

## Armenia

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### Executive Summary

This past year, 2015, marked the end of a successful programme cycle, with a range of strategic alliances and results for children achieved or on the way to being achieved through major reforms and changes in social norms. UNICEF Armenia continues to be positioned as a partner of choice to the Government in facilitating reform processes, providing technical expertise and mobilizing public support.

Within the framework of the childcare system reform, the Government of Armenia took decisive steps to prohibit the establishment of new residential care institutions, prevent the admission of new children into residential care, and invest more in family based alternative care and the effective prevention of separation of children from their families. UNICEF Armenia supported this process through policy and public advocacy, technical support and capacity building, as well as through its convening role, bringing together different actors and creating synergies. The process includes the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as a main donor, respective line ministries and a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Reform of the childcare system is also backed by major progress in developing an effective social security net, which was advocated for by UNICEF Armenia and other partners and reflected in the Law on Social Assistance adopted in 2015.

To mobilize support for increased investment in a set of nutrition interventions in Armenia, the Country Office built a strong partnership with USAID and signed a cooperation agreement in 2014 for a two-year programme that will help improve the health and nutrition of Armenian children 0–5 years old. UNICEF Armenia also supported the development of a Child and Adolescents Health and Development Strategy and Plan of Action for 2016–2020 and a National Breastfeeding Promotion Strategy for 2016–2020 to reflect the needs of the most vulnerable children and to set a common view and goals to address them through joining the efforts of the Government and international partners.

In 2015, the new National Development Programme for Education was prepared, to which UNICEF Armenia contributed with strong technical support and evidence from the best international practices, local surveys and demonstration modelling. The new strategy builds on learning gained through a number of approaches tested in Armenia with UNICEF support, including models of inclusive education in schools and kindergartens, school safety model, new approach to determination of disabilities, early detection of disabilities, flexible early learning options in remote areas, and a comprehensive model of cross-sectoral work on prevention of school dropouts. UNICEF Armenia supported the nationwide school safety assessment, which informed the Government's new Programme on School Seismic Safety Improvement for 2015–2030 and helped to leverage significant resources for the improvement of the seismic safety of schools.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ), supported by UNICEF Armenia, launched a Council on Justice for Children involving key stakeholder ministries, state agencies and international organizations to enhance coordination, leverage donor funding and raise awareness on the issue of children's

access to justice. After this success in policy coordination, further work on improving access to justice for children will require investment in the capacity of services dealing with children in contact with the law.

UNICEF Armenia also engaged with non-traditional partners to leverage resources for children, initiating work with the Armenian diaspora and building the capacity of government partners to steer generous philanthropic support of the diaspora into interventions benefiting children and reducing inequities. Work with such a diverse group proved to be promising but challenging, as there are no established channels of communication and the common agenda has yet to be built. Attention was also given to the new migration and its effects on children and families. With the support of the European Union, UNICEF Armenia worked with local partners to mitigate negative consequences.

In 2015, UNICEF Armenia worked on behaviour and social norms change through Communication for Development campaigns, tackling early health and development, attitudes towards inclusive education of children with disabilities and prenatal sex selection. The exclusive breastfeeding rate has been increased as a result of the sustained First 1,000 Days Matter initiative, and a positive change in attitudes towards children with disabilities was measured after the first part of the Together We Can campaign. However, continuation of the latter was not possible due to lack of funding. Preparatory work on social norms change related to prenatal sex selection has been slower than expected due to its complexity. While advocacy efforts in 2014 resulted in the approval of the draft Law on Flour Fortification by the Government and its submission to the National Assembly, a strong public opposition has hampered the process and UNICEF Armenia was requested to provide expert support in tackling negative public attitudes.

## Humanitarian Assistance

Based on participatory assessment made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and NGOs involved in direct service provision to refugees, a number of child protection risks and cases have been identified in Armenia in 2015. These protection issues include, inter alia, challenges in accessing or continuing education, experience of trauma or violence pre-flight, unmet psychosocial needs and limited response capacities, separation of families, as well as possible unidentified cases of separated children, some cases of child abuse, exposure to domestic violence and possibly exploitation, and refugee children with disabilities facing challenges in accessing appropriate assistance and support. Based on the initial findings, UNICEF Armenia initiated a comprehensive assessment of the child protection issues among refugees, asylum-seekers and persons displaced to Armenia by the conflicts in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. While awaiting results of the assessment for a more tailored response, a local expert has been hired to provide psychosocial support to children.

## Summary Notes and Acronyms

ADB – Asian Development Bank  
AMD – Armenian Dram  
BCP – Business Continuity Plan  
C4D – Communication for Development  
CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women  
CEE/CIS – Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States  
CMT – Country Management Team  
CO – Country Office  
CP – Country Programme

CPD – Country Programme Document  
CPMP – Country Programme Management Plan  
CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child  
CSO – civil society organization  
DCT – Direct Cash Transfer  
DHS – Demographic and Health Surveys  
DIPECHO – Disaster Preparedness Programme of the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department  
DRR – disaster risk reduction  
EEN – Environmental Education Network  
ERRA – Electronic Regional Risk Atlas  
ESD – Education for Sustainable Development  
EU – European Union  
EU/ECHO – European Union/European Commission’s Directorate – General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection  
GIZ – German Society for International Cooperation/Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit  
HACT – Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers  
HRDO – Human Rights Defender Office  
ICF – International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health  
ICF-CY – International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth  
ILCS – Integrated Living Conditions Survey  
IMEP/PRIME – Integrated Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan/Planning for Research Impact Monitoring and Evaluation  
ICT – information and communications technology  
ISS – integrated social services  
IT – information technology  
LTA – Long-Term Agreement  
MDG – Millennium Development Goal  
MoES – Ministry of Education and Science  
MoH – Ministry of Health  
MoJ - Ministry of Justice  
MoLSA – Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs  
MoTAES – Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations  
MoU – Memorandum of Understanding  
NGO – non-governmental organization  
N-MODA – National Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis  
NSS – National Statistical Service  
OXFAM – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief  
PBA – Programme Budget Allotment  
PBR – Programme and Budget Review  
PCM – Programme Coordination Meeting  
PSA – public service announcement  
RKLA – Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda  
SDG – Sustainable Development Goal  
TSP – Territorial Social Plans  
UNCRC – Convention on the Rights of Children  
UNCRC – Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme  
UNDSS – United Nations Department of Safety and Security  
UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
USAID – United States Agency for International Development  
WHO – World Health Organization

## Capacity Development

An important milestone in improving the quality of health and nutrition services for children was achieved with UNICEF support through the development of unified guidelines and clinical protocols, with focus on prioritization of the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach children and timely provision of essential services and functional referral to secondary/tertiary facilities.

In partnership with the National Institute of Health and the State Health Agency, UNICEF Armenia introduced a Child Nutrition Surveillance System at primary health-care level as an effective tool for routine data collection and a basis for informed decision-making on targeted health and nutrition interventions at national and regional levels.

UNICEF Armenia further invested in case managers' capacities to apply social work methodology, enabling them to provide effective and quality responses to the needs of vulnerable families and children.

UNICEF Armenia also supported the design and establishment of alternative preschool services for 3–6-year-old children in the community centres of small villages, with accompanied training and mentoring of teachers, as a viable model for reducing disparities in coverage of preschool education in sparsely populated rural areas. The capacities of public schools on internal evaluation were improved by preparing and introducing training packages on core concepts, principles and tools of school self-evaluation.

