Executive Summary

The closing year of the UNICEF Country Programme in Albania (2012-2016) was marked by further advancements in the realization of the rights of all Albanian children, based on UNICEF’s strong partnership with the Government and civil society partners, continuous collaboration with United Nations (UN) agencies under the ‘Delivering as One’ (DaO) coherence modality and critical support extended to UNICEF by its donors.

The highlights of the year are outlined below.

Four legislative documents of paramount importance for the future of children in Albania were developed: The Law on Child Rights and Protection; the Criminal Justice for Children Code; the National Action Plan (Agenda) for Children for 2016-2020; and the Law on Social Care Services. These normative frameworks, contributing to Albania’s European Union (EU) integration-driven reforms, explicitly outline the accountabilities of various duty bearers at both central and local levels of state governance, specify the enhanced role of civil society, and provide space for a considerably more active participation of right holders in shaping a safe, enabling and friendly environment for all boys and girls in Albania.

Modern education policies and approaches were scaled up based on the country’s new Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) and inclusive education principles. A concerted effort of education professionals, local governments, civil society activists and communities – all supported by UNICEF Albania – contributed to increasing numbers of vulnerable children (such as Roma) accessing preschool and basic education. It is not a coincidence that Albania was featured as the country making the second greatest progress in the 2015 Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) round compared to the 2012 PISA results.

Newly defined accountabilities of local administrations in public health and social protection were gradually converted, as per the Law on Local Self-Government (2015) into knowledge and skills of managers and service providers, benefiting from UNICEF-supported training programmes on mother and child health (MCH) and social care planning, budgeting, delivering and monitoring.

The new UNICEF Programme of Cooperation for 2017-2021 was fully endorsed, based on the wealth of experience and lessons learned during the 2012-2016 programme cycle and drawing from an extensive consultative process with state, civil society and international development partners. Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national development targets, the new Country Programme Document provides an ambitious yet realistic plan of action, in response to the regional and global challenges, in both the development and humanitarian spheres.

Symbolically, the celebration of UNICEF’s 70th anniversary in December 2016 came as a tribute to all UNICEF partners and supporters in Albania, with the UNICEF action timeline in the country displayed as an impressive map of achievements. Children’s faces were captured in a special photo essay ‘For every child in Albania’ looking into a future where all children in Albania will be enjoying their rights and developing to their fullest potential.
UNICEF’s considerable contribution to the above achievements was shaped by the UNICEF Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda (RKLA), with particular focus on the result areas of social protection, de-institutionalization of childcare, advancement of juvenile justice, promotion of early learning and development, and support to preventive mother and child health care.

At the same time, a number of shortfalls compared to the planned results or the expected pace of UNICEF-supported reforms will require particular efforts during the new Country Programme cycle in 2017-2021, as outlined below.

Sector-based systems of administrative data collection remain rather weak, and not always fit to supply regular and sufficiently disaggregated data, thus preventing targeted action for equity results.

The challenge of massive capacity building in local government administrations, in line with the newly re-distributed accountabilities between central and local authorities (including in the social sectors) requires scaled-up solutions going beyond the scope of individual projects.

Public demand for duty bearers’ accountability is not always strong and/or consistent with the rights holders’ realization of the value of their own active position and action to be fostered.

In achieving results for children in Albania, UNICEF’s collaborative partnerships were critically important with the State Agency for Child Rights Protection (SACRP), the parliamentary Friends of Children Caucus, independent human rights institutions of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and People’s Advocate (Ombudsman), and the Ministries of Social Welfare and Youth (MoSWY), Health (MoH), Education and Sports (MoES), Justice, Interior (MiI), Innovation and Public Administration, Local Affairs and Finance. Partnership Cooperation Agreements with civil society organisations (CSOs) continued to remain the key channel for delivering UNICEF’s technical assistance in policy development, child rights monitoring and capacity development.

Humanitarian Assistance

During 2016, UNICEF Albania developed a high degree of emergency preparedness in response to the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, strengthening existing systems to adapt to unexpected situations. In coordination with UN partners and CSOs, the situation of migrants and refugees in Albania was monitored on an ongoing basis, remaining cognizant of the shifting migrant routes, to identify needs and response strategies to support the Government. Emergency planning and contingency activities were addressed by the country management team (CMT), and reflected in emergency plans involving an office-wide approach, ensuring cross-sectoral integration and convergence with development work. Regular reporting to the UNICEF Regional Office and the One-Response Emergency and Coordination Management Team was ensured. Heightened emergency capacities were developed within the office, which benefited from mobilized technical emergency surge capacity, including an emergency specialist through the stand-by partnership modality.

As part of a United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR)-led mapping of the potential response by the UN agencies, inputs were provided on the type and scope of emergency assistance UNICEF could offer, in case of need. Coordination meetings with selected CSO partners were initiated by UNICEF, to map out in-country available resources and capacities to address the needs of children in emergencies. Coordinated by UNICEF, a child protection working group was established, based on the terms of reference agreed among the UN,
Government and civil society stakeholders. During the year, joint UNHCR-UNICEF assessment missions to Albania’s southern border areas took place to develop preparedness strategies for child protection, health and nutrition. More specifically, the viability of establishing transit centres for refugees at the two border crossings with Greece (Tre Urat and Kapshitce) were assessed with specifications for necessary water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) equipment identified and preliminary local market screening conducted.

In March 2016, a joint UNICEF, UNHCR and International Organization for Migration (IOM) workshop was organized to train 45 first-line responders in the basics of child protection, and health and nutrition in emergencies. During the year, UNICEF shared its most recent experience in child protection in relation to the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, including standard operating procedures to establish child and family support hubs and facilitate multi-sectoral interventions such as child-friendly spaces, restoring family links, family reunification, information and advice desks, mother and baby spaces, and support from psychologists and social workers. Specific and up-to-date technical guidance on infant and young child feeding in emergencies was also shared, with UNICEF’s approach to ensure effective nutrition coordination, assessment and surveillance system explained to the trainees.

A consultant mobilized by the UNICEF Regional Office visited Albania in March 2016 to assist UNICEF Albania to design the main elements of its possible engagement in the WASH sector, in case of a massive influx of migrants.

A UNICEF Albania Supply Plan was developed, facilitated by the technical support of a supply division staff member who visited Albania on a short-term mission. Based on a formal request of assistance by the Government on 16 March 2016, UNICEF procured and pre-positioned in-country supplies necessary for the establishment of child and family support hubs, as well as some basic health and hygiene items and an assortment of children’s clothes. Available quantities are sufficient for 1,400 children. This procurement required a budget of US$ 119,000, which was financed by emergency and regular resources.

An assessment report on Albania’s data management systems for children, with a focus on migration, asylum and anti-trafficking, was prepared, based on technical expertise supported financially by the Regional Office, and presented to the MoI, as a basis for further discussions on the scope of possible changes in Government data collection mechanisms and practices. UNICEF Albania also invested technical and financial resources to develop data collection tools (based on standard UNICEF globally accepted practices), adjusted to the context of Albania and suggested to the first line responders – primarily, CSOs – for utilization as appropriate (with a focus on the first 72 hour response).

In collaboration with the Regional Office, UNICEF Albania undertook advocacy efforts to centrally position the rights of children in the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, and assisted Parliament by drafting a report on Protecting the Rights of Children on the Move, as part of Albania’s chairmanship of the Inter-Parliamentary General Committee of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) on Social Development, Education, Research and Science. The Report was presented by Albania, and a Resolution was adopted at the SEECP Inter-Parliamentary conference. The launching of the UNICEF “Uprooted” global report at the International Meeting of Ombudspersons Associations received wide media coverage in Albania.
Emerging Areas of Importance

Of the emerging areas of importance for UNICEF, UNICEF Albania addressed at least three areas in 2016, as outlined below.

**Refugee and migrant children.** In addition to keeping a necessary degree of preparedness for a possible mass influx of migrants into Albania, as a country of transit on the map of the current refugee and migrant crisis in Europe (with details provided in the ‘Humanitarian assistance’ section), UNICEF was also concerned with the situation of Albanian children affected by outward migration. According to Eurostat, in 2015-2016, Albanians remained among the top ten nationalities seeking asylum in the countries of the EU. With most of these requests rejected, families and children return to the country, where their re-integration poses a serious challenge against the backdrop of poverty (one of the major factors fuelling emigration attempts in the first place), joblessness, lack of solid educational qualifications and overall vulnerability. During the year, UNICEF continued to sensitize partners in the MoSWY, SACRP and the State Social Services on the need for attention and special policy measures to address the situation of returnees. UNICEF’s planned interventions in the areas of social and child protection during the new Country Programme cycle of 2017-2021 will address this aspect of the regional migratory picture.

**Urbanization and children.** In the context of Albania’s territorial and administrative reform aimed at optimizing and strengthening the sub-national/local governance structures and mechanisms, UNICEF grasped a strategic opportunity, open in 2015, to establish a partnership with the Albanian Prime Minister’s Office, enlisting its support on behalf of an innovative child-friendly city initiative aimed at leveraging resources for children from the country’s Regional Development Fund. Thanks to UNICEF’s effective team efforts, a comprehensive and unique child-friendly city planning and budgeting framework was developed to leverage and converge actions and investments for children at the municipal level. In April 2016, the first child-friendly city project in the Municipality of Korca (in south-east Albania) was inaugurated, to convert an abandoned uncompleted construction site into a modern cultural and educational hub for children and youth, with the Government pledging US$4.5 million in resources. UNICEF’s engagement with municipal governance also expanded in health, education, justice, and social and child protection, with a plethora of initiatives unfolding (as described in the output result progress statements), to ultimately make Albanian cities and towns more safe and friendly for children and adolescents.

**Acceleration of integrated early childhood development (ECD).** In 2016, based on UNICEF’s extensive advocacy and technical support, integrated approaches to ECD were included in the draft National Action Plan (Agenda) for Children for 2016-2020. Based on the ELDS designed through UNICEF’s technical assistance and endorsed in 2015, a new national preschool education curricula framework and a corresponding programme for teachers’ professional development were developed in 2016, in a collaborative effort between UNICEF, the MoES and the Institute for Education Development. Integration of health and protection issues in Albania’s reformed mother and child health care standards, with a professional training programme launched in 2016, envisages a holistic approach to young child well-being and development. Acceleration of integrated ECD approaches will be further promoted and supported during the UNICEF Country Programme of 2017-2021.

