Annual Report 2017

Armenia

Executive summary

In the second year of the 2016-2020 Country Programme, UNICEF Armenia made significant progress in different programme areas, in spite of somewhat slower development and legislative processes due to the parliamentary elections and the change of Cabinet.

In 2017, new data on children in Armenia gathered through nationally representative studies were published. According to the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), the situation regarding nutrition of young children was improved, with growth in the exclusive breastfeeding rate from 35 per cent to 45 per cent, and a 50 per cent reduction of the stunting rate. This can be linked to multi-year efforts of UNICEF and partners. Significant improvement was also measured in public attitudes towards inclusive education (IE) of children with disabilities, with 40 per cent of the population believing that children with intellectual disabilities should attend mainstream schools, as opposed to 13 per cent in 2014, according to the Integrated Living Conditions Survey published by the National Statistical Service (NSS) in 2017. The same study, however, showed that the slow but steady economic recovery of the country had not reached the poorest families, as over one third of Armenian children remain in poverty (in some parts of the country it is over half). The need for more effective action to reduce the poverty gap was discussed with partners at the annual review meeting and will be further considered at the upcoming mid-term review in 2018.

Significant equity gaps that exist in relation to access to early learning were successfully addressed in two ways: 1) developing and documenting a low-cost model for early learning facilities in remote rural areas, and 2) enhancing the capacity of home-visiting health professionals by putting more emphasis on early stimulation, emotional development and positive parenting of young children, in addition to more traditional health and nutrition content.

Children with disabilities and children living in residential care were strong focuses of UNICEF Armenia and partners, who engaged in a number of ways to change public attitudes and build capacity of professionals working with children. UNICEF facilitated partnerships between government bodies, academia and public institutions in Armenia with the University of Minnesota in the United States and Jonkoping University in Sweden, the Special Olympics and local organizations such as Bridge of Hope and Arabkir Foundation. This resulted in increased understanding and improved support to children and families at the community level, and confirmed the political will for social inclusion of children with disabilities.

Thanks to UNICEF support, the Human Rights Defender’s Office of Armenia positioned itself as a strong body to promote, monitor and protect the rights of children. Strong policy advocacy efforts were made to enhance cross-sectoral cooperation between government bodies and public institutions in child rights monitoring, which was reflected in a National Strategy for Child Rights Protection and a draft Law on Child Rights. In support of the ambitious government agenda to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reflected in the first SDG Innovation Lab in the world, UNICEF Armenia initiated a baseline study on indicators related to children.
Some challenges and shortfalls were also experienced in 2017. Work related to adolescents and violence against children remain difficult to fundraise for in Armenia. While the work at the policy level continues with the modest funding available, more needs to be done to tackle highly relevant issues. UNICEF Armenia reached out to the private sector in the country and to the Armenian diaspora, so far with partial success. The main setback was in the area of child care system reform, with an unexpected cut in funding. Strong and focused efforts were made to find additional resources and prevent the reversal of the slow and difficult progress made so far.

In terms of new partnerships, it is important to note the emergence of new donors and partners from Eastern Europe. The Russian Federation has been a big donor to United Nations (UN) agencies in Armenia, and UNICEF Armenia benefited on a smaller scale. However, the importance of professional links and exchange of experience in the health sector, neonatology in particular, demonstrated potential for impact beyond the funding level. The Government of Bulgaria also provided support in terms of funding and expertise in the field of child care system reform.

Partnership with the Armenian Parliament was renewed in 2017, and culminated on World Children's Day when children “took over” the Parliament and sent powerful messages on five important issues for children to parliamentarians, government ministers and the general public.

**Equity in practice**

UNICEF Armenia used the equity-focused programming approach, applying it to different groups of disadvantaged children, such as children with disabilities, children living in poverty and children living in remote rural areas.

One example of this approach was the development of the alternative preschool model to reduce disparities when it comes to access to early learning services. Armenia has a rich tradition in early education, inherited from the previous system, however the full day-care programme that the traditional preschool institution offers to children aged between one and six is expensive and difficult to sustain in impoverished communities. While the preschool education has been recognized as a component of the general education system, it is not compulsory nor free of charge. The government has been responsible for the preschool education policy, while the local governments were responsible for funding the organization and delivery of preschool services. During a difficult social transition in the 1990s there was a sharp fall of enrolment in kindergartens (15 per cent of children having access to preschools in 1997). The first signs of recovery were observed from 2008, when early learning became a state priority and part of the education reform agenda.

In 2010, UNICEF Armenia in collaboration with the World Bank (WB) worked to support the government to increase the provision of preschool education services. Since then, expansion of preschool education services was made a component of the WB 2014-2019 Education Improvement Project. The government opened new kindergarten and school-based early learning centres to implement the provisions of the 2008-2015 State Programme on Education. However, progress was slowed as the country was hard hit by the global financial crisis. Only 29 per cent of children had access to this core service in 2016, with considerable equity gaps between urban and rural areas (35.6 per cent in urban and 17 per cent in rural). (Education and Culture, Statistical Yearbook of Armenia, NSS, 2017).

Based on data from the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development (MoTAD), in
2016 there were over 400 small communities (with a population of less than 500) across the country without any preschool facilities. The government did not prioritize establishment of early learning services in those communities, and the municipal budgets showed that most of the municipalities, especially the small rural ones, could not afford to maintain traditional preschool education services.

To close the equity gap in access to early learning and to realize the right of children to education emphasizing child-cognitive, social-emotional competencies, UNICEF Armenia developed a model of alternative early learning services for small rural communities. This model was based on international research that suggested that duration, rather than just intensity of early learning experiences, is the key to successful outcomes for children. Communities have ensured suitable spaces, which was critical in order to avoid the high costs of construction. Children attended the preschools between three to five hours per day, five days a week. Selected community members, often mothers/caregivers, were trained to work with young children. The instruction takes into consideration the mixed-age grouping and is adjusted to the needs of each child.

UNICEF Armenia piloted the model of alternative services in 12 settlements in the Syunik and Lori regions (south and north of the country), taking into consideration different models of community organization. The cost-benefit analysis conducted in 2017 demonstrated that the proposed model was cost-effective for reaching children in rural communities where government-run preschools do not exist or are too far away to access.

During the development of the model, it became evident that the current legal and policy framework related to preschool education fell short of providing alternative measures for preschool education. Recognizing these shortcomings and based on generated evidence and advocacy, the Government included the development of cost-effective preschool education models in the 2017-2022 Government Programme, and initiated an amendment of the Law on Preschool Education, and embarked on the development of the legal and policy framework for alternative preschool models. The draft law and decree were available for public comments until mid-November 2017, which provided a window of opportunity for UNICEF Armenia to ensure sustainability of the developed alternative preschool education model, and to revise and upgrade the proposed legal framework around alternative preschool education. UNICEF Armenia will continue to support the Government in the roll-out of this alternative preschool model in 2018.

**Emerging areas of importance**

**Climate change and children.** UNICEF Armenia together with the UNICEF Division for Data Research and Policy prepared a draft Climate Landscape Analysis for Children (CLAC) report. It provided essential baseline information on climate, environment and energy (CEE) issues affecting children and recommendations to UNICEF Armenia on how to start addressing these issues.

Climate change, environment degradation and access to baseline information on CEE threaten many children’s well-being, survival and access to quality, essential services across Armenia. Many children in the country have been found to be exposed to CEE conditions that impact their basic rights to safe, nutritious and sufficient food, a clean and healthy living environment, care and protection, and quality education, all of which undermine the country’s progress towards meeting a number of the SDGs.
Addressing the linkages between CEE threats and health, nutrition, poverty, education and child protection are therefore essential for protecting development gains and achieving development goals as set out in the SDGs, and are in line with UNICEF Armenia’s Country Programme Document 2015-2020 and the UNICEF Strategic Framework on Environmental Sustainability for Children 2016-2017.