With UNICEF support and jointly with the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the capacities of the National Institute of Education at 3 Regional Support Centres and 102 schools in Syunik were increased, including development of special modules on inclusive education.

The Investigative Committee's capacity to work with children in conflict with the law in a child-sensitive manner was enhanced by developing practical guidelines based on best practices and delivering training for selected investigators.

Support for capacity development of the National Statistical Service continued through the joint implementation of National Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (N-MODA) methodology and other new approaches for Armenia.

## Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

UNICEF Armenia worked closely with the National Statistical Services and line ministries to generate data to track the dynamics of the child poverty rate and child needs through the nationally representative household surveys that cover such domains as inclusive education, social protection, child protection and social exclusion to inform policymaking. Building on the results of the data generated through this analysis that identified numerous inefficiencies of the social protection system, the policy dialogue and advocacy efforts of UNICEF Armenia resulted in the adoption of a key government decree regulating the institutional forms of cooperation among respective social services.

The collection of data via anthropometric and biometric measurement of children under 5 to

complement the available evidence in further programming in the area of infant and young child nutrition is another example of fostering policy dialogue.

The research on infant and young child health and nutrition in Armenia, which facilitated formulating long-term strategy to tackle the needs of the most vulnerable children, provided support for the advocacy efforts for sustaining the budgetary allocations on child nutrition as a separate budgetary line in the 2016 state budget.

As a result of the study commissioned by UNICEF Armenia to assess school safety nationwide, the Government of Armenia has committed to strengthening the safety of more than 400 schools in the next 15 years, as stated in the Seismic Safety Improvement Programme.

Evidence was also generated through the demonstration modelling, which provided important insight into bottlenecks and the ways to overcome them, thus informing policy development and government decisions.

Knowledge exchange was facilitated through bringing international experts, study visits to and from Armenia and through the Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda, a platform that enabled information sharing between Country Offices and countries working on the same issues.

## Partnerships

UNICEF Armenia established an effective partnership with line ministries and international partners (the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Bank, Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM) and World Vision to scale up nutrition interventions with an inter-sectoral approach and linked to the family social assistance system.

As part of the childcare system reform, a strong and formalized partnership was developed between UNICEF, USAID, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), MoES, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations (MoTAES), Save the Children, World Vision and the NGO Bridge of Hope, which consolidated all important partners around a common reform agenda and provided a platform for an unified approach between the Government of Armenia and civil society to transform residential care and strengthen alternative family based care.

UNICEF Armenia supported the Government's disaster risk reduction (DRR) agenda by introducing the comprehensive school safety concept, promoting prevention of disaster losses for children and reducing their vulnerability. UNICEF Armenia partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to increase the seismic resilience of school buildings, strengthen seismic disaster preparedness and improve response capacity.

Together with UNDP, UNICEF Armenia substantially contributed to the partnership with the MoLSA to develop an International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) disability determination tools, and gender-responsive methodology for individual rehabilitation plans with the goal to establish national criteria for eligibility and contribute to fair and efficient allocation of existing resources for children with disabilities.

UNICEF also partnered with the Human Rights Defender Office to promote awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), producing Armenia's first child-friendly version of

the CRC, approved by the MoES. Partnership with the TEDx platform was continued, enabling children and youth from marginalized communities to engage in talks on issues that directly concern them.

In order to explore opportunities for partnerships with the corporate sector in the country, UNICEF Armenia commissioned an assessment that will inform future actions.

### **External Communication and Public Advocacy**

UNICEF Armenia became an early adopter of the Global Communication and Public Advocacy Strategy and realigned its digital approach with it. As a result, its reach and engagement were significantly expanded (e.g., 145 per cent growth on Facebook, 62 per cent on Twitter). Key initiatives that contributed to that included:

The Together We Can campaign on social inclusion of children with disabilities garnered the support of 25 partners from the Government of Armenia to the private sector through 20 public events, 250 media mentions, public service announcements (PSAs) and talk shows, as well as Armenia's first soap opera with a child character with an intellectual disability, played by a young boy with Down syndrome. The campaign registered a positive trend in personal normative beliefs that children with intellectual disabilities should be included in society, from 63 per cent (2013) to 73 per cent (2015), and a consequent decrease in beliefs that children with intellectual disabilities should be isolated – from 30 per cent (2013) to 19 per cent (2015).

The First 1,000 Days Matter campaign provided policymakers at national and regional levels, parents and families of children with information on breastfeeding, complementary feeding and care of young children via a range of extensive edutainment and community engagement activities across the country (64 communities, reaching about 4,000 participants), media programmes and PSAs. Parental education centres in primary health facilities were established, instrumental in increasing community capacity for provision of better childcare and nutrition.

To mitigate public opposition to flour fortification, UNICEF Armenia supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) in developing a communication strategy, providing a comprehensive analysis of the situation and guidance to the Ministry and partners on how to effectively work with different target groups.

Together with other members of the United Nations Communication Team, UNICEF actively contributed to the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and UN70 anniversary celebration in Armenia.

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

The newly developed practice of an integrated social services (ISS) system in Armenia was found to be relevant for a number of countries in the region. UNICEF Armenia facilitated experience sharing with the Governments of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan through a one-week residential workshop held in Armenia. The lessons learned from the visit were used by the participants in designing their strategies and programmes on integrated social protection systems. In addition to this, UNICEF Armenia participated in the joint documentation exercise conducted by the UNICEF Programme Division and Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) Regional Office. The assessment is aimed at enhancing the regional and global knowledge on social protection systems and capturing promising reforms in this area.

UNICEF Armenia also facilitated the knowledge exchange in the area of DRR. Representatives of relevant government and non-governmental institutions from Central Asian countries learned good practices developed in Armenia, with a particular focus on DRR in education. A study visit was organized by UNICEF Regional and Country Offices, allowing all participating governments to share their experiences and good practices on DRR with Armenian counterparts and among one another.

An exchange of practices and experience on childcare system reform between Armenia and Bulgaria took place during the summer of 2015. Both countries are pursuing major reforms in this area and the recent lessons learned in Bulgaria were found to be beneficial at this stage for Armenian counterparts. Horizontal cooperation was also effectively supported by the regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda, enabling Country Offices to stay abreast of trends and new practices in the region, and share achievements across borders. While this was primarily a platform for UNICEF staff, it had a strong effect on advocacy and policy development work in countries sharing similar challenges.

### **Identification and Promotion of Innovation**

In 2015, UNICEF Armenia sought ways to introduce innovative methods of diaspora engagement in supporting areas related to child well-being, and commissioned a policy paper that suggested options on their transformed engagement, with knowledge exchange between Armenian and Irish professionals, establishment of four regional knowledge hubs and a web platform. Recommendations of the paper and lessons learned from Ireland are being considered in the process of developing the new strategy on Armenian diaspora engagement.

In cooperation with the National Statistical Service (NSS) and MoH, UNICEF Armenia developed budgeting tools for families to support them in planning their financial resources to ensure availability of basic food for children of different age groups. Having a list of monthly required food items for children, indicative seasonal prices and guidance from health providers, families will allocate funds for the procurement of the required food. This will contribute to advocating for the aligning of nutrition to the social protection system, to address the needs of the most vulnerable families.

Building a new preschool facility in rural and remote communities with less than 10 children of preschool age is not a feasible option for Armenia. UNICEF Armenia supported the Government in introducing a low-cost, community-based alternative preschool model.

Resilience of children and communities was enhanced through the piloting of a new approach to engage children in preparing an Electronic Risk Reduction Atlas, building their understanding of environmental sustainability and disaster risks.