Summary Notes and Acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>BCP</td>
<td>Business Continuity Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEE/CIS</td>
<td>Central and Eastern Europe / Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
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<td>CMT</td>
<td>Country Management Team</td>
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In 2016, UNICEF Albania continued to be engaged with partners in identifying and addressing capacity-development needs at the service delivery level. Training programmes were designed and delivered to service practitioners in health (on the new MCH care standards), education (on inclusive education techniques and new early development standards) and child protection (on case management and multi-sectoral team work). Collaboration between the MCH care centres and professional child protection workers expanded to ensure the child protection axis in the new MCH outreach approaches and staff skills.

At the same time, more fundamental capacity gaps – in evidence- and results-based policy design, planning, budgeting, monitoring and enforcement – were also identified and
increasingly addressed. For example, the capacity of the SACRP was supported to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the National Action Plan to Protect Children in Street Situations in 2015-2017, as well as to develop a solid evidence-based National Action Plan (Agenda) for Children for 2016-2020. Policymakers from the social protection and justice sectors were part of UNICEF-supported processes for developing Albania’s new juvenile justice and social protection strategies and legislation. Following the territorial reform of 2015, UNICEF Albania engaged with municipal administrations in order to strengthen their capacity to design, cost and implement local social protection interventions. Also of an innovative nature was the capacity-building effort around the utilization of the newly developed MCH service budgeting tool in partnership with the MoH and the Health Insurance Fund.

In health, education, social and child protection, capacity-building initiatives were implemented with government structures at central levels (Institute for Public Health, Institute for Education Development, State Social Services, State Agency for Child Rights Protection) and local levels (Regional sectoral Departments and Municipalities) to ensure ownership and an ultimate hand over.

**Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy**

A combination of evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy remained a key strategy of UNICEF Albania in 2016. UNICEF-supported research and analysis informed advocacy interventions of the UNICEF Representative at multiple forums and events covering the themes of child poverty; child-sensitive statistics and planning; independent monitoring of child rights; universal birth registration; upgraded health care services for mothers and children; schoolchildren's learning achievements; professional education of teachers; community-based social protection and de-institutionalised care; inclusive education for children with disabilities; services to report and address violence against children; justice for children; professionalization of child protection work; child-friendly and safe physical (cities and towns) and virtual (internet) environments; migration; and other subjects. Throughout, social inclusion and equity concerns were consistently highlighted, and public awareness and support for child rights was fostered.

In 2016, Albania’s new legislation and action plans for children were largely informed by UNICEF-supported ‘Analysis of policies affecting the situation of children in Albania’ (2014); ‘Children in street situation survey’ (2014); ‘Stock and flow analysis of children’s population in residential care’ (2014); ‘Roma access to preschool’ (2014); ‘Child Poverty Profile’ (2016); and the ‘Benefits of investing in education’ study (2016). All studies were undertaken in close collaboration with the relevant institutions (Albanian Institute of Statistics [INSTAT], MoSWY, MoES). Coordinated efforts with partners were also key in producing a high-quality Transformative Monitoring for Enhanced Equity (TransMonEE) Analytical Report on Disaggregation of Data on Children by Ethnicity. Consistent advocacy and technical coaching efforts by UNICEF paid off with a much stronger appreciation by partners of high-quality disaggregated data for national policy design and implementation.

UNICEF actively used web-based technologies to present data in a visually compelling and interactive manner (see “Social Inclusion Data on Children in Albania”, http://www.sidalbania.org/; “Data on social inclusion of children in Albania” and http://observator.org.al/odf2/qarqet-en.html/). The ISIGURT online platform was established in 2016 to report child abuse and support prevention (http://www.isigurt.al/).

**Partnerships**

The format of DaO UN in Albania in 2012-2016 envisaged a well-established partnership mechanism between the UN agencies and the Government that provided space for joint
action planning, monitoring and reporting through United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Output and Outcome Working Groups. A new mechanism of cross-sectoral Integrated Policy Management Groups was also tested by the Government in 2016. During the programme cycle of 2012-2016, Joint UN Annual Work Plans remained the main instrument for formalising and monitoring partnership arrangements with the Government.

UNICEF partnerships with CSOs continued to be governed by the corporate guidance enacted since 2015 and following the harmonised approach to cash transfers (HACT) to partners, with necessary assurance measures in place to secure UNICEF’s programme and financial management standards. CSOs remain the main recipients of UNICEF’s direct cash transfers (DCTs) to implementing partners, with only three government institutions (i.e. about ten per cent of the total number of UNICEF implementing partners in 2016) having received UNICEF DCT funds in 2016.

Albania's commitment to the global partnership aimed at preventing child sexual exploitation and abuse online, sealed by the Abu Dhabi summit in 2015, was supported by UNICEF through cooperation forged with new partners, such as the telecommunication companies and the Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration, in addition to the MoI, MoSWY and MoES, to initiate legislative measures and launch new mechanisms to protect children in the internet space. UNICEF Albania was also successful, in close collaboration with the UNICEF Regional Office, in partnering with Deutsche Telekom and the David Beckham UNICEF Fund, mobilising resources to promote timely birth registration and health care, early education and social inclusion of marginalised children, including Roma.

External Communication and Public Advocacy

UNICEF global communication and public advocacy initiatives contextualised for and implemented in Albania in 2016 are outlined below.

Children on the Move (refugees/migrants): UNICEF’s messages in support of migrant children were conveyed at two high-profile international conferences convened in Albania by the South East European Cooperation Process Parliamentary Assembly and the Associations of Ombudspersons. Although Albania has not been significantly affected by the refugee and migrant crisis in the region as a transit country, UNICEF’s advocacy – pertinent to the situation of Albanian children and families involved in outward migration – helped sensitize national social and child protection stakeholders on the subject.

Equity/State of the World Children: UNICEF’s corporate messaging on equity was reflected in the inclusion of equity-sensitive targets and monitoring indicators in the draft National Action Plan for Children and Programme of Official Statistics for 2016-2020. The release of the UNICEF Regional Social Monitor Report received significant publicity, with the launch watched online by students of Tirana University. Jointly with other UN agencies, UNICEF invested in sensitizing Albanian policymakers on the importance of the SDGs in shaping national development plans and policies.

#ENDviolence: Campaigning continued throughout the year, and addressed, for the first time in Albania, the threat of online violence and sexual exploitation of children.

UNICEF’s 70th anniversary: In celebrating the 70th anniversary of UNICEF, children were given centre stage as facilitators of a celebratory event and main characters of the For Every Child in Albania photo essay unveiled during the celebration.

According to monthly media monitoring records, positive coverage of UNICEF in top-tier print/broadcast and digital media remained high during the year, at 87 and 91 per cent,
respectively. Having been present on social media since 2014, UNICEF Albania had gained 8,630 likes on Facebook and 1,504 followers in Instagram by the end of 2016.

South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation

UNICEF Albania considered South-South cooperation as one of the key strategies in 2016, and continued to actively engage in experience exchanges within the Central and Eastern Europe / Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) region on social protection and juvenile justice issues, being active members of the Steering Groups of the RKLA in these key results areas. Cooperation (including multi-country initiatives coordinated by the Regional Office) expanded in health, education, child protection and social inclusion of Roma. More specifically, cooperation was promoted among key stakeholders through their participation in regional conferences and workshops on issues such as promotion of breastfeeding; home visiting for child health, protection and development; inclusive education; school dropout prevention; protection of unaccompanied and separated children; and national statistics on children. Benefitting from experience exchanges, Albanian policymakers in the line ministries of health, education, social welfare and justice were able to fine-tune their respective policies and service delivery standards based on the best regional practices.

In the context of South-South cooperation, UNICEF’s contribution to the preparation and proceedings of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly General Committee on Social Development, Education, Research and Science, hosted by Albania in April 2016, was noteworthy. UNICEF’s advocacy and technical expertise supported the drafting of the Assembly’s report and influenced the resolution adopted on Protecting the Rights of Children on the Move, drawing from UNICEF’s front-line experience in responding to the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe. The same subject of migratory flows was addressed by the International Conference of Associations of Ombudspersons, hosted by the People’s Advocate in Albania in September 2016. The joint resolution adopted by the Ombudspersons took stock of the body of evidence and advocacy of UNICEF through the global “Uprooted" report to position the plight of children prominently.

Identification and Promotion of Innovation

In 2016, UNICEF Albania continued to support new instruments and mechanisms to help national partners identify and effectively address the needs of the most disadvantaged children. Of critical importance for effective and efficient policy implementation is the availability of timely and reliable data flows, which is still a challenge faced by policymakers and professional service providers alike in health, education, justice, social and child protection. In all these sectors and thematic areas UNICEF has since 2015 supported the establishment and/or strengthening of the respective management information systems (MIS) to standardise and digitalise data streams. These are currently being handled primarily in their manual, paper-based versions, which poses a barrier to a wider use of information, its year-to-year comparability, analysis, sharing between sectors, etc. Importantly, all these initiatives are done in closest possible collaboration with the line ministries, INSTAT and the Albanian authorities in charge of national computer database hosting, to ensure sustainability and government ownership.

Also in 2016, UNICEF launched an innovative initiative aimed at digitalization of birth-related records and their immediate online transfer from maternity hospitals to primary health care facilities, with a view to ultimately unifying the contents of the national health and civil registry records and avoid instances of unregistered newborn children. This work was made possible thanks to the generous financial contribution of Deutsche Telekom to UNICEF. A technical specifications assessment will allow for the digital data transfer system to be established in 2017.
UNICEF support to emerging information flows and data streams was conditional on these initiatives being equity-sensitive, with indicators prompting for disaggregation of data by age, gender, ethnicity and other metrics, as appropriate, to capture social exclusion and inequalities.

Support to Integration and Cross-Sectoral Linkages

Promoting integrated programming for children in addressing cross- and inter-sectoral issues remained one of the key strategic approaches of UNICEF in Albania in 2016. UNICEF assisted the SACRP to establish and monitor the work of 24 multi-sectoral mobile outreach teams formed in seven municipalities as part of the national Plan to Protect Children in Street Situations in 2015-2017 (formulated based on UNICEF-generated evidence). The scope of these teams’ intervention (with up to 800 children reached between July 2015 and June 2016) was articulated in adherence to the operational Child Protection Protocol that has harmonized the respective accountabilities among the MoSWY, MoES, MoH and MoI since 2015.

