Executive Summary

In this first year of the new Country Programme, UNICEF Azerbaijan focused attention on strengthening systems and institutional responses to some of the priority areas of its strategic vision for Azerbaijan, particularly early childhood education, access to justice for children and inclusion of children with disabilities.

Key results included increased government leadership in school readiness, combining practical improvements in teaching skills and methodologies with policy reforms that will increase access to early education for many children. In addition, a comprehensive review of the justice system in relation to children identified both existing strengths in policies and procedures and areas for improvement especially in relation to practice and implementation of protections for children in contact with the justice system. Alongside this review, UNICEF Azerbaijan invested in piloting legal aid services in the community, which greatly increased the availability of professional legal advice for vulnerable families. This was reflected in the significant number of cases handled by the programme in its first year.

UNICEF Azerbaijan’s work in the justice sector was the result of highly effective partnerships with the European Union, the World Bank and above all between different government agencies including the Ministries of Justice, Internal Affairs, and Labour and Social Protection of the Population. The financial and technical support provided by the external partners, and the commitment to improving multiple aspects of the justice sector – including law enforcement, judicial engagement, legal services and social welfare – enabled a holistic approach to an issue that too often is approached in a siloed manner.

Updated regulations for the assessment and certification of children with disabilities, which will have a positive impact on their access to mainstream education, were approved by the Government. Work also continued for trialling inclusive education approaches in classrooms. Establishing policies that directly reduce discrimination and marginalization is essential for sustained improvements in access to services for excluded children.

Knowing that stigma towards and misunderstanding of disability are major barriers to inclusion in Azerbaijan, UNICEF Azerbaijan’s programme in 2016 placed an emphasis on demonstrating the skills and potential of children with disabilities in society when they are provided with equal opportunities. Increasing the classroom presence of children with disabilities and continuing efforts to make sports and recreation in the community more accessible to children with disabilities were central pillars to UNICEF Azerbaijan’s efforts.

As the country has faced challenging economic developments caused by falling oil prices, the Government led a substantive review of its economic vision. Aligned with this, UNICEF Azerbaijan placed more emphasis on advocating its youth and adolescence programming. With one-third of the country being young people, any economic refocus will require inclusion of the needs of youth in areas such as education, health and social engagement. UNICEF Azerbaijan led the initial stages of a UN-wide review of youth programming, with a view to strengthening collaborative programming in the youth sector in 2017. Greater emphasis was also placed by UNICEF Azerbaijan in its own activities on promoting the positive contributions of young people to social development – for example through the
Youth Advocate Programme, the United Nations (UN) Youth Advisory Council and work on inclusive sports.

With significant changes in management of UNICEF Azerbaijan during the year, some areas of work did not develop as quickly as originally planned. One specific concern was limited follow-up on initiatives developed under the last Country Programme, such as repeating a child deprivation study after the economic shocks in late 2015 to assess the impact of economic volatility on vulnerable children. Similarly, the findings of a major assessment of the social protection system were not adequately developed in terms of policy advocacy or programming. Given the continuing impact of the economic situation, and concerns of increased vulnerability among families, these are areas where more attention will be paid by UNICEF Azerbaijan in 2017.

Progress in the health and nutrition sectors was also slower than planned, notably in flour fortification, which is seen as instrumental to tackling worrying rates of iron-deficient anaemia among women. The lack of a dedicated health and nutrition specialist within UNICEF Azerbaijan was a major impediment to providing the necessary level of support and guidance to partners. This will be addressed in 2017 through a review of human resource capacity within the office.

**Humanitarian Assistance**

Noting the ongoing fragility of the situation around the line of contact with the conflict-affected areas, as demonstrated by a flare-up of hostilities in April, UNICEF Azerbaijan continued to invest in early warning and preparedness measures. This included contributing to the development of an emergency response preparedness framework and an inter-agency contingency plan, which consolidated the emergency plans of the main humanitarian organizations to avoid possible duplication, and aims to improve efficiencies in future responses.

The Azerbaijani Youth Advocate Programme was revived in the three line of contact districts. Sixty young leaders were supported to reach out to conflict-affected children, work with community members to share information on how to stay safe in the event of future crises, and take concerns and issues from community members to local authority representatives for action. Important links were also established through the project with the local government and non-governmental organization partners, which will prove instrumental in delivering any humanitarian response in the future.