### **Support to Integration and Cross-Sectoral Linkages**

Recognizing that issues related to children – especially those facing multiple vulnerabilities and deprivations – are inter-connected and go beyond the responsibilities of one sector, UNICEF Armenia continued to systematically seek opportunities to facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation between line ministries, agencies and services at the local level. Such efforts were evident and fruitful in connecting the child protection system with the social protection system in order to reduce the number of children growing up in residential care; between the education, health and social system to support inclusive education of children with disabilities; for inter-ministerial cooperation on developing child-sensitive responses to improve access to justice and young children's health; to reduce risk of disasters; and so on. Coordination bodies (such as the Child

Protection Council), Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and Protocols of Cooperation were used as effective mechanisms for defining roles and responsibilities and agreeing on a joint agenda.

For example, in the region of Lori, UNICEF Armenia supported a model of collaborative approach to prevent school dropouts. After a consultative process, protocols of cooperation were signed between education, social protection and health services, police, local authorities, regional municipalities and NGOs, defining the roles and responsibilities of all parties in monitoring out-of-school children and children at risk of dropping out of school, and referring them back to school.

Integrated social services are another example of the new approach where ‘one window’ serves to address the different social needs of families and children.

While all sides recognize the importance and value of cross-sectoral cooperation, the hierarchical organization of the sectors often gets in the way.

### **Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation**

UNICEF Armenia continued to support the country in implementing the 2013 Concluding Observations of the CRC, particularly recommendations regarding the family environment and alternative care; children with disabilities; education; health; and justice for children. As Armenia was undergoing its second Universal Periodic Review in 2015, UNICEF Armenia has been committed to supporting the country in following up on child rights-related recommendations. The child-friendly version of the CRC was developed and launched in order to increase children’s awareness on their rights.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and UNICEF Armenia launched a Council on Justice for Children involving key stakeholder ministries and state agencies, as well as international organizations to enhance coordination, leverage donor funding and raise awareness on the issue of children’s access to justice. In line with the Country Programme Document (CPD) 2016–2020, this will support UNICEF Armenia and key partners to identify normative and system-level gaps, as well as promote children’s legal protection, so that the most vulnerable children can combat discrimination and restore entitlements due to violations of their rights.

UNICEF Armenia continued to support the Government in implementing the childcare reform in the country, which will lead to ensuring a child’s right to a family environment through establishing alternative family and community-based services.

UNICEF Armenia also supported the Human Rights Defender Office in researching and establishing an individual complaint mechanism for children, and continues to support capacity building of the Office in relation to child rights.

UNICEF Armenia programming on disabilities was based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, focusing on children with disabilities and addressing system-level bottlenecks. UNICEF Armenia promoted the rights of children with disabilities to inclusive education, health and rehabilitation, as well as their full participation in community life.

### **Gender Mainstreaming and Equality**

Gender inequality remains a key issue in Armenia, positioning the country in the 105th place among 145 countries of the 2015 Gender Gap Report. Gender inequalities were manifested in

many forms, including, but not limited to, prenatal sex selection and gender-based violence.

In cooperation with UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF Armenia supported the assessment of two major national strategies, 'On equal rights and equal opportunities among women and men' and 'On combating gender-based violence', covering the period from 2010–2015. The assessment's recommendations served as a basis for developing new national strategies in the areas of gender equality and gender-based violence.

Innovative research tools were designed to tackle the social behavioural aspects of prenatal sex selection. The developed methodology and instruments are first of their kind not only in Armenia, but also in the CEE/CIS region, and will allow unprecedented depth of insight into the nature of prenatal sex selection at both the individual and household level.

Gender mainstreaming and equality as foundational normative principles for UNICEF are integrated across all research and monitoring and evaluation activities conducted and commissioned by UNICEF Armenia.

UNICEF Armenia remains part of the DRR National Platform's Gender Thematic Group to identify and advocate for gender-specific issues during emergencies.

## Environmental Sustainability

UNICEF Armenia facilitated the establishment of an Environmental Education Network (EEN) to develop environmental awareness and action. More than 30 civil society, government, educational and international organizations have joined or supported the network by signing a MoU.

In 2015, UNICEF Armenia led the cooperation between environmental educational organizations, relevant ministries and teachers, which has been strengthened through the capacity enhancement of the EEN on positive national and international practices on environmental education; mapping and creating a catalogue of environmental education centres in Armenia; organizing media events for awareness raising on environmental concerns that inform policy; developing three public service announcements for further broadcasting; and organizing capacity development and bridge-building activities. EEN has also provided recommendations to the Government's new State Programme of Education Development for 2016–2025 by conducting a situation analysis of environmental education policies, strategies and the curriculum.

The Government of Armenia is exploring the possibilities of securing investments from international financial institutions and donor organizations for retrofitting and building new school facilities throughout the country in the next 15 years. UNICEF Armenia advocated for incorporating best practices in environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive design. In addition to safety and inclusiveness aspects, UNICEF Armenia has advocated for the concept of schools that implement energy savings, use renewable sources of energy for local needs, raise the energy efficiency of school buildings, and develop the education of schoolchildren and enhance public outreach on energy efficiency and energy saving.

The Country Office (CO) made efforts to reduce environmental footprint by using recycled paper and energy-saving lights, avoiding unnecessary travel and separating waste for recycling. The CO does not have a significant supply component, and its environmental footprint related to programme implementation is minimal.

## Effective Leadership

The Country Management Team (CMT), Programme Coordination Meetings (PCM) and Operations Meetings served as platforms to monitor office management and performance, as well as programme implementation to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Eleven CMT meetings were held to address all aspects of programme and operations management and staff issues. Defined management and performance indicators were systematically reviewed, and necessary decisions were made and communicated to staff. Monthly PCMs served as a forum to share programme developments, monitor progress of Rolling Work Plan (RWP) implementation, budget expenditure, Programme Budget Allotment (PBA) expiration and donor reports submission. Operations Meetings were held every two months to identify challenges and discuss solutions. On Monday mornings, All Staff Meetings were held to share information on weekly activities, highlighting important events, and discussing emerging issues and challenges.

The new 2016–2020 CPD was approved in 2015 and a Country Programme Action Plan was developed and submitted for government approval. Discussions on the RWP were initiated with counterparts. Based on the Country Programme Management Plan, two submissions were prepared for the May and October Regional Programme and Budget Review (PBR), leading to the approval of a new staffing structure. Accordingly, recruitment was started and partially finalized in 2015.

The Early Warning Early Action platform was completely and timely updated and in full compliance. The Business Continuity Plan was also updated and tested.

Briefings and workshops were conducted for staff to introduce new guidelines and operational procedures endorsed by the CMT. Office workflows were developed with all-staff involvement. Staff retreat was used to discuss programme development, theories of change and staff issues.

The CO fully applied the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT): conducting financial management assessments of implementing partners before presenting to Partnership Review Committee; organizing programmatic and financial spot-check site visits. Joint HACT implementation with UNDP and UNFPA started in 2015 with identification of common implementing partners and signing common local United Nations Long-Term Agreements (LTAs) for outsourcing HACT assurance activities.

## Financial Resources Management

UNICEF Armenia management has regularly monitored available balances and commitments of all funds, so that Regular Resources, Institutional Budget and Other Resources expiring at the end of the year are fully spent as of 31 December 2015. Budget control was strengthened in 2015 – the annual budget was prepared at the beginning of the year and relevant monitoring of its implementation was set up to avoid high-volume spending at year-end.

