The RLTs were set up as innovative mechanisms to allow professionals at local level, such as teachers, professors and Bureau of Education Development's advisors to conduct local research, identify local problems and through exchange of experiences, such as review of best practices and materials, to find local solutions. To perform these functions the RLTs received extra training in action research, mentoring and classroom observation.

Evidence from implementation showed improvement in teacher knowledge and student learning in early numeracy and literacy at national level. However, it also highlighted differences in results based on the language of instruction and differences between schools. The progress was monitored and reported in 2014. Evidence from focus group discussions, interviews and student work from the schools that benefited from the RLTs support shows improvement in teacher competencies and learning of marginalized students. RLTs also provided an opportunity for academics to get involved in action research related to pedagogical innovation.

The experience is being documented as part of the OECD Innovative Learning Environment Initiative that focuses on innovative approaches in creating stimulating learning environment for students. The plan is to establish an online platform and expand the experience to other geographical regions.

### Support to Integration and cross-sectoral linkages

Significant progress was made in 2014 to further improve the cross-sectoral work within the country programme and with partners for more integrated programming in the area of children with disabilities. While most sectors have been supporting interventions and programming to enhance social inclusion of children with disabilities at all levels, interventions remained isolated and sector based, lacking a holistic and integrated approach.

In consultation with national partners, UNICEF commissioned a cross-sectoral assessment that identified capacity gaps in legislation, policies and services provided to children with disabilities. The assessment proposed also a national model of continuum of services based on the social and human rights approach. The initial findings were discussed in December 2014 in a national consultation with all stakeholders, including Disability People Organizations (DPOs) and children.

Enhanced cross-sectoral cooperation around the child's tailored needs and support at different periods of life came up as a key recommendation from the discussions. The final report will be enriched by the outcomes of the national consultation on children with disability and will serve as a key policy document for future cross-sectoral programming, in the framework of the future Programme of Cooperation 2016-2020.

## Service Delivery

Building on a new law and policy framework, as well as training modules for professionals, the programme support to ECD focused on improving quality of services and expanding the network of services.

The new ECD law adopted in 2013 brought obligations for all ECD providers (i.e. kindergartens and ECD centres) to implement the new preschool education curriculum and new record keeping based on Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS). During 2014, all ECD providers in the country were trained on ELDS implementation. UNICEF also supported a study on assessment of progress of ELDS implementation showing that it is an effective framework to facilitate learning of the most marginalized children. Additionally, based on the findings of a KAP survey conducted this year, activities related to respect for diversity, multiculturalism and inclusive ECD are being piloted.

A fully fledged media campaign to increase awareness on the importance of ECD and mobilise support for opening new ECD centres was coordinated. Together with road-show events promoting ECD centres as cost-effective alternative service delivery model, the campaign has already resulted in mobilising municipalities to open new ECD centres, contributing to the overall increase in enrolment from 34 per cent to 40 per cent in 2014.

In total 14 ECD centres were opened. With funds from the Austrian Development Agency, UNICEF supported opening six new ECD centres and one kindergarten in Roma communities. With funds from Foundation T-Mobile, UNICEF supported opening eight ECD centres in rural communities. In total, 770 children were provided with opportunities for early learning.

Ensuring sustainability of programme results was central to advocacy and partnership strategies adopted during implementation. All new ECD centres were established through formal partnerships with municipalities who committed to provide physical space, funding for staff and running costs. UNICEF support was limited to start-up activities included refurbishment, supply equipment, training and materials. Through the programme, the new ECD centres are also being registered in the national preschool education system (see map of ECD centres - <http://www.prvite5.mk/mapa.nspk>).

Furthermore, through active advocacy and policy advice, the programme continued to work on a funding formula based on the financial study, and on an ECD database.

## Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation

The realisation of the rights of children with disabilities is a growing priority area for UNICEF Skopje. Efforts were undertaken to ensure that principles around Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities were fully embedded into programming with national partners. Participation of DPOs was strongly encouraged in various programme initiatives, including during the national consultation workshop on children with disabilities as well as during the revision process of the medically based model towards more social approach in assessment of children with disabilities.

The DPOs mapping conducted in 2014 aimed also at identifying capacity gaps among the civil sector to fulfil their duties as duty bearers, and also to claim their rights, as rights holders, to further contribute to the realisation of rights of children with disabilities in the country.

Another key initiative carried out was the assessment of the capacities of state institutions and

civil sector for child rights monitoring. Among other key findings, the assessment highlighted weak reporting and monitoring institutional capacities. In 2015, capacity development activities of these institutions will be prioritised in the Monitoring, Evaluation and Child Rights monitoring programme work plan.

Five programme staff members participated in Programme Policy and Procedures (PPP) training in 2014. The key elements of the training, including the human rights-based approach to programming were shared and widely discussed with all staff. The knowledge gained was a valuable resource for programming and using a human rights approach in the preparation of the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the new UNICEF Country Programme, and in overall UNICEF work in the following years.

### **Gender Mainstreaming and Equality**

The office gender focal point (Monitoring and Evaluation and Child Rights Monitoring Officer) actively participated in the UN Human Rights and Gender Theme Group, to further strengthen coordinated UN action towards greater gender equality and human rights realization. The staff member was actively involved in the preparation of the new UNDAF. For the first time, a gender and human rights outcome is being considered to be included in the new UNDAF.

One of the main challenges faced by the programme is the lack of gender disaggregated data in national statistics, hampering gender mainstreaming initiatives in planning and formulating policy documents and evaluation of subsequent policy effectiveness. Overall, the challenge was not only how to further strengthen the collection of gender statistics, but also how to ensure that the data will be effectively used to inform policies. Therefore, UNICEF continuously strengthened the capacities within the wider national statistic system to collect and track data within the framework of its activities, and stress the importance of gender disaggregated data in all possible instances.