In partnership with the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action, the youth leaders were trained as mine risk education facilitators, who will now work in 15 schools to deliver potentially life-saving information to some 750 other young people. UNICEF Azerbaijan also signed a long-term agreement with the ChildFund Alliance, to use the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction for Children as part of the youth advocate programme. This enabled the advocates to inform their peers, families and communities on how to protect themselves and their families in times of crisis, with an emphasis on the importance of self-reliance as part of broader resilience building. UNICEF Azerbaijan also pre-positioned a limited number of schools-in-a-box and recreational supplies for up to 3,000 children, and supported the availability of psychological support for conflict-affected children through 16 schools.

UNICEF Azerbaijan’s emergency preparedness and response was closely coordinated with the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office, United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent (ICRC), and non-governmental and governmental partners, which enabled regular discussion of possible humanitarian scenarios on how best to coordinate response actions.
UNICEF Azerbaijan welcomes the overall focus of the draft Strategic Plan, especially the specific attention placed upon the universality of child rights, sustainable outcomes, and the inclusion of youth and adolescents as a key audience for UNICEF engagement. In a middle income context such as Azerbaijan, the Country Office emphasises the importance of retaining an overarching prioritisation of the necessity of an equity focus to the organization’s work. While recognising that identifying equity as an individual goal area increases the profile of tackling disadvantage as a prerequisite for sustained growth, reality shows that inequity exists in all areas of child and youth development, and thus a separate goal area on equity could imply that the equity issue is not an inherent part of the other areas of the new Plan’s vision.

With Azerbaijan facing the risk of continued economic volatility, impacted by the global fluctuations in oil prices, the Strategic Plan creates an opportunity to redouble efforts to identify and respond to the needs of the most vulnerable sections of the community, who are likely to bear the brunt of any increases in costs of services and commodities and face the greatest barriers to finding quality employment and sustained livelihoods. The Plan’s inclusion of evidence and data generation, improved targeting and delivery of essential services, and leveraging of resources within its change strategies is highly relevant to the Azerbaijan context and to UNICEF Azerbaijan’s national programmatic approach.

More explicit focus on public sector accountability – taking commitments to social inclusion and pro-equity strategies from principle to practice – would be welcomed. This is especially relevant in a context where public resources are under pressure and governments face tough choices in how to allocate available finances. Building the business case for investment in the most vulnerable children as a driver of long-term growth will be essential to balance the understandable focus on public investment in new industries, infrastructure and economic reform.

One other area that is welcome in the Strategic Plan is alternative channels for learning and skills development, beyond national curricula. Linked to the growing importance of youth and adolescent development, the draft Strategic Plan makes reference to goals related to out-of-school children, and skills development. Renewed attention on the value of vocational education, apprenticeships and other practical skills development is timely. This is relevant to environments where diversification of economies for sustained growth will be important for building an appropriate skills mix among young people – and where traditional academic pathways will not be sufficient to meet either the demands of new industries or the capacities of every child.

The draft Strategic Plan reinforces a number of traditional areas of UNICEF’s programmatic value added, such as child survival and basic education, alongside emerging areas of focus such as environmental protections, early childhood development, and multi-pronged social protection initiatives. Success, especially in these newer areas of interest, will require equipping UNICEF Country Programmes with the necessary skills and resources to deliver on subsequent expectations from partners. Financing these approaches, especially in middle income contexts where development assistance is limited, will also require sustained efforts by the organization at all levels to highlight the policy engagement, advocacy and evidence-building efforts of UNICEF as much as the high-profile humanitarian responses that currently dominate much of UNICEF’s communication and resulting public perceptions.
Emerging Areas of Importance

Accelerate integrated early childhood development (ECD). While UNICEF Azerbaijan has yet to move to a fully integrated approach to early childhood development, there are two distinctive areas of work focused on early childhood care.

Following continued advocacy by UNICEF Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Education introduced regular school readiness classes for all five-year-old children, fully funded by the Government and based on a UNICEF-developed training programme. In 2016 this covered 3,000 schools, increasing coverage from 14 to 55 per cent. UNICEF Azerbaijan also prepared a proposal for expanding preschool education to children three to four years of age through a new concept of early childhood development centres including new financing methods.