Internal controls have been also strengthened in the CO. Bank reconciliations have been performed in a timely manner by the Administrative/Human Resources Assistant and Operations Manager. The panel of bank signatories was updated in 2015 to ensure that resigned staff are excluded from the list and new staff occupying relevant positions are added. A procedure for improvement of monthly cash flow has been established with the aim of having low month-end bank balances without jeopardizing programme implementation.

Simplified financial management assessments of implementing partners were conducted by the Operations Manager. Micro-assessments have been outsourced to common local LTA holders.

From mid-2015, UNICEF Armenia started outsourcing financial spot-checks, which contributes to the efficiency of operations. At the end of 2015, the CO had 0 per cent outstanding Direct Cash Transfers (DCT) more than six months.

As per the Common Agreement on Banking Services between United Nations Armenia agencies and HSBC Bank Armenia CJSC, the bank applies special rates for bank charges, currency conversion and interest, resulting in US\$5,600 in savings for UNICEF Armenia. Out-of-country payments have been processed via the New York Cashier's Unit, bringing cost savings of US\$1,500 per year on bank charges.

Due to the resignation of the Finance Assistant, the Information Technology (IT) Assistant was covering finance functions for two months in 2015 until a new Finance Assistant was hired.

## Fund-Raising and Donor Relations

Fund-raising opportunities for Armenia are limited. During earlier times, there were significant problems in mobilizing Other Resources. Thus, UNICEF Armenia made strong efforts throughout the 2010–2015 Country Programme (CP) to mobilize funds for full programme implementation. Overall, these efforts were successful, achieving 129 per cent of the originally approved ceiling (US\$7.4 million). The change of the ceiling to US\$9.4 million was approved, and 89 per cent of its total was successfully raised. However, some programme areas remain underfunded and additional efforts are required to find suitable funding sources for the new CP.

In addition to the two major sources of funding, USAID and European Union/European Commission's Directorate – General for Humanitarian Air and Civil Protection (EU/ECHO), UNICEF engaged with the Swiss Committee for UNICEF, obtaining funds for two programme areas – breastfeeding and nutrition, and gender equality. A final donor report was submitted to the Swiss Committee for the first phase of the initiative in 2015, and funds were approved for the second phase in 2016–2017.

The EU-funded programme on labour migration was extended until June 2016 to capitalize on and further strengthen the sustainability of results. ECHO/Disaster Preparedness programme of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (DIPECHO) funding was instrumental in achieving major improvements in school safety at the policy level and helped leverage substantial funds for improving seismic safety of large number of schools.

Additional efforts were made to reach out to potential new donors, such as the Governments of Russia and Sweden. A study on the corporate sector was commissioned to explore opportunities for partnerships.

Funding gaps were partially covered through the allocation of Thematic Funding, for interventions in Education and Child Protection.

Funds utilization was monitored on a regular basis during CMTs and PCMs using the Manager's Dashboard and Management reports. Donor reports were submitted on time.

## Evaluation

Overall implementation of the Integrated Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan/Planning for Research Impact Monitoring and Evaluation (IMEP/PRIME) in UNICEF Armenia during the reporting period, including preparation and management, can be assessed as satisfactory, with an estimated 80 per cent completion rate given that the actual end dates of two activities

included into PRIME are 2016. Based on the CMT's decision, PRIME implementation was monitored on a monthly basis during PCMs and CMTs.

In December 2014, UNICEF Armenia commissioned evaluation of Family Support Services and Stakeholders' Contribution to those Services/Systems with the purpose to assess UNICEF Armenia's interventions in support of the state statutory services provided by the Government of Armenia since 2010 to respond to the needs of vulnerable families with children. The independent evaluator representing a consortium of local and international research companies was hired to conduct the formative evaluation. The draft evaluation report was submitted at the end of October 2015, and was also reviewed by the MoLSA and regional offices.

The validation session with stakeholders was organized in November, including government representatives, development partners, international/local NGOs and UNICEF Armenia representatives, where the findings and recommendations were presented and verified. During the meeting, the impartiality and usefulness of the evaluation was highlighted, indicating that it depicts the holistic picture of the studied reform initiatives with a focus on those aspects of stakeholders' contributions to ISS and CP that were not covered by any evaluation conducted in the field before. The MoLSA officials mentioned that the evaluation commissioned by UNICEF Armenia was an important exercise for all stakeholders involved in the reform initiatives, with recommendations being constructive, objective and applicable.

The completed report submitted to UNIVERSALIA for quality assurance received mostly satisfactory ratings. The document is currently reviewed and being prepared for the second review phase to ensure a highly satisfactory score.

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

The UNICEF Armenia office is located in the United Nations House, provided rent-free by the Government of Armenia to the United Nations. Cost savings are achieved by using common services in the building, including building management and security services.

In 2015, the following common United Nations LTAs were used: travel, postal/courier services, maintenance and cleaning of air conditioners, maintenance of the building security systems, translation, interpretation, editing services, vehicle maintenance services, customs clearance, fuel procurement, and HACT assurance activities. Usage of common United Nations LTAs brings to the economy of scale, hence the advantage of having better discounts from vendors. Such agreements have further contributed to increased effectiveness and efficiency of usage of financial and human resources.

UNICEF Armenia staff are provided opportunities to include their mobile phones in common United Nations packages, and to operate calls within the group free of charge. The service provider continuously updates UNICEF Armenia on newly introduced mobile service packages, which gives flexibility for change when/if needed and brought to US\$2,800 of annual cost savings.

Starting at the beginning of 2015, UNICEF Armenia has used UNDP Internet as a back-up channel – i.e., having two Internet providers, with UNICEF paying for one, thus saving about US\$2,500 annually.

Additional funds were saved through the use of local VoIP and GSM Gateway for calls.

Free warehouse space provided by the MoTAES allowed for savings of about US\$2,700 annually.

Close monitoring of the necessity of field trips as well as usage of a new vehicle purchased in 2014 reduced vehicle maintenance costs by US\$3,000.

Outsourcing HACT assurance activities to professional audit companies (United Nations LTA holders) increased the effectiveness of HACT implementation.

The effective involvement of interns and volunteers also contributed to cost savings.

## Supply Management

The total value of supplies, services received and value of procurement in 2015 was US\$3,194,101 which is split into programme and operational supplies, services and procurement services as follows:

UNICEF Armenia 2015	Value in US\$
Programme supplies	57,675
Operational supplies	35,864
Services	290,201
Channelled via regular procurement services	2,572,635
Channelled via GAVI	237,726

UNICEF Armenia continued supporting the Government of Armenia and other partners in procurement services for vaccines. By the special decree of the Government, UNICEF Armenia was assigned the role of single source provider of vaccines and immunization devices. During the year, UNICEF Armenia worked intensively with the MoH and Supply Division to ensure timely provision of vaccines to sustain high coverage rates.

The value of programme supplies issued from local warehouses controlled by UNICEF Armenia recorded in VISION as of 24 December 2015 was US\$165,371. The main portion of the inventory kept in the warehouse includes 15 feeders for flour fortification, which will be distributed to millers after approval of the Law on Flour Fortification.

UNICEF Armenia does not have supplies prepositioned for emergencies.

As part of the optimization and effective use of resources, common United Nations LTAs were used in 2015, such as travel, courier services, maintenance and cleaning of air conditioners, maintenance of the building security systems, translation, interpretation, editing services, vehicle maintenance services, customs clearance, fuel procurement, and HACT assurance activities.