Four main threats to children’s well-being were identified in the CLAC report: 1) climate change is expected to exacerbate many of the conditions that lead to children being deprived of their rights; 2) climate change and environmental degradation are impacting rural communities’ livelihoods and food security; 3) air pollution and associated heavy metal contamination threaten children’s health in a number of hotspots across the country; and 4) indoor air pollution in the home and in schools presents a serious risk to children’s health. The risk of indoor air pollution due to the burning of solid fuels in homes and schools for heating is high throughout Armenia.

The CLAC report also included recommendations on the way forward for UNICEF Armenia and what can be done to better address the identified issues. A CEE focal point could be established that would be responsible for engaging in adaptation and mitigation dialogue, and communicating and coordinating UNICEF’s CEE work and messages both within and outside of the organization (i.e. with government, donors and implementing partners and the wider public). A stakeholder engagement strategy could be developed that would include production of information and advocacy materials to build greater understanding and demand for the inclusion of child-sensitive planning and policy within CEE activities. A children’s and CEE roundtable discussion forum could be established to bring together government agencies, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other potential partners in both the child and CEE spheres. Time could be allocated to continued learning about CEE within each UNICEF Armenia section/division, coupled with developing a formal internal mechanism for improved coordination between sectors to identify joint actions for CEE. Children’s voices could be raised on climate issues, and advocacy could be conducted for greater inclusion of inputs from children into the design process and participation of children in the implementation of CEE initiatives. External operations could be greened. Building on the UNICEF Armenia’s exemplary actions in internal, office greening, directing a stronger focus on external greening outside of the office, within the programme activities, could be considered. The report and recommendations will be duly considered during the mid-term review that will take place in 2018.

**Strategic Plan 2018-2021**

UNICEF Armenia staff were introduced to the new Strategic Plan 2018-2021, and analysed the links to the SDGs and the current Country Programme implementation. UNICEF Armenia will undertake a mid-term review in 2018, which is another opportunity to further align the Country Programme with the Strategic Plan.

**Summary Notes and Acronyms**

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<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>CEE –</td>
<td>climate, environment and energy</td>
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Capacity Development

UNICEF Armenia coordinated efforts to identifying capacity gaps with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Justice Academy, Yerevan State University, Yerevan State Pedagogical University, World Vision, Save the Children and local organizations for continuous capacity building of case managers and social workers, potential foster parents, school authorities and local administrators, teachers and representatives of law enforcement and the judiciary. Over 2,100 professionals were trained as well as 93 potential foster families.

The capacity of Yerevan State Pedagogical University to provide pre-service training to future teachers was addressed through a strong collaboration with the University of Minnesota from the United States. Training on International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) was organized for 40 organizations and more than 60 specialists, enhancing their knowledge in partnership with Jonkoping University, Sweden. In collaboration with the Special Olympics, UNICEF Armenia also supported capacity development of physical education teachers in working with children with disabilities.

UNICEF Armenia supported the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisations (GAVI) graduation action plan activities to ensure sustainability of the immunization programme. The capacities of immunization personnel to manage vaccination in accordance with new guidelines were strengthened, and an immunization web platform for effective communication was created.

To preclude misclassification of births and misreporting of neonatal deaths in the state registration system, e-based forms for registration and reporting of live births and stillbirths were introduced, and all relevant staff were trained on its usage and related processes.
UNICEF Armenia and the Human Rights Defender’s Office (HRDO) designed and implemented training for HRDO staff and representatives from civil society for better protection and monitoring of child rights.

The skills of more than 150 key provincial emergency, territorial development and education administrators were improved in effective school disaster management and disaster risk-informed development planning at the local level.

**Evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy**

UNICEF Armenia continued its partnerships with the National Statistical Service (NSS) and line ministries, generating data on child poverty, including baseline data on child-related SDG indicators as part of the national SDG agenda and the SDG Innovation Lab.

UNICEF Armenia’s advocacy resulted in consideration of child rights in key national strategic documents, such as the 2017-2022 Government Programme, the 2017-2021 National Strategy for the Protection of Child Rights, the 2017-2019 Human Rights Action Plan and the new law on domestic violence. Child rights were also considered in the government’s commitments to childcare system reform, child health and survival, enrolment in preschool education, child rights monitoring and budgeting for children.

UNICEF Armenia’s policy dialogue resulted in the clearly stated political will to reduce the number of residential institutions and reallocate state funds to prevention programmes, and the expansion of community and family-based alternatives with a cost-benefit analysis of the transformation process. Changes were reflected in more than 20 legal and strategic documents, including the newly adopted amendments to the Family Code, the Concept Paper on Foster Care and the National Strategy on Alternative Care Services for Children in Difficult Life Circumstances.

UNICEF Armenia advocated for the inclusion of the “Every Newborn Action Plan” concept into the National Strategy on Child Health and Development, paving the way for improving neonatal services informed by assessment of neonatal care services at maternity and primary health care levels. An evaluation of breastfeeding practices, the organization of parliamentary discussions on violations of breastfeeding legislation and an intensive advocacy campaign were conducted in order to encourage further progress in increasing the exclusive breastfeeding rate. UNICEF Armenia also supported the development of an improved system for registering child injuries and trauma.

Thank to joint advocacy with MoTAD, a module for collecting and analysing school safety data was incorporated into the national Education Management Information System. A study on children victims and witnesses was supported in partnership with the MoJ.

**Partnerships**

UNICEF Armenia continued to strengthen its partnerships with the government and with civil society organizations. Collaboration with UN and other international agencies was strengthened, and while the partnership with United States Agency for International Development (USAID) came to an early end, new donor partnerships were established with the Government of Bulgaria as well as with Armenian diaspora in Argentina.

UNICEF Armenia’s collaboration with the Russian Federation on strengthening neonatal care
services brought a new partnership with St. Petersburg Paediatric University and its Perinatology Clinic. An exchange of visits and a training course for Armenian specialists were planned.

The partnership with the Armenian General Benevolent Union was institutionalized through a memorandum of understanding on the together4armenia.am diaspora engagement platform. More than 2,000 beneficiaries were reached, facilitating 60 skills-transfer workshops by Armenian professionals, fostering local development, and benefiting children, communities and civil society organizations.

UNICEF Armenia and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) partnered in developing baseline data on child-related indicators as part of the country’s overall SDG agenda. Good partnerships with other UN agencies were also reflected in joint programming on human rights, disabilities and human security.

UNICEF Armenia collaborated with the Government, the Asian Development Bank, WB, UNDP, and the Armenian Territorial Development Fund on the development of guidelines for new or retrofitting school design. This partnership helped the urban development committee to adopt a flexible approach in piloting new standards for building codes, including earthquake resistance.

UNICEF Armenia and the World Bank continued their close collaboration and coordination in furthering the reform of integrated social services in Armenia through sharing information, aligning priorities, planning joint activities and advocacy. With the European Union (EU), information was shared and priorities aligned to support the Government to implement both child-friendly and gender-sensitive budgeting.

**External communication and public advocacy**

UNICEF Armenia used external communication and public advocacy strategically to promote the country programme and its implementation in 2017, including promotion of breastfeeding, social inclusion of children with disabilities and the rights of children to live in a family environment. UNICEF Armenia also participated in a number of global campaigns, including Children Uprooted, Vaccines Work, Early Moments Matter, World Breastfeeding Week, World’s Largest Lesson, Freedom for Girls, and State of the World's Children.

The highlight was the Children’s Take Over of the National Assembly on November 20. In addition to members of Parliament, Government ministers also attended, as well as children. Five adolescent speakers, aged 14-18, voiced children’s needs in education, health, nutrition and social inclusion, as well as the need to end violence.

Promotion of breastfeeding was celebrated in June with a public reward ceremony for promoters of breastfeeding, and the release of a user-friendly video encyclopaedia with information and practical tools for mothers and healthcare providers. The ceremony was celebrated with parents and children in a park in Yerevan.

