**Executive Summary**

The year of 2012 was the first in the new cycle of the UN cooperation with the Government of Albania (GoA), as part of a full-fledged “Delivering as One” programme agreed for 2012-2016. The programme of cooperation recognizes a number of significant achievements due to the effort of the Government to comply with the EU accession standards and the norms of various international treaties and conventions, while highlighting serious challenges and gaps – mainly, related to the effectiveness of national governance and systematic adherence to human rights principles, especially when it comes to the situation of Roma and other ethnic minorities.

This first year of the programme cycle provided space for the UN and national partners to experiment with new planning tools, identify areas where programme ambitions might be raised and start streamlining common advocacy and knowledge generation agendas. Being one of the two largest resident UN agencies in Albania, UNICEF carries a lot of operational weight in the “Delivering as One” mechanics.

During the year, UNICEF continued to adjust the focus of its programme in Albania to the context of a middle-income economy with significant financial resources, to bring about changes with a positive and long-lasting effect on the wellbeing of children. Gradually, the architecture of UNICEF-supported programmes shifted from narrowly defined sector-specific interventions (in health, education and child protection) to a more embracing concept of “social protection”, whereby the marginalized, deprived and excluded (from whatever rights or services) and adopted strategies to reach and assist them become the essence of UNICEF’s concern. It was along this line of thinking that the new ambitious plan of UNICEF’s support to the GoA in reforming the national social care system was designed and formalized, in close technical collaboration with the Government of Switzerland (through the Swiss Development Cooperation Office in Tirana) and backed by the latter’s generous financial contribution. Using the positive experience of child protection units nested within the local governments’ structure, the reform is calling for a single system of government-owned social care services that could address various types of vulnerabilities and needs, using the capacity of local NGOs and be flexible enough to adjust to Albania’s changing demographics in urban and rural settings.

Similarly, the concept of “justice for children” is increasingly influencing, not only the content of the Juvenile Justice programme but penetrating into other areas and having a strong effect on the mind-sets of key policy-makers. Remarkably, a joint UNICEF-EU initiative in combating violence against children (facilitated by the Regional Office) gained the attention of Albania’s Prime Minister who made a public commitment in November 2012 to put an end to this shameful phenomenon. A UNICEF-supported campaign in public schools to decrease the levels of violence from teachers towards children also started to bear fruit, thanks to the openness and commitment of partners in the Ministry of Education and in thousands of schools across the country.

**Country Situation as Affecting Children & Women**

Profiles of social vulnerability, inequity and exclusion in modern Albania are subject to continuous change: decreasing fertility rates and intense migration (including, emigration) have been having a dramatic effect on the country’s demographic and socio-economic patterns, thus requiring close monitoring and special analytical effort. Although the country has been relatively resilient to the global recession so far (with the GDP growth in 2012 projected at 3.5%), the satisfactory macro-economic indicators mask deeper effects of the economic conjuncture on the wellbeing of the population. However, available statistical data on poverty incidence does not span beyond 2008, with the turbulences of the past few years not captured other than through fragmented anecdotal evidence. As revealed by the national demographic census of 2011, the population of Albania amounts to 2.8 million people, which is about half a million lower than the previously used estimate – a sign that the impact of mass emigration, coupled with decreasing fertility rates, has been stronger than expected. Both the “poverty alleviation” and “crisis buffering” effects of Albanian workers’ remittances are widely acknowledged and documented although the externality and fluidity of this phenomenon are making it difficult to incorporate in the poverty dynamics analysis over shorter periods of time.

In other words, identifying and articulating the correlation between various socio-economic factors and social inequities in Albania’s current context is a task by itself, which is expected to be addressed in the country’s new Social Inclusion Strategy for 2013-2020 (currently in the making). In general, the risk of social exclusion is largely associated with the following population groups:
a/ impoverished families in the mountainous areas. The series of Albania’s Living Standard Measurement Surveys in 2002, 2005 and 2008 mapped the concentration of poverty in the country’s mountainous periphery. For example, in Northeastern Albania, poverty incidence of 29% is double the national average; similarly, the IMR and USMR of 38 and 42 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively, is about two times higher than on average nation-wide. Stunting is observed in almost every 3rd child under the age of five in the mountains. The net compulsory school completion rate (age cohort of 6-14) stands at 82% in the Mountain zone against 97% in Tirana. Only 46% of children in villages continue their education after the age of 14, compared to 71% in the capital. Although in absolute numbers the population in these areas is decreasing (in-depth analysis of the 2011 census information will be needed to update the national population distribution map), the gap in living standards and developmental outcomes is not closing. In the absence of any latest poverty measurements since 2008, the new IFAD-backed economic support programme for 2012-2018 estimates about 650,000 persons as being at high risk of deprivation in these – largely underserved and economically depressed – parts of the country.

b/ ethnic minorities of Roma and Balkan Egyptians. The population census conducted in 2011 registered about 8,600 people who identified themselves as Roma (although some more could have refused to state their ethnic identity). A detailed geo-mapping and description of about 108 Roma settlements supported by UNICEF came up with the total figure of about 15,000 people (including, 5,000 children). Now available as an on-line database, the mapping reveals a very high incidence of poverty among Roma (78%), high illiteracy rate (up to 70%), non-universal birth registration (about 6% of newborns not registered), low preschool enrollment (26% against the national average of about 50%) and other huge gaps in terms of access to basic services, living standards and inclusion in the social fabric.

c/ internal migrants to the sub-urban periphery. Population density in the mountainous areas continues to decrease, in contrast to the Central and Coastal zones attracting the internal migration flows. Today, almost 45% of the country’s population is concentrated in twenty largest municipalities, including more than 20% - in Tirana and its outskirts. At least 1/4 of urban dwellers, according to estimates, live in informal squatter zones, where individual housing construction took little or no account of basic infrastructure needs (traffic and recreational space, proper electricity lines, heating, water and sanitation, access to health care and education facilities, etc.). A FAO-supported research on the situation of recent migrants to sub-urban Tirana reveals that, while the gains in monetary income are well noticeable, the actual consumption levels are not necessarily higher. Living conditions might actually be worse, access to sanitation and clean drinking water is problematic and employment opportunities often irregular. Particularly striking is that school attendance of migrant children in the suburbs was found to be lower than of their rural peers at both primary (compulsory) and secondary levels. Echoing the above findings is the assessment by UNICEF of household food security and child feeding practices in two-suburban areas of the capital, which flags some alarming indication of high vulnerability and limited coping capacity of the families in that regard.

National response to the social inclusion challenges has been guided by respective references in sector-specific policies, as well as summarized in the national cross-cutting Social Inclusion Strategy (2007-2013) that UNICEF is currently assisting to evaluate, to draw lessons for Albania’s renewed vision of social inclusion prospects by 2020. Complementing this analysis are the concluding observations on the CRC Committee on the national periodic report (2012) and the annual conclusions of the European Commission concerning Albania’s possible EU candidate status - both emphasizing persistent equity gaps and an unfinished human rights protection agenda.

Throughout these and other documents, the attainment of equitable wellbeing and development outcomes for Albanian citizens is mainly associated with bottlenecks in the quality of governance (including, the enforcement of justice) and public finance management, especially problematic in their sub-national (decentralized) dimensions. In all fairness, the on-going internal migration complicates any investment decision (e.g. in health, education or protection), especially in rural areas.

Social norms represent another barrier, whereas the mentality of many public servants has not yet embraced their primary accountability for ensuring availability of services, as a priority, to the most deprived, excluded and marginalized. As a result, services that the state actually offers to its citizens fall far behind the needs, in terms of their accessibility, quality and continued use. At the same time the society is not yet ready to exert
sufficient pressure on the duty-bearers – be it through a consolidated voice transmitted by CSO initiatives, using the existing human rights protection mechanisms or just acting as an individual citizen.

**Country Programme Analytical Overview**

In 2012, UNICEF started its new 5-year programme of assistance to the Government of Albania, embedded in the Joint UN-Government programme of cooperation. Being the first full-fledged “Delivering as One” programming framework for the UN in Albania, it identified 11 Outcome and 41 Output results, out of which UNICEF contributes to about half. The Annual Review of the cooperation programme on 5 November 2012 preceded by the UN Country Team Retreat, analyzed the first year of implementation, appreciated the use of Joint UN Annual Work Plans, highlighted a number of substantive and managerial bottlenecks, and suggested ways to address these.

For example, it was acknowledged that the multiplicity of participating UN agencies (20 agencies, with only 8 having resident presence in Albania) and the variety of their mandates are the factors behind the current fragmentation of results and dispersal of advocacy messages. UN positions on key national development challenges are planned to be produced by the UNCT in 2013 to address – at least partially - the abovementioned programme design flaws. This is particularly necessary as the financial contribution of the entire UN system does not exceed 3% of Albania’s ODA. Managing about 40 Joint UN AWPs signed in 2012 has been challenging in terms of result-based planning, monitoring and reporting. The large variety and number of UN-supported indicators turned out to be a heavy burden for the counterparts’ and UN agencies’ own - rather under-developed - M&E systems.

In terms of substance, the limitations of the traditional sector-defined approach are being increasingly visible. While the “stream of engagement” of the UN in none of the social sectors seems to be decisive, landing its support on a common platform of social protection and social inclusion could become a step towards a more strategic positioning of the UN. The intent of the Government of Albania to develop a new vision of the country’s social progress for the next decade offers a unique opportunity for equipping the country with a really comprehensive, robust, forward-looking action plan, based on the best social protection and inclusion practices available worldwide. The middle-income country context of Albania demonstrates with all the evidence that, irrespective of the sector, key bottlenecks preventing good quality and sustainable delivery of services are the same across the board and invariably associated with non-effective governance and public finance mechanisms. In the list of governance flaws, weaknesses of technical nature are compounded with the absence of human rights consciousness in the mindsets of civil servants.

High-caliber technical expertise is these two areas, supported by a much more systematic, reliable and professional management of expertise, experience and science of change, present themselves as key programme strategies of today, requiring a certain re-configuration of UNICEF’s capacities. Regrettably, the introduction of VISION has only added to the challenge, as servicing the new corporate software has been absorbing disproportional amounts of time and effort of the staff - thus preventing the in-house capacity optimization and re-alignment of financial resources to better address the issues of programme substance.

**Effective Advocacy**

 Mostly met benchmarks

The subject of combating violence against children is a good example to demonstrate the comprehensiveness and success of UNICEF’s approach aimed at convincing national stakeholders to prioritize the issue. Based on a solid collaborative effort with UNICEF Regional Office, European Commission, Albanian academic institutions, social service practitioners and NGOs, a volume of recently produced evidence was powerful enough to reach the highest levels of decision-making in the country. The commitment of the Prime-Minister, announced nationally on the occasion of the International Children’s day in November 2012, solidified the work already underway in Albania. The involvement of teachers in all public schools in promoting non-violent disciplining and interaction with students through a UNICEF-supported COMBI initiative has been one of the remarkable achievements. The “ALO 116” child helpline – recognized as one of the best such services in Europe - continues to operate. More focussed approach in sensitizing parliamentarians on issues of violence against children (as part of a joint regional project facilitated by the RO and funded by the EU) is expected to bring concrete results in changing the mind-sets and attitudes of the legislators.

Another example of successful advocacy is the progress of de-institutionalization reform, with annual
budgetary allocations for foster families now established by the law. Overall, the accountability of national and local government authorities for properly performing the roles they have been assigned with has remained the focus of UNICEF’s advocacy. In the context of a middle-income economy, improving the situation of a concrete child or family is often dependent not on any additional resources or new policies, but the mere action of those bearing the respective public service duty at the municipal or communal level. Within this spirit, re-connecting the UN Country Team’s attention from the UN-centred publicity to a well-articulated advocacy agenda that would prioritize and encourage national action will remain one of the “Delivering as One” challenges in 2013.