The supply function has been assigned to the IT Assistant. UNICEF Armenia management ensured the participation of the IT Assistant in Supply and Procurement trainings organized by the Supply Division. During 2015, the IT Assistant conducted several trainings for the staff on

different areas of the supply component, including: procurement-related workflows, and warehouse management in VISION.

## Security for Staff and Premises

The overall security of United Nations staff and premises is ensured by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) Armenia. UNICEF Armenia is located in the United Nations Building in Yerevan. It is a member of the Security Management Team and actively participated in United Nations Armenia security meetings on a regular basis. In 2015, the CO continued ensuring the provision of security briefings by UNDSS to all new staff members, as well as visitors on mission to UNICEF Armenia upon their arrival.

Monthly radio checks were conducted by UNDSS.

UNICEF Armenia received additional security funds of US\$6,100 from New York headquarters, which was spent for Minimum Operating Security Standards-compliance purposes.

A three-day Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments training with an entire day dedicated to first aid training was organized for all UNICEF Armenia staff.

The operations section has been following up on the investigation of a car accident on 14 June 2014, in which UNICEF Armenia Senior Driver passed away. The case was closed by the Investigation Committee of the Republic of Armenia in 2015 and a claim was submitted to the Advisory Board on Compensation Claims at New York headquarters. The case was reviewed and considered as attributable to the performance of the driver's duties on behalf of UNICEF. As per a Local Property Survey Board recommendation, damaged vehicle UN051AM and old vehicle UN027AM have been sold through auction. One new vehicle was purchased.

The Business Continuity Plan (BCP) was updated in April 2015, reflecting an updated risk assessment, staffing list and critical response team. A BCP test on staff remote work was organized in December.

## Human Resources

There was a high fluctuation of staff in 2015, with several staff members being appointed to new duties and others leaving for private reasons, leading to the internal re-assignment of tasks. Six new Fixed-Term posts (Health and Nutrition, Education Specialists, Nutrition Officer, Junior Professional Officer (Access to Justice) and two Programme Assistants) were established through the May and October PBRs in line with the objectives of the new 2016–2020 CPD. Altogether 18 recruitments were started, with 10 selections completed in 2015 and 8 selections initiated.

The CO continued to have one Junior Professional Officer. Management initiated negotiations with the Government of Austria for allocation of funds for a contract extension. UNICEF Armenia benefited from volunteers and interns as per office needs.

The timelines of the individual work-plan development and Performance Evaluation Report/Performance Appraisal System were monitored by CMT, with a 93.75 per cent completion rate for 2014.

The annual training plan was prepared with the support of the Human Resource Development Committee and approved based on office priorities and within the foreseen budget. The new

hired staff members took mandatory online courses on HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

Several staff members undertook shorter development assignments: the Administrative/Human Resources Assistant and Executive Assistant served in the Regional Office; and the Deputy Representative and Health and Nutrition Officer were seconded to UNICEF Ukraine. The Education Officer took temporary assignment with UNICEF Lebanon for most of 2015, while keeping a double incumbency status.

The CO also gained from peer support from other offices, most notably from UNICEF Georgia (Operations) and UNICEF Montenegro (Communication and Child Protection).

UNICEF Armenia applied UNICEF Human Resource policies on learning days and flexi-time. Five staff members benefited from flexi-hour work arrangements. Due to an insufficient staff participation rate in the 2014 Global Staff Survey, the Local Staff Association initiated an internal staff survey in 2015 to identify areas for improvement.

### Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

During the reporting period, UNICEF Armenia implemented the information and communications technology (ICT) strategies and new technologies as planned. Global UNICEF standards and policies were duly followed.

Continued availability of ICT resources and efficient user support were ensured during 2015.

With the release of Windows 8 OS, UNICEF Armenia has started upgrading to the new operating system.

Throughout the year, Skype for Business (Lync) has been actively used by staff to host online meetings and conduct interviews. This has improved efficiency and cut down on the cost of telephone charges, both local and overseas. Moreover, the use of video conference facilities also contributed to increased efficiency and effectiveness of resources. The availability of this tool also allowed the CO to invite colleagues from other offices to participate remotely in UNICEF Armenia recruitments.

Starting at the beginning of 2015, UNICEF Armenia has used UNDP Internet as a back-up channel – i.e., having two Internet providers, with UNICEF paying for one, thus saving about US\$2,500 annually.

UNICEF Armenia continued to use 3G Internet facilities for all critical staff, which ensures their out-of-office connectivity.

UNICEF Armenia requested a team site for internal use, which will make the use of available ICT resources in business process more efficient.

### Programme Components from Results Assessment Module

#### ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

**OUTCOME 1:** The Government of Armenia, at national and local levels, systematically identifies and addresses the needs of vulnerable children based on data produced by national and regional networks.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

Work on monitoring of child rights and evidence-based social policy development was a key component of UNICEF Armenia's work in 2015. Efforts were focused on generating more data on children and included assessments of practices and existing services, especially at the sub-national level. Both types of information were used to inform policy advocacy and legislation change.

UNICEF Armenia worked closely with the NSS to track the dynamics of child poverty through the nationally representative household-based Integrated Living Conditions Survey (ILCS). The survey, released in November 2015, showed that poverty and extreme poverty rates have not yet decreased to 2008 levels. Additional data include that 3 per cent of children in Armenia live in extreme poverty and 34 per cent live below the poverty line. Regional disparities on the sub-national level are high, with 50 per cent of children living in poverty in the Shirak region and 13.5 per cent in the Aragatsotn region. UNICEF Armenia also worked to build the capacity of NSS to implement new methodologies, such as N-MODA.

Since 2010, UNICEF Armenia, in close collaboration with the World Bank, has been supporting the Government in reforming its social protection system through introduction of ISS, aiming to respond more effectively to poverty, vulnerabilities and multiple deprivations that families and children face. While the World Bank has been supporting the establishment of Integrated Social Centres through co-location of social protection services and integration of social protection data systems, UNICEF Armenia has been instrumental in supporting the introduction of social work practices such as case management, enhancement of cooperation among social services and promotion of local social planning.

As part of the support provided, almost all UNICEF core roles were utilized, with special focus on advocacy, knowledge generation, modelling, technical assistance, capacity development and leveraging resources. UNICEF Armenia was particularly instrumental in supporting the development of a knowledge base, human capacity and legal framework for various elements of ISS. Special attention was given to the sustainability of efforts through working with existing national and sub-national structures, as well as the incorporation of aspects of public finance management, monitoring and evaluation and visibility. In the past couple of years, the reform of the social protection system has evolved from the initial generic concept into the legally and institutionally regulated practice already reaching intended beneficiaries. The Law on Social Assistance regulated the newly established ISS, which was further supported by by-laws such as the Decree on Institutional Cooperation, which mandates that all on-the-field services exchange information and use referral procedures.

The newly created legal framework also regulated the overlaps between the social and child protection functions and provided case managers with a broader child protection function. As of 2015, there are 130 civil and municipal servants applying case management across the country, most of which benefited from UNICEF Armenia-supported capacity development. There are also 19 operational Integrated Social Centres applying the 'one window' approach.

The experience of the country and UNICEF Armenia is already utilized through horizontal cooperation, including the residential workshop for public officials from Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, support to UNICEF Myanmar on local social planning, as well as the recent reflection of the experience in UNICEF regional and global documentation of social protection interventions. Work in Armenia has also contributed to the Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda (RKLA) on Social Protection.