Preparations for the gender assessment of the Country Programme to take place in 2015 were carried out in 2014. Terms of reference for the assessment were developed, and the office was included in the preparations for conducting the gender assessment led by the Regional Office.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

The Country Office had no activities targeting environmental sustainability. This sector has not yet been assessed nor prioritized.

### **Effective Leadership**

Under the leadership of the Representative, closing the recommendations of the 2013 audit was the management priority. The main issues that needed attention were handled in a systematic approach and monitored by the Country Management Team (CMT). All audit recommendations were closed by September 2014.

The Risk Control and Self-Assessment (RCSA) was reflected in the Annual Management Plan (AMP), which was regularly monitored at the CMT. At the beginning of the year, the office assessed the risks that could jeopardize the implementation of the country programme and put in place measures to mitigate the identified risks. The only risk remaining without full mitigation measures was an earthquake and its consequences.

The office worked on improving the monitoring mechanism of field trips and especially the

implementation of their follow up. At the monthly programme meetings chaired by the Deputy Representative, Programme Officers shared their field trip plan for the following month. When the field trips were completed, the Programme Officers finalised their field trip reports and submitted them to their supervisor who reviewed, commented as needed and signed the reports. During the following month Programme meeting, the field trip plan and field trip reports were updated and discussed, including the findings from the trip reports.

The review of the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) was a standard item on the CMT agenda. This was prepared by the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer and discussed at the CMT.

The Representative convened monthly CMT meetings with a standard agenda and a set of indicators ensuring monitoring of the office management. These included resource mobilization, funding level by programme and expenditure by type of funding, as well as the donor reports schedule.

The office also monitored the annual leave as requested by the Global Staff Association which enables an effort to be made to ensure all staff members took their leave in order to have an adequate life/work balance.

The Business Continuity Plan (BCP) was regularly updated and tested. The BCP enabled Staff members to work from out of the office successfully.

## **Financial Resources Management**

The monthly CMT meetings were used to monitor the contribution management and other performance management indicators. Budget utilisation reports of all contributions per programme component and per intermediate results, as well as by source of funding were presented and discussed. The budget utilisation targets were met throughout the year. One hundred per cent of the available Regular Resources and 2014 Other Resources were optimally utilized. In the last quarter, the monitoring of the budget expenditure was intensified and the unspent Regular Resources were transferred to other programmes in need of extra funding.

The office continued with the good practice of no outstanding Direct Cash Transfers (DCTs) for more than six months throughout the year. No donor report was overdue.

The office closely monitored the accounting instructions related to the interim and year-end closure of accounts, and met the requirements and the deadlines set by UNICEF headquarters (HQ). Bank reconciliations were completed as per the HQ monthly closure schedule. The office successfully managed to process all transactions with no delays.

The office continued implementing the HACT related activities independent of the other UN agencies, through the use of the Funding Authorization and Certificate of Expenditure (FACE) form, by visiting partners and conducting spot-checks and monitoring field visits. The office developed and implemented a 2014 assurance plan, which included the conducting of four micro-assessments of partners and spots checks. In addition, a new macro assessment of the Public Financial Management system in the country was completed in 2014.

The small annual budget of the office was optimally used, and there was no room for extra efficiency gains.

Some cost savings were made as part of the UN Operations, but not quantified.

## Fund-raising and Donor Relations

The office submitted on time the three donor reports due in 2014. The donor report schedule was a standing item on the CMT agenda, as one of the key management performance indicators.

As of end of the year, the office had mobilized 63 per cent of the Other Resources ceiling of the 2010-2015 Country Programme (US\$7.613 million out of US\$12 million) which were utilised by the expiring date of the grants. The bulk of the Other Resources funds were from Global Thematic Funding, and were mainly for education and ECD.

The 2014 contribution from the Austrian Development Agency as part of a three year regional project aiming at “Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion for Roma Children through ECD and Education” was fully utilised as per the planned agreed activities.

The 2014 portion of the Foreign Commonwealth Office’s contribution through the British Embassy in Skopje for the implementation of “Mainstreaming diversity and Multiculturalism in early childhood development” was used as per the plans.

The 2014 contribution from the Dutch Embassy as part of a two year project “Towards a child-friendly justice system” was fully utilized as per the planned agreed activities.

Thanks to the contribution of US\$52,000 from T-Mobile Foundation, 10 ECD centres were established in marginalised communities.

The office mobilized US\$100,000 Set-A-Side funds to support capacity development for home visiting nurses and US\$75,000 Thematic funds for reforms of the social protection system.

The direct grant to UNICEF as part of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funds from the European Union for US\$2.736 million has been under negotiation for over 18 months between the EU delegation in Skopje and the MoES to improve quality education.

As the country has reached the upper middle income country threshold, bilateral donors have reduced or even stopped their financial support.

## Evaluation

The annual Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) was developed based on the 2010-2015 multi-year IMEP. The implementation of the activities from the 2014 IMEP was regularly reviewed by CMT and the mid-year IMEP revision was conducted in July.

The office participated in two regional Multi-Country Evaluations (MCE), one on inclusive education (inclusion of all out of school children in quality learning) and one on availability and quality of ECD services (early learning and school readiness). Both evaluations were finalized in 2014, with active participation of relevant staff.

The MCE report on inclusive education was shared with the Ministry of Education and Science. It was jointly reviewed, and the findings and conclusions were discussed with the relevant officials from the ministry. The recommendations will need to be reviewed and discussed for

planning of the next programme cycle, as they provide direction toward further improvement of inclusion of most marginalized groups in education.

The MCE on availability and quality of ECD services was shared with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The recommendations from the MCE report will also be used to additionally improve the availability and quality and equity of ECD services in the country.