A new area of cross-sectoral engagement supported by UNICEF in 2016 addressed the challenge of child protection from internet-based violence and abuse, in partnership with the Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration, MoSWY, MoES and MoI, through the promotion of national actions for child safety online.

Child protection considerations were also included in Albania’s new MCH care standards and ongoing training programme, emphasizing the role of outreach and family visits by health professionals to identify and address child neglect and/or abuse. In the region of Durres (selected by the MoH and UNICEF as a testing ground), child protection workers assisted MCH personnel in identifying vulnerable families, with 565 patronage visits having reached 455 children during the reporting period.

Cross-sectoral work with the MoSWY, and Ministries of Local Government Affairs and Finance allowed UNICEF to develop and bring to formalization new standards for locally planned and delivered social protection programmes, together with their budgeting and financing mechanism. To support the newly defined accountabilities of Albania’s reformed municipal governance in social protection, intensive training programmes were designed and launched in seven municipalities, with scaling up envisaged in 2017 and beyond.

Service Delivery

In 2016, as in previous years, UNICEF was not involved in direct service delivery in Albania. Nevertheless, UNICEF’s assistance was key in developing service delivery standards in MCH care, inclusive education, child protection and social care services. UNICEF was increasingly involved in budgeting of these services and identifying their financing mechanisms. Critical for service delivery planning and monitoring, sector-based MIS were supported. UNICEF’s engagement varied from the “turn-key” development of the software and training packages (as in the case of an MIS to monitor cases of children in conflict with the law) to influencing the design of the MIS indicators and fine-tuning the data collection and management flows (as in the case of the education MIS).

UNICEF collaboration with the national inspection bodies tasked to monitor and review the quality, timeliness, and effective reach of services widened in health, education, social and child protection – with this particular type of engagement to be expanded further during the new programme cycle of 2017-2021. As a child rights custodian organization, UNICEF also prioritized its assistance offered to Albania’s independent human rights institutions of the
Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and People’s Advocate (Ombudsman) in monitoring equitable and quality service delivery to all children and citizens of Albania.

**Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation**

UNICEF’s positioning on key issues of concern in relation to the realization of children’s rights in Albania have been continuously shaped by the provisions of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, as well as the respective treaty bodies’ concluding observations and recommendations.

The human rights-based approach was a cross-cutting normative principle that guided the entire process of developing UNICEF’s new Country Programme for 2017-2021, including the situation analysis of Albania’s policies and reforms and their impact on children (2014), the UN Common Country Assessment and the DaO programme evaluation (2015) and an extensive series of stakeholder consultations conducted within the DaO/UNDAF and UNICEF-specific formats in 2015-2016. Human rights principles were fully integrated into the new Country Programme design, including alignment of national development targets with Albania’s human/child rights obligations; emphasis on accountability of duty bearers and democratic oversight in relation to their actual performance; supporting the ability of rights holders to claim their rights; and highlighting inequities through disaggregated data.

In 2016, UNICEF provided extensive support to the State Agency for Child Rights Protection in the preparation of Albania’s draft National Action Plan (Agenda) for Children for 2016-2020, structured and drafted in alignment with the CRC chapters and the latest set of the CRC Committee recommendations on Albania (issued in 2012). UNICEF also supported, jointly with other UN agencies, Albania’s national delegation preparations for the CEDAW report review in summer 2016 by organizing a mock hearing session in Tirana.

In 2016, UNICEF further strengthened its cooperation with Albania’s independent human rights institutions of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and People’s Advocate (Ombudsman) and supported them in monitoring the situation of children in detention, in residential care, affected by migration, from the underprivileged Roma minority, etc. These efforts helped bring the situations of exclusion, marginalization, abuse and neglect to the centre of public attention in the country.

**Gender Equality**

Albania’s new National Strategy on Gender Equality (2016-2020) and its Action Plan benefited from technical advice of UN agencies, including UNICEF. UNICEF contributed actively to joint UN efforts for the preparation of Albania’s periodic CEDAW report hearing in July 2016. This included the preparation of a UN report to the CEDAW Committee and assisting the Albanian delegation in preparing their intervention through a mock session. The new UNDAF for 2017-2021 was informed by the Common Country Assessment that included a special gender-focused analysis of the situation and challenges in Albania. UNICEF continued to be an active contributing member to the UN Gender Thematic Working Group.

To support gender mainstreaming in education, UNICEF assisted the process of developing Albania’s new preschool curricula from the gender equality and non-discrimination perspective. UNICEF also supported the MoES to integrate gender equality, human rights and non-discrimination aspects in the ongoing nationwide School Principals’ Training Programme.
From the UNICEF corporate gender priorities, the following were addressed in Albania in 2016.

Gender-responsive adolescent health was promoted by supporting the establishment of at least six mechanisms to report and address violence against children, including gender-based violence, through: State Police, child protection units, State Education Inspectorate, MCH care centres, ALO 116 Child Helpline, and the ISIGURT online platform.

Girls’ secondary education was advanced by successfully advocating for inclusion of disaggregated data on adolescent girls in the national out-of-school children statistical framework and appropriate provisions in the draft Law on Child Rights and Protection.

To help end child marriage, funds were raised to conduct in 2017 a joint UNICEF-UN Population Fund (UNFPA) assessment of the child marriage phenomenon in Albania.

Also in 2016, UNICEF supported a parenting programme for families of children in conflict/contact with the law. An essential component of this programme was the promotion of engagement of father-son pairs in family, group and community activities. This will seek to challenge common gender stereotypes that push (mainly) boys towards delinquency, and promote an overall sense of gender equality in the community, including the worth of women and girls and the model of engagement with boys in combatting gender-based violence and gender inequality.

Environmental Sustainability

Jointly with other UN agencies, UNICEF contributed to the formulation of the new Albania UNDAF for 2017-2021, with one of the Framework’s four outcome results addressing environment and climate change. The design of the UNDAF was, in turn, informed by the Common Country Assessment of 2015, where environmental risks and hazards were identified and analysed. UNICEF’s new Country Programme for 2017-2021 identified disaster risk reduction and environmental education as entry points in addressing environment-related risks for children.

The new programme will capitalize on the achievements of the previous 2012-2016 cycle, during which UNICEF-supported environmental education programmes became part of the new school curriculum. The Education for Sustainable Development standards for Grades 1-12, endorsed by the MoES in 2016, are based on the experience of the Child-Led Environmental Education (CLEEN) environmental education program implemented by UNICEF in 2009-2012. Environmental awareness is included as one of the seven key competencies of schoolchildren, in the section of ‘competences for life, entrepreneurship and environment’. The recently approved ELDS and the preschool curriculum (developed with UNICEF having a central role in the provision of technical advice and financial resources) are also explicitly sensitive to making young children aware of the environment from the early years of their lives.

Based on a 2015 analysis of UNICEF Albania’s greenhouse and carbon emissions, including those generated through air travel of staff, a response strategy was developed and implemented, including prioritization of web-based conferencing and learning opportunities, optimizing the heating/cooling temperatures in the office and minimizing the usage of hot water. The two last measures contributed to a 16 per cent decrease in utility costs.
Effective Leadership

Operations and programme management systems were further strengthened in 2016 to ensure a continuously enabling environment for delivering results for children in a risk-informed, efficient and effective manner. The country management team monitored performance through the various tools made available (including Insight Manager’s Dashboard and the Performance- Key Performance Indicator [KPI] Scorecard), which aim to encourage continuous improvement and sensitize each member of the Albania team on their individual accountabilities for contributing to UNICEF Albania’s overall performance management goals. Bottlenecks were addressed by putting corrective measures in place as a team effort. Performance was further managed in accordance with staff supervisory roles and through established office mechanisms of oversight.

The country management team as well as other committees met regularly, ensuring effective follow-up and monitoring of all planned activities, as per the annual management plan and workplan targets. Programme implementation, funds utilization, HACT standards observance, quality of research and human resources management were all reported on regularly. Financial implementation reports (by output) were generated from the Management Dashboard and shared on a weekly basis. Standard corporate KPIs were reviewed at every CMT meeting as a standing agenda item.

The business continuity plan (BCP) was updated twice during the year (June and November), with two tests conducted: in October, as a UN House evacuation drill, and in December, as a simulation of a pandemic flu scenario. Timely security advisories were provided to staff during the reporting period, in coordination with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS).

The UNICEF Albania risk library was updated based on an office-wide discussion and participatory exercise. Risks associated with DCT management by CSO and Government partners were identified and addressed with mitigation measures, as per the UNICEF HACT policy.

Financial Resources Management

Standard KPIs on financial and administrative controls continued to be reviewed at every country management team meeting. Daily reviews of UNICEF Management Dashboard information helped to ensure that all alerts were addressed in due course. The expenditure levels of allocated annual amounts of regular, other resources (OR) and emergency resources reached 100 per cent, 97 per cent and 100 per cent, respectively. UNICEF Albania disbursed US$2,214,351 to implementing partners as DCTs. Two thirds of them received less than US$100,000 during the year, which illustrates their relatively low absorption capacity leading to fragmentation of DCT cash flows.

All fund requests and liquidations were processed under the HACT modality using the funding authorisation and certification of expenditure (FACE) form. The DCT liquidations management improved in 2016, although capacity gaps remain in many partner organizations. Micro-assessments and spot checks of implementing partners were conducted by Deloitte Haskins LLP (holder of a global long-term arrangement). Fifty programmatic visits and twenty-one spot checks took place during the year.

UNICEF Albania transitioned successfully to the operational Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC) model, with invoice processing, payments and master data management now managed by the GSSC.

Bank transaction optimization and proper cash forecasting continued to remain among the
priorities of the operations section. Realistic cash flow forecasting by the office, more frequent cash replenishments and careful consideration of the exchange rate fluctuations, while effecting currency conversion, allowed for currency gains of US$39,293.

All monthly, mid- and end-year reconciliations and closure of accounts were effected within the corporate deadlines; matching between the bank and Virtual Integrated System of Information (VISION) data was always ensured. An assets inventory was performed in September with all items corresponding to VISION records. The volume of small transactions was reduced compared with previous years: 186 out of 508 payments (37 per cent) were less than US$ 500.