UNICEF Azerbaijan supported the Ministry of Health to develop a concept note and national action plan on early detection and prevention of childhood disabilities and improved quality of early interventions among children up to three years of age, as well as accuracy of data on the number and categories of disabilities. There is currently no accurate data collection, and available statistics provide a proxy number of disability cases detected for children in that age bracket as 22 per cent.

UNICEF Azerbaijan provided technical assistance for the institutionalisation of the International Guide for Monitoring Child Development with the Paediatric Development Department of Ankara University. This will become a mandatory course for all paediatricians during in-service training.

Looking ahead, UNICEF Azerbaijan will focus on developing a more integrated package of support to early childhood development and positive parenting aligned with its youth and advocacy programming.

The second decade. With a third of the population aged 14-29 years of age, increased attention is being paid to youth development, for example by upgrading youth policies, endorsing a National Youth Development Strategy and including youth considerations in other key strategies. Limited engagement with young people on decision-making and lack of access to positive social and recreational space and school-to-job transition opportunities have shaped UNICEF Azerbaijan’s approaches to youth and adolescent development.

The Azerbaijani Youth Advocate Programme was revived in three conflict-affected districts, with 60 adolescents from displaced families creating district-based Youth Advisory Councils. Initial areas of work focused on promoting safe behaviours in crises among peers, families and communities, and liaising with local authorities on issues of concern. In 2017, UNICEF Azerbaijan will continue building the capacity of the young advocates to expand and measure the impact of their engagements.

UNICEF Azerbaijan continued using a sports-for-development approach as a core entry point for adolescents’ participation. A detailed assessment of accessibility of 28 Olympic Centres and 141 schools helped to determine the degree to which these facilities were accessible for children and youth with a disability, particularly those who are wheelchair users. Recommendations were given to the Government for steps needed to address identified barriers. Coaches from seven Women’s Football Leagues worked with as many as 900 girl footballers aged 10 to 21 to increase their knowledge of girls’ rights and build the level of participation of girls, including leadership roles and decision-making. This was guided through new guidelines for coaches specially adapted for girls’ football by UNICEF Azerbaijan and the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan.
The potential for sport to foster social inclusion with young people was also explored through a partnership with the National Children’s Paralympic Association and the 2nd National Children’s Paralympic Games, and a national Football Tournament for Children with Disabilities. Over 100 young people with disabilities were enabled to compete in six sports. The role of young people as ambassadors for social change was also promoted, with young sport ‘ambassadors’ from the Under-17 and National Women’s Football Leagues’ spearheading an End Violence against Children Campaign.

Young people were also supported to become involved in research and analysis on youth issues, with young researchers trained as facilitators to support future surveys and assessments. Building capacity of young people in these roles will strengthen the relevance and focus of future research into issues affecting young people.

Summary Notes and Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADSL</td>
<td>Asymmetric digital subscriber line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Capacity Development

Government capacity to deliver school readiness programmes increased through teacher training support, with over 3,700 teachers reached through new modules. This enabled the Government to provide school readiness programmes in 3,000 new schools reaching an additional 100,000 children and increasing enrolment to 55 per cent.

The juvenile justice sector was strengthened through systematic improvements in knowledge and understanding among judiciary and legal professionals. Knowledge of core human rights principles and approaches, and capacity for detecting child abuse, was strengthened through work with the National Preventative Group against Torture and Ill-treatment.

Public awareness of access to justice for children was supported through communication efforts, including a focus on the availability of free legal aid services, which was supported on a pilot basis in rural areas. More than 800 cases were handled through these services. To support promotion of access to justice, UNICEF Azerbaijan supported local community organizations to develop communication strategies to target local populations with information and background on the legal services initiative.

Capacity in the health sector was supported through work with the Public Health and Reform Centre on improving data collection techniques for the World Health Organization’s STEPS (STEPwise approach to surveillance) survey, which measures non-communicable disease risk factors. Work was also undertaken with the Ministry of Health on data collection tools and methodologies for analysis of low birth weights among newborns, including better tracing of survival rates.