In addition to the MCE, UNICEF Skopje commissioned the same research team to produce a country specific report on the evaluation of the quality of ECD services in the country. The specific objectives of the evaluation were to document and report on impact results (in terms of changes in children's life) and reduction of equity gaps in ECD; to assess how such results were achieved through system changes (removal of system bottlenecks) at national and/or local levels; and to document the contribution of UNICEF to these system changes. The draft report was submitted in December and will be reviewed by UNICEF and MoLSP.

### **Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings**

The implementation of the 2013 Programme and Budget Review (PBR) recommendations and some post changes in the operations sections generated savings of US\$45,000: through the part-time positions of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Assistant and a Driver. The Administration/Human Resources Assistant, also covering the supply component, went on special leave without pay for one year. The office decided not to hire temporary staff, and distributed the tasks under this position among the existing staff, thus generating savings of US\$47,000. In addition, the office cleaner was also put on part-time work, thus making additional savings of US\$6,500.

In the previous years, the office access surveillance system was set only on one floor and was part of the tasks of one driver/receptionist's position which was abolished on 1 January 2014. Access to the surveillance system was re-organised from the reception to all four floors, enabling monitoring of the entrance by staff on any floor as required.

Direct landline phone numbers were established for each staff member, reducing dramatically the number of calls to the switchboard, causing less disruption for the Executive Assistant who was in charge of the phone switchboard.

The UN agencies continued to benefit from long-term arrangements in many areas as part of the Operations Management Team annual plan including travel, express mail courier, local internet service provider, security services, hotel rates, and unified fees for national consultants, interpreters and translators. This was an efficient way to reduce the workload and staff time spent on market research processes conducted by each agency separately. No estimates of cost savings are available.

### **Supply Management**

The total value of the supplies in 2014 was US\$129,287, representing five per cent of the overall office annual budget. The programme component reached a value of US\$111,690, or 86 per cent of the total supplies, while the operational supplies were US\$17,597 (14 per cent).

These supplies and services were mainly used for supporting the expansion of early childhood development services in 14 municipalities, and to establish Child Friendly Rooms for interviewing victims and witnesses of violence and abuse in five municipalities.

In addition to the programme supplies, as part of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF in partnership with the national Ombudsperson's office, engaged in development of an interactive online game designed to engage children in learning and promoting child rights [www.detskiprava.mk](http://www.detskiprava.mk). The game is available in Macedonian and Albanian language. Bookmarks, badges, T-shirts and bags were also developed to promote the initiative.

The office supported the printing of the manual on "procedures for courts, public prosecution and police on how to deal with the cases involving children victims of violence" in both Macedonian and Albanian languages.

As part of the operational supplies, one office network server was replaced, as well as the outdated equipment of the office surveillance system.

The office continued with the existing practice of having vendors deliver the supplies to the final beneficiaries, enabling UNICEF Skopje not to have a warehouse.

UNICEF supported the local Agency for food and veterinary by procuring 500 salt test kits through its global direct ordering mechanisms.

There were no procurement services carried out.

## Security for Staff and Premises

During 2014, no significant changes were noted in the external or internal office working environment. The country enjoyed a stable and quiet environment, and was free of man-made and natural disasters. No security issues jeopardized programme delivery.

Security-related information was disseminated to all staff in a timely manner; new staff were oriented and briefed on security issues by the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) in the country, while the staff list was regularly updated and shared accordingly. The agency warden system was in place and regular monthly radio checks conducted.

With HQ financial support, the outdated office surveillance system was upgraded, which enhanced staff safety and security. The system was installed on each of the four floors of the office, and is managed by any staff as needed.

The new surveillance system, including smoke detectors, was tested by conducting a fire evacuation drill. The BCP was tested through off-site working arrangements.

During the period, the UNDSS held two training sessions on safety and security for UN staff in the country. Similar training workshops are scheduled for next year to cover all UN staff.

## Human Resources

Following the 2013 Mid-Term Review (MTR) and PBR recommendations, there were some post changes in 2014, such as: Health and Nutrition post upgrade to National Officer-B level, abolishment of one Driver's position (out of three total), conversion of full-time to part-time of ICT Assistant and one Driver.

At the beginning of the year, the Social Protection Specialist moved to an international position. A recruitment process was conducted and a new Social Protection Specialist was appointed in May.

UNICEF NY Help Desk asked for the office's half-time ICT Assistant to work another half-time

remotely for HQs for eight months. This was a very positive working arrangement, which was most cost-effective for UNICEF than New York-based based technical support to the global IT system.

In 2014, several staff benefited from learning and professional opportunities. Five staff members (Education for Development Specialist, Child Protection Officer, M&E and Child Rights Monitoring Officer, Health and Nutrition Officer and Social Protection Specialist) attended the PPP workshop organized by the Regional Office. The Social Protection Specialist participated a World Bank global training on social protection, along with two key national partners. The Communication Officer attended Communication for Development training in Johannesburg; the Finance and Accounting Assistant attended a training on procurement in Supply Division in Copenhagen; the ICT Assistant attended the Emergency Telecommunications Training in Morocco; and the Representative attended a five-day course on UN Country Team (UNC)T leadership.

In addition, several staff benefited from development assignments while providing support to other UNICEF offices:

1. Communication Officer for five weeks in Liberia;
2. Education for Development Specialist for five weeks in Turkey;
3. The Ops Manager on emergency support for two weeks in Ukraine;
4. The ICT Assistant for four weeks in the Regional Office;
5. The Administration/Human Resources Assistant, while on special leave without pay, provided support to the Turkey office for two months;
6. The Finance and Accounts Assistant commenced support to the Regional Office in Geneva from the end of December for six weeks.