### Capacity Development

**Mostly met benchmarks**

During 2012, the focus of UNICEF’s attention has been increasingly shifting away from individual towards institutional capacity building. In this regard, capacity is understood as the combination of sustainable resources to perform well, a motivated and skilled workforce with career prospects, an environment that wants the institution to function (or legislation that provides a mandate and authority), and an internal set-up that makes the institution effective and efficient (with clear management structure, accurate JDs, well-articulated performance expectations, etc.). However, the reality shows that such understanding is not always present in the design of many development-oriented programmes. For example, one of the lessons learned during the first year of the joint UN Annual Work Plans implementation in 2012 was that the abundance of the UN-supported capacity building initiatives does not necessarily lead to a continued long-lasting effect or make a critical difference. A project-based approach still prevails in many UN agencies’ activities doing some little good here and there for relatively small groups of practitioners but not resulting in systemic changes. The way UNICEF has been addressing this “illness syndrome” of development assistance programmes was to connect any newly-suggested training initiatives to the perspective of official national accreditation of the content and methodologies used in UNICEF-supported trainings (as a signal of the national partners’ confirmation of genuine interest). For example, in the health programme the newly introduced modules on nutrition and integrated management of child illnesses have been accredited by the National Center for Continuous Health Education, with appropriate certification of trained professionals being in place. Similarly, the Ministry of Education has certified the materials and curricula of the environmental education package piloted by UNICEF in previous years. At the same time, constraints related to high turn-over of staff in technical and decision-making positions (with nominations influenced by the fluid political conjuncture) remain valid and seriously dissolve the effect of newly transferred knowledge.

The launch of an ambitious Social Care System reform plan by the government (supported by UNICEF and the Swiss Development Cooperation) in 2012 is believed to open the door for a more focused and systematic capacity building, as this work will be an integral part of the government-led comprehensive redressing of the entire social protection system (in its both cash- and service-based pillars). UNICEF is intending to apply the approach already tested in its Health and Nutrition programme whereby national actors are not only provided with necessary training and orientation but they remain continuously “coached”, advised, assessed and evaluated by a specially assigned institution experienced in development planning and monitoring.

### Communication for Development

**Mostly met benchmarks**

In 2012, UNICEF Albania CO continued to support a Communication for Behavioral Impact (COMBI) initiative aimed at reducing the incidence of violence from adults towards children through increasing the practice of New Way Discipline (NWD) in schools, kindergartens and residential care institutions. Focusing on caregivers/teachers provides a fixed “target”, limited in numbers and location, which in turn serves as a basis for putting on the national agenda the whole issue of Violence Against Children (VAC). Desired behavioural changes are being reached through a mix of activities, such as radio, TV and media interventions, awards for NWD champion schools and individual NWD advocates, NWD PEET (Pause, Enquire, Engage, Take) Yellow Cards for use by teachers in dealing with incidents requiring disciplinary measures, 640,000 school children using a discussion worksheet on VAC and NWD and regular surveys in sample schools. By end-2012, the main
methodology components of the COMBI programme have been delivered to each of Albania’s 4,150 schools. A sample of about 80,000 students has been used to track the NWD program impact. Some signs of positive change in teachers’ behaviour – although very slow – were captured by the latest measurement at the end of the academic year of 2011/2012. Signatures from 400,000 parents were collected in support of NWD, also committing them to refrain from using violence as a disciplining measure. At the highest level, Albania’s national *commitment to combating VAC was re-iterated by the Prime Minister* during a UNICEF- and EU-supported anti-VAC conference on 21 November 2012. Another COMBI implemented in 2012 has been targeting mothers and their skills in feeding young children (including breastfeeding). A combination of media tools has been used, to reach mothers and families with messages on improved child rearing and feeding practices. At the end of the year the Ministry of Health awarded recognition certificates to the winners of a nation-wide competition of mothers on issues of child feeding and nutrition.

**Service Delivery**

*Mostly met benchmarks*

In 2012, some residual service delivery support has remained part of UNICEF’s portfolio in Albania, particularly in areas where the capacity of the government to reach and effectively assist the most vulnerable populations is not yet in place. Gradually, UNICEF has been able to reduce its financial assistance to the network of more than 60 Child Protection Units (CPUs), now formally institutionalized as part of the municipal and communal structures. Most recently, the Mayor of Tirana has committed to open 11 new CPUs in the capital and fully cover their running costs, with UNICEF’s support to be limited by some start-up and training interventions.

As part of UNICEF’s engagement with the national social care system reform, a new functional content is expected to be infused in the existing network of the State Social Services. This content will be based on the modern notion of social work understood as a face-to-face interaction with families and “case management” of problems whenever these occur. This would mean a radical upgrade of the SSS’ current role, far beyond what they are doing today as local offices administering the distribution of cash assistance allowances to impoverished families.

Some limited involvement in direct service delivery remains in the ECD programme where families in constrained life circumstances (living in poverty, led by single mothers or belonging to Roma minority) are assisted by sub-contracted UNICEF partners through family visits, medical check-ups, parenting education sessions, birth registration paperwork, pre-school classes enrolment, etc. Similarly, NGOs are the main providers of legal assistance and social re-integration follow-up for young law offenders in the Juvenile Justice programme. Joint UNICEF and EU advocacy for the government’s taking over these services will continue in 2013, especially as the justice sector is likely to be chosen for direct budgetary support by the EU in the future.

For the time being UNICEF’s remaining commitments in service delivery are operationalized mainly through partnerships with NGOs, but the progress in the social care system reform should bring longer-term solutions, either through the state-run or state-contracted services.

**Strategic Partnerships**

*Mostly met benchmarks*

The wide range of UNICEF’s partners in Albania continues to include government legislative and civil service authorities (at central, regional and local levels), line ministries, international and bilateral donor agencies, EU Delegation, non-government and civil society organizations, academic institutions and the media (with the main facets of corresponding partnerships described in the 2011 Annual Report).

As in previous years, UNICEF has been closely cooperating with the EU Delegation and UNICEF Office in Brussels in the preparation of Albania’s annual assessment of the EU compliance progress, and facilitated the implementation of required measures with the government. UNICEF has been an active participant in the EU-led coordination mechanisms promoting cooperation with civil society, use of government procurement systems, etc. Partnership with the Swiss Development Cooperation and Austrian Development Cooperation offices has been particularly fruitful as it allowed facilitation of a very ambitious national programme of social
care reform. Technical alignment of the planned course of action with USAID (especially, in the aspect of
decentralized governance) has been important and will continue in 2013.
As already mentioned in other sections of the report, NGOs and civil society partners offer additional channels
for the transmission of UNICEF’s assistance, alongside the government. In 2012 the combined voice
of UNICEF and NGOs has been particularly decisive in presenting the case of Albania to the CRC Committee in
Geneva, as part of the national periodic report hearings. Facilitated by UNICEF Tirana, a consolidated list of
NGO-suggested advocacy items and specific messages were prepared to complement the picture presented in
the national report, in light of additional clarifications requested by the Committee on the substance of
Albania’s submission. The mechanics of such collaboration are also being used to generate a nation-wide
debate on the country’s post-2015 agenda, when the NGOs will be orchestrating a series of televised talk-
shows with ordinary citizens to present their opinions and wishes on the future of their own country.

Knowledge Management

*Partially met benchmarks*

Weak demand for knowledge products as the basis for evidence-driven decision-making remains one of the
fundamental constraints, as many important decisions continue to be shaped by Albania’s immediate political
conjecture. Internet and the shelves of donor assistance agencies are full of high-quality reports and
analyses, many of which are little known outside the projects that these materials have been part of. There is
no national repository of socio-economic development literature (in the absence of a ministry of planning or
similar institution), so most externally-funded initiatives have to start afresh and often duplicate what has
already been researched. Non-stop rotation of international experts hampers the continuity of knowledge
accumulation, and many project-linked websites dry out, together with the expiration of project funding.
The same syndrome of project dependence can be observed in the national research community. It is often
difficult to identify a thematic specialization of many organizations, as they would cover almost any subject
that the donors may be interested in. Rotation of their staff illustrates the “brain drain” effect, so the quality
of delivery from the same organization could be rather uneven. Teaming up local organizations with external
expertise (providing overall methodology guidance and quality assurance) appears to be the most productive
approach.

In 2013 UNICEF will continue to systematize its awareness of local knowledge generation resources – in
research centres, universities and think tanks. However, stimulating the demand for knowledge and
connecting information flows with public policy planning entities (in central ministries, regional and local
administrations) remains a huge challenge. The need is recognized by most donors, as well as by the UN
Country Team, but the evolution towards the culture of evidence-based decision-making is slow. UNICEF
Country Office’s internal set up is being reconfigured to become more knowledge-oriented too, with further
capacity upgrade to be pursued in the course of 2013.
Although it does not solve the issue of national ownership of knowledge about Albania, UNICEF is committed,
together with other UN agencies, to offer its web-site space to house major reports and analyses of the past
decade or so, to facilitate larger access to this wealth of knowledge. The architecture of UNICEF Albania’s new
web-site has been developed with the view of making it a web-based hub for important national development
challenges related to children. UNICEF’s plans for 2013 envisage this web-space to not only facilitate public
access to the wealth of accumulated knowledge resources, but to play a role of a pro-active advocacy channel
where the position of UNICEF on key national policy challenges will be clearly spelled out.

Human Rights Based Approach to Cooperation

*Mostly met benchmarks*

Consistent in its position, UNICEF in Albania has been emphasizing the principle of duty-bearers’
accountability vis-a-vis the citizens. Accountability in the civil service is often poorly understood. Teachers
feel responsible for running a school, but nor providing education for all children in their area of responsibility.
Services will be provided to clients “belonging to the community”, but not to those who don't belong,
regardless of their basic human rights. In our experience, there often is no need for new policies as long as
those in official positions follow the spirit and letter of their assignments, especially at the level of
municipalities and communes. What may be needed is better explanation and articulation of roles; better inspection by their superiors; better oversight by independent institutions and increased demand for accountability by civil society; provision of practical planning tools; access to up to date statistical information; on-the-job coaching and advice, and networking between administrations in different sectors. Such an approach has been illustrated by the [UNICEF-led Joint UN programme on Child Nutrition](https://www.unicef.org) where local governments in several pilot locations in typical rural and sub-urban settings have been empowered to plan and implement interventions aimed at enhanced food safety of families and better feeding standards for children, relying mainly on their own – yet better used – resources.

Another dimension of human rights based approach to programming urges for adapting the systems so they reach, protect and assist all those in need of support, rather than creating parallel mechanisms for different categories of vulnerability or specific problems (as it often happens in donor-assisted programmes when isolated measures could be designed for street children, abused women, orphans, the disabled, marginalized Roma, etc.). In other words, a system of social protection must be designed to offer tailor-made solutions for an “invisible” Roma child in some remote settlement, a women suffering from domestic violence behind closed doors of her house or a young graduate from the orphanage. In its most recent engagement with the national Social Care System reform, UNICEF Office in Albania has been promoting these criteria of inclusiveness and universalism, which are being increasingly accepted by the government. It also creates a stronger platform for a joint UN action, as the UNICEF-led process has been catalytic for other agencies to express their will to support the reform within a single programming framework.

**Gender Equality**

*Mostly met benchmarks*

In all undertakings of UNICEF Albania Country Office, gender equality considerations have been given due attention. All partnership agreements and contracts undergo a review by the Gender focal point, as part of the established business process. To the extent possible, statistical and factual information on UNICEF-supported activities are disaggregated by gender.