**Fundraising and Donor Relations**

By the end of 2016, the amount of OR raised by UNICEF Albania during the programme cycle of 2012-2016 had reached US$11.1 million, equivalent to 41 per cent of the Executive Board-approved US$27 million OR ceiling for the country programme cycle. The largest donors to UNICEF in Albania were the Governments of Austria, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, as well as the European Commission and the Delivering Results Together Fund. Valuable resources were offered by UNICEF National Committees of Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. UNICEF Albania was also successful, in close collaboration with the UNICEF Regional Office, in mobilizing resources from Deutsche Telekom and 7: The David Beckham UNICEF Fund. Reforming Albania’s system of social care services, promoting early education and social inclusion of Roma, combatting violence against children and ensuring their internet safety were the thematic areas that benefited from the generosity of UNICEF donors (see the UNICEF Transparency Portal for details: [http://open.unicef.org/map/](http://open.unicef.org/map/)).

Timely utilization of OR Grants was monitored by a dedicated focal point/programme assistant, in close coordination with the deputy representative and programme specialists. Out of six grant extension requests submitted by UNICEF Albania in 2016, three were related to the One UN Coherence Fund (extended for the duration of the new programme cycle of 2017-2021) arrangements. Re-phasing of valid OR grants to 2017 was subject to review and endorsement by the CMT.

All seven donor reports due for submission in 2016 were prepared and sent on time. The quality assurance mechanism included the review of draft reports by the Deputy Representative and review/clearance by the Representative. Quality review by the Regional Office included the UNICEF Albania inputs to a consolidated Albania UN Country Team report to the Delivering Results Together Fund, involving health, education and juvenile justice programmes.

**Evaluation and Research**

In 2016, UNICEF's corporate plans for research, impact monitoring and evaluation (PRIME) platform continued to be used as a strategic planning instrument to prioritize resources on critical knowledge generation exercises, aiming to contribute to programme learning, understanding of emerging issues, and identification of long-term strategic needs. Over the year, PRIME was regularly updated and reviewed, with progress monitored by the CMT.

UNICEF Albania ensured quality of the PRIME-registered activities through adherence to the Global and Regional Quality Assurance Standards of Operations. To ensure that all UNICEF-supported research, studies and evaluations (RSE) met the established technical and ethical standards and to make recommendations to management on RSE processes, a relevant Steering Committee was established in 2016.
Management of a summative evaluation of the three-country Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion for Roma Children through ECD and Education in Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia project has been led by UNICEF Albania since 2016. Once finalized in early 2017, the evaluation will be expected to assess the participating countries’ achievements in compliance with project commitments. Using the Monitoring Results for Equity System approach, it is planned to provide quality evidence to inform key stakeholders at national and local levels on effective and efficient approaches in planning and delivering inclusive services for the most vulnerable children.

During the preparation of the new UNICEF Country Programme for 2017-2021, UNICEF Albania was guided by the findings of the independent thematic multi-country evaluations commissioned by UNICEF CEE/CIS in 2013-2015, as well as by the joint UN Evaluation of the DaO Programme of Cooperation between the Government of Albania and the UN in 2012-2016. Evaluation management responses informed programmatic and operational adjustments envisaged in the new cycle.

**Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings**

In 2016, UNICEF Albania generated savings in the following expenditure items: stationery (70 per cent), utilities (16 per cent) and fuel (26 per cent). Thanks to continuous use of modern technologies and software packages allowing free-of-charge communication (such as Skype for Business and Viber) installed in all UNICEF mobile devices, as well as due to a tariff reduction, communication expenses dropped by about five per cent compared with 2015. Two internet providers maintained their discount for UNICEF of about 10-15 per cent. Expenses for fuel were reduced mainly due to a smaller number of field trips. A small cost reduction related to more economical use of energy and water was also identified.

As in previous years, UNICEF Albania continued to recycle paper, plastic and cartridges by involving a CSO supporting Roma communities. Throughout 2016, there was no evidence of cost savings due to joint UN operations. Common UN LTAs for fuel, travel, printing, stationery supplies and events management continued to be used by the UN agencies, including UNICEF. Three LTAs were managed by UNICEF. According to the Business Operations Strategy analysis conducted in 2016, most of these LTAs are achieving the value for money and quality standards set by the Operations Management Team. While they do save time for programme and operations staff, a combined efficiency gain effect from such common arrangements still needs to be proven (based on a thorough calculation of all cost variables, including the cost of UN staff working time), in comparison with similar LTAs that could be managed solely by UNICEF. As in previous years, UNICEF Albania staff were requested to devote considerable time to managing coordination meetings and exchanges with other UN agencies.

**Supply Management**

The total volume of procurement for UNICEF Country Programme and Operations needs in 2016 reached US$ 961,563.67, which represented a 44 per cent increase compared with 2015. About 83 per cent (US$ 736,010) of the amount was related to the cost of technical expertise procured to support programme interventions. Because of the potential influx of migrants to Albania (as a possible transit route to Europe), 16 per cent of the total procurement value was related to pre-positioning of humanitarian supplies.
In 2016, UNICEF Albania continued to assist the MoH in procuring antiretroviral (ARV) medicines and vaccines through UNICEF Procurement Services for a total amount of US$ 1,885,260.96 (the volume of ARV and vaccine supplies reached US$ 132,865.38 and US$ 1,752,395.58, respectively). The vaccine procurement is based on a long-term memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by the MoH and UNICEF Supply Division.

UNICEF Albania ensured the timely completion of all VISION activities related to the verification of accuracy of equipment inventories and intangibles, considering it as critical for the successful closure of accounts for 2016 and confirmation that the UNICEF Office asset records are correct.
Security for Staff and Premises

Safety and security of UNICEF staff and office premises continued to be constantly monitored during the year, in close coordination with UNDSS and the UN Security Management Team. The UN Security Plan, the Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan and the BCP were regularly updated in 2016, as per UN/UNICEF guidance and standards. Moreover, UNICEF Albania updated its warden system accordingly (including staff on temporary and stretch assignments). The fire safety drill and emergency evacuation plans were tested in October 2016.

Security advisories were provided to UNICEF staff in a timely manner, based on UNDSS monitoring of the situation in the country. In collaboration with UNDSS, a Security Risk Assessment of UNICEF premises (located in the UN House) was conducted to inform earthquake preparedness training in September 2016 and was attended by 87 per cent of UNICEF staff. Additional earthquake damage mitigation measures were undertaken to fasten bookcases and file cabinets to office walls. Shatter-resistant film was installed on all glass separators/elements of the office (funded by US$11,000 from Special Security Funds) to comply with the Minimum Operating Security Standards.

In December 2016, UNICEF Albania was visited by the Regional CEE/CIS Security Specialist. During a three-day mission, meetings with staff were conducted to refresh knowledge of the UN/UNICEF security policies and highlight the specifics of a globally changing security environment. The surveillance system to monitor access to the UNICEF premises was upgraded, following advice by the Regional Security Officer.

Human Resources

In line with UNICEF global and regional initiatives, human resources of UNICEF Albania were developed and staff welfare maintained to ensure competent team performance to achieve programme results. The development of the country programme management plan for the new cycle (2017-2021) entailed the review of existing office positions to gauge adequate capacities to sustain the required mix of skills for achieving the results set out by the new Country Programme. The need to establish new positions was identified while several job profiles were consequently updated. Changes in reporting lines, post titles and funding sources were introduced. As such, the recruitment of the new international position of child protection specialist was completed. The resignation of the finance & human resources assistant prompted competitive recruitment for the post, which was filled by a programme assistant, and the recruitment of the latter vacancy was also completed. During 2016, four stretch assignments were advertised and hosted, which served as a very positive experience to gain additional short-term capacity efficiently. This experience was embraced as a unique way of reinforcing exchanges of professional experiences and skills among UNICEF staff internationally.

Staff were sensitized to the organizational reforms in human resources. Transition to the GSSC model was completed smoothly with the transfer of the respective human resources records (attendance records, leave quota corrections, dependency statuses, benefits claims, etc.) and UNICEF staff were systematically informed and oriented on the gradual shift to the MyCase corporate platform of human resources administration. Servicing and management of entitlements of national and international staff were completed on time.

The new performance management system “ACHIEVE” was introduced, linking individual results with contributions to overall office achievement.

Staff well-being was supported throughout the year. Information sessions on the human
immunodeficiency virus (HIV) for staff and family members were organized, and staff counselling peer support was made available.

**Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology**

In 2016, the SharePoint Team Site for collaboration in document drafting and review was introduced in UNICEF Albania. Training was conducted in using OneDrive for Business for file storing and file sharing in an effort to reduce the usage of email communications with heavy and multiple attachments. Although not adopted completely, users are increasingly utilizing OneDrive for storing their documents and sharing them with other colleagues in the Office.

Benefiting from the migration to LIGHT infrastructure of a neighbouring country, the office received two newer servers as a donation. This allowed an increase in the storage capacity and the lifespan of the server equipment without affecting the office budget.

Regarding social media, the organisation saw the introduction of Hootsuite as the standard in the Digital Governance Framework for registering all UNICEF-branded social media accounts. This framework allowed for better management of content publishing and the analytics for tracking visitors and their engagement with social media platforms.

The Information Communication Technology (ICT) Assistant continued to remotely support UNICEF Montenegro based on the agreed 10 per cent cost-sharing arrangement.

**Programme Components from RAM**

**ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS**

**OUTCOME 1 OUTCOME 1 - GOVERNANCE FOR CHILDREN**

Effective public oversight and monitoring of institutions help to ensure implementation of policies and programmes addressing the needs and rights of marginalized children.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

In 2016, UNICEF Albania expanded its support to the Government and human rights institutions to further strengthen the system of democratic governance at national and decentralized levels for the fullest possible realization of child rights, especially for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children, contributing actively to Albania’s priorities of EU integration reform efforts. The RKLA guided the effort of UNICEF and its partners in Albania, towards common result areas related to children’s rights to: a caring family environment (RKLA 1); access to justice (RKLA 2); early learning and inclusive and quality education (RKLAs 3 and 4); health and comprehensive well-being (RKLAs 6 and 7); and social protection (RKLA 8).

Contextualizing the RKLA targets for Albania, UNICEF worked closely with the Parliament, its Child Rights Caucus and various statutory committees, the national Ombudsman’s Office (People’s Advocate), the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, SACRP, the Child Rights Observatory (CRO), representing civil society, and selected municipalities to ensure the conversion of the international child rights norms and standards into evidence-informed, effective and sustainable action at both the national and, particularly, local levels.