During their absence, staff were remotely providing support to the office, thus ensuring continuity of the programme implementation and working processes.

Performance management was understood as a management tool, supervisors and supervisees have regular open discussions and do not wait for the formal mandatory scheduled as per the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) process.

## **Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology**

During 2014, the office implemented the ICT strategies and introduced and implemented the new technologies as planned by following global UNICEF standards and policies.

Following the client-oriented approach, technical support was provided to UNICEF Skopje users on the information management tools and technology infrastructure together with advice on the use of new technologies.

The major changes during the past year were the implementation of cloud based services for Microsoft Office 365 including migration from MS Office 2010 to MS Office 2013, the implementation of Lync 2013, SharePoint 2013 and migration of Lotus Domino/Notes email system to cloud based O365/MS Outlook 2013.

Users became familiar with Lync 2013 as groupware tool, using the additional communication services such as real-time presence information with instant messaging, video conferencing, and voice communication integrated with email and Microsoft Office applications.

Cloud based communication system increased the user mobility by easing “work out of office” scenarios.

Each staff member was provided with a laptop and smart phone with integrated email client. Working from home with full LAN access is possible using of CISCO VPN services.

Provision of advice on maintenance of equipment and acquisition of hardware supplies, routine repairs and change of hardware electronic components was done as needed.

BCP was regularly updated and server’s backup was done on external hard disk drives. A restore exercise was successfully undertaken twice in the past year.

The office maintained a website, Facebook page and Twitter profile, using them as information tools for the UNICEF activities in the country.

More details are in the External Communication and Advocacy section of this annual report in relation to digital/social media.

## Programme Components from RAM

### ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

**OUTCOME 1** By end of 2015, as a result of social sector reforms, the Government addresses targeted disparities in the quality of and access to basic social services for vulnerable children and families.

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Significant progress was achieved in strengthening national systems and institutional capacities to further support the realization of child rights, including for children with disabilities and Roma children, who are among the most excluded children in the country.

Capacities of primary health care home visiting system for early identification, referral and care was strengthened through an effective training package on developmental disabilities to be used by nurse educators for home visiting in both in-service and pre-service training courses.

The programme continued to support the expansion of the ECD network. According to the last data provided by the MoLSP, the rate of ECD coverage increased from 34 per cent in 2013 to 40 per cent in 2014, with ECD centres established mostly in Roma communities and rural areas to reach the most excluded and hard to reach children.

All the 6,000 early grade teachers were trained in early numeracy and 60 percent (3,600) in early literacy to improve learning quality. Using experience from the schools implementing inclusive education practices in line with the UNICEF-supported training programme on Inclusive education based on ICF-CY, case studies were developed to support other teachers’ and schools’ learning in this area. Seven new primary schools with predominant Roma population were included in the training based on ICF-CY, and on strategies to help Roma students to acquire the language of instruction and learning.

Training activities of the social workers continued in 2014 on the service delivery standards developed in 2012. All Centres for Social Work (CSW) staff were trained. A Multi-Agency Team

(MAT) model was developed, aiming at providing coordinated quality care to and management of cases of children victims of violence. Training on the newly developed guidelines was provided to relevant professionals in 12 out of 84 municipalities. The next steps will include establishment of teams work in practice, expand the MAT work to other municipalities and institutionalize the monitoring of their work.

The current health-based model to assess children with disabilities was revised to include the ICF-CY approach. The draft model was improved during five public debates and will be tested in a few municipalities and submitted to the MoLSP for approval and endorsement.

**OUTPUT 1** By end of 2015, national and local authorities' resource programmes and action plans that address targeted MCH disparities and gaps in the quality of MCH services.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Despite reaching the Millennium Development Goal 4 target in terms of child mortality, the country still has 2.5 times higher rate than EU average, with significant ethnic disparities. Children of Roma ethnic background have 1.7 times higher mortality rates and three times higher stunting rates.

To ensure further progress in child health and well-being and address prevailing disparities in key child health indicators, the programme continued providing technical assistance to reform government institutions in evidence-based planning of national policies and community services.

At a system level, a new national methodology was developed to provide disaggregated and reliable data on causes for child mortality. The methodology allows a systematic and peer review of mortality cases, alongside disaggregation per causes, ethnicity and other relevant determinants. The results of this analysis will guide policy makers to advance the medical practice and to improve planning of equity-focused public health interventions, to further reduce gaps in child mortality. Implementation of the methodology will commence in 2015.

In addition, the data collection system in the health sector was strengthened to provide information on the health status, access and utilization of health services by the Roma community. With UNICEF's support, the Ministry of Health created a new data base for Roma health, under the auspices of the national health information system. This is significant progress in efforts to bring national ownership and sustainability of public health programming and monitoring for Roma. Before becoming fully operational, the data base will be piloted and field tested in 2015.

Capacity development for community health services was supported, included two complementary approaches: strengthening the home visiting system, and scaling up of outreach health services for Roma community.

The Ulster University with the national nursing association, developed a high quality and effective training package on developmental disabilities for home visiting nurses. This will be used by nurse educators in both in-service and pre-service training courses. The implementation of this training package through a "train the trainer" approach, showed potential for further application among health and non-health community personnel, as well as in the region.

Support to the Ministry of Health and the civil society sector continued to scale up and institutionalize the "Roma Health mediators" into an effective and integrated model of outreach

services, alongside the system of home visiting nurses. In 2014, the programme increased coverage from six to 10 municipalities, while in 2015, it will reach the 16 municipalities where the Roma community is living.