In the UN Country Team, the role of UN Women has been central in analyzing the situation of Albanian women and their position on the local labour market. Complementing this recently compiled knowledge is a UNICEF-supported piece of research to explore a correlation between access to ECD services and economic and social empowerment of women. In 2012, international expertise was mobilized to develop a research methodology, with field data collection and subsequent analysis to take place in 2013. This work is closely aligned with “Delivering as One” UN partners working towards a number of gender-specific joint outputs. The study offers a good opportunity for stronger synergy between the efforts of UNICEF and UN Women, concerned with good quality early care for children (especially, from vulnerable families) and women’s empowerment, respectively.

**Environmental Sustainability**

*Partially met benchmarks*
Narrative Analysis by Programme Component Results and Intermediate Results
Albania - 0090

PC 1 - Governance for children

On-track

**PCR 0090/A0/04/001 PCR 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.

**Progress:**

Albania's public governance and justice enforcement systems remain among the critical areas where the attainment of much higher effectiveness and efficiency standards are necessary to guarantee the observance of Albanian citizens’ human rights and more equitable distribution of socio-economic gains of the two post-totalitarian decades. UNICEF’s particular role in this regard, alongside the contribution of other UN partners, consists in activating institutional mechanisms to ensure that the action (or non-action) of duty-bearers at all levels is adequately controlled and responded to by the society. Thus, the human rights-inspired concept of civil servants’ ultimate accountability to the citizens (especially, the most vulnerable) has been the cross-cutting theme that UNICEF promoted in all its interventions.

To this end, various channels open to the voice and initiative of the civil society have been explored and supported. For example, Albania’s CSO-managed network of Child Rights Observatories became a unique [on-line provider of data on child wellbeing](#) collected from administrative sources not only at the first sub-national level of the regions, but also in municipalities and communes (i.e. urban and rural settings, respectively). Albania's democratic governance institutions - such as the Parliament, Human Rights Ombudsman, Anti-discrimination Commissioner, People's Advocate - have all been increasingly used to prevent the issue of child rights and their protection from slipping onto the margins of the national social development and EU integration agenda. Justice for children has been operationalized through the Juvenile Justice programme; considered more broadly, this framework is believed to be relevant for other UNICEF-supported interventions, where injustice for many children means their exclusion from developmental opportunities that the middle-income status of Albania could in principle guarantee.

Among the bottlenecks that UNICEF continues to address is a great degree of public skepticism concerning the prospects of democratic values in the country and lack of trust in public institutions and due process. Civil initiatives continue to be highly dependent on donor funding. While the emerging Albanian democracy has been more dynamic in the capital, the periphery of the country is lagging behind. Identifying and bringing to light promising examples of truly democratic and effective governance at the local level is the subject for UNICEFs’ programme communication to amplify and transmit - to make sure that the voice for children is heard in the choir of messages saturating the country’s media space in the wake of next year’s parliamentary elections and in anticipation of the EU candidate country status.

On-track

**IR 0090/A0/04/001/001 Public oversight bodies related to children, including the Parliament, Ombudsman’s Office, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, civil society organizations and the media, increasingly demand accountability of duty-bearers for better governance results for children.**

**Progress:**

By end-2012, Albania’s Child Rights monitoring and protection machinery encompasses a [State Council](#) and [State Agency for the Protection of the Rights of the Child](#), the Agency being a central element of the system coordinating national action for children. The Chairman of the Agency is appointed by the Prime Minister, based on the proposal from the lead Ministry (i.e. the MoLSAE – Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities). At the sub-national level, government action for child rights is channeled through the [Child Rights Units (CRUs)](#) entrusted with the function to design regional policies for children and monitor their implementation. The CRUs are part of the administrative structure of the Regional Councils; they are active in 11 out of the country’s 12 regions. In 2012 a new [National Plan of Action for Children for 2012-2015](#) was adopted, complemented by sub-national plans in 6 regions (Shkoder, Vlore, Kukes, Lezhe, Diber, Elbasan)
that translate the national commitment into local action, commensurate with available resources and specificity. Complementing the government, civil society runs a Child Rights Observatories network, collecting data on children at the sub-national level. Starting 2012, the information is publicly available on-line. Using the momentum, UNICEF has facilitated a common advocacy agenda with a coalition of NGOs around the issues presented in the national CRC periodic report.

However, unfinished decentralization of public authority is posing challenges to the realization of rights for all children, too often due to the mismatch between government commitments and availability of funds and capacity for their implementation, rudimentary planning and budgeting procedures at the local level, and weak central government oversight on equitable implementation of standards. To address these challenges, capacity building support was extended to the State Agency in 2012 and a nation-wide training programme launched for CRU staff and local officials on practical aspects of child rights Law implementation (such as data collection and sharing, cooperation modalities between national and sub-national structures, cooperation with NGO service providers, legal sanctions for non-action in cases of child rights violations, etc.). Contacts with the Parliament, Children’s Commissioner in the Ombudsman’s Office and Anti-Discrimination Commissioner have been strengthening, with issues of universal birth registration and combating violence against children appearing prominently in the cooperation agenda.

On-track

IR 0090/AO/04/001/003 National media encouraged and supported to bring human rights, equity, gender equality, children’s and women’s issues and accountability of duty-bearers/government at the center of public attention.

Progress:
The majority of Albanian newspapers, radio and TV stations are concentrated in the capital. Local media outlets emerged but their development has been far from smooth. During 2012 UNICEF continued to strengthen journalists’ capacities in investigative journalism through joint field trips to remote areas. Twelve comprehensive articles were published during the year addressing various subjects, such as youth unemployment in Gjirokastra, lack of health insurance for women in rural areas, low quality of teaching in provincial schools, violence in the school, child health and nutrition, and other. Overall, the quality of reporting and analysis on women and children issues has been increasing, albeit slowly. As in previous years, UNICEF has supported the annual International Human Rights Film Festival in Albania, which has, over the years, received more donor and public attention. Environmental challenges have been selected a key topic. A special TV programme for Roma population was supported, with 48 issues produced so far. For the first time in Albania a TV programme addressed Roma in their native language and focused exclusively on issues of concern for them. An audience response assessment is ongoing, to guide UNICEF’s further planning. As an “edutainment” tool, a puppet theater reached the audience of about 2,000 children in remote rural areas spreading messages on child rights and life skills.

High degree of media politicization remains one of the main challenges. The readiness of citizens to openly express their positions and concerns through the media is low, be it the case of civil servants afraid of losing their jobs or women not acknowledging facts of domestic violence in public. An interesting experiment in this regard is being conceived by the UN Country Team in preparing a professionally facilitated series of citizens’ televised debates on the “post-2015 development agenda” for Albania (planned to be aired in early 2013). UNICEF Representative continued to play a role of an active advocate for human and child rights, being invited as key-note speaker to multiple events during the year. UNICEF’s advocacy has always been strongly anchored to issues of national importance and concern, contrary to the approach of some other development actors primarily focused on their own publicity. Social protection of marginalized children and families, the situation of Roma, violence against children, gaps in juvenile justice policies are among the topics that consistently appear in UNICEF’s advocacy messages.

On-track

IR 0090/AO/04/001/004 Key policy research and monitoring institutions, as well as central, regional and local government entities, effectively mandated for issues related to children and women and periodically report on the situation of marginalized children and families, implementation of child-related legislation and international conventions.

Progress:
During 2012 UNICEF has been working jointly with other UN agencies and MoLSAEO, State Agency for Child Rights Protection and INSTAT to improve national regulatory framework for a fully functional data collection and monitoring system that would capture various aspects of child wellbeing and social exclusion whenever it happens. Adoption of the Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 267 dated 12 April 2012 on statistical monitoring of the rights of the child was a key achievement in 2012, with potentially strong effect for child-focused evidence-based policy analysis, as it instructs regional and local authorities to establish appropriate data collection mechanisms. Albania’s law on official statistics adopted in 2004 is currently under revision, as part of the National Programme on Economic and Social Statistics (2012-2016), and the set of child-centered indicators is expected to be included in the new version of the law. The Programme envisages a lot of capacity building of administrative data holders to collect, analyze and disseminate statistical data, including on children. During the year the capacity of the newly established State Agency for Child Rights Protection and of the regional Child Rights Units (CRUs) was strengthened through a series of trainings. In close collaboration with Child Rights Observatories, the CRUs units are now able to provide and disseminate data on child social exclusion indicators (http://www.aca.org.al/odf/index.htm).

In the meantime the joint ambition of the UN agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNICEF) is to encourage and support a comprehensive nationwide data system that will provide vital information on the situation of all vulnerable population groups, such as the disabled, elderly, Roma, children, recipients of economic assistance, single women-led households, etc. Capacity building on data collection, research and surveys methodologies, human resources, financing, infrastructure, IT technology support, policy planning and coordination will be vital to monitor the access to and quality of services for these population groups.

IR 0090/A0/04/001/005 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 alternative sentencing, and d/ social support and rehabilitative measures for children under 14 years of age.

Progress:
Given the very recent nature of Albanian democracy and slow shifts in people’s mindsets, progress from punitive towards restorative justice for juvenile law offenders has been substantial. By end-2012, i.e. in the 3rd year of implementation, probation services expanded to 4 more districts, now covering 8 districts out of 12 and providing alternatives to detention and mediation options for juveniles. About 700 cases were referred to alternatives to detention in 2012 (a 10.5% increase compared to 2011), thus expanding probation practices to 40% of the total juvenile caseload. The Ministry of Education has ensured the appointment of teachers in all the pre-trial detention sites. Drafting of the new Criminal Procedure Code started in 2012, with UNICEF-supported expertise ensuring that it will incorporate “child-friendly” procedures for young people in conflict with the law, as well as for victims and witnesses of crime, in accordance with the international standards of Juvenile Justice. Identification of special needs of victims and witnesses is a remarkable development, also reflected for the first time in the newly adopted National Plan of Action for Children for 2012-2015.

Yet, the adoption of the Juvenile Justice Strategy and Action Plan is pending. There has been no progress in reducing the length of re-trial detention. Legal provisions are needed on referral to social services of children under the age of criminal responsibility and on witnesses and victims of crime – an institutional link between the justice and social protection sectors that has yet to be established, and the national social care system currently undergoing a substantial reform (supported by UNICEF) explicitly prioritizes preventive local action by social workers. Further advocacy and technical support efforts will be exerted to start a gradual shift of financial burden from donors to the state, in line with its legally existing but not fully implemented obligations (i.e. the legal assistance). The EU’s plan to select Justice as one of the two sectors for direct budget support in their future country strategy will be taken into consideration.

IR 0090/A0/04/001/007 Barriers to women's empowerment in the transition society context are analyzed, with a particular focus on women's roles in society and community life.

Progress:
The existence of a separate IR for “gender equality promotion” (which normally is mainstreamed in all UNICEF-supported interventions) is explained by practical budget management and reporting considerations of the “Delivering as One” mechanism, whereby individual agencies’ activities must be aligned with multiple joint outcomes and outputs. Due to budgetary constraints, this is for the moment a “one activity” IR, where UNICEF is supporting a piece of research to explore a correlation between access to ECD services and economic and social empowerment of women. The working assumption is that the availability of day care and/or advisory services assisting mothers in their daily tasks of caring for young children would free some time that could be devoted to economic activity. Professional guidance on ECD matters is likely to strengthen the mother’s confidence in her actions, increase the weight of her decisions in the eyes of other family members, thus ultimately helping to raise her self-esteem. Networking with other mothers and families through services available in communities is another important element of social capital that empowers women, especially when their social environment remains traditional in many aspects.