Based on 2016 evidence on the most at risk out-of-school children and children at risk of dropout, and the introduction of 12-year compulsory schooling from September 2017, UNICEF Armenia supported the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) to launch a nationwide campaign entitled “12 years of free schooling. 12 steps that guarantee a better future.” This initiative was designed to renew a call for action to education stakeholders, including teachers, parents and community leaders, to ensure schooling for all children.

The reach indicators were maximized on Facebook (impressions reached 959,696 around World Children’s Day). The number of web users increased by 20 per cent. Engagement improved across all channels (60 per cent on Facebook, 400 per cent on Twitter, 337 per cent on Instagram, 145 per cent increase in returning web visitors).

**South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation**

Among the South-South cooperation activities that UNICEF Armenia supported in 2017 was a new agreement signed with the Government of Bulgaria to support the Government of Armenia in applying the Bulgarian experience of child care system reform. This built on earlier sharing of expertise between the two countries. A study visit to Georgia was also organized for Armenian government representatives to observe and exchange information on child care reform in Georgia. A high-level international conference was organized in Yerevan on the rights of the child to live in a family, in partnership with the HRDO. Representatives from the Ombudsman Offices from ten countries participated, promoting exchanges of information, good practices and lessons learned in the area of child protection.

Representatives of the Government participated in an international conference on poverty measurements in Morocco, where Armenia’s Child Poverty study was shared.

UNICEF Armenia benefited from South-South cooperation through participation of Armenia’s representatives in the “Investing in Children” Seminar in Argentina. The Armenian delegates had the opportunity not only to learn about recent developments in budgeting for children but also to share the latest developments in public finance for child-related activities from Armenia, such as a cost-benefit analysis on preschool education and alternative care for children.

**Identification and promotion of innovation**

UNICEF Armenia tested a new approach to training justice professionals with the goal of developing knowledge on international standards in the field of rights of children in contact with the law. Taking note of the fact that the biggest challenge in professional training of judges and prosecutors is lack of time and flexibility, resulting in low motivation to engage in learning processes, UNICEF Armenia in cooperation with the Justice Academy of Armenia developed and tested a distance learning course on the rights of children in contact with the law. The course provided judges and prosecutors with the necessary flexibility and support to learn at a preferred pace and obtain feedback from peers and trainers.

The course was successfully taken by 120 judges and prosecutors in 2017 and incorporated in the curriculum of the Justice Academy of Armenia. The course will be available for around 150 justice professionals each year. In addition, course materials are publicly available on the website of the Justice Academy.

The course develops knowledge of UN standards on juvenile justice and access to justice for children, and will allow judges and prosecutors to apply child-friendly approaches in justice processes. While this intervention was not necessarily innovative in global terms, it was new for the country and especially for the target audience. It allowed UNICEF Armenia to reach justice professionals who are otherwise difficult to reach. Even more importantly, it underlined the
multidisciplinary nature of justice for children, establishing links between the judiciary and social services that did not exist before.

**Support to integration and cross-sectoral linkages**

UNICEF Armenia supported cross-sectoral cooperation with different line ministries, governmental institutions and local government bodies. While challenging, there were examples of successful cross-sectoral coordination and collaboration providing preliminary results.

Implementation of the new ICF model for disability assessment in Armenia required a strong cross-sectoral collaboration between different government ministries and civil society organizations. While the ground for such cooperation has been laid, more advocacy and stronger coordination mechanisms are needed to ensure full implementation of the model, to enhance access to community-based services and to support an inclusive environment for children with disabilities.

UNICEF Armenia engaged with a number of line ministries, HRDO and the Parliament to discuss the application of a child rights monitoring system (CRM) as a comprehensive system of collecting, analysing and reporting on the situation of child rights in Armenia. Intensive advocacy resulted in a draft Law on Child Rights being presented at the end of 2017 that emphasizes the importance of systematic and comparable data collection through a nationally established system.

A good example of cross-sectoral collaboration is the functioning of the National Council on Access to Justice, led by the MoJ with support from UNICEF Armenia, which brings together all relevant state actors and some leading non-state actors. In addition to issues related to juvenile justice, the Council discussed broader topics and facilitated initiatives related to violence against children, including Armenia’s joining the WePROTECT Network and Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

The work on development of the universal risk-based home visiting model for young children enhanced collaboration between health and social protection services, in order to ensure healthy growth, nutrition and holistic development of young children across the country. Efforts were taken to include the most remote areas and the poorest families.

**Human rights-based approach to cooperation**

UNICEF Armenia continued to support the implementation of the 2013 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to Armenia, and the recommendations from the second Universal Periodic Review in 2015. Particular efforts were made to support the implementation of the recommendations related to children’s right to live in a family environment and the promotion of family-like alternative care.

Support was given to the Government for ongoing childcare reform. Major advancements were made on decrees approved to increase the number of foster families in 2018 and the return of children to their families of origin, and to establish integrated social services to the families of returned children and other vulnerable children. UNICEF Armenia contributed to the development and adoption of a number of key documents, including Amendments to the Family Code, the Strategic Programme for Protection of Child Rights and the Action Plan for 2017-2021, as well as to the revision of the Law on the Rights of the Child.

UNICEF Armenia also contributed to the report on the progress of implementation of the
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities submitted by the Government to the relevant Committee in the first periodic reporting cycle. Together with UNDP, UNICEF supported the Government with the development of the National Strategy on Inclusion of Persons with Disability and the Action Plan 2017-2021 as well as a detailed Action Plan for 2018, with a focus on enhancing children’s issues in the disability policy reform in line with the Committee’s recommendations in the Concluding Observations.

UNICEF Armenia continued to support the strengthening of the HRDO in developing a complaint mechanism and direct access of children to the HRDO.

In partnership with UNDP and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and with support of the EU, UNICEF Armenia provided technical assistance to the Government in the implementation of the National Strategy on Protection of Human Rights and the 2017-2019 Action Plan.

UNICEF Armenia will be part of the roll-out of the UN System Framework for Action on Equality as part of the UN Country Team in 2018.

**Gender equality**

Gender equality remains a key issue in Armenia, which has advanced from 102 in 2016 to 97 of 144 countries in 2017 on the Global Gender Gap Index. Gender inequalities continue in many forms, including, but not limited to, prenatal sex selection and gender-based violence.

In line with UNICEF’s Gender Action Plan, UNICEF Armenia continues to strengthen its capacity on gender equality in its programming through mainstreaming, and in targeted gender priorities. The UNICEF Regional Gender Adviser provided support to the gender focal point and the office as a whole, and also assisted with interagency coordination. UNICEF Armenia has established a gender focal point team, which includes the focal point, a gender officer and the Deputy Representative.

Among new tasks in 2017 was the co-leadership of the Extended UN Gender Thematic Group, with over 50 members from government, civil society and the donor community. The group discussed the new draft national gender strategy, and a new draft work plan for the group was developed. UNICEF Armenia led the UN’s actions in 2017 during the 16 day campaign “Leave No One Behind – End Violence against Women and Girls”. The issue of domestic violence and the need for the new law to be adopted were highlighted; a new law was adopted by the Parliament shortly thereafter.

Through a targeted project on prenatal sex selection in Armenia, in a partnership between UNICEF, the Swiss National Committee and University of Zurich, field research on the root causes of prenatal sex selection was finalized in 2017. The preliminary findings will be presented in 2018. The overall budget is US$104,667 with co-funding from University of Zurich of US$20,000.

UNICEF Armenia continued to work with the Government and partners to incorporate gender issues and considerations in disaster risk assessments and risk reduction actions, as well as in national data generation with sex and age disaggregation. New modules in the Education Management Information System also incorporated gender issues.

**Environmental sustainability**
In response to the Executive Directive on “Addressing the Impact of Climate Change on Children”, UNICEF Armenia together with UNICEF’s Division for Data Research and Policy prepared a draft CLAC report. It provides the essential baseline information on CEE issues affecting children and provided recommendations on how UNICEF Armenia and partners could engage in these issues. Work will be undertaken to gradually integrate CEE issues into programming.