**OUTPUT 2** By the end of 2015, all municipalities provide an essential set of diversified ECD services.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Through active advocacy, capacity development and policy advice, the programme continued to support the expansion of the ECD network. Fifteen new kindergartens were opened by the Government, while the private sector supported the opening of five ECD centres. In addition, UNICEF supported the establishment of 15 new ECD centres. With the purpose to reach the most excluded and hard to reach children, the centres were mainly open in Roma communities and rural areas.

The programme also supported capacity development of ECD and kindergarten teachers to implement the new ECD curricula, ELDS and record keeping, which all became mandatory as per the new law adopted in 2013. All kindergartens teachers were trained on the newly developed in-service training modules. Two manuals to support implementation of ELDS were developed and disseminated to all kindergarten and ECD providers: one for teachers of children up to two years, and the other one for teachers of children aged three to six years.

Based on the findings of a KAP survey conducted this year to better understand how the prevailing social norms are barriers to inclusion, activities related to respect for diversity, multiculturalism and inclusive ECD are being piloted. The preschool education curricula and inspection framework were revised to include increased focus on respect for diversity and multiculturalism. In addition, two modules for training of ECD staff on respect for diversity and inclusive ECD based on ICF-CY were developed. Joint activities with children from different ethnic backgrounds were piloted in 10 municipalities. Work on funding formula based on the financial study and ECD database is ongoing.

The results achieved, best practices and lessons learned in the ECD programme in the period 2005-2013 were reviewed and documented as part of the Regional Multi-Country Evaluation on ensuring access to quality education for all children. As a follow-up, a national report with in-depth analysis was also developed. In the framework of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance funds, negotiations with the EU and the Ministry of Education and Sciences for a direct grant to UNICEF in the area of inclusive and quality ECD continued throughout 2014. The final approval and signing of the contract is expected in early 2015.

**OUTPUT 3** By the end of 2015, the Ministry of Education and municipalities ensure that the national education system is inclusive (regardless of ethnicity, ability, and socio-economic background) and effective, in line with CFS standards.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The programme supported capacity development for improving teacher instruction and student learning in early literacy and numeracy in line with international standards. All early grade teachers (6,000) are trained in early numeracy and 60 percent (3,600) in early literacy. Regional learning and mentoring teams that were supported to provide a platform for teachers to learn and share knowledge and evidence showed that they have contributed to increase teacher competence for innovative teaching approaches and improved student learning.

Using experience from the schools implementing inclusive education practices in line with the UNICEF-supported training programme on inclusive education based on ICF-CY, case studies were developed to support other teachers' and schools' learning in this area. Seven new primary schools with predominant Roma population were included in the training based on ICF-CY, and on strategies to help Roma students to acquire the language of instruction and learning. These schools are piloting inclusive education which, in addition to assessment and individualized planning, include specific support for learning. The baseline is being finalized. The experience is being documented with Regional Office support. The first in-country Resource Centre for parents of children with disabilities was established and its work was promoted nationwide. Parents have a platform to support each other and advocate for issues related to rights and entitlements of children with disabilities.

UNICEF's global partnership with Aflatoun resulted in introducing child social and financial education as part of the Life Skills curriculum in all grades of primary education, and establishment of saving clubs in 10 primary schools in the country. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is one of the four countries in the world piloting this programme.

**OUTPUT 4** By end of 2015, the Government addresses targeted system gaps in provision of preventive and protective services, consistent with the revised normative framework.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Following the recommendations of the in-depth 2013 review of the secondary legislation related to identification, treatment and referral of children victims of violence, detailed regulations and procedures were developed that will guide relevant professionals, including judges, prosecutors, police and health staff in identifying, referring and treating a child victim of violence.

The monitoring indicators and tools, developed in 2011 by the National Council on Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (NCPJD) with UNICEF technical assistance, to monitor the implementation of the Law on Justice for Children were simplified to improve monitoring and data collection on the situation of children in the justice sector. Significant progress was made in data collection based on the revised set of indicators. For the first time, most of the institutions collected relevant data such as the availability of legal aid in police stations, which were reflected in the annual Report submitted by the Council to the Government and the Parliament.

The programme will continue supporting the NCPJD in 2015 for data analysis and report writing.

To further improve capacity of social workers, training activities under the leadership of the Institute of Social Activities (ISA) continued in 2014 in the areas of: [1] Promoting equality and value diversity of people, [2] Understanding the Needs of and Working with At-Risk Children, [3] Communicate with people, [4] Engaging and Working with Families, [5] Engaging with Communities, [6] Continuous professional development planning, [7] Management skills in social protection. The service delivery standards developed in 2012 were formally adopted and the rollout training in the specific areas mentioned above continued. To date, all 942 CSW social staff were trained. Monitoring visits were conducted in 13 of the 30 CSWs to assess how skills and knowledge provided during the training are effectively put in practice. The monitoring visits showed that only seven of the thirteen CSWs apply the new skills and knowledge, while two CSW are doing it partially and four CSW are not applying it. Next steps include further support to Institute for Social Activities (ISA) in ensuring that trained social workers apply in practice the case management procedure for children at risk or victims of abuse, violence and neglect.

A major milestone was achieved in in 2014 in addressing the issue of violence against children.

The programme supported the development of a Multi-Agency Team model, aiming at providing quality care to and management of cases of children victims of violence. The model which benefitted from the technical assistance of international experts from “Terre des Hommes Albania” was field tested and validated by stakeholders. The model included also development of specific guidelines for the MAT work. As a first phase, training was provided to members of the MAT comprised of judges, prosecutors, police, health professionals and representatives from education and the CSW in 12 out of 84 municipalities. The main aim of the MAT is to address the lack of coordination and inter sectoral work between the different agencies involved to ensure that children victims receive a continuum of care and protection services. Next steps will include establishment of teams work in practice, expand the MAT work to other municipalities and institutionalize the monitoring of their work.