In 2012, international expertise was mobilized to develop a research methodology, with field data collection and subsequent analysis to take place in 2013. This work is closely aligned with “Delivering as One” UN partners working towards a number of gender-specific joint outputs, under the overall leadership of UN Women. The study offers a good opportunity for stronger synergy between the efforts of UNICEF and UN Women, concerned with good quality early care for children (especially, from vulnerable families) and women’s empowerment, respectively.

**PC 2 - Inclusive and protective policies for children**

**On-track**

**PCR 0090/A0/04/002 PCR 2 - INCLUSIVE & PROTECTIVE POLICIES** Children from vulnerable groups are assisted, through specific policy measures and government programmes, to be healthy and take full advantage of all learning opportunities.

**Progress:**

In 2012, UNICEF has further sharpened the focus of its cooperation with the Government of Albania on addressing inequities and prioritizing action for the benefit of the most vulnerable, through interventions in health, education and social protection (including, child protection). In all three sectors the capacity of national and local authorities to plan, finance, administer and monitor inclusive social policies that would take into account Albania’s extremely complex decentralized governance architecture remains a critical bottleneck. In social protection, the breakthrough of the year was the adoption of a UNICEF-supported roadmap for a long overdue national reform of the social care system, aimed at introducing the “case management” function of social workers, re-profiling of existing residential care institutions and engaging NGOs as sub-contractors for government-commissioned service delivery. Parallel to that, Albania’s scheme of pro-poor economic aid is being reformed, while UNICEF is safeguarding the interests of children throughout the process. In health, an in-depth analysis of the situation of the lowest income quintile group identified by the DHS of 2008-2009 guided the modelling of inter-sectoral collaboration mechanisms and initiatives at the local level in typical underserved rural and sub-urban areas to improve nutrition status and food safety of children and families. In education, similar local modelling in 7 schools in the cities of Korca, Berat and Durrës brought together regional education authorities, municipalities and school administrations over the task of identifying out-of-school children and bringing them back to the classroom. The formulation of the new Pre-University Education law adopted in 2012 was influenced by UNICEF’s advocacy for child friendliness and inclusiveness of the school system. The priority needs of young children have been addressed through Early Childhood Development (ECD) interventions. The Government was assisted to outline standards of early care (in ECD facilities, health centers and in families), focusing on the marginalized and Roma. Models of pre-school education have also been tested and proved to be both effective and cost-efficient.

Across all the sectors, particular vulnerabilities of Roma children and families have been addressed, and accountabilities of duty-bearers continuously highlighted, especially as the numbers of Roma in Albania are not that high to prevent their full social integration. Prioritizing Roma as the population in extreme need, UNICEF nevertheless has been consistent in advocating for a universal, nationally-owned, system-based approach to social protection, to prevent the fragmentation of action and solutions – as it often happens – tailored for different problems and/or population categories (i.e. separate services co-existing in parallel for the poor, disabled, elderly, youth, women, children, Roma, Egyptians, etc.). Yet, making social protection system work for children and Roma is UNICEF’s ultimate goal. Once achieved for these two particular groups,
it will serve a "litmus test" of the overall success in the social care reform.

**On-track**

**IR 0090/A0/04/002/001** National mechanisms of social inclusion and protection are evaluated and income support system enhanced to make it better for children.

**Progress:**
The Albanian government is undertaking a broad social policy reform, which deals with the economic and social needs of citizens. In this context, the design of new social policies calls for the revision of the existing legal framework and for preparation of new laws, where necessary. The social reform is taking place alongside the process of decentralization, increasing the authority and power of local government. At the same time, it increases the responsibilities of the local government towards citizens. Local government is gradually entitled to take decisions regarding the use of financial resources, aimed at the provision of basic services for people.

Two UNICEF-supported studies on "Reforming Economic Aid: from survival to investment in poverty reduction" and "Effective use of Economic Aid to improve health and nutrition status of children in poor families" issued in 2011-2012 clearly reveal that Economic Aid cannot address child poverty in all its dimensions. The studies provide recommendations which aim to improve the effectiveness of EA, especially with regard to health and nutritional status of young children. The studies contain proposals for changes of a technical and political nature that must be implemented for the Economic Aid program to enable an acceptable living standard for poor children, their education, development and integration in the society, at par with their non-poor peers. Some of these recommendations have been included in the National Plan of Action for Children for 2012-2015 (see Strategic Goal 1, Objective 2, Measures 2.1 & 2.2). Most recently, in collaboration with MoLSAEO and MoH, UNICEF has started assessing the feasibility (logistical and financial) of supplementing Economic Aid with food packages.

**On-track**

**IR 0090/A0/04/002/002** The system of social care services is reformed to effectively address the needs of the most vulnerable families and children.

**Progress:**
Sealing the commitment of the Government to reform the social care services system in Albania, an ambitious four-year program was launched with UNICEF’s support in 2012, backed by a USD 3.3 million contribution of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). The intent to move away from the old approach of residential care institutions towards a flexible, mobile, community-based model of social work and case referrals to specialized assistance (including services offered by NGOs) was outlined in the National Social Protection Sector Strategy for 2007-2013. For several years UNICEF has been playing a role of a broker between the government and donor community, hammering the idea that the national scheme of cash assistance ("ndihma ekonomike") should be complemented by professional “case management” social work effectively reaching families at the local level. The “ndihma ekonomike“ system is currently under reform too, with a USD 50 million loan approved by the World Bank in early 2012, so UNICEF-advocated non-cash assistance component is well aligned with this major effort chronologically, and will be more aligned substantively, as both streams (cash and non-cash assistance) progress. The UNICEF-supported social care services reform is based on two pillars of “improved policies” informed by “best local practices”. Various models of social work tested by UNICEF in earlier projects will be extensively used to substantiate the input of “best practices”: parental education on ECD, child protection units, street work with Roma children, foster care for orphans, social rehabilitation for young law offenders, etc. – all these experiences will be documented, financially assessed and presented to policy makers for further review and ultimate conversion into a comprehensive national social service framework. Supporting the political will of the government to stick to the ambition of such fundamental reform will remain one of the most challenging tasks for UNICEF (including navigation through the stormy period of parliamentary elections in 2013).

**Discontinued**

**IR 0090/A0/04/002/003** Situation of children with disabilities is analyzed.
Progress: 
In November 2012 Albania ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is believed to boost national action to improve the situation of this vulnerable group. In 2011 about 126,000 of Albanians were receiving disability benefits, but otherwise the statistics of disability are very incomplete and only scattered anecdotal evidence can be found to depict the vulnerability profile of the disabled. Children with disabilities appear to be at very high risk of exclusion and are also particularly vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and neglect. Poverty and lack of community-based services keep most of them isolated at home, unable to integrate into mainstream society. Under the social care programs of the MoLSAEO, financed from the state budget, disabled children receive cash payments and treatment in 6 residential centers in Tirana, Durrës, Korçë, Berat, Vlorë and Shkodër, as well as in 2 day-care centers in Korça and Lezha. Currently, there are 283 disabled children living in residential institutions; 50% of them are older than 16 years. Although this is not allowed by law, they remain in these facilities because they have nowhere else to go due to the lack of rehabilitation and reintegration services – this denies them their right to live independently in the community. This situation is further exacerbated by a lack of services for persons with disability in the community. Education for children with disabilities still focuses on specialized institutions and schools and teachers in the general education system lack skills and infrastructure to accommodate learners with disabilities. Attitudes in society create barriers to the full participation of persons with disabilities, particularly views that persons with disability are incapable of learning or working or participating in other areas of social and economic life. A range of responses to address discrimination and provide protection will be supported by the GoA-UN Programme of Cooperation in the years to come; as a first step, UNICEF will help in documenting the situation of children with disabilities (as part of a comprehensive situation analysis planned in 2013). Starting January 2013, the content of this IR will be captured by the thematically closest of the active IRs.

- On-track

IR 0090/AO/04/002/004 Child protection mechanisms and services enhanced to effectively reach and support children and families in situations of particular vulnerability.

Progress:
By end-2012 the network of Child Protection Units (CPUs) institutionalized by the Law “On the protection of the Rights of the Child” (2010) as part of the local government at the lowest administrative level of municipalities (in cities/towns) and communes (in villages) expanded to 62 locations. As a result of UNICEF lobbying, the Mayor of Tirana has recently committed to establish 11 new CPUs, to cover all districts of Albanian capital where about ¼ of the country’s population are concentrated. In the meantime the "House of Colors" municipal centre for street children – so far the main unit of child protection infrastructure in Tirana - continued to provide shelter and other assistance to approximately 500 children (mainly from Roma and Egyptian minority groups) per year, keeping contact with the kids’ families and trying to influence their parents’ life style and the choices they make for their children. The CPUs act as front-liners in reaching out to families and children, identifying their needs and concerns, interacting with local service providers and offering referral support. They represent a prototype of the “case management” community-based social work that the national social care service reform, supported by UNICEF, is aiming to introduce, instead of the current system largely based on residential care institutions. Operational since 2009, by end November-2012 "Albania’s national child helpline “ALO 116”" has answered 91,000 calls, provided counselling to 54,000 children and managed some 1,800 cases that required specialized assistance and individual follow up from social services. Assessed by specialists as one of the best child helplines in Europe, “ALO 116” and UNICEF are now working on the helpline’s financial sustainability scheme. The foster care pilot involving 80 children so far (while 265 children live in public residential centres and 400 in non-public residential centres) was acknowledged by the government as a way to go, with financial allowances to foster parents introduced by new national legislation since 2012.

- On-track

IR 0090/AO/04/002/005 Policies and measures improved and implemented to support social protection and inclusion of Roma children.

Progress:
UNICEF-supported work to facilitate the mainstreaming of Roma children in Albania is based on the regional
Decade Action Plan for Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) and on the corresponding national Action Plan for Roma Inclusion (2010-2015). In 2011, UNICEF conducted a mapping based on surveying and GIS positioning of known and newly discovered Roma settlements throughout Albania. This first nation-wide Roma mapping produced a headcount of some 15,000 pers. (including about 5,000 children). The exercise confirmed that many - though not all - Roma families and children have little access or make inadequate use of maternal and child healthcare, organized early childhood development opportunities, parenting and family counselling services, kindergarten, schools and preschools. Most importantly, the mapping links the locations where Roma live with the nearest health, education and protection services, thus clearly pointing the accountability vector to respective government officials and institutions. Ultimately, the culture of conscious duty-bearing in civil service should be instilled where no official would neglect anyone in need of his or her action.

Baseline statistics provided by the mapping are being increasingly utilized for national action planning and monitoring, although more effort is needed to plant the culture of evidence-based policy making and maximize the use of the tool. International expertise has been mobilized by UNICEF in 2012 to assist the government in drafting an action plan for early development and socialization of Roma children. Both dimensions of central and local action are being tackled, keeping in mind that early development programmes that fully include children from vulnerable groups will be decisive for larger social inclusion goals. A comprehensive social care system reform launched with UNICEF's support in 2012 prioritizes the mainstreaming of Roma into a nationally-established continuum of social services, especially since the mapping has dissolved the myth about the “unmanageable” scope of the problem. ECD services for Roma continued to be supported; about 100 more cases of proper birth registration were finalized in 2012 and 225 civil registry officers trained in non-discriminatory practices.

IR 0090/A0/04/002/006 Gender-based violence in schools, family and community is reduced through capacity building of service providers and social communication.