**OUTPUT 1:** By the end of 2015, national and regional authorities use reliable data, social policy and budget analysis to allocate resources to vulnerable children.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

For a more in-depth assessment of child poverty and disparities, UNICEF Armenia commissioned a survey in partnership with NSS through a special module on 'Child Needs' included in the ILCS in 2014. The module covered such domains as nutrition, inclusive education, social and child protection, and social exclusion.

With support from the UNICEF Office of Research and in partnership with NSS, UNICEF Armenia is undertaking N-MODA to enhance knowledge on the simultaneous experience of deprivations and to assist in the identification of the most vulnerable among the vulnerable in Armenia for targeted programming and policy dialogue. As a result of the initiative, NSS staff were capacitated and a partnership was established with the World Bank for the development of a joint action plan.

The TransMonEE country database is being updated on an annual basis to better inform decision-making and policy development. The country analytical report on minorities and children in Armenia was drafted, providing an overview of national legislation on minorities and disaggregated statistical data on the population's composition based on ethnicity, native language and religion.

Evidence created through UNICEF Armenia programme interventions in the past couple of years largely informed the Law on Social Assistance adopted by the Parliament of Armenia. The new law and subsequent by-laws were developed on modelling and advocacy using international best practices.

Through the EU-supported programme, UNICEF Armenia strengthened the capacities of 50 case managers in four target regions who assessed the situations and needs of families left behind. In cooperation with local partners 1,260 individual social projects were developed to address the specific needs of such families. It was complemented by mass media Communication for Development (C4D) interventions, covering issues on the social consequences of migration and parental care.

UNICEF Armenia has been proactively involved in the area of diaspora engagement with the aim of introducing innovative methods of leveraging funds for child-focused reforms. Four knowledge hubs were established at the sub-national level, performing mapping of organizations and projects, and a web-platform is being developed to reflect knowledge gained on diaspora engagement strategies for children and local development. UNICEF Armenia has initiated a knowledge exchange between Armenian professionals, including those from social sectors, with professionals from Ireland. A policy paper on 'Reforming and Transforming Institutions for Child Well-Being in Armenia: Mechanisms and instruments of diaspora engagement', was commissioned and presented to the Ministry of Diaspora and other stakeholders.

In the area of gender equality, UNICEF Armenia supported the establishment of a gender-equality national mechanism. In 2015, in close cooperation with UNDP and UNFPA, UNICEF supported the process of assessment of two national strategies – 'Addressing Gender-Based Violence' and 'Promoting Gender Equality', based on which the new strategy on gender equality and gender-based violence was developed and submitted to the Government.

The issue of gender disparities in Armenia was also demonstrated through the high prevalence of sex selective abortions. In 2015, UNICEF Armenia initiated a comprehensive study of social norms behind this phenomenon, as well as ways to effectively tackle it.

**OUTPUT 2:** By the end of 2015, the Government of Armenia provides institutional resources for the implementation of Territorial Social Plans (TSP) methodology nationwide.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

UNICEF Armenia has supported efforts to improve sub-national governance in order to ensure greater equity and access to basic services for all children. Since the beginning of the programme cycle (2010) the partner ministries, the MoLSA, MoTAES and local governments were supported in articulation and application of child-focused local action planning. The local social planning also establishes a link between case managers working with individuals and sub-national authorities responsible for the establishment of the respective social services in municipalities.

UNICEF Armenia supported a local social planning approach through demonstration modelling in two target regions, and later expanded it in two additional regions. Learning from the model has informed the new Law on Social Assistance, and the tested methodology was adopted by a joint decree of the respective ministries. UNICEF Armenia also contributed to greater capacity of sub-national professionals through face-to-face training and an e-learning platform.

The efforts resulted in the development and implementation of four regional Action Plans and 10 child-focused municipal social programmes. Particular attention was given to the most vulnerable migrants' families and children. Responding to a key bottleneck hampering the smooth sub-national social planning – lack of administrative data systems – UNICEF Armenia supported the development of the administrative database of the MoTAES, which contains disaggregated data on children and families and social infrastructure. The data quality assurance system, developed in 2014 with the support of UNICEF Armenia, was officially approved by the Ministry in 2015. In addition, UNICEF also commissioned a Policy Analysis in order to address the issue of predictable and sufficient funding for sub-national social planning, which further details the scenarios of restructuring public financing at the local level, including through the newly established territorial development fund and changes in the governmental Medium-Term Expenditure Framework process.

**OUTCOME 2:** The social-sector system reduces disparities in access to quality social services for girls and boys.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

The aim of the interventions in the social sector was to reduce disparities and gaps in education, health and nutrition, and child protection areas. In 2015, UNICEF Armenia focused on its cross-sectoral programmes to increase access and quality of neonatal, nutrition and rehabilitation services through the health sector, access to quality early learning and inclusive schools in the education sector, promotion of the safety of educational facilities for children against natural hazards through DRR measures and reform of the childcare system, moving away from the inherited residential childcare institutions to family based and community-based care.

UNICEF Armenia continued providing support and technical assistance to the Government in fulfilling its commitments to address child survival and nutrition issues through: developing by-laws and strategies; changing social norms and strengthening parental skills to introduce a new model of a school that is inclusive, safe and energy/resource efficient; increasing the resilience

of vulnerable families and children through better-informed social protection policies; conducting assessments of residential childcare institutions; introducing foster care and correspondingly amending the Family Code and relevant by-laws; supporting the development of pedagogical support centres in order to replace special schools for children with disabilities; developing mechanisms to identify out-of-school children and refer them back to school; and initiating the modelling of alternative early learning opportunities in remote communities.

UNICEF Armenia contributed significantly to the policy and legislation change in Armenia in 2015, with regard to nutrition, inclusive education and school safety. The Parliament approved the amendments to the Law on General Education, which stipulates the transformation of special schools for children with disabilities into inclusive education support centres. The MoLSA has approved an Order on Approving and testing disability assessment criteria and their application guide based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY) of the World Health Organization (WHO), following UNICEF advocacy efforts. The Government of Armenia has approved the Regulation for Development and Implementation of Individual Rehabilitation Plan for People with Disabilities and also declared 2016 as a year of equal opportunities for people with disabilities. The Government has also adopted a Decree on the Public School Seismic Safety Improvement Programme for 2015–2030.

In 2015, UNICEF Armenia continued supporting the Government in fulfilling its political commitment to address nutrition issues through developing sub-legislative documents to ensure the enforcement of a national law on ‘Breastfeeding promotion and regulation of infant food marketing’, approved in 2014. Development of two important strategies – ‘Child and Adolescents Health and Development Strategy for 2016–2020’ and ‘Comprehensive Nutrition Strategy’ – is further evidence of the priority given to child health and nutrition issues in the country.

**OUTPUT 1:** By the end of 2015, the Government increasingly provides resources for the set-up of community-based child protection services.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

Within the scope of the childcare reform programme, UNICEF Armenia assisted the Government of Armenia in conducting a rapid assessment of residential childcare institutions under the MoLSA, drafting a road map of transformation for those as well as implementation of in-depth assessment of children at four major residential childcare institutions in Vanadzor and Yerevan, their families and communities of origin for the purpose of well-planned family reunification or alternative care solutions. UNICEF Armenia also supported the MoLSA in strengthening the social services outsourcing system by bringing an international expert on board.

UNICEF and partners have advocated for the wider application of foster care as alternative to residential institutions. Policy papers, amendments to the Family Code and draft by-laws have been prepared in consultation with international and local experts, and have been submitted to the Government through the MoLSA and MoJ.

Policy recommendations were also provided for amendments of the Family Code related to adoption and the development of pedagogical support centres in order to replace residential special schools for children with disabilities.