In assisting national partners to improve governance for children in Albania, the following **core roles** of UNICEF were particularly prominent:

In many instances, the **independent advocacy voice and position of UNICEF** played a decisive role in 2016, when Albania’s national development strategies, targets and Government commitments were taking shape, with many of these targets supported by new
enhanced legislation. The position of UNICEF, conveyed at various forums by the Representative and UNICEF Specialists, strongly influenced the spirit and contents of Albania’s new draft Law on Child Rights and Protection, draft Criminal Justice for Children Code and the draft national Action Plan (Agenda) for Children for 2016-2020. These documents are of paramount importance for equity and social inclusion principles to effectively define the future of all children in Albania.

UNICEF’s advocacy voice was consistent in transmitting the call for stakeholder action, based on the child and human rights principles and norms. For example, UNICEF’s assistance to the formulation of the new Agenda for Children for 2016-2020 was strongly based on the CRC Committee’s latest set of recommendations to Albania (2012). In collaboration with other UN agencies, UNICEF played an active role in the preparations for Albania’s periodic CEDAW report hearing in July 2016, including drafting inputs to a UN report to the CEDAW Committee and assisting the Albanian delegation to prepare their intervention through a mock hearing session. The National Strategy on Gender Equality (2016-2020) and its Action Plan, which benefited from technical advice of UN agencies, was launched in December 2016. UNICEF’s contributions to these processes, through joint efforts of the UN Theme Group on Gender, were guided by the UNICEF Gender Action Plan and the CEE/CIS Regional Strategic Framework for Gender Equality.

Continuous high-level policy dialogue was accompanied by solid expert advice mobilised from UNICEF technical resources globally and regionally, which ultimately enabled the formulation of the above-mentioned key legislative documents, as well as drafting of other policies and normative frameworks, such as the Justice for Children Strategy; national De-institutionalization Plan; Social Care Plans in seven municipalities (Tirana, Durres, Shkodra, Elbasan, Korca, Berat and Kukes); new national standards for community-based social protection services; a new mechanism for budgeting and financing social care services from social protection budget; new preschool education curricula framework; revised Law on Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding; and the Council of Ministers’ decision on packing and labelling of Breast Milk Substitute products.

The culture of evidence-based policymaking grew steadily, with UNICEF-supported research and analysis finding wider application as a basis for national planning and action monitoring. Knowledge generated with UNICEF’s assistance on the situation of children in institutions, on the street, in detention, living in poverty, belonging to the Roma ethnic minority and/or abused and neglected, was actively utilized in the formulation of the respective national policies and action plans adopted or drafted in 2016.

Supporting Albania in strengthening its child rights monitoring systems and mechanisms remained one of the core roles of UNICEF. In collaboration with INSTAT, child-relevant indicators, aligned with UNICEF’s TransMonEE datasets, were included in the country’s Programme of Official Statistics for 2017-2021. SACRP, CRO and independent human rights bodies, such as the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and the People’s Advocate (Ombudsman) continued to benefit from UNICEF’s support in child rights monitoring. Local government administrations in Albania’s newly formed municipalities (following territorial reform and elections in 2015) increasingly tapped into UNICEF-generated data on children in their constituencies, guiding local action planning in child and social protection.

Among the persistent challenges hampering good governance for children remained insufficient institutional capacities – across all sectors – to (i) collect and manage routine administrative data, (ii) link evidence to robust planning processes, (iii) convert desired results into accurate budgeting estimates and (iv) scale up professional training programmes necessary for delivering new/upgraded services. While citizens’ demands for accountability of state authorities is still weak, the latter’s agenda is often dominated by immediate political
considerations. The design of UNICEF’s new Country Programme for 2017-2021 fully acknowledges the above constraints, which will be addressed in a systematic manner in collaboration with national, UN and international partners.

OUTPUT 1 Public oversight bodies related to children, including the Parliament, Ombudsman’s Office, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, CSOs and the media, increasingly demand accountability of duty bearers for better governance results for children.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
In 2016, the Parliament of Albania maintained its focus on justice reform as the country's key priority towards EU integration. Constitutional amendments, adopted in July, opened the door to the revision of some 40 laws. Among the new legislative acts are the Criminal Justice for Children Code and the Law on Child Rights and Protection, both developed with extensive assistance from UNICEF.

At least five parliamentary hearing sessions took place, offering high-profile advocacy and discussion platforms for child rights issues. The members of the Child Rights Caucus in Parliament, with UNICEF’s support, were active in increasing the level of accountability of the Government towards its citizens, while facilitating the participation of CSOs. A Protect Children from Violence Guide for Parliamentarians was drafted in consultation with the Caucus. A Youth Parliament group of 20 children and youth was established in Parliament to facilitate and strengthen the dialogue between children across Albania and Parliamentarians, as well as to advise the Caucus regarding child rights and child participation.

In April, Albania hosted the meeting of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly General Committee on Social Development, Education, Research and Science, with UNICEF’s participation. The report prepared by the Rapporteur, with UNICEF’s expertise, influenced the resolution adopted on Protecting the Rights of Children on the Move.

With UNICEF’s assistance, the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner engaged for the first time in monitoring judicial decisions in relation to disadvantaged children to reveal biases and point out practices resulting in inequitable outcomes that thus undermined vulnerable children’s access to justice. Similarly, UNICEF supported the People’s Advocate to strengthen and expand its role in protecting child rights. In 2016, two thematic monitoring reports were prepared, one on the conditions and treatment of children deprived of their liberty and another on children living in residential institutions. In September 2016, the People's Advocate hosted an International Conference of Associations of Ombudspersons dedicated to migratory flows. The joint resolution adopted by the Ombudspersons took stock of the body of evidence and advocacy of UNICEF.

In partnership with CSOs, UNICEF invested in strategic litigation for children’s rights. Eight new cases were initiated in 2016 in addition to the ongoing five initiated in 2015. One case was successfully completed, with the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination issuing a resolution stating that the failure of education authorities to provide assistant teachers for children with disabilities represents an act of discrimination against children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Other strategic litigation processes delved into mechanisms of removal of parental rights from abusive parents; offering social benefits to de facto orphans; and prosecution of online child abuse, among others. These cases are intended to protect the rights and well-being of not only those individual children impacted by such situations but also of other children in similar life circumstances, thus expanding the range of legal child protection instruments.
OUTPUT 2 Expected standards for private sector (including media) engagement and corporate social responsibility established and published by authoritative institutions (government or regulatory bodies)

Analytical Statement of Progress:
As guided by the UNICEF global communication strategy and in line with the equity focus, the goal of UNICEF Communication in Albania in 2016 was to place the rights and well-being of the most disadvantaged children at the forefront of the societal and political agenda. Owing to the major advocacy events held, key media grew more knowledgeable about UNICEF programmes contributing to national efforts on behalf of the SDGs.

In 2016, the visibility of UNICEF’s work in relation to key results for children in Albania was strengthened. National concerns and policy responses in the areas of birth registration, breastfeeding, young child nutrition, early education of Roma, teacher-to-student violence at schools, school dropout, children in conflict with the law, children in street situations and/or in conflict with the law, child safety online, among others, received extensive coverage in the media.

Celebrations on International Children's Day on June 1 made reference to many good practices of UNICEF collaboration with partners in addressing these and other issues. The #I protect children communication campaign, conducted by the SACRP during the first half of 2016, with UNICEF’s extensive support, called upon Albanian society to unite efforts in preventing and combatting violence against children, reaching 26 municipalities and up to 10,000 parents, 20,000 children and 2,000 teachers.

The Global Communication Strategy KPIs were monitored to assess the strength of UNICEF’s corporate voice, level of engagement and reach to the potential target audiences. Evidence collected daily by the contracted media monitoring company testifies that: the voice of UNICEF is the strongest among actors dealing with children’s issues, ahead of Save the Children and World Vision; UNICEF reached about 3.2 million potential readers/viewers through a combination of print, online and TV media channels; and UNICEF is actively engaged with the audience, with an almost 80 per cent increase in the number of Facebook likes and a 40 per cent rise in Instagram followers since 2015.

These media monitoring findings were shared at a national child protection conference that addressed, among other issues, the role of the media in child rights protection and the style of media coverage. UNICEF media guidelines on ethical reporting were strategically disseminated among media professionals.

To celebrate the 70th anniversary of UNICEF, a high-profile public event was held to highlight UNICEF’s journey in contributing to results for children, who participated as key protagonists, moderating the entire event and artistically conveying their messages through a theatrical performance. Testimonies were shared by those whose lives were impacted by UNICEF. Unveiling of the For Every Child in Albania photo essay was the culmination of the event. Thanks to the Starwood Hotels and Resorts global partnership (of which Sheraton Hotels are a part) Check Out for Children, this exhibition was featured for over twenty days at the Sheraton Hotel Tirana. During the first week of January 2017, the photo exhibition was hosted at the Prime Minister’s library. Plans are underway to make it a travelling exhibition.

OUTPUT 3 Key policy research and monitoring institutions, as well as central, regional and local government entities, effectively manage data related to children and women and periodically report on the situation of marginalised children and families, implementation of child-related legislation and international conventions
Analytical Statement of Progress:
Supported by UNICEF’s technical advice and financial resources and based on a partnership with the CRO, data collection and reporting on children at the sub-national level improved in 2016. While in the past years, data could be collected for only 40-50 per cent of the nationally established indicators on children, data availability expanded in 2016, enabling 60 per cent of such indicators to be monitored and reported on because of strengthened capacity of local officials and a series of advocacy events in support of the child rights monitoring agenda. With UNICEF’s support, twelve regional child rights data sets were produced and published by the CRO.

During 2016, UNICEF-supported research of the previous years (e.g. "Analysis of policies affecting the situation of children in Albania" (2014); "Children in street situation" survey (2014); "Stock and flow analysis of children’s population in residential care" (2014); "Roma access to preschool" (2014); "Preliminary findings of Child Poverty Profile" (2016)), largely informed the drafting of the country’s new Law on Child Rights and Protection, the Criminal Justice for Children Code, the Agenda (Action Plan) for Children 2016-2020, the Justice for Children Strategy, and the De-institutionalization Plan, as well as seven local (municipal) social care plans. These major undertakings of the Government of Albania were extensively supported by UNICEF with technical expertise to ensure alignment with international child rights standards, referral to the best practices in the region and facilitation of fully participatory processes throughout.