**Progress:**
More than half (56%) of Albanian women (aged 15-49) have experienced at least one form of domestic violence in their lifetime. Women with no or low level of education, divorced women and rural women have the highest percentage among victims of physical violence. Most women (90%) have sought help from their family and only 10% have tried to seek help through professionals. The majority state that they do not report the violence because they do not believe anything would change or that they have fear of being judged or ridiculed. Rural women and women single-heads-of-households were two categories identified as priority target groups by the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence (2007-2010). The strategy facilitated the preparation and adoption of the national legislation addressing the issue of family-based violence, including some recent guidance on the mechanism of coordinated action between various duty-bearers. In the past years many donors have invested in piloting of community-based services for violence identification and protection of victims. UNICEF's position is that these fragmented experiences should be unified as part of a reformed national social care system, staffed with social care workers who are able to identify and refer cases of GBV, where necessary, to specialized assistance and protection. Complementary to the role of social workers operating as closely to the communities as possible would be the function of school psychologists (suggested by the new Pre-University Education Law, 2012) to communicate with schoolchildren and their families.

Initiation of activities under this IR was subject to joint UN fundraising; unfortunately, the UN Albania Country Team submission to the UN Trust Fund to end Violence Against Women and Girls prepared in early 2012 was unsuccessful. Other funding possibilities will be explored, within the programming framework of the joint UN Output on Gender-Based Violence.

Starting January 2013, the content of this IR will be captured by the thematically closest of the active IRs.

IR 0090/A0/04/002/007 Financial barriers in access to health services are analyzed.

**Progress:**
Informal payments in Albania's health sector remain an issue and have a disproportionate effect on poor families. According to a UNICEF-supported DHS survey (2008-2009), 29% of women and 26% of men who visited a public health facility reported that it had been suggested to them to make an informal payment for the health care received. 72% of women and 68% of men reported paying for medical care that they could have received for free. 36% of women and 22% of men reported they avoided medical care in the past 12 months because they could not pay. Almost nine in ten women (87%) and four in five men (80%) aged 15-49 reported at least one barrier in accessing health care. “Getting money to go for treatment” is one of the most common problems reported by women and men (56 and 62%, respectively). Overall, it is estimated that out-of-pocket expenditures on health care could be around 60-70% of the total expenditures on health. The reform of the health sector includes improvements in health financing, with the Health Insurance Institute (HII) identified as the single purchaser of services by a new law on health insurance (entering into force in March 2013). While this change intends to address fragmentation in health financing, it requires much stronger contracting and purchasing power of the HII and better monitoring of service provider performance. Lack of access by the most vulnerable, inadequate information on the benefits of health insurance coverage and continuing out-of-pocket payments remain a concern. In 2013 UNICEF is planning to conduct an analysis of public perceptions of health insurance and degree of awareness of its benefits. The study will also look into a correlation between health insurance participation and the use of MCH services (especially, by the most vulnerable populations). Costing of services included in the basic benefit package is also planned for 2013 and will be jointly supported by UN agencies. This is expected to strengthen purchasing and negotiation power of the HII with public and private providers to ensure basic benefit package is provided to all population groups.

**IR 0090/A0/04/002/008 Improved child feeding practices and access to commodities and services.**

**Progress:**

Despite considerable progress since the 1990s, manifestations of child malnutrition prevail in Albania. According to Albanian DHS 2008-2009, the country is faced with the double burden of malnutrition: 19% of children under the age of 5 are stunted and at the same time 22% are overweight. About 17% of children aged 6-59 months and 19% of women have some level of anaemia. Poverty, household food insecurity and poor infant and child feeding practices all contribute to malnutrition. Stunting indicates chronic malnutrition and is more common in mountainous rural regions (28%) than in urban areas of Tirana and Central region. Similarly, anaemia rates are considerably higher in rural areas than in urban areas; it is more common in children of mothers with no education and among the lowest wealth quintile.

Household food insecurity levels are high in the North and pronounced in sub-urban areas of the capital, with 43% and 34% of the population, respectively, stating to the baseline food and nutrition survey in 2010 that they had difficulty buying food for their families in the previous six months. Recognizing the importance of inter-sectoral interventions for nutrition, UNICEF has been coordinating a joint programme with WHO and FAO since 2010 that aims to improve child nutrition and household food insecurity. In 15 target locations community-based interventions are being implemented to increase agricultural production, better utilize local natural resources, improve post-harvest practices and food processing and preservation at the household level. To monitor the impact, child growth assessments are routinely conducted in health facilities in target districts, using standardized growth charts and child health books.

At the national level, a communication campaign is underway targeting care givers with information on Infant and Young Child Feeding. A sentinel surveillance system to monitor progress with elimination of iodine deficiency disorders in most marginalized areas is established by the Institute of Public Health. All nutrition-related training materials for health care professionals have been accredited by the National Centre for Continued Medical Education.
adolescents are strengthened.

**Progress:**
As of December 2011, there were 478 people diagnosed with HIV in Albania, including 24 children. Heterosexual transmission is the major route of infection, still specific groups appear more at risk: data from sero-behavioural surveillance in 2010[1] showed a prevalence of 0.8% among MSM and discovered the first HIV-positive case among injecting drug users. There is no data on access to and utilization of HIV prevention services by age, gender and risk behaviour; information is limited to a few centres in Tirana providing harm reduction services (primarily, donor-funded). While there has been progress in establishing government-run VCT centers (one in each of the 12 regions) or in introduction of harm- and risk reduction services, the utilization of their resources specifically by adolescents is limited; in fact, only 1/3 of organizations engaged with HIV programmes have some capacity to target adolescents.

Although for several years UNICEF has been one of the major international supporters of the Government in HIV/AIDS-related issues, its current capacity to continue on the same scale is shrinking, reflecting the deficit of funding. In 2012 UNICEF’s involvement was limited by supporting the communication and outreach work of regional VCT centers and helping the Ministry of Public Health to review their anti-retroviral drugs procurement process. Some residual assistance to the delivery of IDU harm-reduction services in Tirana and Vlora was also offered, reaching out to more than 200 IDUs and applying an innovative for Albania “break the cycle” approach of reducing drug use initiation (financial scaling up feasibility to be assessed in 2013). As part of the Joint UN Programme of Cooperation 2012-2016, UNICEF will re-orient its future engagement from services towards selective support of draft inputs into national policies, strategically aligned with WHO and UNAIDS contributions.


IR 0090/A0/04/002/010 Children and young people of vulnerable families have equal access to health services, and the health of young children is monitored.

**Progress:**
According to available assessment data, preventive mother and child health (MCH) services in Albania are fragmented, lack the public health approach and fail to recognize and prioritize mothers and children most-at-risk. Components of ECD and child protection are missing. Only half of medical practitioners are using standard child growth charts to monitor the development of young children. In early 2012, a national action plan was approved to reorganize preventive MCH services (including patronage nursing). Stronger focus on prevention, health promotion and communication for behavior change have been the essence of trainings offered by UNICEF to health sector managers, as institutional mind-set shifts and corresponding capacity development were endorsed as the main intervention strategy for this component. The National Center for Quality Control and Accreditation of Health Institutions started developing necessary guidelines, protocols and standards. Supported by UNICEF, several standard clinical guidelines have been finalized, such as for antenatal and postnatal care, nutrition and child growth and development. Also in 2012 the use of new standard growth charts for children aged 0-5 in all health institutions were approved by the MoH, accompanied by UNICEF-supported training on the use of the chart. In general, the reorganization and redefinition of roles in MCH services will include more explicit links to child development and protection, prioritizing the most vulnerable. The development of standards and indicators will contribute to quality control, performance-based monitoring and payment and accreditation of these health institutions.

Capacities of health care personnel in maternity facilities of Gjirokaster, Korce, Vlora, Shkodra and Fier to implement 10 steps for successful breastfeeding have been strengthened. Formalized in a MoU between the Mayor of Durres, the regional Public Health Department, and UNICEF, support was provided to three local communities setting an example by committing to make themselves “baby-friendly” and promote optimal infant and young child feeding (IYCF), Mother support groups in these communities are active in fostering social normative and behavioural changes in favour of breast milk and age-appropriate supplementary feeding.

IR 0090/A0/04/002/011 Specific government policies ensure that children in vulnerable families receive appropriate support for their health and development during early years.
Progress:
The very early years in life are crucial for the future wellbeing and development of the child. In Albania, child development is not yet given the necessary level of importance. Only 20% of parents could be considered as well informed of the importance of early learning and development while the majority lacks updated information on child-rearing. There is no standardized information on good parenting skills. In Albania, ECD services for the age group of 0-3 fall under the responsibility of local government authorities and health authorities (in the part related to parenting education and counseling). However, the capacity of the local governments to meet potential needs is extremely limited, with play care/ crèche services accessible to only 15% of children. Even available facilities often lack standards and child-friendly environments.

In 2012, UNICEF-supported parenting skills programme continued to be implemented in Tirana maternity hospital by a multidisciplinary group of psychologists, social workers, pediatricians and gynecologists, with an estimated coverage of 1,500 parents annually. A special home visiting programme was set up for Roma communities. Further analysis and consultations with stakeholders and government counterparts will take place in 2013 to encourage a broad national discussion of ECD policies, especially in relation to the first three years of life. They will be based on two studies supported in 2012 on “Early detection of children with developmental delays” and “Service gap analysis for children aged 0-3”. Addressing families directly with a nation-wide parenting education programme (including, more actively using the potential of public media, SMS or other ways of modern communication) could be one of the strategies for UNICEF to stick to, while a service-based component - given the scarcity of local resources – is to be prioritized for targeted support to the most vulnerable.

On-track

IR 0090/A0/04/002/012 Specific policy measures increase percentage of children aged 3-6 in some form of early childhood education programme.

Progress:
UNICEF’s assistance to the Government of Albania in the area of Early Childhood Development is based on the organization’s position that investment in early years is not only the most effective human development “equalizer” but also a policy of high efficiency helping to maximize tomorrow’s gains for today’s inputs. Over the past five years (and in complementarity with the World Bank’s loan investment in 2009-2011), UNICEF has supported the establishment of teaching capacity for one-year pre-primary/preparatory class (for the age group of 5-6) in about 400 schools, i.e. in ¼ of all basic education cycle (1-9 grades) schools. It contributed to the increase in pre-school enrolment in the age group of 5 to 6 from 50% to 70%.

Regrettably, fiscal constraints did not allow the new Pre-University Education Law (2012) to formalize the preparatory year as a mandatory addition to the current 9 years of schooling, although there is a lot of domestically accumulated evidence to confirm its utmost importance for future academic performance. In 2012 UNICEF completed the “Albania Reads” early literacy program (implemented since 2009) which, over the years, equipped about 930 pre-schools with mini-libraries and trained about ¾ of the total number of pre-school teachers in pedagogical skills to enhance early literacy, together with additional orientation on modern ECD approaches. Early education methodologies have been also developed for the age group of 3-4 (in collaboration with Save the Children). Parallel to that, technical assistance is offered to the MoES in the national pre-school curriculum and preparedness standards review. Given the multiplicity of actors involved in ECD matters (education and health authorities, municipal and communal administrations, private care providers, NGOs) UNICEF is helping to facilitate a national discussion on the best architecture of the country’s pre-school system and its inclusiveness, as well as on matters of fiscal affordability and cost-efficiency.

On-track

IR 0090/A0/04/002/013 Education decentralization policies effectively connect to local contexts and ensure marginalized children participate in quality compulsory education.

Progress:
According to the Ministry of Education’s own sources, the “Zero Drop-Out” initiative succeeded in decreasing Albania's school drop-out rate from 3% in 2010 to 0.43% in 2012, but challenges remain as there are still Roma/other children “invisible” to the system. Cross-sectoral coordination between education authorities and local administrations to identify out-of-school children is fragile. Problems with timely birth registration of Roma children pose a barrier for some of them later on to get enrolled in school, although there is an
instruction by the MoE that says that no child should be refused from school registration on the basis of a missing birth certificate. School-based EMIS is still not fully developed to capture local demographics and guide action for universal school enrolment. In addition to the actual drop-out and/or school non-attendance, the phenomenon of “hidden drop-out” persists; on average, at least 10% of children in the classroom show poor learning achievements being at risk of dropping-out.