UNICEF Armenia has supported local partners in the development of a code of ethics and

standards for the social work profession and social services, aiming at standardization of quality social work practices across Armenia to ensure that social workers and their clients are strengthened and protected.

In the area of justice for children, UNICEF conducted a comprehensive review of the criminal legislation and by-laws to support the Government of Armenia to bring its normative framework in line with international child rights standards. UNICEF Armenia developed practical guidelines/standard operational procedures for the Investigative Committee and trained a selected group of investigators working with children in contact with the law, particularly child victims and witnesses of crime, to act more child-friendly to avoid the secondary victimization of children. UNICEF Armenia also assessed the data collection system on juvenile justice and proposed a set of indicators based on international best practices, with concrete recommendations on creating a unified and coherent database to ensure evidence-based policies in the future.

The MoJ and UNICEF launched a Council on Justice for Children involving key stakeholder ministries and state agencies, as well as international organizations to enhance coordination, leverage donor funding and raise awareness on the issue of children's access to justice, and to identify normative and system-level gaps and promote children's legal protection.

Since the start of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic until the fall of 2015, more than 18,000 persons displaced due to the conflict have at some stage sought protection in Armenia, and of those some 16,000 are currently hosted in the country.

UNICEF, jointly with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), initiated the process of a comprehensive assessment of child protection issues among refugees, asylum-seekers and persons displaced to Armenia by the conflicts in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, as a result of which a package of recommendations will be developed for the Government of Armenia with the goal of improving the situation of refugee children and youth. As an immediate response, a local expert was hired to provide psychosocial support to children.

**OUTPUT 2:** National policy agendas are informed by evidence-based knowledge and technical guidelines on regional and national disasters and education for sustainable development.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

Important work was done with regard to social norms change, especially focused on the right to inclusive education for all children. This past year, 2015, was the first year of UNICEF Armenia's nationwide Together We Can campaign on the social inclusion of children with disabilities. The campaign generated more than 200 media articles, a series of public events, soap opera episodes, billboards and significant social media followers promoting inclusive values and behavioural change in support of children with intellectual disabilities, who are the most marginalized and excluded. A campaign partners' network grew to incorporate more than 20 governments, local and international organizations. In June 2015, UNICEF Armenia implemented the follow-up to the baseline survey, which showed an overall 10 per cent increase in positive attitudes towards children with intellectual disabilities.

The MoES prepared the Education Development National Programme for 2016–2025, to which UNICEF Armenia contributed by supporting the national team of experts and international expertise. The draft document declares six main goals of education for the next 10 years, including the promotion of inclusive education and a safe school initiative.

The measurement tools and guidelines of disability determination based on ICF-CY were revised, and trainings were provided for case managers/social workers and specialists of Medical Social Expert Committees and professional of assessment centres in Goris and Sisian.

UNICEF Armenia supported a study on school safety that was adopted by the Government and helped prioritize the most at-risk schools. The recommendations of the study are being incorporated into the Government's school safety investment plan.

In total, 400 schools will be strengthened or newly built during the next 15 years, out of which 66 are targeted for the next five years. The MoTAES has drafted the new guidelines for school disaster management planning that will be shared with the MoES for joint approval to ensure the culture of safety and resilience in preschools and schools.

In the Lori region, protocols of cooperation were signed between education, social protection and health services, police, local authorities, regional municipalities and NGOs, defining the roles and responsibilities of all parties in monitoring out-of-school children and children at risk of dropping out, and referring them back to school. The refined model will be presented to the Government for consideration of further expansion. In the Tavush region, similar protocols were developed for early identification and intervention for children with childhood disabilities and developmental delays, outlining the cooperation of preschool, medical staff and social services. In the Malatia-Sebastia district of Yerevan, inclusive kindergarten with provision of other services (physiotherapist, speech therapist, ergo therapist, psychologist) for children with disabilities was piloted.

Alternative community-based preschool model for small communities were established in eight rural and marginalized villages in the Syunik region. Training was provided to the staff and initial results will be assessed and documented for possible national scale-up in 2016.

**OUTPUT 3:** By the end of 2015, the health system addresses disparities in access to quality mother, child and adolescent health and nutrition services.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

The 2014–2015 Rolling Work Plan on Health and Nutrition was shaped to address disparities and gaps in access to quality mother, child and adolescent health and nutrition services. UNICEF Armenia worked closely with the MoH to initiate a comprehensive assessment on infant birth and death registration and reporting, the results of which will be summarized to develop an effective child survival monitoring and data flow systems for informed decision-making at national and regional levels. To address adolescent health issues, UNICEF Armenia supported the development of a model of integrated social services for school-age children and adolescents during this programme cycle, which was piloted and evaluated. Based on the evaluation findings, a strategy with a plan of actions was developed and presented to the MoH for approval.

To mobilize support for increased investment in a set of nutrition interventions in Armenia, UNICEF Armenia has built up a strong partnership with USAID and Swiss National Committee that will help improve the health and nutrition of Armenian children 0–5 years old. UNICEF Armenia initiated development of a Child Nutrition Surveillance System as a routine data collection system on children's growth and nutrition for informed decision-making at national and regional levels.

To ensure that minimum-standard health and nutrition services are provided to children, UNICEF Armenia supported the MoH in developing comprehensive standards and clinical protocols on management of children's health and nutrition at the primary health-care level, which were successfully introduced in all regions of the country. Together with the MoH and local health authorities, UNICEF Armenia revitalized breastfeeding promotion activities and effectively promoted the idea of creating a sustainable parental education system at maternity and primary health-care facilities. A budgeting tool for families has also been developed to support them in effectively planning financial resources to make available basic food items for the proper nutrition of children of different age groups. Together with the establishment of parental centres, those are instrumental in increasing community capacity for childcare and nutrition.

To have a common strategic plan in public communication towards the promotion of a flour fortification concept and to address some public opposition in a constructive and sustainable way, UNICEF Armenia developed a communication strategy on flour fortification which, based on the analysis of the current situation, provides guidance to the MoH and partners on effective communication with different target groups. The strategy prioritizes the health community as the primary entry point for the promotion of flour fortification as well as counselling on nutrition issues.

During the year, UNICEF Armenia continued supporting the Government of Armenia in the provision of procurement services for vaccines. By a special decree of the Government, UNICEF Armenia was assigned to the role of single provider of vaccines and immunization devices to ensure that all vaccines delivered to the country meet the quality standards. Throughout the year, UNICEF Armenia worked intensively with the MoH and Supply Division to ensure the timely provision of vaccines to sustain high coverage rates against all basic antigens achieved by the country.

**OUTCOME 3:** Effective and efficient programme management and operations support to programme delivery.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

Overall guidance, high-level advocacy and serving as a public voice for children, as well as sustained efforts to secure funds were performed by UNICEF Armenia management in support of programme implementation. The Communications Officer effectively supported the programme advocacy goals, as well as the overall relevance and positioning of UNICEF Armenia. UNICEF Armenia became an early adopter of the Global Communication and Public Advocacy Strategy and significantly increased the public profile of UNICEF and topics related to children, through digital/social media and innovative social engagement platforms such as TEDx.

The operations team provided reliable and timely support in budget utilization, HACT compliance, human resources and overall working conditions, including security. An effective and results-ensuring governance system was put in place, promoting participatory decision-making and the efficient realization of the risk management function.