Initiated in 2011, the piloting of the mentoring programme, aimed at improving behaviour, self-confidence, attitudes, regular attendance and success in the school and reintegration of children in conflict with the law, was pursued in three additional CSW throughout 2014. So far, the programme has been very successful. It has contributed to reduce recidivism among children in conflict with the law and improved their reintegration in their family and in society. In 2015, based on the good results achieved, UNICEF will advocate for this programme to be institutionalized as part of the regular CSW work.

One of the bottlenecks identified as hampering the realization of children with disabilities’ rights is the current process of their identification and assessment, heavily based on the medical approach. The child protection programme actively contributed to improve the cross-sectoral coordination on children with disabilities by providing technical support to the MoLSP in reforming the process of assessment of children with disabilities. An inter-ministerial working group with the support of international experts developed a new assessment model based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health. The draft model was widely discussed during five public debates and improved. Based on the various inputs, the model will be finalized in 2015, tested in a few municipalities and submitted to the MoLSP for approval and endorsement.

**OUTCOME 2** By end of 2015, all partners (Government, civil society organisations, Parliament, media, and private sector) are collectively engaged in budgeting, monitoring child rights and child-focused social responsibility programmes.

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

An assessment of the capacities for child rights monitoring among the institutions and civil sector involved in the process of monitoring child rights was completed in 2014. The capacity of the National Child Rights Commission (NCRC) remains weak as a result of the continued lack of financial and operational independence. The absence of a dedicated budget and specialized secretariat limits the NCRC’s scope and potential to fulfil its mandate to the fullest. The Ombudsman’s office, on the other hand is generally perceived to have satisfactory human and material capacities to fulfil its mandate related to monitoring child rights. Independence and professionalism in their work, long experience, and close cooperation with other state institutions and the civil sector are perceived as major strengths of the Ombudsman. Civil sector organizations are a respected stakeholder in the field of child rights monitoring. However, their capacities for data collection, analysis and use are limited and require further strengthening.

Following extensive advocacy, UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the World Bank and initiated a full scale reform of the country’s cash benefits system. With UNICEF support, an inter-disciplinary working group was tasked to review cash benefits and

provide policy recommendations for improvement. The work of the group is based on the findings of the 2013 UNICEF cash benefits study which provided solid evidence on the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of these benefits to address the needs of most marginalized children. The improvements in the design and administration of cash benefits will contribute to the overall functioning of the country's social protection system.

A KAP survey was conducted in order to inform future communication interventions towards the inclusion of children with disabilities. Paired with a Mapping of Disability Person's Organizations, the studies provide a wealth of information on the general public's awareness of disability and the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as on the capacities and activities of DPOs in ensuring rights holders take on the role of agents of change and self-determination. In addition to this, the office continued to roll out a fully-fledged media campaign to increase awareness on the importance of ECD and mobilize support for opening new ECD centres throughout the country.

**OUTPUT 1** By the end of 2015, national and sub-national authorities use a reliable disaggregated data system for planning, budgeting, and monitoring to address child poverty and social exclusion.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The State Statistics Office (SSO) and UNICEF continued the 2013 practice of direct dissemination of latest child related data among potential users with the purpose of promoting utilization of this data. Four local level workshops were held in the first half of 2014, covering 38 out of 84 municipalities in the country. Participants included mayors, members of municipal administration, and representatives of regional departments of the relevant ministries as well as from the private sector. The average number of participants was around 40 per workshop. The workshops were organized as a combination of presentations of available data and a practical online work searching for data using the State Statistics Office (SSO) web site. After the first two workshops, the World Bank expressed interest in joining the activity. The subsequent two workshops were therefore jointly organized by SSO, UNICEF and the World Bank.

The child justice data collection system was revised and is now fully operational. Indicators were reduced from 21 to 17 in order to simplify the data collection process and gender disaggregated data was introduced. The Council performed an evaluation of the data collection process and noted significant improvement. More than 90 per cent of the responsible institutions, the Public Prosecutors Office, police stations, the basic courts with wider jurisdiction and the CSW provided data. For the first time, the 2013 report of the Council included data on child victims.

In line with the MTR recommendation to expand the partnership to more civil society organisations working on child rights monitoring in the country, consultations were held with prominent and active NGOs in this area. A lack of data related to the Roma communities was highlighted by NGOs working with Roma population as an important bottleneck preventing them from providing better services to children. To gain better understanding of this issue, a mapping of initiatives and of NGOs involved in child rights monitoring was conducted. Six NGOs with good practices in this area were selected to present their experience in a national workshop and to discuss with other stakeholders, challenges and gaps in data collection and reporting.

An assessment of the capacity gaps for child rights monitoring among the institutions and civil sector organizations was completed. The institutions covered by the assessment included the Ombudsman office, National Commission on the Rights of the Child and the Directorate for

Personal Data Protection. The key NGOs active in the field of child rights monitoring were also covered by this study.

According to the findings, the main strengths of the Ombudsman's office are independence and professionalism, long experience and close cooperation with other state institutions and civil sector, allowing this institution to fulfil its mandate related to child rights monitoring. However, the findings indicated that the NCRC suffers from frequent changes in composition, rare meetings, and lack of dedication to child rights, and absence of concrete results, preventing it from properly accomplishing its mandate. The findings of the assessment will be used to inform UNICEF and partners on future activities to further strengthen the institutional capacities in this critical area of child rights monitoring.