In the context of education policy decentralization, Albania continues to face challenges in offering quality education to children and adolescents from the most marginalized communities. Multiple interventions of the central and local MoES structures have been supported by UNICEF in 2012, to document evidence for further policy making or to test some innovative for Albania approaches. Examples of UNICEF’s assistance include: assessment of the MoES’ inclusive policies (such as supplementary classes, “second chance” education program, free textbooks policy, school-providing-meal policy), evaluation of the school-based EMIS component, Student Governments and Regional Parents’ Board guidelines (with recommendations for new normative provisions under the recently adopted Law on Pre-University Education). Other products supported by UNICEF in 2012 include: “hidden drop-out” program assessment and the scaling-up plan, “child-friendly school standards contextualized for Albania and a school self-assessment tool, a local cross-sectoral cooperation model targeting “invisible” children, “school without violence” modules for teachers, students and parents, 60 national teacher trainers promoting interactive teaching techniques and a data analysis report on out-of-school children (with international expertise mobilized by the Regional Office).

**On-track**

**IR 0090/A0/04/002/014** All schools in Albania engaged in behaviour change campaign to reduce social acceptance of violence.

**Progress:**
The results of a 2006 study on violence against children in Albania indicate that the majority of adults think that physical and psychological violence has positive effects on a child’s education. Also 50% of children have absorbed the perception that violence is needed, both at home and in schools. The belief that “whoever spanks you, loves you” is quite widespread among parents, teachers and children. In response to the situation, a four-year strategy on Communication for Behavioural Impact (COMBI) was developed for 2011-2014 which targets schools, kindergartens and residential care institutions focusing on one major behavior change - reducing the incidence of violence from adults towards children through increasing the practice of New Way Discipline (NWD). Focusing on caregivers/teachers provides a fixed “target”, limited in numbers and location, which provides in turn a basis for putting on the national agenda the whole issue of Violence Against Children (VAC). Desired behavioural changes are being reached through a mix of activities, such as radio, TV and media interventions, awards for NWD champion schools and individual NWD advocates, NWD PEET (Pause, Enquire, Engage, Take) Yellow Cards for use by teachers in dealing with incidents requiring disciplinary measures, 640,000 school children using a discussion worksheet on VAC and NWD and regular surveys in sample schools.

By end-2012, main methodology components of the COMBI programme have been delivered to each of Albania’s 4,150 schools. A sample of about 80,000 students has been used to track the NWD program impact. Some signs of positive change in teachers’ behaviour – although very slow – were captured by the last measurement at the end of the academic year of 2011/2012. Signatures from 400,000 parents were collected in support of NWD, also committing themselves to refrain from using violence as a disciplinary measure. At the highest level, Albania’s national commitment to combatting VAC was re-iterated by the Prime Minister during a UNICEF- and EU-supported anti-VAC conference on 21 November 2012.

**On-track**

**IR 0090/A0/04/002/015** Children in compulsory schools act for environmental protection.

**Progress:**
In 2012 UNICEF completed the implementation of its Child-Led Environmental Education (CLEEN) project (on-going since 2009). A full package of environmental education teaching materials for primary school has been developed and successfully tested in about 15% of Albanian schools, in 10 out of the country’s 12 regions. Introduction of environmental education modules in grades 1-5 and complementing textbook-based knowledge with a variety of outdoor activities enriched the classroom experience of young children and even reflected in better grades in subjects other than science (such as math and reading, for example), as
confirmed by the project evaluation. Collection and recycling of plastic garbage was part of the project and enthusiastically appreciated by children and school personnel. It took into account and involved traditional Roma family businesses related to waste recycling, and cooperation modalities between schools and Roma communities have been established.

Building the culture of environmental awareness is one of the national priorities, as Albania faces multiple challenges related to sustainable resource use, solid and liquid waste management, air pollution, garbage collection and recycling, etc. Scaling up of the CLEEN program would be a good contribution to the national response to these challenges; the programme has acquired a formal certification by education authorities, so identification of a funding scheme (most probably, involving the private sector) would make the replication a possibility. Both aspects will continue to be explored by UNICEF in 2013, in close coordination with other UN agencies under the “Delivering as One” framework.

**IR 0090/A0/04/002/016** Vulnerable youth have access to functioning employment services and empowered to enter job market.

**Progress:** Establishment of special services to assist young Albanians in their job search was part of a Joint UN Programme implemented in 2008–2012 to address Youth Employment and Migration (YEM) challenges. The programme was supported by the Government of Spain through the MDG Fund, with the total of USD 3.3 million channeled to ILO, IOM, UNDP and UNICEF. Under the YEM programme, UNICEF supported the upgrading of existing employment services (run by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities - MoLSAEO) to make them more youth-oriented. In a country with no tradition of job searching in an open labour market, the establishment of special orientation and counseling services for young job seekers was an important priority identified by government plans as a mandatory structure to be available in each of the country’s 12 regions. As part of the national employment services network covering the entire country, the YES outlets are supposed to promote domestic employment and maximize the developmental potential of the regions (according to the World Bank, up to 45% of Albanians currently work/live outside their own country, which is one of the ten highest ratios in the world).

By the end of the Joint Programme in 2012, five Youth Employment Service (YES) outlets have been established in Shkodra, Kukes, Fier, Durres and Elbasan (the last three – outside the formal scope of the YEM programme, but using the same methodology). The YES centers assist young job seekers to prepare their CVs, articulate personal strengths, liaise with potential employers, handle interviews, access job vacancies databases, avoid harmful jobs, manage conflicts with employers, etc. The start-up cost of a YES outlet (around USD 20,000) makes it a potentially affordable model, especially if private sector sponsorship is mobilized – an option to consider by the Government in the new labour and employment strategy (under development).

As UNICEF’s commitments under the Joint UN Programme for Youth Employment and Migration implemented during the previous programme cycle have been met, the IR is closed.

### PC 800 - Cross-sectoral costs

**On-track**

**PCR 0090/A0/04/800 PCR 3 - CROSS-SECTORAL COSTS**

**Progress:** All major operational benchmarks and objectives of the year 2012 have been met, as described in detail in the corresponding sections of the Country Office Annual Report.

**On-track**

**IR 0090/A0/04/800/001 Governance and Systems**

**Progress:** The 2012 Annual Management Plan for UNICEF Albania was prepared on time in February 2012 and updated in March 2012, to reflect recommendations of the Office Retreat. According to the OIAI Audit Report issued in August 2012, UNICEF Tirana’s AMP was the best in their audit experience. The AMP contains a very
detailed description of the governance structure of the office, explains the agreed office objectives, priorities and management performance indicators. Annual priorities were clearly outlined and accountabilities assigned. They have been guiding the formulation of PAS assignments and were taken into account whenever conflicting demands for time or financial resources occurred. The 2012 AMP was regularly monitored in the CMT meetings. Comments in the governance survey confirmed that the AMP’s development had been a rigorous process and included opportunities for the staff to discuss programming and management issues.

**The oversight structures – as part of the governance system – are also described in the AMP, and the system of statutory committees is updated annually. The Office Retreat early in 2012 discussed the functioning of the committees as well.**

The CMT remains the central management body advising the Representative on policies, strategies, programme implementation, management and performance, and how to keep human and financial resources focused on office priorities. The CMT is the primary recipient of management reports based on UNICEF’s key performance indicators. The CMT was regularly functioning in 2012. In a total of 9 CMT meetings and 4 Staff Meetings, programme and operations management processes and workflows have been discussed and approved.

The CO has systematically and closely monitored the security situation, in close collaboration with UNDSS. Albania is not an emergency country and the overall risk level of natural or man-made disasters is considered low. Minimum recommended procedures and practices are implemented by the office; Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan and the Business Continuity Plan have been regularly updated in 2012 and information on risk assessment posted on the Early Warning-Early Action system. No specific preparedness initiatives or emergency simulation have been undertaken in 2012. UNICEF is an active participant in UN security meetings and trainings and all staff are continually informed on security and safety issues accordingly. The office continues to be MOSS compliant.

**The latest Country Office audit took place in May, 2012.** The audit covered governance, programme management and operations support during the period between January 2011 and April 2012. Out of 12 recommendations issued in September, only one was rated as “high priority”, with the rest being “medium priority”. The high-priority recommendation dealt with the implications of “Delivering as One” modality on the efficiency and effectiveness of UNICEF programme operations.

UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigation (OIAI) concluded that, except for the high-priority area mentioned above, the governance, risk-management and control processes over the Albania Country Office were adequately established and functioning well. The implementation of the audit response plan has been successful in closing 50% of recommendations before end-2012, including the only high-risk observation.

**IR 0090/A0/04/800/002 Financial Resources and Stewardship**

**Progress:**

In 2012, UNICEF Albania Regular Resources spent was close to 100%; the Monitoring Report produced monthly by the RO has been a useful booster to establish an internal system to frequently check the status of Grants utilization, with core resources given priority attention. Bank reconciliations have been prepared monthly in due time and there are no un-reconciled items.

In terms of DCT management, the Office disbursed a total amount of USD 3.9 million to 92 implementing partners, of which 10 organizations received over USD 100,000 and 82 received between USD 20,000 to USD 100,000. For the majority of the implementing partners, the Office continued requesting and reviewing full documentation to support the liquidation of cash transfers. During 2012, the Office faced substantial difficulties with DCT management due to a number of factors:

- an unusually high number of around 250 DCTs (worth USD 2.8 million) was issued around the last quarter of 2011 (when the bulk of UN Coherence Funds was received) and accumulated as a backlog several months later;
- high fragmentation of cash transfers due to decentralized health, education and social care systems in Albania, with many interventions implemented by local government units in the country’s 12 regions;
- delayed liquidations due to high turn-over of trained staff in UNICEF partner organizations, especially in public institutions after the local elections in 2011.
The Office’s response to this unusual situation included:
- monitoring the status of DCT liquidations on a weekly basis;
- the DCT status review as a standing item in monthly CMT meetings;
- hiring an accountant (on a SSA) to assist with the accumulated DCT backlog;
- establishing the liquidation of DCT advances as a priority task for all Programme Assistants, supported by Programme Officers.

As a result, the total of DCTs older than 9 months has been reduced from USD 833,000 to zero. The outstanding balance of DCTs with more than 6-month maturity has been reduced from USD 1.7 million in May to approx. USD 20,000 in December.

To facilitate transition to HACT, the Office assessed the financial management capacity of about 40 implementing partners (public and NGOs), for which the Funding Authorization and Certification of Expenditure (FACE) form will be used in 2013. The Operations conducted several trainings on HACT for partners and office staff and developed a HACT assurance activities matrix. The role of the Operations advice has been strengthened during the early phase of the preparation of the PCAs and their formal review by the PCA Committee, with the Head of Operations as a permanent member of the review panel. Also, a more active utilisation of SSAs instead of PCAs was recommended by the Annual Management Plan in 2012, as the competitive contracting modality is considered a better way for UNICEF programming in the middle-income country context.

While regularly reviewing key management indicators, the CMT did not identify any particular efficiency gains (except for DCT management/ HACT implementation) or cost reductions. LTAs common with the UN system were largely used, with some cost savings negotiated for the use of telecommunication services. The Office is aware of the fact that about 70% of its transactions are small payments of less than 500 USD, but this is the trend in other UNICEF offices as well, so more thought should be given to the way of doing business at the corporate level.