Strong emphasis was put on cross-sectoral work and the integration of interventions, both externally, with partners, and internally, with programme teams. UNICEF Armenia actively participated, contributed to and benefited from the regional UNICEF agenda, through RKLA. This kind of programme support was essential for staying abreast with technical guidance and

trends in the region, as it combines technical expertise and sharing of good practices from other countries.

In 2015, the new CPD was adopted by the Executive Board. This led to intense preparations for the new programme cycle, as well as intensified work to fully complete the programme activities from the 2010–2015 Country Programme. A Country Programme Action Plan was developed and submitted to the Government, consultation with partners for the development of Rolling Work Plan are ongoing, and a staff retreat was used for more detailed discussion of the determinant analysis and theories of change.

The CO has completely updated the risk analysis and key actions in the Early Warning Early Action platform in a timely manner, ensuring compliance with emergency preparedness requirements. The Country Business Continuity Plan was also updated and tested during 2015.

**OUTPUT 1:** Includes Representation, Operations Management, IT Management, Business Continuity and Risk Management, Programme Guidance and Management/Oversight, Communication.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

While the overall guidance, high-level advocacy and public voice for children, as well as sustained efforts to secure funds, were performed mostly by the Representative, the Deputy Representative was engaged in the day-to-day support to the Country Programme in setting objectives, tracking progress and budget utilization and, most importantly, cross-sectoral collaboration. As UNICEF Armenia systematically promotes cross-sectoral cooperation and integrated interventions with partners, the same approach is introduced internally, with the effect of breaking silos and achieving greater synergy. For example, this was practiced through jointly planned field visits, which not only save money but also help integrate interventions from different programme areas.

The Communications Officer effectively supported the programme advocacy goals, as well as UNICEF Armenia's overall relevance and positioning. UNICEF Armenia became an early adopter of the Global Communication and Public Advocacy Strategy and significantly increased the public profile of UNICEF and topics related to children, through digital/social media and innovative social engagement platforms such as TEDx. However, since having only one staff member to provide essential support in the area of communication, including external relations and C4D was considered insufficient, the request for one more post was submitted to and approved by the PBR.

In addition to the internal coordination and cross-sectoral integration of work, UNICEF Armenia actively participated and took part in the RKLA, with key contributions to the Child Right to Live in a Family Environment, Right to Social Protection and Disaster Risk Reduction, and active participation in a number of other regional reference groups.

After approval of the new CPD 2016–2020 in June 2015, preparations started for closing one programme cycle and preparing the new one. This included discussions on the determinant analysis and ways to overcome the identified bottlenecks which led to the drafting of respective theories of change for different programme areas.

**OUTPUT 2:** Financial Management and Administrative Management.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

Regular CMT meetings have been convened to identify and discuss office needs related to programme and operation management, focusing primarily on programmatic priorities. Management indicators focusing on budget utilization, DCTs and performance appraisals have also been part of the CMT discussions.

UNICEF Armenia conducted a workshop on the development of office workflows and presenting new/changed policies and procedures related to work with civil society organizations (CSOs), travel and procurement. In 2015, workflows on DCT, travel, competitive procurement, low-value procurement and contractors/individual consultants have been developed, contributing to the optimization of work processes.

As one of the important financial management tools, HACT was one of the priorities of 2015 for the office. UNICEF Armenia has undertaken a number of steps to strengthen its practices in this respect. All relevant staff members passed HACT online training. Arrangements for joint HACT implementation with UNDP and UNFPA started in 2015. Common local UN LTAs for outsourced HACT assurance activities have been signed by UNDP on behalf of three HACT implementing agencies and effectively used by UNICEF Armenia.

Staff continued to receive support related to VISION and other areas whenever changes were made (including administrative instructions, policies and procedures).

UNICEF Armenia has successfully continued the cash forecasting practice, on a monthly basis, providing managers the opportunity to additionally revise and adjust the payment plans and ensuring cash availability for the operations section.

The planning and utilization of resources has been aimed at reaching the maximum efficiency of the performed activities. Taking into account the office capacity and resource constraints, UNICEF Armenia applied a cost-effective rational approach. Strategic planning and qualified evaluation of ICT resources have ensured their long-term usage and prospective savings.

**OUTPUT 3:** Effective and efficient management of human capacities.

**Analytical statement of progress:**

The Country Programme Management Plan (CPMP) 2016–2020 office structure discussions with all staff have been undertaken and submitted to the PBR. New job descriptions for posts proposed for establishment have been prepared and classified. Recruitments for posts approved for the new programme cycle have been initiated in 2015.

Preparation of human resources filing for electronic systems is ongoing.

The Peer Support Volunteer function has been duly and actively performed.

Staff learning has been diligently pursued by UNICEF Armenia management, ensuring the development and implementation of the Local Training Plan. Apart from the enhancement and development of managerial skills, UNICEF Armenia has also focused on developing competences identified during the performance discussions for each staff member on individual basis.

Overall, 18 recruitments were undertaken by the Armenia CO in 2015. Of those, 10 selections were completed in 2015 to fill the following full-time posts: two national Child Protection Officers;

Child Protection Programme Assistant; Driver; Disaster Risk Reduction Programme Officer; Finance Assistant; Planning Programme Assistant; Cleaner; Administrative Assistant; and through UNDP service contract, a National United Nations Volunteer M&E Assistant. The following selections have been initiated in 2015: the Deputy Representative; Child Protection, Health and Nutrition; Education Specialist posts, Nutrition Officer; two Programme Assistants; Senior Driver; two Administrative Assistant posts and National United Nations' Volunteer were filled through direct selection using the CO talent pool.

Also, six new full-time posts (Health and Nutrition, Education Specialists, Nutrition Officer, Programme Officer (Access to Justice) and 2 Programme Assistants) were established through May and October PBRs in line with the objectives of the new 2016–2020 CPD. The CO continued to have one Junior Programme Officer. Management initiated negotiations with the Government of Austria for allocation of funds for a contract extension. The Armenia CO benefited from volunteers and interns as per office needs.

The timelines of the individual work-plan development and PER/PAS were monitored by the CMT, with a 93.8 per cent completion rate for 2014.

The annual training plan was prepared with support of Human Resources Development Committee and approved based on office priorities and within the foreseen budget. The new hired staff members took mandatory online courses on HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

Several staff members undertook development assignments: Administrative/Human Resources Assistant in the Regional Office's Human Resources department; Deputy Representative and health and nutrition programme officer in Kiev, and the Executive Assistant in the RO. The CO also benefited from the support of peers in the Montenegro and Georgia COs.

The Education Officer NOB (fixed-term) took temporary assignment in UNICEF Lebanon in June 2015 on a temporary appointment on double incumbency basis.

The Armenia CO applied UNICEF Human Resource policies on learning days and flexi-time. Five staff members benefited from flexi-hour work arrangements. Due to an insufficient staff participation rate in 2014 global staff survey, the Local Staff Association initiated another internal staff survey in 2015 to identify areas for improvement.

## Document Centre

### Evaluation and Research

Title	Sequence number	Type of report
Evaluation of Family Support Services and Stakeholders' Contribution to Related Services/Systems	2015/004	Evaluation
Identification of Out-of-School Children: The experience of Armenia's cross-sector approach in Lori Marz	2015/003	Study
Infant and Young Child Health and Nutrition in Armenia	2015/002	Research
Preventing Disaster Loses and Reducing Vulnerability of Children in Armenia	2015/001	Research

## Other Publications

Title
Public Attitude towards Children with Disabilities in Armenia
I Am a Child: Child-friendly version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child
Advices for Ensuring Safety: Manual for disaster risk reduction and resilience education