UNICEF Armenia continued to support the Environmental Education Network, which works with the Government in promoting environmental education in all schools. Support was also provided to the Acopian Center for the Environment of the American University of Armenia to review school curricula and national education policies for inclusion of education for sustainable development.

UNICEF Armenia leveraged support to one project from the UNDP Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme to decrease the environmental and financial burden of four newly established alternative preschool services in one consolidated community in Armenia. Photovoltaic panels for electricity and heating were installed and environmental education materials were developed that were adapted for children aged three to six. This demonstrated UNICEF Armenia’s leverage in terms of advocating on inter-related CEE and children’s issues.

Steps have already been taken by UNICEF Armenia toward reducing its environmental footprint, including analysing the water and energy consumption in UN House and using only LED bulbs for energy-efficient lighting in the offices. While renovating the office, energy and water-efficient equipment was installed, such as low flow toilets and a new air-distribution system. A space-efficient design was used for the new main conference room. An efficient, safe and reliable solar water heater was installed, replacing inefficient electric water heaters. Waste separation and recycling were used systematically by all staff.

**Effective leadership**

Within the current Country Programme Document, the first two year rolling work plan was reviewed at a joint meeting with all partners in December 2017, and the implementation status and results achieved were assessed.

UNICEF Armenia’s office management and performance and programme progress were monitored on a regular basis through regular country management team meetings, programme coordination meetings and operation team meetings to ensure quality and timely management and implementation. Systematic review of the InSight performance system was used to track management and performance indicators. Management decisions were communicated to all staff through emails and all-staff meetings.

The business continuity plan was updated in December, including a test with all staff participating in an interactive online Skype meeting.

UNICEF Armenia was among the first countries in the region to migrate successfully from the Early Warning Early Action platform to the new Early Preparedness and Response Platform. All reference documents and other information were uploaded in the new system.

New UNICEF guidelines and operational procedures were discussed by the country management team and presented to staff. Results of the Global Staff Survey were discussed by the local staff association and the joint consultative committee. A half-day mini-retreat was
organized to agree on an action plan. UNICEF Armenia also joined UNICEF’s global initiative and organized a number of activities during Ethics Month.

Particular attention in 2017 was paid to capacity development of staff. Group training was provided to all staff in areas identified in the annual management plan: procurement, results-based management, performance management, advocacy and emergency preparedness. In addition to the group training, other learning opportunities were made available, including stretch assignments in other UNICEF offices.

Office greening and renovation works started in 2016 were finalized, improving working conditions for staff as well as providing energy savings.

**Financial resources management**

UNICEF Armenia regularly monitored balances and commitments of funds to ensure that Regular Resources and Institutional Budget (IB) funds were fully spent by 31 December 2017. Other grants were monitored to ensure utilisation before grant expiration dates. There was an issue regarding funds appearing in the monitoring reports as unspent while the office had no way of utilizing them, e.g. an unspent balance for a junior professional post. The annual budget was prepared in January 2017 and its implementation regularly monitored.

As a result of thorough analysis of non-post IB actual needs, the IB budget was increased for 2017-2021. Although the increased amount was received in September, UNICEF Armenia managed to fully utilize these funds by the end of 2017, meeting both short-term and long-term needs.

UNICEF Armenia continued to follow procedures to ensure internal controls were in place. All non-purchase order payment requests were released by the operations manager in MyCase. Bank reconciliations were done in a timely manner. The local staff payroll was processed by the Global Shared Service Centre, and the accuracy of the records of overtime inputs and relevant funding sources were checked by management. Cash flow was monitored, which ensured low month-end bank balances, contributing to efficient use of UNICEF resources. All bank transfers were done using a double-approving modality mostly via e-banking. UNICEF Armenia ensured internal control in regard to the segregation of duties for payment approvals.

The transition to the new electronic harmonized approach to cash transfers (eZHACT) system improved the efficiency of operations and business continuity. While transaction processing was simplified, implementation of some actions in the eZHACT was challenging due to data migration. These challenges were successfully resolved.

**Fundraising and donor relations**

In 2017, UNICEF Armenia developed a resource mobilization strategy, identifying new potential donors in the private sector and among the Eastern European countries, and among the Armenian diaspora. These efforts met with partial success.

While the available Other Resources were almost on target for 2017, resource mobilization efforts for the coming years experienced some challenges. UNICEF Armenia was not successful in fund-raising for adolescent and youth programming, so this programme component of the Country Programme Document remained limited. The early termination of the USAID-supported project in the child protection area in November 2017 required an intensified effort to mobilize resources from other donors in order to prevent irreversible damage to the
reform process. Given the end-of-year pressure, these efforts were fairly successful, bringing in a new donor, the Government of Bulgaria, and additional support from the UNICEF Swiss Committee.

However, the funding amounts are not sufficient and further efforts are needed to replace the lost funding. With the help of UNICEF Argentina, an initial amount was raised for children in Armenia, as part of larger efforts to engage the Armenian diaspora in Argentina.

After initial research and meetings, several funding proposals were developed and submitted to local private companies, to date without success.

The joint project with UNDP on disabilities received new funding for 2017-2019 from the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD). The joint project on Human Rights by UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF also received new funding for 2017-2019 from the EU. A joint proposal for the UN Trust Fund for Human Security by UNICEF and five other UN agencies was shortlisted for funding at the end of 2017.

Funds utilization was closely monitored, and a 100 per cent implementation rate was reached. All donor reports were submitted on time. Regular meetings were held with Embassies of donor countries and the EU.

**Evaluation and research**

The overall performance of the evaluation function, including planning for research impact monitoring and evaluation (PRIME) preparation and management, was satisfactory and took place as planned. The PRIME implementation was monitored, and in 2017 a total of six research/studies/evaluations were on track.

A final evaluation of the EU-supported migration project was presented for validation at the end of 2016 and finalized in March 2017. UNICEF Armenia also commissioned a mid-term evaluation of a major project on child care system reform. The draft report was received at the end of 2017 and will be finalized in the first quarter of 2018.

The evaluation of the 3.5-year migration project was rated as satisfactory by Universalia in 2017 in terms of quality of evidence collected, related findings and recommendations. The final report was posted on the evaluation and research database, and the management response was developed and uploaded into the management response tracking system. Evidence generated from the evaluation was shared with the donor and was used to help shape the activities of UNICEF Armenia in a number of areas. It also informed planning by other actors, such as the World Bank and the Armenian General Benevolent Union. The recommendations were discussed with the national partners, who aligned their actions accordingly.

The management response reflected policy, programming and advocacy actions derived from the evaluation findings and recommendations. Financial and other resources were leveraged to ensure sustainability of the proposed set of measures under the project interventions, which targeted labour migrants in Armenia. In addition, the evaluation ensured the continuation of good practices in terms of producing quality evaluation reports. It was compliant with UN Evaluation Group and UNICEF standards, and also enhanced local evaluation capacity.

**Efficiency gains and cost savings**
UNICEF Armenia is located in the UN House, which is provided by the Government of Armenia free of charge. Cost savings were achieved through using common services in the building, including building management and security services. In 2017, the effectiveness and efficiency of operational costs were linked to the implementation of the Business Operations Strategy and usage of common UN long-term agreements (LTAs) for a number of goods and services.

HSBC Bank Armenia continues to apply special rates to UNICEF Armenia for bank charges, currency conversion and interest, as a result of which more than US$6,000 was saved. Staff continued to benefit from a common mobile package with free calls among UN staff. UNICEF Armenia continued to use UNDP internet as a back-up channel. Having two internet providers while paying for only one resulted in savings of more than US$1,000. According to the UNICEF LTA with the internet provider, internet connectivity costs in 2017 were reduced by 17 per cent compared to 2016. Additional funds were saved by using Skype for Business, local VoIP phone service and the Global System for Mobile Gateway for international and mobile calls. Free warehouse space was provided by the Ministry of Emergency Situations and led to savings of US$2,700. Close monitoring of field trips reduced vehicle maintenance costs. The greening of the office and making use of interns and volunteers also contributed to cost savings.

Harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT) micro-assessments and financial spotchecks were conducted by professional audit companies, common UN Armenia LTA holders. The increased effectiveness of the HACT implementation resulted in cost savings of more than US$12,000. Usage of other UN Common LTAs, including fuel procurement, telecommunications, hotel, travel, vehicle maintenance, customs brokerage and UN doctor services, brought savings of almost US$25,000. The savings are small but significant within a modest budget.

Supply management

The total value of procurement performed by the office, as well as supplies and services received in 2017, was US$3,777,704, as presented in the below table.

The value of programme supplies in the local warehouse as of 31-Dec-2017 was US$129,619. Fifteen feeders for flour fortification (US$108,527) made up the bulk of the inventory. As of the end of the year, UNICEF Armenia was actively working with the producer to return the feeders, as the Law on Flour Fortification was rejected by Armenian Parliament and the feeders cannot be used in Armenia. UNICEF Armenia also maintained pre-positioned supplies valued at US$8,606 in the warehouse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supply and logistics key figures</th>
<th>US$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total procurement performed by UNICEF Armenia</td>
<td>310,654.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total supplies and services received by UNICEF Armenia</td>
<td>3,467,049.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total supplies managed in UNICEF Armenia’s controlled warehouses</td>
<td>129,618.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNICEF Armenia was assigned the role of single source provider of vaccines and immunization devices by a special decree of the Government. During 2017, UNICEF Armenia, MoH and Supply Division collaborated to ensure successful and timely provision of vaccines and sustain high coverage rates.

UNICEF Armenia actively used Common UN LTAs, which contributed to effective and efficient usage of resources.

In 2017, staff capacity building in the field of procurement/supply management was enhanced. Procurement training was organized in Yerevan for all UNICEF Armenia staff and two staff members from UNICEF Georgia. The training was conducted by the procurement specialist from UNICEF Ethiopia, and focused on procurement planning stages, steps, relevant policies, and actions in Vision. UNICEF Armenia staff participated in the following training activities/meetings in Supply Division: supply focal point – global supply meeting; emergency focal point – emergency preparedness & response supply/logistics training; and communications assistant – procurement for services training. The international cash transfer (ICT) assistant in UNICEF Armenia also trained staff on different areas of supply and procurement based on needs and knowledge gaps.

**Security for staff and premises**

Overall security of UN staff and premises are ensured by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) Armenia. The UNICEF Armenia office is located in the common UN House.

UNICEF Armenia is a member of the Security Management Team and participated in all the UN Armenia security meetings. In 2017, security briefings were provided by UNDSS to new staff, consultants, interns and visitors on mission upon their arrival at the duty station. Travelling staff members completed the on-line training on basic and advanced security in the field.

The following training/drills were conducted by UNDSS: monthly morning and residential radiochecks, wardens/deputy wardens’ training, and Security Management Team training on emergency communication and handling of suspicious packages.

The majority of UNICEF Armenia staff is trained in safe and secure approaches in field environments. The emergency focal point participated in emergency supply training and the Representative and Deputy Representative participated in a sub-regional humanitarian crisis simulation exercise.

A total of US$7,700 received from the Central Investment Fund (Security Fund) was fully spent on first aid kits for all vehicles and the office, the installation of shutter resistant film on all newly installed glass surfaces, and on UNICEF Armenia’s share of the UN premises’ security costs.

UNICEF Armenia’s vehicles were prepared for winter, complying with Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) regulations. One old field vehicle was replaced.

**Human resources**

In 2017, five recruitment processes were undertaken to fill four fixed-term posts, - access to justice NOB, child protection PA/GS6, executive assistant/GS5, M&E specialist/NOC, and one temporary appointment post education officer/NOA. Direct selection was applied in one of the processes through hiring the candidate from the local talent pool.
As part of the Global Programme Budget Review exercise, a new IB post for administrative assistant/GS5 was approved. UNICEF Armenia continued to benefit from local and international interns, with a total of eight in 2017.

The 2016 performance evaluation reports (PERs) were 100 per cent completed in Achieve by the end of February 2017.

The annual training plan was developed based on office priorities. All staff was trained in results-based management, performance management, procurement and advocacy by external trainers. Presentations on PERs in Achieve and eZHACT were delivered to all staff. Staff also participated in other technical and leadership training activities. New staff took the mandatory online courses. Two staff members undertook stretch assignments: the human resources (HR) assistant to Supply Division Copenhagen and the health and nutrition PA to UNICEF Libya. The ICT assistant went on a surge mission to Ukraine.

UNICEF HR policies on learning days and flexi-work arrangements were applied in 2017. As part of the Emergency Preparedness Platform, the emergency staff job descriptions/terms of reference and needs were updated by HR and programme sections. The local staff association and management developed an action plan based on the Global Staff Survey results, which was then discussed and agreed at staff meetings and joint consultative committees. It was decided to organize a staff retreat to discuss personal empowerment, improved work distribution and communication, and work/life balance and to engage with Regional HR on career development.

**Effective use of information and communication technology**

During 2017, UNICEF Armenia followed the UNICEF ICT standards, strategies and guidelines, and new technologies were introduced and used in the office.

UNICEF Armenia was operated by, and reinforced the use of, cloud-based applications for working efficiently. All users during the reporting period moved from the file server to using UNICEF One Driver. Preparatory work was undertaken to move to team site in SharePoint, and a Skype call consultation was held with UNICEF Headquarters and IT Services and Support on best practices to help shape the new UNICEF Armenia team site in SharePoint.

The collaborative tools in the Outlook calendar were systematically used for scheduling meetings and other planning purposes.

The acquisition of new equipment improved users’ efficiency by reducing the equipment downtime for maintenance and troubleshooting, and improving compatibility to new UNICEF systems. All office laptops were migrated to Windows 10.

Throughout the year, Skype for Business was actively used by staff to host online meetings, conduct interviews and participate in online webinars. This improved time use efficiency and cut down costs of telephone charges, for both local and international calls. Moreover, the use of videoconference services also contributed to increased efficiency and effective use of resources.

UNICEF Armenia continued to use the UNDP internet link as a backup for UNICEF’s own internet services.

All staff were equipped with laptops. Critical staff were equipped with walkie-talkies and 4G wifi.
internet modems, upgraded from 3G, ensuring better internet connectivity out of the office. A successful test of the business continuity plan was undertaken in December, with a meeting conducted from remote locations with the participation of all staff.

**Programme Components from RAM**

**ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS**

**OUTCOME 1** Survival, health and development of children aged 0-6 years

Overall, the objective of this programme component is to address equity gaps in the health system and increase access to inclusive kindergartens for vulnerable children and their families in social services. Building on the well-developed primary healthcare structure as the best channel to access families with young children, and in cooperation with education and social services, it will ensure early identification of children with malnutrition, health problems, developmental delays and maltreatment, to ensure the provision of care and support and increase promotion of healthy behaviours.

**Analytical statement of progress**

Health and development of children up to six years of age was addressed through interventions involving the health and education systems, as well as through public advocacy and parenting education.

The results of DHS 2015-16 demonstrate the progress that Armenia achieved in improving child nutrition. In particular, the decrease in the stunting rate (19 to 9 per cent) and increase in the exclusive breastfeeding rate (35 to 45 per cent), confirms the effectiveness of continuous and strategic programmatic interventions. To sustain the success and ensure further improvements, efforts in this area will be re-enforced, with inter-sectoral collaboration prioritized.

UNICEF Armenia initiated several actions aimed at strengthening neonatal care services through generating evidence, developing an enabling policy framework, and strengthening cooperation with key partners. The “Every Newborn Action Plan” concept was introduced and incorporated into the National Child Health and Development Strategy. The introduction of special electronic forms for registration and reporting of livebirths and stillbirths as well as a unified reporting/analytical form on child traumas and injuries will contribute to strengthening data reliability and management. Support was provided to implementation of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisations (GAVI) graduation action plan activities to ensure the sustainability of the immunization programme and vaccine procurement processes.