During 2012, one LPSB meeting was organized. Apart from this, there were 9 CMT meetings, 11 SSA (13 proposals reviewed) and 7 CRC meetings (8 submissions reviewed).

On-track

IR 0090/A0/04/800/003 Human Capacity

Progress:
The Office prepared a new Country Programme Management Plan (CPMP) for the 2012-2016 programme cycle, and the PBR subsequently approved a new organigram. The new organigram replaced the L3 operations officer with a NO-C position, enabling considerable costs reduction which benefited the regional portfolio. The L3 Operations Officer departed in August 2011 and the new Operations Officer started her work in January 2012, when the new position came into effect.

Based on the audit recommendation, the Office made a decision to change the reporting line, starting in 2013, of the NO-C Social Policy position from the Representative to Deputy Representative, to ensure a closer connection between sector-specific interventions supported by UNICEF and a more general social policy perspective.

During the reporting period, all travel arrangements and visa issues have been successfully handled the HR/Operations section. There were delays with the completion of the PERs for 2011 due to the reassignment of the Deputy Representative and Operations Manager that year. The formulation of staff assignments in 2012 PERs was dependent on the finalization of joint UN Annual Work Plans that happened some time around February 2012. A combination of these factors explains the low percentage – only 16% – of completed PERs by that month, but the situation has been rectified later on.

UNICEF staff in Albania are aware of staff counselling resources available locally. Based on the premise that the work environment should be an effective location for early interventions for staff members undergoing personal, inter-personal, stress or family problems, as per the Staff Association suggestion, the Operations section organized a PSV presentation in March 2012.

The 2011 staff survey showed above average motivation and satisfaction levels for most indicators for the Tirana Office. It also shows areas where improvement is possible, and actions are discussed in the JCC, CMT and staff meeting. Overall, it is thought that staff members in UNICEF Tirana enjoy a tolerant and respectful relationship among each other.
Effective Governance Structure

The Annual Management Plan for UNICEF Albania was updated in March 2012 reflecting recommendations of the Office Retreat. According to the OIAI Audit in 2012, UNICEF Tirana’s AMP was the best in their audit experience. The AMP contains a very detailed description of the governance structure of the office, explains the agreed office objectives, priorities and management performance indicators. Annual priorities are clearly outlined and accountabilities assigned. They have been guiding the formulation of PAS assignments and were meant to be considered whenever conflicting demands for time or financial resources occurred. The AMP was regularly monitored in the CMT meetings. Comments in the governance survey confirmed that the AMP’s development had been a rigorous process and included opportunities for the staff to discuss programming and management issues.

The oversight structures – as part of the governance system – are also described in the AMP, and the system of statutory committees is updated annually. The Office Retreat early in 2012 discussed the functioning of the committees as well.

The CMT remains the central management body advising the Representative on policies, strategies, programme implementation, management and performance, and how to keep human and financial resources focused on office priorities. The CMT is the primary recipient of management reports. The CMT functioned regularly in 2012. In a total of 9 CMT meetings and 4 Staff Meetings, programme and operations management processes and workflows were discussed and agreed.

The CO systematically monitored the security situation, in close collaboration with UNDSS. Albania is not an emergency country and the overall risk level of natural or man-made disasters is considered low. Minimum recommended procedures and practices were implemented by the office; Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan and the Business Continuity Plan were updated in 2012 and information on risk assessment posted on the Early Warning-Early Action system. No specific preparedness initiatives or emergency simulation were undertaken in 2012. UNICEF is an active participant in UN security meetings and trainings. All staff are informed on security and safety issues. The office continues to be MOSS compliant.

The latest Country Office audit took place in May, 2012. The audit covered governance, programme management and operations support during the period between January 2011 and April 2012. Out of 12 recommendations issued in September, only one was rated as “high priority”, with the rest being “medium priority”. The high-priority recommendation dealt with the implications of “Delivering as One” modality on the efficiency and effectiveness of UNICEF programme operations.

UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigation (OIAI) concluded that, apart from the high-priority area mentioned above, the governance, risk-management and control processes of the Albania Country Office were adequately established and functioning well. The implementation of the audit response plan progressed well. 50% of recommendations were closed before end-2012, including the high-risk observation.

Strategic Risk Management

The UNICEF Tirana office successfully implemented the difficult transition from Proms to VISION, although not without some operational and financial risks. Delays early in the year in transactions due to system bugs were compounded with weakened financial monitoring capacity, as many new reporting modules were still work in progress. Towards end-2012, the majority of critical bottlenecks had been removed and staff members felt more confident in operating the new system.

The general environment of UNICEF Tirana operations is considered low-risk, albeit complex, with some uncertainty associated with VISION. Operational risks were identified and informed the streamlining of the core business processes. The status of action taken to manage High and Medium-High risks is monitored at least semi-annually.

The Office complied with the Enterprise Risk Management policy and updated its risk assessment and risk control library in June 2012. A simplified procedure (endorsed by the Regional Office) was used; all risks have their corresponding actions plans. High risks identified during 2012 were:

a) Aid environment and predictability of funding. The “Delivering as One” approach creates difficulties for (i) the image of UNICEF by adding more bureaucracy and (ii) fundraising and donor relations. The root cause is the difficulty to distinguish the relevance and value added of UNICEF relative to other partners. At the same time the UN Coherence Funds have been dwindling. Organizational positions on these issues have not been very clear. The office participates in a regional process of identifying UNICEF’s new engagement in
Risk control for this include: CO monitoring expenditure strictly against contribution agreements; donor reporting quality being monitored regularly; lobbying for transparent and objective Coherence Fund allocation decisions; and greater attention to securing flexible funding.

b) UN Coherence. Participation in UN Coherence framework could result in a loss of control over access to partners, decision-making and risk taking/mitigation. “One UN” communication directly impacts UNICEF. It may diminish the focus on UNICEF’s mandate and result in loss of UNICEF’s voice and brand visibility, less funding available for children’s issues, and duplicative processes and structures at the UN operational level. Experience from the February 2012 allocation shows that the coherence fund guidelines need to be adjusted. The office has submitted role mapping for VISION that indicated the system users and their delegated functional roles. The Designation and Acceptance of Delegation of Financial Signing Authority was completed. After several months of using VISION a comprehensive review of the designated roles was conducted and necessary redistribution of roles introduced. In May 2012, there were 54 conflicting roles involving 17 users; 19 out of the 54 conflicts were rated high risk, 28 medium risk and seven low risk. By December 2012 the number of conflicting roles had been reduced and no high risk conflicts existed anymore. However, we can suggest that the roles leading to the segregation of duties in VISION be re-engineered by the HQs, so as to find the right balance between efficiency and managing control risks.

### Evaluation

In 2012, UNICEF Albania Country Office formally assigned the M&E function to the Deputy Representative post and revised the respective Job Description. This came as a reflection of the Office’s commitment to ensure that UNICEF’s “core roles” are properly supported by the HR capacity, being also in line with the recommendations of the audit conducted in May 2012. During the year, the Office made an effort to strengthen its management of M&E issues. The guidance and tools offered by the RO were instrumental in refreshing the knowledge of UNICEF staff on definitions and purpose of various analytical products (evaluations, studies, assessments, etc.), on evaluation quality standards, content of the Terms of Reference, generic structure of evaluation reports, etc. The list of planned M&E products was included in the Annual Management Plan, to ensure close follow up. An inventory of Albania’s evaluations uploaded to UNICEF global database in the past 10 years was compiled, to inform the analysis of M&E strengths and weaknesses in the country programme. Partner organizations with unsatisfactory quality record – as reflected in UNICEF HQ ratings of submitted evaluations – have been red-flagged. Meantime an updated list of national research centres was prepared to actively explore the emerging national evaluation capacity (as a starting point, the Office used an assessment of Albania’s research capacities in social sciences published by the Swiss Development Cooperation in 2010). This expanded roster has been used for all recent solicitations of analytical expertise, with the response rate and quality of submissions to be seen in early 2013.

The evaluations completed in previous years were followed up through the management response mechanism, although most of these evaluations were assessing Albanian government’s policies and practices, rather than UNICEF-led projects. The only – yet a very complex – evaluation conducted in 2012 addressed the impact of Albania’s Social Inclusion Strategy (2007-2013). Making a distinction between the role of this cross-cutting Strategy as a meta-instrument enhancing inclusiveness in respective sectors and not slipping into the analysis of each of these sectors proved to be challenging. The relative novelty (and difficulty) of evaluating such cross-cutting frameworks has also been acknowledged by the PARC team, in their feedback on the draft ToRs. The evaluation report has been submitted to UNICEF in its draft form and will be finalized in 2013. The Office will also establish a more systematic cooperation and collaboration with the Albanian Society of Program Evaluation (ASPE), in support of the recent EvAlbania country-led initiative. Overall, the demand for evaluations as the basis for evidence-informed policy making is gaining prominence. UNICEF is therefore facing a challenge of crafting its advocacy strategy and tactics to incorporate and effectively transmit objective findings of research and analysis reports (the majority still produced by donor agencies). Doing it in a coherent manner with other UN agencies contributing to “Delivering as One” in Albania adds to the complexity of the task.
Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

The introduction of VISION in January 2012 was accompanied by multiple challenges, as the staff had to familiarise themselves with the new workflows and business processes. All issues encountered by the users were reported to the Regional and Global HelpDesks during several transitional months of adjustment to the new system. Every update of new e-courses from iLearn was downloaded and provided locally through uPerform server to the Office staff for access. Since the Office’s services had been increasingly relying on internet connectivity, a second ISP contract was upgraded to provide continuous connectivity, instead of being just a back-up option. Wireless access within the Office was provided to UNICEF staff, consultants and visitors to enable connectivity to public internet through a secondary link. Remote access was improved with the introduction of Cisco AnyConnect software on client machines. Following the “Bring Your Own Device” option, an application for providing access to office e-mails was made available to staff who were using different brands of smartphones.

It should be highlighted that the ICT staff capacity continued to be actively used for programmatic purposes as well (see also the Innovations Section of the Annual Report). After the successful completion of the “Albania Reads” project in 2011 where ICT helped in mapping the distribution of library books around the country, two other projects related to geo-maps were completed during 2012, namely the national Social Services availability map and the Roma communities map. For that purpose, a new website containing “Social Inclusion Data on Children in Albania” was created, using geo-tagged visualizations of information of Roma communities' survey on Google Maps and Google Earth. The Social Services map is still being improved, in collaboration with World Vision partners and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. In addition, the ICT officer participated in meetings with partners and the General Directorate of Civil Status regarding birth registration in the country. This project will enable the citizens of Albania and Civil Status officials to register all new child births in a timely manner.

Fund-raising and Donor Relations

Overall, the environment for UNICEF’s fundraising in Albania is not very conducive at the current moment. For a number of years the “Delivering as One” modality has de facto imposed a ban on any individual fundraising by the UN agencies. In the meantime the UN Coherence Fund reserves were depleted and the latest allocations have not been adequately managed in a transparent manner. UNICEF has always advocated for using various channels at the country and HQ levels to mobilize funds, as opposed to the practice of fundraising under the umbrella of “One UN”, and for clear rules for resource mobilization – now hopefully, to take a shape of an agreed inter-agency guidance. Meanwhile, country programming presence of bilateral donors has been gradually shrinking, while the EU approach is getting more and more geared towards direct budgetary support.

In this context the focus of UNICEF’s fundraising effort in 2012 has been deliberately diverted from specific projects of temporary nature to government-led policy reforms. The main success of the year was the finalization of an agreement with the Swiss Development Cooperation to support the national reform of social care services, with USD 3.3 million to be channelled through UNICEF during 2012-2016, thus providing a predictable planning horizon for both national and international stakeholders in the implementation of this ambitious plan (the SDC Grant to UNICEF Tirana is among the largest in their entire regional portfolio). The contribution of UNICEF/SDC to the social care reform is being closely aligned with a USD 50 million loan from the World Bank intended to test an improved scheme of cash benefits to impoverished families.