UNICEF also supported INSTAT in developing the country’s Programme of Official Statistics for 2017-2021. The Programme, to be approved as a law, constitutes a fundamental document on the production of data by the national statistical system, in full harmony with the latest EUROSTAT standards. In response to UNICEF’s advocacy, the draft Programme included child-relevant indicators aligned with UNICEF’s TransMonEE datasets. Advocacy with the Government will be pursued to ensure that indicators on child rights and well-being remain as a political and institutional commitment to be measured and reported.

As part of the TransMonEE reporting exercise, UNICEF assisted INSTAT to compile Albania’s Analytical Report on Disaggregation of Data on Children by Ethnicity. The report was utilized as a timely advocacy tool during the national statistics programme drafting process to emphasise the importance of ethnicity-specific data disaggregation for capturing social inequities.

UNICEF in Albania actively engaged in monitoring and analysis of migration-related issues. With Regional Office support, an assessment report on Albania’s refugee and migrant data management system was prepared. By shedding light on the main shortcomings within the current system, the assessment helped UNICEF Albania advocate with the Government for better reporting tools and practices. UNICEF Albania provided regular updates to the Regional Office on local developments in relation to the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe. The inter-agency Child Protection Working Group, established by UNICEF as part of the emergency preparedness effort, was supported with guidance on humanitarian data monitoring instruments.

OUTPUT 4 Juvenile offenders or victims of crime are treated in accordance with international standards, including a) shortened pre-trial period, b) education opportunities for all children in detention, c) re-integration pre- and post-trial, including diversion and/or alternative sentencing and d) social support and rehabilitative measures for children under 14 years of age
**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

As part of Albania’s justice system reform, UNICEF supported the drafting of the Criminal Justice for Children Code through a consultative process involving international and national legal experts, Albanian legislators, child rights activists and children. Guided by the CRC Committee recommendations and in line with international standards, UNICEF technical assistance allowed for international child-friendly model legislation to be adapted and contextualized in the Albanian context, strengthening national ownership and paving the way for effective implementation.

UNICEF coordinated the formulation of the draft Code with expert groups engaged in the reform, including the EU-funded EURALIUS programme, and ensured its harmonization with the (draft) Law on Child Rights and Protection, as well as with the new legislation on social housing, rendering juveniles in conflict with the law eligible to receive public housing. These children were thus removed from situations of extreme risk often associated with the “street child” lifestyle, and recidivism was reduced.

Children and young people in conflict/contact with the law received a diversified mosaic of services through UNICEF support in partnership with CSOs, including: victim-offender mediation with 76 of 83 cases (92 per cent) resolved positively; programmes for parents of children in conflict/contact with the law (established for the first time in Albania) reached 45 families; psychosocial counselling and economic reintegration services accompanied 68 children – 85 per cent of all those released from detention – to community reintegration and 46 children through the probation process; and 178 juveniles and their families were provided with legal and psychological assistance, while interacting with various elements of the justice system.

To facilitate social reintegration of juveniles upon their release, multi-sectoral collaboration was strengthened with UNICEF support. In the city of Vlora, a detention centre entered into an MoU with the municipality, the Gjirokastra Probation Office conducted the screening of community service centres and the State Probation Service tested the mechanism of subcontracting non-governmental service providers for restorative justice services.

To strengthen institutional coordination among the MoI (Police), Ministry of Justice and the Prosecutor’s Office, UNICEF supported the development of an online tracking system, from the moment a child enters into contact with the law until s/he leaves the justice system, with the first cohorts of authorized users from the courts, prosecution, police, probation, prisons already trained on its use. Reducing gaps and inconsistencies in official statistics will help the country design evidence-based policies and assess progress in the implementation of children’s right to justice, with accountabilities of all stakeholders clarified and monitored.

Unfortunately, pre-trial detention is still widely applied in juvenile cases, although its average duration was reduced to the 2016 target, and the number of children affected by this measure was the lowest in 2016 compared to any year since 2012. There are no provisions for offering secondary education programmes to imprisoned children, while the quality and regularity of primary school classes in detention facilities was questioned by Albania’s Ombudsman during a recent monitoring round supported by UNICEF. Safety concerns prompted the Ombudsman to recommend closure of the Lezha detention facility for juveniles.

**OUTCOME 2**

- Child well-being data collection and management infrastructure in 12 Child Rights Units and 12 Child Rights Observatories fully established and 50 people trained, with a special focus on capturing social exclusion and marginalization (RKLA 8)
Analytical Statement of Progress:
In 2016, UNICEF’s assistance to the Government of Albania in strengthening the country’s inclusive social policies continued to include the sharing of UNICEF good practices and lessons learned globally and in the CEE/CIS regional context, as guided by the RKLA and its thematic theories of change, advocating for and supporting an improved performance of the institutions and immediate caregivers as a precondition for impact changes in the lives of children and families, especially the most excluded ones.

The past year marked an important milestone for Albania in terms of a comprehensive revision of virtually all national strategies and development targets set by new legislative and normative frameworks. The National Strategy for Development and Integration, the National Action Plan (Agenda) for Children, the Law on Child Rights and Protection, the Criminal Justice for Children Code, sector-specific strategies in health, education and social protection were developed with UNICEF’s extensive technical and financial assistance, based on consultative processes involving professional communities, CSOs and direct beneficiaries.

Throughout this process UNICEF, together with other UN agencies, facilitated the alignment of national development plans with the SDGs. Articulation of child- and gender-specific commitments was guided by the CRC and CEDAW Committees’ concluding observations on Albania’s periodic reports (of 2012 and 2016, respectively). At the same time, the formulation of the new UNDAF for 2017-2021 was informed by considerations and specificities of the local Albanian context, distilled into programmatic inputs as a result of the joint planning effort of the UN agencies and national counterparts in 2015-2016.

The country’s “road map” for development and reforms was supported by UNICEF core roles, activated in various combinations to promote national policy change and appropriate action, at both the central and local levels. An independent advocacy voice remained key to encouraging and/or maintaining political will and government commitment to policy upgrades and sustainable action. During the year, every opportunity was used to articulate the position of UNICEF on various child-related issues, drawing from UNICEF global and regional experience and adjusting UNICEF’s messaging to the local context. Interventions of the UNICEF Representative at multiple forums, events and workshops covered priority themes of child poverty; child-sensitive statistics and planning; independent monitoring of child rights; universal birth registration; upgraded health care services for mothers and children; schoolchildren’s learning achievements; professional education of teachers; community-based social protection and de-institutionalised care; inclusive education for children with disabilities; services to report and address violence against children; justice for children; professionalization of child protection work; child-friendly cities and towns; internet safety; and migration.

Knowledge generation and utilization remained one of the cornerstones of UNICEF’s assistance, with the content of the new laws on Social Protection and on Child Rights and Protection embracing the richness of UNICEF-supported analyses of Albania’s systems and actors in the respective areas conducted in previous years. In health, implementation of the new MCH operational standards was fine-tuned through continuous monitoring, information-sharing and necessary adjustments. Service provision in the social protection, child protection, education and justice sectors was increasingly informed by the respective MIS, designed (or enhanced with child-centred indicators) with UNICEF’s support and responding to the need to disaggregate information by age, ethnicity, gender and social status of service beneficiaries, to target and trace responses to particular groups of vulnerable children living in situations of exclusion. Child-centred indicators were also suggested for inclusion in the national Programme of Official Statistics for 2017-2021 to address the challenge of weak measurability of policy outcomes for children due to the scarcity and/or poor quality of data.
To promote inclusive, rights-based, child-friendly policies and services, UNICEF continued to support capacity-development programmes for professionals in health care, education, social and child protection, linking the upgraded skills of doctors, nurses, teachers and protection workers to the newly introduced service delivery norms/standards and performance frameworks. Programmes were endorsed for certification by the respective national authorities and included in the routine service inspection and quality control to ensure national ownership and sustainability of implementation. Moreover, UNICEF launched a series of training initiatives at the municipal level to equip local government units with knowledge and tools to plan, budget and deliver social services to citizens in their constituencies in line with the newly defined accountabilities of local administrations, as per Albania’s Law on Local Self-Governance (2015). UNICEF’s ability to mobilize high-quality technical advice – from both international and national expert sources – was essential in providing support to such capacity-development initiatives. UNICEF’s exposure to regional and international best practices proved to add value to such capacity development efforts.

Horizontal cooperation beyond borders within the CEE/CIS region included an active exchange of experience on social protection and juvenile justice issues, as part of the Reference Groups’ agendas in respective regional Key Leadership Areas. Horizontal cooperation (including multi-country initiatives coordinated by the Regional Office) expanded in health, education, child protection and social inclusion of Roma, through regional conferences and workshops for national stakeholders on issues such as promotion of breast feeding; home visiting for child health, protection and development; inclusive education; school dropout prevention; protection of unaccompanied and separated children; and national statistics on children.

**OUTPUT 1** The system of social care services is reformed to effectively address the needs of the most vulnerable families and children

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
In 2016, UNICEF continued to support the MoSWY in establishing the building blocks of a comprehensive social care services system, including the development of the appropriate capacity of newly formed municipal governments and equipping them with instruments to effectively plan, deliver and monitor social care services. The highlight of the year was the adoption in November 2016 of a new Law on Social Care Services, prepared with UNICEF’s extensive technical and financial assistance. It sets the foundation for a modern social protection system in Albania, with focus on decentralised service delivery. In addition, the achievements of the year are outlined below.

Instruments were developed for local social care service planning, already tested in seven municipalities (deliberately selected for diverse profiles, capacity and resources) and addressing such aspects as local needs assessment, budgeting and outsourcing of services to non-governmental providers (based on the existing public procurement legislation), in order to plan the transformation of existing residential institutions into modern community-based facilities. This work has been firmly guided by the new national Standards for Community-Based Care Services.

A financial mechanism was developed to integrate the priorities outlined in the National Social Protection Strategy for 2015-2020, the new Law on Local Self-Governance and in the Medium-Term Budget Framework – in order to enable local governments plan and request appropriate budgets, commensurate with their newly assigned social protection functions.
The professionalization of the social protection sector workforce was taken to scale through a partnership established with the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Tirana, including the ongoing revision of professional qualifications and of the in- and pre-service training contents. The existing university curricula on Social Work and Social Benefits Administration were enhanced based on the best practice models available locally and internationally. The in-service capacity building plan includes both formal and on-the-job training methods (mentoring and coaching), exchanges of experience, and inter-disciplinary group trainings, among others.