UNICEF Armenia continued to work intensively with the MoH and regional health authorities to introduce a risk-based universal-progressive home visiting model. This will aim to ensure that children’s healthy growth and development and proper nutrition are assessed comprehensively and addressed through the joint efforts of health and social protection services.

In 2017, the legal and policy framework related to preschool education was analysed for identification of gaps in providing alternative measures for preschool education for the most disadvantaged children, mainly in small remote communities. Realizing these shortcomings, and based on UNICEF Armenia’s advocacy, the Government of Armenia included the development of cost-effective preschool education models in the 2017-2022 Government Programme and initiated an amendment of the Law on Preschool Education. The Government also embarked on the development of a legal and policy framework for alternative preschool models. The draft law on preschool and a decree were publicized for comments and opinions until mid-November.
2017, which provided UNICEF Armenia a window of opportunity to ensure sustainability of the
developed alternative preschool education model and to revise and upgrade the legal
framework around preschool education. However, more investment from the Government and
from international donors is required to close the equity gap to apply this model across the
country.

**OUTPUT 1** The programme will identify and address underlying systemic bottlenecks and equity
gaps in infant mortality, by increasing sustainable state financing for child health care,
strengthening data reliability/management, improving quality assurance and capacity for service
delivery, and supporting the introduction of the child nutrition surveillance system. In order to
reduce child mortality among the most vulnerable families, priority will be given to strengthening
neonatal and paediatric care at the subnational level, improving referral mechanisms and
immunization services. There would also be a focus on decreasing the number of children
unnecessarily referred to tertiary facilities who can be successfully treated at the regional facility
level.

**Analytical statement of progress**
Strategically designed interventions in child nutrition conducted throughout recent years resulted
in a significant improvement in infant and young children’s nutrition in the country. In particular,
there was a 50 per cent reduction in the stunting rate.

Within the framework of the introduction of a risk-based universal-progressive home visiting
model, UNICEF Armenia developed and introduced standard tools for home visiting, and
increased the capacities of 500 health providers on providing parents with age-specific
counselling and support during home visits and during each visit of a child to a primary health
care facility. In addition, the development of a strategy for strengthening the home-visiting
system was supported, which will become a guiding document for partners to plan long-term
interventions and activities.

UNICEF Armenia, in partnership with the Center for Disease Control and civil society
organization partners, initiated an integrated social mobilization and capacity-building campaign
in four regions of the country, creating a platform to support collaboration between primary
healthcare providers and parents.

Prioritizing the need for ensuring the sustainability of achievements in exclusive breastfeeding
(35 per cent/DHS 2010 and 45 per cent/DHS 2015-16), UNICEF Armenia and the MoH: (a)
evaluated the breastfeeding ten-step practices in maternities and polyclinics as a basis for
development of further strategies and action plans; (b) organized parliamentary discussions on
violations of breastfeeding legislation and developed an action plan for overcoming them; and
(c) implemented an intensive breastfeeding/infant and young child feeding advocacy campaign
through multiple channels and mechanisms that reached key policy makers and thousands of
service providers and parents. UNICEF Armenia worked with the MoH and civil society
organization partners to release a user-friendly video encyclopaedia on all aspects of
breastfeeding, including the common problems facing lactating women and how to overcome
them. The official presentation of the encyclopaedia took place on June 1, during the Children’s
Protection Day celebrations, and brought together policy makers, UNICEF Armenia
representatives and around 500 children and parents. The encyclopaedia was produced in a
DVD format with short thematic videos and distributed to 325 healthcare facilities to be
incorporated into parental education.
OUTPUT 2 The programme will enable preschool expansion and inclusiveness by designing alternative models for remote, sparsely populated communities; strengthening professionals' capacities and practices; providing policy advice to address inclusion; and supporting improved data management. It will focus on sustainable state financing to reduce gaps in access to inclusive preschools, and will promote effective community models, such as fee waivers for the poorest families, subsidized by other parents. The programme will also support early identification/early intervention to prevent developmental delays and disabilities through refining health providers’ functional responsibilities and capacities so that parents can be trained in appropriate parenting techniques.

Analytical statement of progress
In small communities where the number of preschool-aged children is below 10-15, regular or school-based preschool services are not cost-effective and represent a burden on the already small community budget. Therefore children in these communities do not have access to early learning services.

The Lori region has some recently consolidated communities and the highest number and proportion of communities with a population under 300 inhabitants (56 of 86 communities), particularly children (for example in Atan community there are ten children six years and under). It was therefore decided to model and test alternative models of preschool services in Tumanyan consolidated community of Lori marz. UNICEF Armenia and partners established preschool services in four small settlements of Tumanyan community, benefiting a total of 80 children aged three to six. Since the settlements are very small and linked to a larger central community, UNICEF Armenia proposed an early childhood development cluster concept that envisaged centralized governance of early learning centres within a state-defined core package of services for all children. Thus, the existing preschool in Tumanyan town (the administrative centre of Tumanyan consolidated community) served as a methodological hub and administrative centre for the newly established services. The model was costed and recommendations on replication were presented to the Government of Armenia for adoption into new legislation and policies. Those recommendations and alternative forms of preschool education were included in the 2017-2022 Government Programme and amendments to the Law on Preschool Education.

UNICEF Armenia continued to engage in policy advocacy to advance the rights of one of the most marginalized group of children in Armenia – children with severe disabilities and developmental delays. As of 2017, around 120 children with disabilities have benefited from rehabilitation, development, psychosocial and education services available for children with severe and profound disabilities in Yerevan preschool in Malathia-Sebastia community. A high-level round table, chaired by the Speaker of the Parliament, was organized to present the results of “Improving community-based services for children with disabilities and developmental delays.” Topics for discussion included bottlenecks and difficulties that the country needs to overcome in the future to ensure that all children in need can benefit from this model throughout the country. In 2018, Save the Children Armenia will support the opening of similar centres in Lori and Gegharkhunik regions in collaboration with the “Arabkir” United Children’s Charity Foundation.

OUTCOME 2 Enhancement of the realization of the rights of children with disabilities
Children with disabilities face multiple deprivations and need a continuum of services. This component's overall objective is to reduce bottlenecks in policy and legislation, budgeting and
availability of services for children with disabilities, and to promote societal attitudes conducive to their full inclusion. Overall, this component will contribute to the needs of children with disabilities being reflected in education, health, child protection, justice and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.

**Analytical statement of progress**

UNICEF Armenia, in collaboration with the MoLSA, UNPRPD, UNDP, disabled people’s organizations, civil society and international experts, continued to support the transition to an ICF model across Armenia. Round One of the project was completed in May 2017. Activities included the tool for an Armenian context, systemic reforms at the ministerial level, development of a multi-stakeholder working group, awareness raising and pilot programmes.

The project laid the groundwork for strong alignment of the MoLSA reform process with reforms in education and health sectors carried out by the MoES and MoH. In particular, the MoLSA-led nation-wide efforts on the transition to an ICF-based disability assessment system and on the comprehensive de-institutionalization of children including children with disabilities align with the expansion of the child developmental assessment system by MoES, and the introduction of e-health system by MoH to result in a unified electronic information system for data management.

There was a need to ensure institutionalization of achieved results. Therefore UNICEF Armenia facilitated the development of the Round Two proposal, working closely with UNDP and MoLSA, and was successful in securing UNPRPD funding. The objective of the second project is to ensure the national application of the new model of disability assessment, enhance access to services, and support an inclusive environment for participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities.

Work on alignment of pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes continued in 2017 as part of the UNICEF Armenia-supported partnership between the University of Minnesota’s Global Resource Center and the Armenian State Pedagogical University and the significant in-service teacher training within the USAID-funded programme that took place in two regions of Armenia. While both interventions demonstrated considerable results in terms of practical application of IE principles, there is still a need to translate the changes into sustainable results fostering social and academic inclusion of children with disabilities.