In terms of the OR management, the Office consistently adhered to corporate good practices, closely monitored allocations and expenditure, ensured timely reporting and full utilization of allocated amounts by the expiry date. The only Grant with a 6-month extension is the one related to the Joint UN Programme of Child Nutrition (funded by the Government of Spain through the MDG Fund and managed by UNICEF), where a complex programme design involving several UN agencies and activities implemented at both central and provincial levels required additional time for work completion until June 2013. By end-2012 (the first year of the 5-year programme cycle) the availability of OR versus the approved programmable ceiling reached 20% - counting Grants already in the system, and 30% - taking into account the total amount of the SDC funding pledge.
Management of Financial and Other Assets

In 2012, UNICEF Albania Regular Resources spent was close to 100%; the Monitoring Report produced monthly by the RO has been a useful booster to establish an internal system for frequently checking the status of Grants utilization, with core resources given priority attention. Bank reconciliations have been prepared monthly in due time and there are no un-reconciled items.

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During 2012, one LPSB meeting was organized. Apart from this, there were 9 CMT meetings, 11 SSA (13 proposals reviewed) and 7 CRC meetings (8 submissions reviewed).

Supply Management

Despite various challenges associated with VISION, no delays were experienced with the procurement of supplies or distribution of locally procured supplies. Offshore procurement continued to be mainly related to the procurement of vaccines on behalf of the Ministry of Health (MoH), based on the signed MoU between the MoH and the UNICEF Supply Division in Copenhagen.

In 2012, UNICEF continued to support as facilitator the Ministry of Public Health in procuring ARV medicines. ARV is distributed free of charge to about 140 patients diagnosed with HIV in Albania. The support continued for MoH in procurement of vaccines as well. At the same time a discussion was initiated with the Ministry offering UNICEF’s institutional expertise to streamline the MoH’s procurement processes, facilitating access to international pharmaceutical market and assessing the feasibility of sustainable long term procurement arrangements.

During 2012 the total volume of processed supplies remained relatively low. There were 30 supply transactions for a total of about USD 213,000 (with programme and operations supplies accounting for about 70% and 30% respectively). The majority of these transactions were small in value, as only 20% represented the procurement worth more than USD 10,000. About 30% of transactions were less than 1,000 USD in value.
During 2012 a market survey was conducted for fuel supply. Three LTAs were renewed during 2012 and one LTA on fuel, where UNICEF is the leading agency is in process. A lot of effort was required to understand and complete all the transactions in VISION. The Office has completed all VISION activities related to the verification of accuracy of equipment inventories and intangibles, considering it as critical for the successful closure of accounts because it provides documentation that the Tirana Office asset records are correct.

Human Resources

The Office prepared a new Country Programme Management Plan (CPMP) for the 2012-2016 programme cycle, and the PBR subsequently approved a new organigram. The new organigram replaced the L3 operations officer with a NO-C position, enabling considerable costs reduction which benefited the regional portfolio. The L3 Operations Officer departed in August 2011 and the new Operations Officer started her work in January 2012, when the new position came into effect.

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Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

The lease for UNICEF Tirana Office premises is fixed in US Dollar instead of Euro as it is done for other UN agencies in Albania, which resulted in cost savings in 2012. Through a common LTA for telecommunications services, costs for telephone services with the preferred provider were reduced. Some telephone numbers have been disconnected to reduce office expenses.

Since the Office's services have been increasingly relying on the internet connectivity, a second ISP contract was upgraded to provide continuous connectivity, instead of being just a back-up option. For decreasing the yearly cost of internet connectivity, an advance payment was negotiated with both companies, conditional on discounts of 10% from the first company and 15% - from the second one.

A joint LTA for security services signed by the UN agencies in May 2012 resulted in a slight reduction in costs of this service, considering a 24-hour service coverage.

Otherwise, no direct cost savings was observed through common services with other UN agencies. On the other hand, senior UNICEF staff have been spending considerable amounts of time in management meetings with other UN agencies. In general, the staff of UNICEF (together with their UNDP colleagues) carry a disproportional share of the workload for the so-called common services or undertakings (e.g. participation in working groups, interview panels, review of common documentation, and so on) – with only marginal returns (if any) for the invested time and effort.
Changes in AMP & CPMP

No significant changes to the Annual Management Plan have been introduced. The quality of UNICEF Albania AMP has been highly praised by the audit in May 2012, as one of the best corporate examples of a clear and practical management tool.

Summary Notes and Acronyms

ACRONYMS

AMP  Annual Management Plan
BKTF Bashku Kunder Trafikimit Te Femijeve ("All Together Against Child Trafficking") NGO coalition
CEE/CIS Central and Eastern Europe / Commonwealth of Independent States
CF  Coherence Fund
CMT  Country Management Team
COMBI  Communication for Behaviour Impact
CPMP  Country Programme Management Plan
CPU  Child Protection Unit
CRC  Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRO  Child Rights Observatory
CRU  Child Rights Unit
CSO  Civil Society Organization
C4D  Communication for Development
DaO  Delivering as One
DevInfo  Development Information (database)
DCT  Direct Cash Transfer
DHS  Demographic and Health Survey
EC  European Commission
ECD  Early Childhood Development
EU  European Union
FAO  Food and Agriculture Organization
FFI  Flour Fortification Initiative
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
GIS  Geographic Information System
HIV/AIDS  Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICT  Information Communication Technology
IMCI  Integrated Management of Child Illnesses
IMR  Infant Mortality Rate
IPSAS  International Public Sector Accountancy Standards
JCC  Joint Consultative Committee
LSMS  Living Standards Measurement Survey
MCH  Mother and Child Health
MDG-F  Millennium Development Goals Fund
MoES  Ministry of Education and Science
MoLSAEO  Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
MoH  Ministry of Health
M&E  Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO  Non-governmental Organization
OR  Other Resources
PER  Performance Evaluation Report
RED  Regional Education Department
RBM  Result-Based Management
RR  Regular Resources
UN RCO  United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office
UNCT  United Nations Country Team
UNDP  United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF  United Nations Children’s Fund
U5MR  Under-five Mortality Rate
VCT  Voluntary Counselling and Testing
VISION  Virtual Integrated System of Information
VPN  Virtual Private Network
WHO  World Health Organization
**Evaluation**

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**Other Publications**

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Lessons Learned / Innovation

1 Use of geo-tagging for Roma settlements mapping in Albania

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Contact Person

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Abstract

Accurate data on Roma children and families have been largely lacking in Albania. In response to this situation, UNICEF Albania conducted a mapping exercise based on surveying and geographic positioning of all Roma communities throughout the country. The mapping produced a headcount of 15,000 Roma distributed between 108 settlements. Each Roma community is described in detail and the nearest health, education and protection facilities indicated. The exercise confirmed that many – though not all - Roma families and children have little access or make inadequate use of social services. The mapping also confirmed that this may not be an issue of big numbers, but lack of accountability and often lack of political will.

Innovation or Lesson Learned

The innovative element of this exercise, namely using Google Earth to display information on the hardest to reach population, turned to be a very powerful communication means for advocacy with the government. In one snapshot policy makers were able to see where Roma communities live, which ones are the biggest and where the services potentially provided to them are located.

The creation of a geographic map with place marks sized according to the number of community members gave a better understanding of the population spread, distance from necessary public services and other information obtained through the survey.

Of particular surprise was the fact that in most Roma communities only a very small number of children need to be assisted; e.g. two children not in school, 1 child in need of kindergarten, 1 child not registered or similar. This strongly points to local action (and not necessarily the creation of more national policies), with the maps now being the tool to facilitate the demand for more accountability by local officials. Among other surprises of the survey is the chart showing a higher education of Roma people where their community is smaller.

Obviously, the Google Earth map shows place marks as per the time of the survey. Repeating the exercise in the future or updating data for each settlement whenever they are confirmed to have re-located may illustrate Roma migration patterns within the country or outside.

What UNICEF has learned: In order for this map to provide additional information and better management of data, it is best to look for developers creating a platform where UNICEF and partners can enter data from surveys and have this data update the map in real time. Currently two databases exist: one for the map and another for the survey. It is best to have a common database which can generate both versions of information to the viewer and requires less maintenance and managing time.

Potential Application

The Google Earth mapping is a tool that has been embraced by Government, civil society and donors for the simplicity of its use and for making very easily visible the situation of Roma children. Donors have joined in with this initiative to add up to the current map, the Google map information of the Albanian Roma emigrants. The application can be used for displaying geographical data for other issues as well, such as: areas with high levels of reported domestic violence; schools which require intervention in infrastructure, human resources or materials for pupils; areas which may require intervention regarding health issues and many more.

A potentially most important application is for monitoring the large-scale distribution of relief supplies of other deliveries. The agent simply has to take a photograph with a GPS-enabled cellphone and can send it to an administrator who thus monitors actual delivery in real time.
### Issue

Roma continue to be challenged by discrimination, exclusion and the transmission of poverty from one generation to the next. Roma access to many of the social services available in the country is much lower than the mainstream population. Although there has been research conducted in the past on the situation of Roma children, there has never existed available data on the locations and demographics of Roma children in Albania. The lack of such data, especially at the local level, has led to lack of accountability for the inclusion of Roma children, as they are considered as “no one’s children”, so no government structure would be responsible for them.

Thus, Google Earth software helps in visualising the accountability links and identifying the local authorities and different service departments responsible for integrating Roma as full-fledged and entitled members of the community. Being a web-based publicly available tool, the mapping allows anyone (government officials, CSOs, other partners) to inquire about the situation and/or follow up on needed action in the locations where Roma live.

### Strategy and Implementation

UNICEF teamed up with a group of researchers, a coalition of Roma NGOs, service providers at local and central level, donors, etc., in order to identify all Roma locations. Through a desk review of available data sources, new information collected from all actors and field survey work, the total of 108 locations was identified (compared to 68 known from Roma NGOs). The research team conducted 3,139 house-to-house interviews of Roma families in all their settlements. The survey consisted of 25 questions and provided detailed information on family location, size and structure, number of children and their age, civil registration status, education level, etc. This new volume of knowledge was complemented by the information on Roma families’ access to social services (health centers, crèches, kindergartens, schools, economic assistance, unemployment and disability benefits, pension for elderly and orphans, food assistance, etc.). Distance to social services/facilities from each community has also been measured. The interviewers were equipped with GPS cameras able to provide a photo with GPS coordinates for each of the locations. For each community a data fiche containing the above information and availability or gap of services was created. It is worth highlighting that in-house UNICEF IT capacity was sufficient to create the geo-tagged visualisation.

### Progress and Results

For the first time in Albania, the mapping provided a concrete picture of where and how Roma children live. Information for each location is disaggregated by gender and age. It shows which are the services these children receive. This exercise is aimed to ensure the accountability of central and especially local government in taking concrete measures and in designing evidence-driven policies for Roma children. Based on the results of the mapping exercise, an action plan on early inclusion of Roma children has already been drafted by the Roma Technical Groups in each of the country’s 12 regions. The new Social Protection and Inclusion Strategy of the Government of Albania for 2013-2020 will also rely heavily on the results of the mapping.

Although somehow resistant to the fact that the mapping revealed a relatively small number of Roma population in Albania, the Roma community in general did not reject the survey results as they have been part of the mapping project since the very beginning.

### Next Steps

--- Track the progress made by local government units in consistently addressing the situation of Roma children;
--- Updating the situational analysis by using mapping data as a baseline.