Reviews of legislation on infant and young child feeding helped identify areas to bring legislation in compliance with the International Code of Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes. To support improved public knowledge of maternal and child nutrition, local journalists were provided with information and guidance on the issues of exclusive breastfeeding and flour fortification with iron.

UNICEF Azerbaijan supported the skills development of a group of local young researchers to position them as future leaders on youth engagement and participation.
Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

In the first year of the new Country Programme, emphasis was placed on building baseline data and technical evidence to support further policy and service development. This work included the following.

A juvenile justice system assessment including fiscal impact analysis led to draft recommendations on social rehabilitation approaches, penal reform, prevention of offending and addressing gaps in technical capacities and processes compared to international standards. The assessment was with the Government for response as of the end of 2016.

The National Centralised Child Databank supported by UNICEF Azerbaijan is now generating evidence on the situation of children through data on 37 categories. UNICEF Azerbaijan supported technical skills building with district officials on inputting data.

A feasibility study on introducing vouchers for preschool education led to a model for preschool provision for children aged three to six. This supplemented advocacy leading to a Ministry of Education decree introducing school readiness classes for all five year olds to be fully funded by the Government.

An accessibility assessment of 28 Olympic Centres and 141 schools identified physical barriers to child and youth participation in sports and physical education and generated recommendations that were made to the Government.

Analysis of official records of children with disabilities led to a lower data point than national figures previously indicated. This is being reviewed ahead of further dialogue with government partners on stronger identification of children with disabilities.

- An analytical report on alternative care for children, produced as part of a regional study, combined with inputs to the TransMonEE (Transformative Monitoring for Enhanced Equity Database) regional database increased the potential for country-by-country analysis and comparison on key indicators.

Partnerships

The Access to Justice for Children Project brought together the European Union Delegation in Azerbaijan, the Ministries of Justice, Internal Affairs and Labour and Social Protection of the Population, the State Agency for Public Services and Social Innovations and the Office of the Ombudsperson, to identify reforms and test new approaches to support children who get into trouble with the law, child victims and witnesses of crimes and vulnerable families facing legal problems.

With the World Bank, UNICEF Azerbaijan oversaw a comprehensive assessment of the juvenile justice system, leading to recommendations for a National Strategy to Strengthen Juvenile Justice, now under review by the Ministry of Justice.

With the National Paralympic Committee, the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan and the Football Federation of People with Disabilities, UNICEF Azerbaijan promoted the integration of children with disabilities into mainstream society and girls’ participation in and through sport. One key result was enhanced capacity of coaches to bring girls and children with disabilities into mainstream sport, breaking taboos and public attitudes to the role of these groups in the community.

External Communication and Public Advocacy
UNICEF Azerbaijan produced an updated advocacy kit in support of the new Country Programme, aimed at the public, policymakers, media and donors. UNICEF Azerbaijan’s Facebook page remained an important tool for public engagement and communication on issues ranging from girls’ participation to disaster risk reduction, with about 34,000 followers.

An increased focus was placed throughout the year on spotlighting social exclusion in all major public outreach – including events to commemorate UNICEF’s 70th anniversary, which included gala performances from children themselves and a special meeting of Parliamentarians on child rights. UNICEF Azerbaijan worked with the national Children Paralympics Committee to produce a series of video spots for traditional and social media highlighting the aspirations and potential of children with disabilities.

In partnership with the European Union, UNICEF produced a documentary on juvenile justice reforms, highlighting issues on protection and rehabilitation of children, as well as progress being made with government and civil society. The film is designed to generate discussion across audiences on finding alternatives to juvenile detention and the importance of addressing the causes of offending.

UNICEF Azerbaijan also used global communication initiatives, such as the Tiny Stories project inviting writers from around the world to pen a story on ‘what I want for every child’, which engaged the support of four national writers.

A joint campaign on ending violence against children was initiated at the end of the year with the Association of Football Federations, incorporating public service announcements featuring young football players, as well as billboards.

A renewed partnership with the Ministry of Health led to a series of training sessions for journalists on public health issues.

UNICEF Azerbaijan began the development of an integrated advocacy and communication for social change strategy to reflect the new focus of the Country Programme, which will be completed in 2017.