The social protection MIS was strengthened with a view to connecting information data blocks and flows at both the national and local levels. Technical recommendations provided by UNICEF to the MoSWY covered three key dimensions of such a system: (i) governance, administrative and institutional structures; (ii) operational maintenance requirements and (iii) IT infrastructure. The MoSWY had included the costs of necessary IT equipment in their annual budget for 2016 and initiated the procurement process.

Parallel to its engagement with the services-based component of the social protection system, UNICEF completed an in-depth analysis of monetary and non-monetary deprivation factors affecting the lives of children in Albania. An advocacy and brokering effort was necessary to validate the report by national stakeholders given the sensitivity of the topic of poverty in the public discourse in Albania. The report is expected to inform the development of specific policies (including at the municipal level) in child-focused social protection.

OUTPUT 2 Child protection mechanisms and services enhanced to effectively reach and support children and families in situations of particular vulnerability

Analytical Statement of Progress:
The development of a new Law on Child Rights and Protection – intended to clearly define the accountabilities of various duty bearers at central and municipal levels in upholding child rights and ensuring a system approach to child protection – was a critical milestone of the year, with UNICEF’s central role in advocating for and technically supporting the process, facilitating national consensus building and engaging with Government and civil society in legislative work. In the Law, the entire national child rights machinery is delineated to ensure clear lines of reporting, avoid overlaps in competences and promote inter-sectoral approaches in child protection policymaking and implementation. Submitted to Parliament in 2016, the draft Law is awaiting adoption in 2017.

UNICEF continued supporting SACRP in strengthening the function of Albania’s local Child Protection Units and Child Protection Workers (CPWs), including standardization of the CPWs qualifications. The in-service training course on child protection (developed by ‘Terres des hommes’ in collaboration with UNICEF and other stakeholders) became the first initiative in Albania to establish minimum competency standards and certification criteria for CPWs, regulate service supervision and guide multidisciplinary team work. Pending the course’s full accreditation, a pilot cohort of 60 CPWs benefited from the course, which was delivered at the Department of Social Work of the University of Tirana. At the same time UNICEF supported the development of the Law on the Status of Psychologist (adopted in 2016), which regularizes this important profession in its offering of effective child protection services.

To address the phenomenon of street children, between July 2015 and June 2016, 24 special mobile outreach teams formed in seven municipalities (11 teams in Tirana) reached 800 children, of whom 360 were referred to school or kindergarten. In 166 cases, parents were assisted to get a regular job. The results of these mobile teams, coordinated by the
SACRP, were made possible through UNICEF technical/financial support. However, monitoring of child protection indicators remains a challenge due to the multiplicity of tools and methods used by various government and civil society actors.

Also in 2016, Albania’s new national De-Institutionalization Plan for 2017-2019 was developed, benefiting from UNICEF’s extensive technical assistance and incorporating the “best interest of the child” principle to ensure a safe family-type environment for every child deprived of biological parents’ care. The Plan takes in account the newly defined division of accountabilities between child protection actors at central and local (municipal) levels, in light of the country’s social care and administrative decentralization reforms. In the meantime, the number of abandoned young children per year almost halved between 2015 and 2016, arguably reflecting a gradual change in attitudes towards residential care among parents and professional care givers. In target areas, managerial and financial schemes were tested to allow for a gradual transformation of residential institutions into community-based day-care and support centres for vulnerable children and families.

OUTPUT 3 Education, health and protection policies improved and budgeted for to support social inclusion of children in early years, especially those with vulnerable backgrounds, such as Roma

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF’s input into system strengthening and improving teaching capacities and practices was among the development assistance contributions behind the improved performance of Albania’s students in reading, maths and science, as registered by the 2015 Programme for International Students (PISA) round.

As a reflection of long-term evidence-based advocacy by UNICEF on the benefits of investing in early learning, Albania’s National Development and Integration Strategy until 2020 (adopted in May 2016) prioritized for the first time in Albania the introduction of a universally applied pre-primary school year for all children. A study to define the cost of under-investment in education, designed to inform policy dialogue and advocacy for increased education (especially, preschool) budgets, was undertaken by UNICEF experts.

Based on the ELDS developed through UNICEF’s technical assistance and endorsed in 2015, a new national preschool education curricula framework and a corresponding programme for teachers’ professional development were prepared, in a collaborative effort between UNICEF, the MoES and the Institute for Education Development.

In line with the inclusive education roadmap developed with the support of UNICEF, new policies are being designed in collaboration with other international development partners. Based on a newly endorsed Inclusive Teacher Profile, four Albanian universities developed and approved a revised syllabus on inclusive education. Modules were incorporated in the MoES’ massive in-service training programme (accompanying the introduction of the new competency-based curricula) that reached 11,000 teachers or 100 per cent of the teacher workforce in grades two and seven.

As part of the nationwide Every Roma Child in Preschool effort, facilitated by UNICEF’s collaboration with local civil society networks and municipal administrations, 406 young Roma children were enrolled in kindergartens; 375 children were registered in school; 92 children were vaccinated (as a prerequisite for school attendance) for the 2016-2017 academic year; and 69 parent clubs were established to promote responsive and positive parenting practices among Roma families.

The region of Durres was supported in piloting the implementation of the inter-sectoral MoU
on out-of-school children signed by the MoES, MoH and Mol in late 2014. A guide on the roles of each actor to implement the MoU was used to develop capacities of local authorities and service practitioners. The MoES also endorsed the set of out-of-school-children tracking indicators, for inclusion in the new Education Management Information System. A mechanism for early identification of school drop-out risks was designed and tested in Tirana, Berat and Korca regions. All these advancements were made possible through UNICEF’s technical advice (including from the Regional Office) and financial assistance.

To facilitate the introduction of the new vision and approaches in education, a leadership programme was supported by UNICEF, reaching 214 school headmasters in 2016.

OUTPUT 4 Children and young people of vulnerable families have equal access to health services, and the health of young children is monitored

Analytical Statement of Progress:
To develop enforcement mechanisms for the new MCH regulatory framework, the region of Durres was selected jointly by the MoH and UNICEF as a testing ground. During the year, over 80 per cent of eligible health personnel participated in accredited training activities and were provided with tools to plan and deliver holistic MCH services focusing on the most vulnerable. A total of 565 patronage visits were conducted using the standard checklist informed by the UNICEF home-visiting model, reaching 455 children under five years of age. Supportive supervision tools were developed in collaboration with the MoH and the Institute of Public Health and used in monitoring the quality of service delivery. Cross-sectoral collaboration was promoted, as local Child Protection Units assisted in identifying vulnerable families. An MoU was facilitated between the Regional Department of Health and the municipality, emphasizing the new role of the local government in health, in the frame of Albania’s decentralization reform, which made changes in the roles and responsibilities within the local government institutions, including reorganization of municipality councils to include public health issues in the scope of work of one of the municipality commissions. A regional conference brought together Departments of Health from six regions in an effort to disseminate lessons learned while testing new approaches in Durres and plan for their scaling up across the country.

To mobilize adequate resources for MCH services, UNICEF assisted the MoH and the Health Insurance Fund to design a costing tool for MCH services and calculate the actual and future costs, utilising high-calibre international expertise. The MCH service cost estimates will be used in advocating for having a dedicated MCH budget line in the Mid-Term Budgetary Framework.

Following UNICEF’s advocacy on the importance of reliable and timely administrative data, the national List of Health Indicators, including key child health and nutrition indicators, and a comprehensive manual (developed in 2015), were endorsed and launched by the MoH in early 2016. Six new child nutrition indicators were introduced for nationwide monitoring in all primary and secondary health care facilities. The monitoring capacity of around 1,600 health care professionals and specialists of health statistics departments (over 85 per cent of eligible personnel at the national level) was developed.

A comparative analysis of the national measures versus the provisions of the International Code for Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes (conducted in 2015) was the basis for legal upgrades to: (i) expand the range of products covered under the scope of Albania’s Law no. 53 on Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding; (ii) clarify and strengthen labelling requirements; and (iii) strengthen administrative measures for law violations. Supported by UNICEF’s advocacy and technical advice, a revised version of the Law was adopted in 2016. Monitoring of compliance by the State Health Inspectorate was facilitated.
Based on lessons learned throughout the year, UNICEF will strengthen its advocacy with key national stakeholders to establish a system allowing for a faster scaling up of innovative MCH approaches and appropriate public financial management solutions.

**OUTPUT 5** Violence against children is recognized and increasingly addressed as a harmful social phenomenon

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
In 2016, UNICEF continued to support the capacity of the national ALO 116 Child Helpline to report and address cases of violence against children. Regular reports prepared by the ALO 116 team with reliable evidence portraying manifestations of violence against children stimulated timely and comprehensive responses to identified cases. A new MoU signed by the Helpline with child protection actors facilitated the provision of assistance to children in need. During the year, more than 27,000 calls were received, and although most calls (up to 80 per cent) were exploratory, they positively represented a growing culture to acknowledge and report violence. General psychosocial counselling was offered in 610 cases, while 127 cases required a referral to specialized assistance.

The communication for behavioural impact (COMBI) programme to address violence against children in schools contributed to a noticeable reduction of some forms of violence, such as threatening and insulting of children by teachers, by eight and six percentage points respectively, since 2015. However, the overall incidence of violence used by teachers as a disciplining method remains high, with as many as seven per cent of students stating that they do not feel safe at school. To guide the in-service training programme, a COMBI Manual for teachers is in the process of getting accredited. The State Education Inspectorate finalized the review of checklists to monitor disciplining practices in schools nationwide.

For the first time, in-service training programmes on Albania’s new MCH care standards and service delivery protocols included specific child protection provisions, obliging health care professionals to observe and report instances of child abuse and maltreatment, including during home visits to families at risk.