**OUTPUT 2** By 2015, relevant national and sub-national authorities adjust targeted institutional mechanisms that define and govern the volume and efficiency of public funding for social protection and education programmes for children and determine its effectiveness to reach marginalised and socially excluded children.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The State Budget for 2014 mainly follows previous year's levels of budgetary allocations for the social sectors. Spending is not child-oriented and funding is not allocated on the basis of specific outcomes and as a result of clearly defined standards. Public expenditure systems remain weak and insufficiently transparent. With only one per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the country has one of the lowest allocations for social assistance programmes in the region, and is lagging behind the average for Eastern Europe of 2.2 per cent of GDP. In the second half of 2014, UNICEF invited the Ministry of Finance to develop and jointly conduct a Public Expenditure Review focused on child related spending as a first step aimed at addressing some of these bottlenecks, but specific Terms of References are yet to be agreed upon.

The collaboration with the MoLSP was strengthened in 2014 to further improve the Social Protection system. Following intensive and sustained advocacy efforts, an Inter-Ministerial Working Group was established in mid-2014, with the purpose of revising and validating policy recommendations made by the 2013 UNICEF supported study on "Strengthening Social Protection for Children and developing and facilitating a roadmap for legislative change. The MoLSP and UNICEF jointly developed the Working Group terms of reference and plan of action for the reform of the country's social transfer programmes. Once the Working Group was fully established, capacity building was provided on the design and implementation of social transfers. By the end of 2014, the Working Group had reviewed and developed legislative and policy recommendations for five out of the country's 19 social transfers. The remaining transfers will be reviewed in 2015. In connection to this, UNICEF partnered with the World Bank in the provision of technical assistance to the MoLSP and the Working Group aimed at revising the social transfers system, and in particular, child benefits. A national consultant was engaged to advise the Government in improving the adequacy, targeting and impact of various social transfers and in particular those aimed at children.

Following the 2014 early Parliamentary Elections, the programme continued its advocacy efforts to promote legislation that further advances children's rights. UNICEF initiated with the Parliament the formulation of a new Memorandum of Understanding aimed at reinforcing the country's commitment to strengthen the implementation of child rights. Due to the boycott of Parliament by opposition parties, the delays in the establishment of key Parliamentary

committees, as well as due to the current leadership's political agenda, no partnership framework could be agreed at this point of time.

**OUTPUT 4** By end of 2015, alliances with parliamentarians, media, and the private sector establish an enabling environment for the fulfilment of child rights

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The communication programme continued to support the establishment of an enabling environment to expand ECD services and to promote social inclusion of children with disabilities.

Through integrating external communication, communication for development and corporate engagement, the programme continued to roll out a fully-fledged media campaign to increase awareness on the importance of ECD and mobilise support for opening new ECD centres.

From December 2013 to March 2014 five TV spots aired pro-bono on four national television stations <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLq9rh5lTnBpHh7KMpuvKt8s7Cfz971Tqj>; five print advertisements ran pro-bono in four daily newspapers; flash online advertising banner with link to campaign microsite was featured pro-bono on 18 web portals; five radio advertisements aired on three to four times per day on 10 national and local radio stations; two billboard advertisements were placed pro-bono on 15 billboards.

The campaign microsite [www.prvite5.mk](http://www.prvite5.mk) – the main digital point - was updated with new content through to December 2014 had 20,657 visits (engaged 18,225 unique visitors); over 190 posts were published on the campaign [Facebook page](#) through to December 2014 reaching on average approximately 93,000 people each month throughout the year and engaging on average 1,090 users each month.

Nine public relations events (with media coverage) were organized to mark the opening of eight early childhood development centres during February and November 2014. A full evaluation will be conducted in early 2015 to assess the first phase and inform the design of the second phase communication activities which will run in 2015.

In order to better understand the bottlenecks and barriers to inclusion of children with disabilities and to inform future communication interventions the programme supported two important studies.

A “Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Survey towards Inclusion of Children with Disabilities” was conducted in October with a national representative sample. Key findings confirmed the prevailing views among the general public that children with disabilities cannot be fully integrated in the society and should be enrolled in special schools. Another alarming finding was that most people interviewed favours a medical as well as charity model to care for children with disabilities. The findings of the KAP study will be used to develop communication activities to address stereotypes and negative attitudes towards these groups of children and promote more social and human rights model.

A mapping of disability person's organisations was conducted from October to November, and identified 136 civic organizations and informal groups active in the field of inclusion of persons with disabilities. The major activities of these organizations include service provision, awareness raising, and advocacy with relevant authorities and institutions to improve legislation and policies at national and local level. According to the findings, most of these organizations use a

human-rights based approach over charity-type approach. The mapping provided a detailed overview of the capacities and activities of 33 organizations, and will inform future UNICEF-supported activities.

Having identified the need to empower children so that they become proactive in understanding and claiming their rights, UNICEF commissioned and launched, as part of CRC@25 activities, an interactive online game designed to engage children in learning and promoting child rights: [www.detskiprava.mk](http://www.detskiprava.mk). Entitled “Child Rights have not fallen from Mars”, the game is available in both Macedonian and Albanian, and puts children in an active role of helping other “aliens” learn about child rights. After completing the journey, game players become Child Rights Ambassadors and learn new ways to promote child rights within their communities.

### **OUTCOME 3** Cross-sectoral costs

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Major achievements for this Outcome are the correct and timely processing and implementation of activities that enabled a smooth functioning of the country office as a whole. Those activities related to the direct administrative/operational support for the day to day functioning of the Skopje Office.

#### **OUTPUT 1** Programme Support

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The Output contributed to efficient operation and administration of the country office. Funds utilized contributed to the overall achievement of country programme goals through the provision of support staff costs (a Driver), provision of facilities to enable adequate office functioning (office rental/maintenance, and provision of miscellaneous office supplies and other administration related costs).

The cross-sectoral issues such as monitoring and evaluation, gender, advocacy and communication are largely covered under different programme Outputs (see programme component results for details). The country programme has separate Outputs on communication and advocacy, and monitoring and evaluation. Only six per cent of the total Regular Resources were used for cross-sectoral issues, which were mainly for support functions (drivers, miscellaneous costs).