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

The new Country Programme has adopted a more cross-sectoral approach, with workplans in support of education and youth and adolescents complementing each other in certain areas such as school accessibility, and child-rights monitoring work feeding into broader policy areas in social protection through different government partners.

A district-based multi-disciplinary working group of representatives of local executive authorities on statistics, environment, education, health and social protection was established with UNICEF Azerbaijan’s support to lead disaster risk analysis in three districts. This helped identify cross-cutting threats to children across sectors including infrastructure, local economy, agriculture, education, health, sanitation, and water resource management.

UNICEF Azerbaijan actively promoted the importance of aligned programming approaches within the UN Country Team and secured its endorsement for a joint review of agency activities for youth and adolescents. An initial mapping exercise was launched at the end of the year to identify the scope for more alignment of agencies’ work in 2017. This exercise also reflects efforts to present a consolidated, publicly visible demonstration of the UN’s shared value added in the country, relevant to the current economic context.

UNICEF Azerbaijan co-chaired the UN Joint Working Group on ‘Strengthening institutional capacities and effective public and social services’ under the UN Azerbaijan Partnership
Framework, another effort to improve integration and better alignment of development activities among partners.

**Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation**

The new Country Programme identified specific groups of children that are vulnerable or disadvantaged, including children with disabilities, girls and young people. In the first year of the new Programme UNICEF Azerbaijan strengthened child rights monitoring mechanisms within state structures. This work included supporting the State Committee for Family, Women and Children’s Affairs to develop a centralized electronic child databank, a key recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which will help improve evidence-based policymaking and programming.

UNICEF Azerbaijan worked with the Office of the Ombudsperson to further enhance independent monitoring of child rights violations in public settings. UNICEF Azerbaijan also worked with the National Preventive Group within the Ombudsperson’s office to support monitoring of detention centres and childcare institutions. International experts from UNICEF Azerbaijan also provided practical and theoretical training, tools and methodologies to better identify and prevent child rights violations.

Adolescent development programming was also tailored to achieve human rights benchmarks as established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Policy advocacy with the Parliament and the Ministry of Youth and Sports on upgrading of the national Youth Law included specific focus on providing young people with broader opportunities to actively participate in decision-making and accountability mechanisms both in their communities and at the national level. The first Parliament hearings to review the upgraded law took place in November 2016.

UNICEF Azerbaijan continued advocating for the adoption of the National Child Strategy, which will play a key role in implementing the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Azerbaijan, with due attention paid to the rights of the most marginalised.

**Gender Equality**

UNICEF Azerbaijan’s gender focus addressed two areas of importance relevant to the country context: equitable access to services for girls, and the broader issue of recognition of the value of girls within society, which the Country Office believes is a contributory factor to gender discrimination. For example, advocacy with the Ministry of Education in the areas of inclusive education for children with disabilities led to a renewed commitment by the Ministry to promote gender parity of enrolment, with 50 per cent of children enrolled in the UNICEF-supported pilot programme being girls.

In the sports for development programme, technical assistance was provided to partners, including the Association of Football Federations to develop guidelines for coaches that will improve their ability to attract and support girls’ participation in the sport. This is one step towards increasing the visibility of girls as active participants in community activities.

Girls aged from 11 to 19 years of age make up just over half of the members (32 out of 63) of the UNICEF-supported Youth Advisory Councils established in conflict-affected districts – rural areas where girls’ participation is traditional highly constrained.

The National Child Databank launched in 2016 contains sex-segregated data and categories related to girls, as a key step to recognising the specific issues affecting girls and young
women. During training of district officials on use of the databank, specific focus was paid to the importance of gender-disaggregated inputs.

### Environmental Sustainability

UNICEF Azerbaijan’s work on disaster risk analysis in three districts in 2016 included an element of causal analysis, identifying existing and potential triggers for natural disasters. This work included environmental aspects, such as deforestation contributing to increased risk of landslides. The findings of these analyses were shared with local authority partners to support risk mitigation efforts. In 2017, findings will also feed into new environment education work with children and young people.

Within UNICEF Azerbaijan, in a national context where environmental good practices are relatively limited, there is a commitment to reducing the office’s environment footprint through measures to reduce paper use, use more recycled products and low energy lighting, and embrace the use of video conferencing and webinars to avoid unnecessary travel.