**OUTPUT 1**

The programme will work to give children with disabilities greater visibility in national data collection through strengthening of cross-sectoral data management so that state policies/budgeting are better informed. The Government's efforts to improve the assessment of disability will be aligned with the ICF by revising eligibility criteria for benefits/services. Within this programme component, the Government will establish and expand existing rehabilitation services within the primary health-care system, as well as create community-based after-school care, development and respite services for children with disabilities and their families. Fostering cross-sectoral cooperation among education, health, child protection and social protection services for children with disabilities will be a key strategy to strengthen the exchange of information and referral mechanisms among outpatient health facilities, preschools and social services. The national IE system will be strengthened by transforming special schools into teaching support centres, developing the capacity of teaching/administrative staff, revising special-education needs assessments based on the ICF-CY (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth), changing funding mechanisms and improving quality of instruction. The programme will further work to ensure that positive
experiences and lessons learned from inclusive school policies and programmes are reflected in preschools.

**Analytical statement of progress**

There was an overall increased sensitivity about the rights of children with disabilities and application of ICF-CY for determination of disability and service provision because of consultation meetings and capacity enhancement initiatives held in 2017. Training on ICF-CY ideology and application was organized for 40 representatives of disabled people’s organizations, organizations of parents of children with disabilities, and organizations representing persons with disabilities. More than 60 specialists enhanced their knowledge on development, implementation and monitoring of individual rehabilitation plans using the World Health Organization ICF framework workshop facilitated by four international experts from Jonkoping University. With respect to data collection, the Washington Group’s short set of questions on disability and the Washington Group’s/UNICEF’s Child Functioning Module for improved identification, as well as systematic disaggregation across all sectors, was promoted among 30 policy makers from MoLSA, MoES, MoHand the NSS. This work will be continued in 2018 linked to the SDG nationalization and data collection processes.

UNICEF Armenia supported the production of Armenian language methodological literature to enhance in-service and pre-service teachers’ knowledge with respect to delivery of high-quality IE. Faculty of the University of Minnesota and Armenian State Pedagogical University developed webinars on three learning modules on disability inclusion methodologies, special education needs assessment, and individualized lesson plans for pre-services teachers. In addition, Armenian State Pedagogical University faculty developed eight modules for specialists from the psychological-pedagogical support centres and school-based multidisciplinary teams, such as physiotherapists, speech therapists, ergo-therapists and psychologists. Several workshops and master classes were organized for more than 300 teachers and specialists to enhance their knowledge delivering high-quality IE services for children with disabilities and their families.

The transformation of special schools and the expansion of IE continued to reach more than 260 schools. Approximately 1,700 trained teachers in Lori and Syunik regions demonstrated confidence in applying their knowledge for academic and social inclusion of children with disability. Based on the analysis of ongoing projects and consultation with the main stakeholders, including children with disability and their parents, UNICEF Armenia identified a need for expanding IE practices to all levels of education (from preschool to tertiary education, transition to work) and establishment of quality standards, monitoring and evaluation of IE practices and services for children with disability.

**OUTPUT 2** To reduce stigma and increase the participation of children with disabilities, this component will also focus on addressing social norms in preschools and schools, as well as on reducing the public’s acceptance of child abandonment because of disability by raising awareness of the rights of children with disabilities, promoting equal access to education and encouraging inclusive values and respect for diversity.

**Analytical statement of progress**

UNICEF Armenia supported the implementation of activities promoting general awareness raising on disability among school students from across the country registered on the Dasaran.am educational platform. A glossary of disability-related terms was placed on the platform and made available for both registered users and external visitors. The online quiz-game “My Friend Auguste,” based on the New York Times bestseller by R.J Palacia, Wonder,
and supported by the United States Embassy in Armenia, was successfully launched in the summer. The quiz aimed to promote the idea of social inclusion, IE and accessibility, while also breaking stereotypes around disability. The platform also organized an online painting contest enabling school students to picture their perception of disability and equal opportunities. Children from all regions of the country had the opportunity to participate and express their views on IE and equal opportunities.

On World Children’s Day, five adolescents took over the National Parliament in Armenia to talk about issues of importance to them, such as IE and disability rights, among others. One of the key adolescent speakers talked about her experiences, her transitions from school to school, and how stigma affected her as a student with a disability. The talk proved to be one of the most popular, and was covered by many media outlets. Disability rights were also a key narrative when children took over the social media pages of UNICEF Armenia’s Goodwill Ambassador, national football team captain Henrikh Mkhitaryan, generating massive digital engagement from international and local fans and followers.

On June 14, Mr. Mkhitaryan had a special meeting with children with and without disabilities, followed by a Facebook live event, which was widely covered in local mass media, during which he called for acceptance of children with disabilities in public schools. He also issued a special video message to teachers and parents on September 1, at the start of the academic year, calling for inclusion of students with disabilities in public schools.

In collaboration with Special Olympics Europe Eurasia, UNICEF Armenia worked to improve social inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities through unified sports activities. Training on unified sports for 34 physical education teachers of inclusive schools and 20 student-coaches was organized. Around 170 girls and boys with and without disabilities, aged 8-15, participated in multiple activities and competitions. A project impact assessment revealed that attitudes of physical education teachers, coaches, and children without disabilities taking part in unified sports were positively changed with a focus on social orientation. Children highlighted friendship and a sense of togetherness with children with intellectual disabilities.

Marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, UNICEF Armenia partnered with UNDP and the UN Department of Public Information to organize a three-day exhibition and sale of handicrafts by children and adults with disabilities, as well as a round-table discussion entitled "Empowering women and girls: Striving towards a sustainable and resilient society for all." The roundtable brought together policy makers, experts, persons and children with disabilities and their representative organizations, all of who discussed good practices and further joint activities to promote inclusion in the country.

**OUTCOME 3** Building on the reform of criminal and civil legislation and accompanying procedural codes, this component will assist efforts to establish a fair, timely and effective judicial system for children, as well as a child rights monitoring system that can address violations of rights for the most vulnerable children.

**Analytical statement of progress**
UNICEF Armenia continued its expert support to the development of legal and policy documents on child rights, as well as reflection of children’s issues in other documents of strategic concern. Most importantly, UNICEF Armenia’s advocacy and partnership with the MoJ, as well as the review of existing legislation for compliance with Committee on the Rights of the Child concluding observations and recommendations and respective international instruments in the
field of juvenile justice (e.g. the Hague Convention and Best Practice Guide), resulted in the inclusion of amendments to the Family Code on the best interests of the child, adoption and foster care. The Family Code was adopted by the Parliament in December 2017.

Draft amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure addressing the rights of child victims and witnesses were developed by the MoJ with support from UNICEF Armenia. UNICEF Armenia continued its support to the Council of Justice for Children under the MoJ with participation of MoLSA, MoH, MoES, the police, the NSS, and other relevant state and non-state stakeholders as a multisectoral and multi-stakeholder body to coordinate, inter alia, on prevention of and response to violence against children, within the wider scope of access to justice for children. With the support of UNICEF Armenia, the Charter of the Council was developed and was pending adoption by the MoJ at the end of 2017. UNICEF Armenia’s advocacy and collaboration with the Council led to Armenia joining the WePROTECT Global Alliance and the End Violence Against Children Global Partnership. At the same time, the new Law on Domestic Violence, which was adopted in December 2017, and which UNICEF Armenia also advocated for, created the framework for combatting domestic violence affecting children and women.

UNICEF Armenia also supported the institutionalization of capacity-development efforts for judges and prosecutors on the rights of children in contact with the law, including a distance/online learning course in the curriculum of the Justice Academy.

UNICEF Armenia worked closely with the NSS and development partners to generate evidence and collect reliable data on the situation of children in Armenia, particularly focusing on child needs, poverty measurement (monetary and multidimensional), child and maternal health and nutrition, as well as development of child-related SDG indicator baselines. One of the most visible successes of UNICEF Armenia’s advocacy was the institutionalization of multidimensional child poverty measurement as part of annual reporting by the NSS within its Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia report.