### **OUTCOME 4** Special Purpose

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Funds under this outcome were mainly used to upgrade the office surveillance system.

#### **OUTPUT 1** Premises and Security

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Upgrade of office surveillance system funded by UNICEF HQ.

### **OUTCOME 5** Effective and efficient programme management and operations support

### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The major achievement under this Outcome was the correct and timely processing and implementation of activities enabling a smooth functioning of the country office. Those activities, as described for each Output below, include Human Resources to support the office, administrative / operational tasks to support office functioning and provision of supplies, services and knowledge required to perform administrative tasks. Staff funded under this Outcome are as follows: Representative, Operations Manager, ICT Assistant, Finance and Accounts Assistant, Executive Secretary, Administration and Human Resources Assistant and a Driver. Funds allocated to office under this Outcome are for non-staff costs category while staff costs category is maintained at HQ level.

#### **OUTPUT 1** Effective and efficient Management and Stewardship of Financial Resource s

##### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Closing the recommendations of the 2013 audit was a 2014 management priority. A systematic approach was used to address the recommendations and progress was monitored by the CMT. By September 2014, all audit recommendations were closed. The RCSA was reflected in the AMP, which was regularly monitored at the CMT. At the beginning of the year, the office assessed the risks that could jeopardize the implementation of the country programme and appropriate measures were put in place to mitigate the identified risks.

#### **OUTPUT 2** Effective and efficient management of human capacity.

##### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The office completed all programmatic and operational activities within the planned budgeted resources. The financial and other assets of the organization were safeguarded and funds used in an efficient, timely and cost effective manner. All financial closures activities were successfully completed and in full compliance with prescribed deadlines, including the 2014 accounts closure activities.

The bank reconciliations were undertaken in a timely manner. Replenishment requests were placed promptly and funds received timely. The office also uses VISION tools such as the Admin/Finance Dashboard, VISION Performance Management reports as well as SAP-generated reports for regular monitoring of financial and other assets.

The office continued with the good practice of no outstanding DCTs for more than six months throughout the year.

The small presence of UN agencies in the country has an impact on HACT implementation. UNICEF took action and conducted a new macro assessment of the public finance management system in the country. HACT implementation was continued independently of the other UN agencies, through the use of the FACE form, by visiting partners and conducting programme visits as well as spot-checks. Four micro assessments of implementing partners were conducted as part of the office assurance activity plan.

#### **OUTPUT 3** Effective and efficient management of human capacity.

##### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Following the 2013 MTR and PBR recommendations, there were some post changes that took place in 2014: Health and Nutrition Officer upgrade to National Officer-B level, abolishment of

one driver's position (out of three total), conversion of full-time to part-time of ICT Assistant and one driver's position. The recruitment process for Social Protection Specialist position was conducted in a timely manner and based on competency framework.

The office continued with the policy of investing in staff and several staff benefited from learning and professional opportunities like trainings, short term development assignments as well as professional support to other offices. Nine staff members attended trainings organized by the Regional Office, and six staff members benefitted from short term development assignments and professional assistance to other UNICEF offices.

Further, based on a UNICEF HQ Help Desk request, the ICT Assistant worked half-time for them for eight months.

Performance management was undertaken systematically, with clear deadlines for the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) task definition and completion was monitored by the CMT. The 2013 PAS was completed on time for all staff.

In addition to the official performance appraisals, staff members had regular feedback discussions with managers and supervisors to discuss their work, challenges and career development.

Three local Joint Consultative Committee meetings were held, bringing together management and staff representatives to ensure staff well-being and staff morale. The office management highly encouraged staff to participate in the 2014 Global Staff Survey.

## **OUTCOME 6** Development Effectiveness

### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Higher quality programmes through results - based management and improved accountability of results. Staff under this Outcome are Deputy Representative and Communication Officer. Funding for staff costs category maintained at HQ level.

### **OUTPUT 1** Programme Coordination

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF provided human resource support for technical leadership to help the organization contribute to the achievement of results across the country programme.

### **OUTPUT 2** Advocacy / Communication

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF provided human resource support for transparency in information and across the country programme of cooperation.

## Evaluation

Title	Sequence Number	Type of Report
Evaluation of the Early Childhood Development Programme in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2014/007	Evaluation
Mapping of Disability Persons Organisations	2014/006	Research
Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Survey towards Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2014/005	Survey
Mainstreaming Respect for Diversity and Multiculturalism in Early Childhood Development	2014/004	Research
Mapping of Institutions and Civil Society Organizations Which Provide Services to Children Victims of Violence and Abuse	2014/002	Research
Macedonia 2014 IMEP	2014/001	IMEP

## Other Publication

Title
Language literacy in the early grades: Report from the mid-term progress assessment
Language literacy in the early grades: Report from the baseline assessment
Thinking mathematics in the early grades: Report from the mid-term progress assessment
Thinking mathematics in the early grades Report from the baseline assessment
Assessment of the progress of the UNICEF-supported Early Learning and Development Programme based on the Early Learning and Development Standards
Mainstreaming respect for diversity and multiculturalism in Early Childhood Development: Study on the understanding, practices and attitudes of parents and educators in terms of diversity and the need for multicultural preschool education- Baseline
Applying early learning and development standards: Good practices for supporting early learning in young children: Manual for educators
How to support early learning and development of children 0-2 years: Manual for caregivers
Convention on the Rights of the Child in Child Friendly Language
Video on Activate Talks
Video on CRC@25
Interactive online game "Child rights have not fallen from Mars"

## Lessons Learned

Document Type/Category	Title
Innovation	"Training community nurses on supporting families with children who have developmental difficulties"