### Effective Leadership

UNICEF Azerbaijan underwent a significant management transition in the first half of the year, with one-fifth of the office’s current staff joining in the last six months. Nonetheless, efforts were ongoing to maintain good management practices and overall leadership throughout the year.

Statutory Committees and the designation of authority were systematically reviewed and updated, and an Annual Management Plan was finalised with measurable performance indicators.

Following a resurgence in hostilities on the line of contact around the conflict-affected areas, UNICEF Azerbaijan activated its crisis management team to coordinate possible responses with sister agencies, government and civil society. These efforts focused on developing possible crisis scenarios, a response plan and operational capacities. While an organizational response was not eventually required, UNICEF Azerbaijan noted that more attention was needed to strengthen internal readiness and coordination with government, inter-agency partners and potential implementing partners. UNICEF Azerbaijan subsequently supported the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator to organize an interagency contingency workshop that resulted in the re-establishment of an Interagency Contingency Plan with government partners, sister agencies and civil society organizations.

UNICEF Azerbaijan’s business continuity plan was updated and will be tested in early 2017.

Management and programme indicators were routinely reviewed by the country management team, with particular attention paid to funding, security, staff well-being and learning and development. Systematic reviews of management indicators, the budget and the Enterprise Risk Management profile of the office were also covered.

### Financial Resources Management

UNICEF Azerbaijan managed financial resources in compliance with established guidelines and control mechanisms, monitored through its country management team.

The annual budget was regularly monitored through reports generated by the VISION financial management system and UNICEF Azerbaijan’s Performance Management Dashboard. The currency devaluation affected planned budget utilization, but effective management of funds in the last quarter of the year to support transitional activities from 2016 into 2017 enabled UNICEF Azerbaijan to avoid any loss of core resources. Similarly,
non-core funds were re-phased to support activities overlapping the two financial years.

National legislation on registration of grants to non-governmental organizations remained in place, which in practice placed administrative impediments on traditional cooperation agreements with implementing partners. As a result, UNICEF Azerbaijan resorted to a contract-based approach with individual contractors to ensure programme work could be undertaken in a timely manner.

Disbursement of cash assistance to government partners and liquidation of advances were implemented and recorded in line with funding authorization and certificate of expenditures procedures. No direct cash transfers to partners had an outstanding unspent balance of more than nine months at any point during the year.

UNICEF Azerbaijan regularly updated the harmonized approach to cash transfers assurance plan, with 38 monitoring visits, including four financial checks, undertaken in 2016.

UNICEF Azerbaijan continued to effectively use its bank optimization and cash forecasting tools, met its closing bank balance targets, and restored the percentage of closing balances for subsequent months in line with organizational benchmarks. Deadlines for bank reconciliations and bank optimization targets were met. Monthly closures and financial reports were generated and submitted through the Sharepoint system on time.

UNICEF Azerbaijan’s premises remained in a commercial building. Negotiations with the Government for free office space continued in 2016, but no suitable alternative premises could be identified.

**Fundraising and Donor Relations**

UNICEF Azerbaijan was heavily reliant on core resources to finance its operations and programme work. A small number of donor grants were available in 2016, covering work in access to justice, education and disaster preparedness. Two donor reports were not submitted on time, and UNICEF Azerbaijan introduced an alert system to strengthen reporting processes in the future. The quality of reports met organizational standards, with minimal requests for reports to be revised after initial review by the UNICEF Regional Office or by donors themselves.

Fund utilization was managed efficiently, although some other resources were reprogrammed into 2017. Only eight of 30 areas of activity in 2016 were unfunded. As UNICEF Azerbaijan is working to a two-year workplan, these activities can be undertaken in 2017, utilizing funds available in the new financial year where available, or otherwise forming the basis for new fundraising strategies.

UNICEF Azerbaijan’s resource mobilization strategy has not been updated since 2015, and this will be a priority for 2017, following the first substantive review of programme progress with partners. This will include a review of national as well as international sources of potential funding, noting the continued opportunities for more strategic engagement with the private sector.