UNICEF Armenia also provided technical and administrative assistance to the implementation of the Armenia DHS 2015-2016 by the NSS with support of development partners. This document generated up-to-date estimates of key demographic and health indicators, including data on child and maternal health, nutrition and child protection. The Armenia DHS showed considerable progress in nutrition, particularly reduction of stunting and increase in exclusive breastfeeding, which are key areas of UNICEF Armenia’s work.

As part of the efforts to develop a CRM in the country, UNICEF Armenia continued to build the capacity of the Child Rights Unit of the HRDO and other stakeholders, resulting in the strengthening of the HRDO’s monitoring function and the release of three ad hoc reports of the Ombudsman on child rights. Simultaneously, as a result of UNICEF Armenia’s advocacy, the notion of CRM was included in the 2017-2021 National Child Rights Protection Strategy, which demonstrated the commitment of the Government to review and refine data collection methods, harmonize existing data and create the framework for comprehensive assessment of child rights in Armenia, particularly in the context of the SDGs.

**OUTPUT 1** The Country Programme will monitor barriers and bottlenecks faced by the most disadvantaged children in order to develop the most adequate strategies to help to reduce socioeconomic disparities. It will assist in establishing an equity-focused monitoring system to regularly inform policy and decision-making, with indicators agreed with partners and showing high disaggregation, based on internationally recognized standards. The Country Programme
will invest in harmonizing social statistics on child rights across state bodies to align with international standards, promoting the establishment of a designated institution to engage line ministries in implementing child rights policies in accordance with the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It will periodically publish a report on the state of children in Armenia. Programme baselines will rely on the 2015 Armenia DHS, the ILCS and government administrative data. Child poverty data will be monitored based on the annual report on Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia and by using a multiple overlapping deprivation analysis. Each key programme component will be externally evaluated in line with UNICEF evaluation policies.

**Analytical statement of progress**

UNICEF Armenia continued its close partnership with the NSS and other development actors for the generation of evidence on the situation of children in Armenia, referring to the SDG targets and indicators wherever possible.

More precisely, UNICEF Armenia further supported the development of child poverty data and information on child needs in Armenia as part of the Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia reporting system of the NSS. This included generation of child poverty data disaggregated by different demographic, geographical and socio-economic classifications, as well as measurement of multi-dimensional child poverty (N-MODA, SDG 1.2), which has been institutionalized by the NSS as part of annual reporting. The findings for 2017 do not show significant changes from 2016; every third child is still monetarily poor in Armenia, and every fourth is both poor and deprived. The urban-rural and geographical disparities in child poverty persist. Additionally, UNICEF Armenia used the opportunity of the nationwide household survey to incorporate questions related to early childhood development, which had not previously been measured. The results will be available in 2018.

Considerable advocacy efforts were undertaken by UNICEF Armenia to advance the concept of the child rights monitoring system (CRM), with sensitization of various high-level stakeholders on the topic, including in the Government, the Parliament and President’s Office, as well as with line ministries and HRDO. Subsequently, the CRM concept was embedded into the 2017-2021 National Child Rights Protection Strategy. In cooperation with the International Centre for Human Development, an analysis of the country context in terms of CRM was conducted, and included a review of child rights-related administrative data, statistics and systems identifying where Armenia stands regarding CRM. The analysis also highlighted the compatibility of child-focused data across different government agencies by addressing data gaps, discrepancies and missing data. The need for data harmonization and measurement became even more evident with the presentation of the nutrition results of the Armenia DHS study. Thus, the analysis, together with the ongoing exercise of developing baseline data on child-related SDG indicators by the NSS with UNICEF Armenia’s support, will form the basis for a broader discussion on CRM in the country and point the way forward. As part of awareness-raising efforts, the concept of child rights and CRM was introduced to 25 HRDO staff and NGO representatives with an aim to improve HRDO reporting through the CRM lens.

Finally, UNICEF Armenia continued its cooperation with Zurich University through the implementation of an experimental research study on prenatal sex selection aimed at measuring the social norms related to male preference and the value given to the girl child. Due to the challenging nature of the experimental research, six training sessions were conducted for 24 NSS interviewers to develop mastery of the protocols of the interviews, including IATs, a vignette study and exit surveys with wives, husbands and mothers-in-law. The field work phase
was completed in 2017 and the results are expected in 2018, with a full report from Zurich University in 2019.

OUTPUT 2 The programme will support the legal reform process so that new laws safeguard the best interests of the child in contact with the civil, criminal or administrative justice system, including through the provision of child-sensitive procedures and information. It will further contribute to strengthening justice professionals' capacity to work with children in conflict with the law. It will also contribute to the development of policies and services to protect the rights of children in contact with the law (child victims/witnesses in particular) in order to reduce obstacles these children face in accessing justice and to prevent secondary victimization. To facilitate the implementation of all rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and under national laws, the programme will promote a participatory approach so that marginalized children have a voice in combating discrimination and experience the realization of their right to an effective remedy. Measures to accomplish this will include the provision of child-sensitive alternative mechanisms to solving disputes and seeking redress as well as the provision of appropriate reparation measures. This component will continue to support strengthened independent monitoring of child rights by the HRDO, including through enhancing direct access of children to the HRDO and preparing specialized child rights reports to the President and Parliament. The role of NGOs as part of an independent monitoring system will be promoted. This component will also enable a more child-oriented approach to policy, programme and service design at all levels following relevant institutional mandates. Service provision will increasingly focus on the specific needs of the child and on better referral systems, with the expected result of a sharpened equity focus and greater progress in the realization of the rights of the most vulnerable.

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF Armenia supported HRDO in further enhancement of the special child rights unit. Several reports on child rights and child-friendly complaint mechanisms were published by the Ombudsman. HRDO staff were trained in child rights, child rights monitoring and dealing with child victims and witnesses of crime. This resulted in expanded monitoring of child rights and awareness-raising activities and reaching out directly to more children and their families, in particular to vulnerable children, including children in institutions and children with disabilities. With the support of UNICEF Armenia, HRDO developed ethical guidelines for media on how to address justice issues related to children and validated these with key media representatives. An international landmark conference on the right of the child to live in a family was organized in November 2017. It included 7 ombudspersons and 11 representatives from ombudsman offices of countries of Europe and Central Asia, as well as high-level officials from the Council of Europe. A set of recommendations were developed for Armenian government authorities.

UNICEF Armenia also supported the Justice Academy of Armenia in the development of a distance learning training course on the rights of children in contact with the law to be incorporated into the curriculum for justice professionals. One hundred and twenty judges and prosecutors successfully passed the course.

UNICEF Armenia continued to support and further strengthen the multisectoral Council on Justice for Children under the MoJ. The Council adopted its bylaws and expanded the scope of its members, and undertook a study on the needs of child victims and witnesses of crime. UNICEF Armenia was successful in advocating for Armenia to join the WePROTECT Global Alliance and begin the process of becoming a pathfinding country of the and End Violence
Against Children Global Partnership, thus accelerating the Government’s actions to combat violence against children.

**Document Centre**

**Evaluation and research**

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**Other publications**

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<td>‘I am a CHILD’ Child Friendly Version of the CRC (reprint)</td>
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<td>‘Let’s Play Together’ PSA</td>
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<td>‘The World We Want. A Guide to the Goals for Children and Young People’ in Armenian</td>
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<td>A series of methodological guidelines and training materials: ‘Ayb-Ben planet games’; ‘Finger language’; ‘Organization of care provision of children and youth with mobility difficulties’; ‘Psychological support to children with behavioural disorders’</td>
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<td>‘Child and Trauma’ manual</td>
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<td>Online Course on the Protection of Children’s Rights During Criminal Procedures</td>
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<td>Bulletin on Access to Justice for Children</td>
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<td>EU-UNICEF Child Rights Toolkit: Integrating Child Rights in Development Cooperation (reprint)</td>
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**Lessons learned**

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**Programme documents**

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