Maintaining the momentum of the Summit on Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Online, held in Abu Dhabi in 2015, and the Government to Albania’s formal commitment to the Summit action points, UNICEF facilitated the development of an inter-ministerial MoU between the MoSWY, MoES, MoI and the Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration to promote national action for child safety online. Relevant national legislation and policy frameworks were mapped, informing amendments suggested to the Albania’s Penal Code and child-specific inputs to the draft Law on Cyber Security. Albania’s first online platform ISIGURT (www.isigurt.al) for reporting internet abuse and offences was launched, with more than 100 cases reported in 2016. A nationwide Open Your Eyes communication campaign reached an estimated 90 per cent of the adult and 70 per cent of the child audiences during the school break period in December 2016, thus bringing – for the first time in Albania – the topic of child internet safety to wide public attention.

Embracing various violence-against-children prevention messages, a large I Protect Children communication campaign was conducted by the MoSWY and SACRP in January-June 2016, benefiting from UNICEF’s advocacy and financial support. In addition to the nationwide coverage of the campaign in print and online media, 26 municipalities (more than one-third of the total) were reached with special awareness-raising visits by the MoSWY and SACRP.
OUTCOME 3 - MANAGEMENT E&E: Effective and efficient office and financial management. IT systems and HR practices are in place and contribute to the realization of UNICEF’s commitments to the programme of cooperation in Albania, in compliance with UNICEF policies and procedures.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
In 2016, UNICEF Albania’s governance and management systems continued to be strengthened in line with the organization’s transformative initiatives to make maximum use of UNICEF resources and be more effective in managing for results for children. The CMT and the office statutory committees met regularly to monitor compliance with the corporate performance benchmarks and guide necessary action. Daily monitoring of the newly introduced online Scorecard of KPIs allowed any corrective measures to be introduced immediately.

UNICEF Operations provided essential support to programme delivery in managing cash transfers to partners and mobilizing necessary technical expertise through contracts. In 2016, DCT disbursements to partners reached approximately US$ 2.2 million, while the value of purchase orders in relation to technical expertise contracting was approximately US$ 0.9 million.

Multiple VISION-generated and Management Dashboard reports were used to monitor the performance of contracts as well as the timely liquidation of DCTs to implementing partners engaged under programme cooperation agreements. Continuous guidance was provided to partners on funds management issues to ensure compliance with UNICEF policy and guidance on cooperation with CSOs. Programmatic visits, spot checks, micro-assessments and audits of CSO partners were conducted, as planned, in full compliance with the UNICEF HACT policy.

The Annual Management Plan and BCP provided up to date, risk-informed frameworks for UNICEF operations in Albania.

UNICEF Albania transitioned successfully to the operational GSSC model, with invoice processing, payments and master data management now managed by the GSSC.

Management of human resources remained one of the key areas of attention in 2016, including designing the new organogram to match the programmatic needs of the new Country Programme in 2017-2021 with the required staffing skills and competencies. Three recruitment cases were completed by the end of 2016 in accordance with the approved organogram to ensure a swift start of the Country Programme and implementation. Four stretch assignments advertised and hosted during the year offered a mutually beneficial opportunity of experience exchange between the Tirana Office and other UNICEF teams in the region and beyond. UNICEF staff were systematically informed and oriented on the gradual shift to the MyCase and Achieve corporate platforms of HR administration and performance monitoring, respectively, reinforcing the culture of linking individual results to the context of the overall Office performance.

The cross-cutting programme activities of UNICEF Albania included interventions aimed at maintaining a high degree of emergency preparedness in the context of the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, such as regular situation monitoring and reporting, building the capacity of, and networking with, partners and pre-positioning of humanitarian supplies. The latter consists of basic health and hygiene items, children’s clothes and materials necessary for the establishment of mobile children and family support hubs, worth US$ 119,000 and financed by UNICEF emergency and regular resources.
OUTPUT 1  IR-01 Governance and Systems. Effective and efficient Governance and Systems. The governance system ensuring the appropriate sharing of information, wide consultations within the office, transparency, as well as informed and timely decisions. Weekly senior management meetings used to further discuss strategic concerns including those raised in CMT or other statutory bodies.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Operations and programme management systems were further strengthened in 2016 to ensure a continuous enabling environment for delivering results for children in a risk-informed, efficient and effective manner. The CMT monitored performance through the various tools available (including Insight Manager’s Dashboard and the Performance KPI Scorecard), which aim to encourage continuous improvement and sensitize each member of the Albania team on their individual accountabilities for contributing to UNICEF Albania’s overall performance management excellence goals, at both the programme and operational levels. The CMT was responsible for monitoring performance and identifying bottlenecks in order to put improvement and corrective measures in place in a timely manner whenever necessary. Performance was further managed in accordance with staff supervisory roles and through other established office oversight mechanisms.

A robust set of KPIs were used to reference collective and individual performance of the office against established UNICEF standards. The CMT as well as other committees met regularly, ensuring effective follow up and monitoring of all planned activities, as per the Annual Work Plans signed with the Government of Albania. Progress was monitored towards Annual Management Plan targets, particularly in terms of programme implementation, funds utilization, HACT standards observance, quality of research and human resources management. Financial implementation reports (by Output) were generated from the Management Dashboard and shared within the office on a weekly basis, and standard corporate KPIs were reviewed at every CMT meeting as a standing agenda item.

The BCP was updated twice during the year (June and November), with two BCP tests conducted, in October as a UN House evacuation drill, and in December as a simulation of a pandemic flu scenario. Timely security advisories were provided to staff during the reporting period in coordination with UNDSS.

The UNICEF Albania risk library was updated based on an office-wide discussion and participatory exercises. Risks associated with DCT management by CSO and Government partners were identified and addressed with mitigation measures, as per the UNICEF HACT policy.

OUTPUT 2  IR-02 Financial resources and Stewardship. Effective and efficient management and stewardship of financial resources, including administration, finance, office security and equipment maintenance and vehicles.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Standard KPIs on financial and administrative controls continued to be reviewed at every CMT meeting. Daily reviews of UNICEF Management Dashboard information helped to ensure that all alerts were addressed in due course. The expenditure levels of allocated annual amounts of regular resources, OR and emergency resources reached 100 per cent, 97 per cent and 100 per cent, respectively. UNICEF Albania disbursed US$ 2,214,351 to implementing partners as DCTs. Two thirds of them received less than US$ 100,000 during the year, which illustrates their relatively low absorption capacity leading to fragmentation of DCT cash flows. All fund requests and liquidations were processed under the HACT.
modality using the Funding Authorisation and Certification of Expenditure (FACE) form. The DCT liquidations management improved in 2016, although capacity gaps remain in many partner organizations. Micro-assessments and spot checks of implementing partners were conducted by Deloitte Haskins LLP (holder of a global LTA). Fifty programmatic visits and twenty-one spot checks took place during the year.

UNICEF Albania transitioned successfully to the GSSC model, with invoice processing, payments and master data management now managed by the GSSC.

Bank transactions optimization and proper cash forecasting continued to remain among the Operations Section’s priorities. Realistic cash flow forecasting, more frequent cash replenishments and careful consideration of the exchange rate fluctuations, while effecting currency conversion, allowed UNICEF Albania to assure currency gains of US$ 39,293.

All monthly, mid- and end-year reconciliations and closures of accounts were effected within the corporate deadlines; efforts were made to ensure that bank and VISION always matched. An assets inventory was performed in September with all items corresponding to VISION records. The volume of small transactions was reduced compared with previous years: 186 out of 508 payments (37 per cent) were for amounts less than US$ 500.

OUTPUT 3 IR 03- Human Capacity. Effective and efficient management of human capacity including HR management, staff development and learning, staff well-being, staff related security costs

Analytical Statement of Progress:
In line with UNICEF global and regional initiatives, the human resources of UNICEF Albania were developed and staff welfare maintained to ensure competent team performance to achieve programme results. The development of the Country Programme Management Plan for the new cycle 2017-2021 entailed an attentive review of the existing staff positions with view to gauge adequate capacities to sustain the required mix of skills for achieving the results set out by the new Country Programme. The need to establish new positions was identified, and several job profiles were consequently updated. As part of the Programme Budget Review process, post classifications were obtained, and changes in reporting lines, post titles and funding sources were introduced. As such, the recruitment of the new international position of Child Protection Specialist (P3) was undertaken and completed. The resignation of the Finance and HR Assistant prompted the vacancy of the post, which was filled by a colleague occupying one of the two posts of Programme Assistant. Efforts were made to offer appropriate measures to make the necessary shift, and the recruitment of the new vacancy was also completed. During 2016, four stretch assignments were advertised and hosted, which served as a very positive experience to gain additional short-term capacity efficiently without undergoing a full selection and contracting process. This experience was embraced by team members as a unique way of reinforcing exchanges of professional experiences and skills among staff.

Transition to the GSSC model was completed smoothly and in a timely manner with the transfer of the respective HR records (attendance records, leave quota corrections, dependency statuses, benefits claims, etc.), and UNICEF staff were systematically informed and oriented on the gradual shift to the MyCase corporate platform of HR administration. Servicing and management of entitlements of national and international staff were completed on time.

The new performance management system Achieve was introduced, linking individual results with contributions to overall office achievement, while emphasizing the reinforcing
roles between individual and team accountability for performance.

Information sessions on HIV for the UN staff and their family members were organized in December for all UN Agencies. UNICEF staff in Albania were sensitized to the organizational reforms in human resources.

The Information Communication Technology (ICT) Assistant continued to remotely support UNICEF Montenegro, based on the agreed 10 per cent cost-sharing arrangement.

OUTPUT 4 Other Cross-Sectoral programme areas.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
Cross-cutting programme activities during the year primarily included an extensive office-wide effort aimed at developing and maintaining a high degree of emergency preparedness in the context of the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe. UNICEF Albania actively contributed to the Government-led planning and capacity development activities; led technical discussions with national and international partners on humanitarian data collection and management; provided an in-depth analysis of the Government's current system of data collection in relation to migration and possible humanitarian situations; established a Child Protection Working Group involving government and civil society partners; facilitated technical inputs to partners' training on child protection and health and nutrition in emergencies; and assessed the feasibility and scope of interventions in the area of WASH in locations of possible concentration of migrants.

According to the Supply Plan, supplies necessary for the establishment of child and family support hubs, as well as some basic health and hygiene items and an assortment of children’s clothes were procured and pre-positioned, with quantities planned to be sufficient for 1,400 children. This procurement required a budget of US$ 119,000, which was financed by emergency and regular resources. (More details are provided in the “Humanitarian Assistance” section).

**Document Centre**

Other publications

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**Lessons learned**

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**Programme Documents**

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