With the development of the first Joint UN Work Plans in the last quarter of 2016, in support of the UN Azerbaijan Partnership Framework, unfunded activities are now included in these joint plans, creating opportunities to explore inter-agency financial support and collective resource mobilization.
Evaluation and Research

Six studies were planned in 2016. Two reached technical completion by year’s end but await approval by government partners: a feasibility study on the introduction of vouchers in preschool education and an accessibility assessment of Olympic Centres and schools. Four other studies – a baseline survey of adolescents, an updated situation analysis of children and women, a study on the effects of the economic crisis on children, and a study of public knowledge and attitudes towards inclusive education of children with disabilities – were rescheduled until a later date. A further assessment on the juvenile justice sector in relation to children was undertaken with the support of the World Bank. At the end of the year, the assessment findings were awaiting review and validation by the Government.

UNICEF Azerbaijan drew on a multi-country evaluation of juvenile justice reforms, undertaken in 2015, to shape its current programming focus, including:

- Supporting the roll out of the National Central Child Data Bank to collect, analyse and use data related to juvenile justice;
- Supporting the implementation of training curricula and trainers. During the year, more than 100 police officers were trained at the Police Academy, while the Justice Academy trained over 30 new judges and justice professionals with support from UNICEF Azerbaijan. Both Academies incorporated international standards and principles on administration of justice for juveniles into their curricula; and
- Partnering with the national human rights institutions and civil society organizations for monitoring the rights of children in conflict with the law.

As a result of capacity development work with the National Preventive Group and with civil society organizations, there was an increase in the level of understanding and knowledge of human rights issues in relation to juvenile justice of up to 50 per cent.

Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

UNICEF Azerbaijan used jointly established long-term agreements and rosters of UN agencies in Azerbaijan to reduce costs of supplies and consumables. Systematic use of the common services in procurement, human resource management and travel continued throughout the year.

Most supplies were procured locally, supporting local markets and enabling procurement of quality supplies at competitive prices. UNICEF Azerbaijan continually sought cost savings in all possible areas. Although the sudden fall in the local currency exchange rate at the start of the year reduced the cost of some expenses in respect to US dollars, UNICEF Azerbaijan continued to optimise the use of communications and IT tools with the help of favourable mobile tariffs, the use of free facilities, virtual modes of meetings, interviews and teleconferences. For instance, staff members were encouraged to use VOIP or Skype for Business for international calls. This was broadly embraced across the office, reducing communication costs by up to 40 per cent in comparison with previous years.

UNICEF Azerbaijan also maximised the availability of a free meeting room in the premises, reducing the need to spend resources on outside venues.

Supply Management

UNICEF Azerbaijan’s supply component reduced even further in comparison with previous years. Administrative supplies and printing of reports and project materials constituted the main supply expenditures. Local printing houses were used for printing of reports and training materials, as well as visibility items using joint long-term agreements managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other UN agencies. The main
sources of procurement were local markets that have been improving in efficiency and quality. The number of consultancy contracts increased, due to local changes in regulations that constrained options for institutional contracts and programme cooperation agreements. UNICEF Azerbaijan continued its assistance to the Ministry of Health in facilitating procurement services provided by the organization’s Supply Division in Copenhagen. In 2016, the quantity of vaccines and safety injection purchased by the Ministry of Health through UNICEF increased to just under US$ 3.3 million.

UNICEF Azerbaijan continued using long-term agreements for IT maintenance, design and transportation services as well as UN Common Agreements for transportation, hotels and conference facility services. A common roster of translation and interpretation services was also fully utilized to minimize cost and maximize administrative efficiencies. UNICEF Azerbaijan procured IT supply items mainly from Supply Division and from global long-term agreement suppliers in line with organizational procedures. There was no loss in local and offshore procurement in 2016, and UNICEF does not manage a warehouse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURE OF PURCHASE DOCUMENT</th>
<th>DOC TYPE</th>
<th>AMOUNT US$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultancy Contracts</td>
<td>ZCON/ ZIND</td>
<td>639,518.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Contracts</td>
<td>ZLCO</td>
<td>106,362.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Ordering (computer equipment)</td>
<td>ZLAM</td>
<td>9,409.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme supplies</td>
<td>ZLC</td>
<td>22,184.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>777,473.51</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Security for Staff and Premises**

UNICEF operates in a generally low-risk environment in Azerbaijan, but has retained a focus on preventative security measures. Staff undertook entry-level training courses in first aid and defensive driving techniques during the year. Briefings were organized with UN Department of Safety and Security colleagues to raise awareness of possible threats and mitigating measures.

A humanitarian response assessment was undertaken under the leadership of UNICEF Regional Office colleagues, in support of UNICEF Azerbaijan’s programmes on the line of contact with conflict-affected areas. This work also identified some operational improvements for staff safety, including replacing vehicles for field missions to ensure mechanical reliability in higher-risk areas, and compliance with security requirements. These improvements have been implemented.

All critical staff are being issued with VHF (very high frequency) radios and the UN instigated regular radio checks for all resident agencies.

At the end of 2016, UNICEF Azerbaijan, noting some increases in armed activity in the country and cognizant of the volatile security situation worldwide, decided to upgrade its physical onsite security with the installation of a static government-provided guard from 2017. This service is provided through a UN-wide agreement, at no cost to the organization.

**Human Resources**

Critical gaps in human resources affected UNICEF Azerbaijan for much of the year, notably in senior management functions and one programme area. Recruitment was undertaken with a view to identifying candidate profiles to deliver on the specifics of the new Country
Programme. By the end of 2016, all posts had been filled with suitably qualified candidates.

UNICEF Azerbaijan has achieved gender equity in its staffing levels, and is predominantly staffed by nationals of Azerbaijan. All programme staff attended results-based management training during the year to further support their programme management capacity in the new Programme.

A management review in the last quarter of 2016 recommended further revisions to the staffing structure to enhance the level of technical expertise available in the youth and adolescence sector. A programme budget review in October 2016 approved changes that created a higher-level international post to lead work in this area in 2017. However, a critical gap remains in the health and nutrition sector, for which there are commitments to government but no expertise within the staffing structure.

Performance monitoring followed the new organizational processes and systems. All staff finalised annual performance and professional development plans, and assessments of performance took place during the year. More robust management of training opportunities was implemented, linking training and development more closely to staff workplan responsibilities and strengthening monitoring of investment in staff development. The human resource development committee reported that 70 per cent of planned training and development opportunities were implemented by staff.

Staff welfare was supported through peer support volunteers, and more than 40 per cent of staff exercised flexible working arrangements agreed by management.

Staff well-being, security, learning and development issues were discussed at staff meetings and within the country management team.

**Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology**

UNICEF Azerbaijan maintained UNICEF standards across its information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, assets and activities. Increased use was made of cloud-based tools, including One Drive, Skype for Business and SAP, and the internet connection was upgraded from an ADSL to fibre optic connection to allow for more effective file transfer speeds.

Skype for Business was widely used for e-meetings, reducing the need for physical meetings or expensive international telephone calls.

UNICEF Azerbaijan replaced desktop computers with laptops to support mobility and to prepare for implementation of the globally introduced “Light” System (which now means all key files are cloud-based) and to maximise use of the One Drive system by early 2017.

UNICEF Azerbaijan invested in upgraded VHF radios, as the UN-wide communication system moved to a digital platform during the year.

Social media platforms in Azerbaijan are limited primarily to social networking, and there is little tradition of using such networks for advocacy and public engagement beyond simple information sharing. UNICEF Azerbaijan manages one social networking site, a video-sharing site and a public website, but these are not currently considered to be primary advocacy tools.

One risk identified during the year was caused by the reduction in availability of a staff IT professional to a part-time basis. This exposes the office to potential gaps in service support,
and an appropriate contingency plan has yet to be identified. Such a plan will be a priority for 2017.

### Evaluation and Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Type of Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information, Education &amp; Communication on Water, Sanitation &amp; Hygiene materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rights of Children and Why They Matter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile Justice Documentary film</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series of short videos on 2nd Paralympic Games for Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short video 70th Anniversary Commemoration Event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sphere Project: Humanitarian Chapter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (in Azerbaijani)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (in Azerbaijani)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: For Children (in Azerbaijani)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Lessons Learned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Type/Category</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Learned</td>
<td>Adolescent Baseline Study 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Programme Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Type</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>