Executive summary

The year 2017 saw the acceleration of programmes for children in Azerbaijan by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Of particular note were the developments in youth programming, with the initiation of a new pilot programme to deliver aligned services for young people by different government and United Nations (UN) agencies through the national Youth House structure. In addition, the launch of early learning centres provided more integrated support for cognitive and physical development for children aged three to four years of age and their parents. The design of a more comprehensive social services framework fostered closer collaboration between child protection and welfare agencies and more professional support to children and families at risk.

Underpinning much of UNICEF Azerbaijan’s work in 2017 was the strong public commitment of the Government and the UN system to the Sustainable Development Agenda. With a continued focus by the Government on economic reforms and investment in more sustained economic growth, UNICEF continued to advocate for the inclusion of social development – especially for the most vulnerable children and young people – in the new economic vision as an essential element of sustainability. The decision by the Government to undertake a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in 2020, with preparatory work underway from 2017, will provide key disaggregated data on the situation of children in a number of sectors, and enable more systematic monitoring of equitable progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Azerbaijan continued to position itself on the regional and global stage and achieve international standards. UNICEF Azerbaijan worked closely with the Government and non-governmental partners to support efforts to translate that commitment into practical action. For example, assistance was provided to the Government on its preparations for the next report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, an evaluation against international standards of newly piloted programmes in the area of juvenile justice, and through ongoing technical assistance in the education, health and nutrition sectors. Progress was made towards introducing mandatory flour fortification, a global standard for reducing iron-deficiency anaemia, with the drafting of the first-ever national fortification legislation. The approval at the end of 2017 of a National Programme on Inclusive Education was expected to dramatically advance efforts to enable children with disabilities to access mainstream education. This work was supported at the pilot level by UNICEF Azerbaijan.

The year under review also saw the expansion of efforts initiated in the first year of the country programme. For example, the strong foundations laid in 2016 for nationwide school preparedness efforts enabled a rapid expansion of the programme for five-year-old children, with nearly two-thirds of children in this age group entering school preparedness classes in 2017. Continued investment in promoting the rights of children with disabilities to play a full part in community life was exemplified by an almost three-fold increase in the number of young athletes with disabilities participating in this year’s National Children’s Paralympics. Previous work undertaken in the area of disaster risk reduction (DRR) was further developed in 2017 to
prepare disaster risk management guidelines for all schools in the country.

The situation around the Line of Contact affected by the ongoing conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh remained volatile. UNICEF Azerbaijan therefore invested heavily in strengthening its preparedness capacity for any future humanitarian response, while continuing to deliver programmes that directly impact children living in the conflict-affected districts. This included the development of psychological support programmes and youth engagement opportunities for young people living in affected communities.

UNICEF’s primary partnerships in Azerbaijan are with government agencies. During the year, UNICEF Azerbaijan stepped up efforts to engage more with representatives of the international community to emphasize the importance of the social development agenda to the broader issues of economic and financial stability. These engagements resulted in closer dialogue between UNICEF and key international actors, who expressed interest in future partnerships, notably in the areas of gender equity, youth development and education.

Looking forward, UNICEF Azerbaijan will undertake a mid-term review of its Country Programme in the first quarter of 2018. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of inter-sectoral programming and collaboration between different government institutions and other agencies to deliver more comprehensive and effective programmes for children, especially in the areas of early childhood development, youth and adolescent development and social services support.

**Humanitarian assistance**

While UNICEF does not implement a specific humanitarian programme in Azerbaijan, it worked closely with the UN Country Team and other UN offices in the South Caucasus region to strengthen inter-agency preparedness capacity for possible future humanitarian action.

Within UNICEF Azerbaijan, particular attention was paid to reviewing and updating programmatic response capacity in specific sectors, including child and maternal nutrition, education and child protection. This process enabled UNICEF to identify areas where additional support will be required in the event of a humanitarian crisis, to pre-identify potential partners available in the country to manage a humanitarian response, and to begin the process of engaging with government agencies in these sectors to agree on response modalities.

As part of its commitment to identifying and supporting all vulnerable groups within Azerbaijan, UNICEF remained committed to supporting children affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. During 2017, UNICEF Azerbaijan invested in the development of psychological support services for children living in districts close to the Line of Contact.

With support from the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action and the Ministry of Education, 60 youth leaders continued their activities as mine risk education (MRE) facilitators for their peers at schools, reaching a total of 360 other adolescents. UNICEF supported the upgrading and printing of 5,500 copies of mine risk reduction textbooks, including student manuals and teachers’ guides for primary and secondary schools, which were circulated among 15 schools in the three Line of Contact districts.

**Equity in practice**

Since 2016, when the current country programme began, UNICEF in Azerbaijan has focused its efforts on improving state support to the most vulnerable children and young people, who are
identified through analysis of national data and UNICEF's own data collection. Target groups were prioritized based on identification of key indicators, including low exclusive breastfeeding rates, high anaemia prevalence, low preschool attendance, low school enrolment for children with disabilities, lack of social protection services for children, and insufficient opportunities for adolescent and youth participation and development. Children living in rural areas, children with disabilities, girls, children in contact with the law, adolescents and young people and children of displaced families were identified as among the most vulnerable groups.

UNICEF programmes invested in increasing national and local capacities to better identify and target these groups, and design and deliver effective services to increase take up of support and assistance. Results included increased enrolment of children in early learning opportunities; implementation of youth-led community activities; development of national nutrition strategies focused especially on increasing breastfeeding rates and reducing prevalence of anaemia; provision of free legal aid services at the district level; and the launch of a new approach to social service support and social welfare assistance. Support to data collection and analysis by the Government was provided through technical capacity building and investment in data management systems.

The first two years of the country programme enabled UNICEF and its partners to have a better understanding of the bottlenecks to equitable child development. A number of initiatives were successfully implemented that increased access to services, notably in the education, youth and adolescence and juvenile justice sectors. For example, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to develop and implement a communication strategy for promotion of exclusive breastfeeding, addressing not only young parents, but also health professionals and policy decision makers to change attitudes to breastfeeding. Flour fortification was identified as an effective approach to improve child nutrition and reduce anaemia among women and children, and UNICEF Azerbaijan strongly advocated for flour fortification to the Government and partners, which resulted in the preparation of a draft law on mandatory fortification.

A school readiness programme and community-based early learning programme were developed, and the one-year preschool attendance rate increased from 20 per cent to 65 per cent in two years. While only one in five children with disabilities can access some form of education, UNICEF’s advocacy and pilot programming on inclusive education led to the approval in late 2017 of a comprehensive State Programme on Inclusive Education. UNICEF Azerbaijan also supported the Government to develop a child-centred and equity-focused social protection and service system, including the development of a national Social Services Strategy and the development of a social worker workforce for vulnerable and at-risk children, building on the success of a district-level pilot to provide free legal aid services to vulnerable families.

UNICEF supported adolescents' and young peoples' engagement particularly through the UN Youth Advisory Council and the Azerbaijan Youth Advocacy Programme, while sport for development initiatives enabled more girls and children with disabilities to participate in activities that demonstrate their talents and ability. UNICEF also led the initiative of a joint UN-Government Youth House Programme to develop integrated youth-friendly services for young people at the sub-national level.

It is clear that sustainability of these initiatives remains a challenge, given reduced fiscal space for social development in Azerbaijan. The focus for the remainder of the current country programme will be on advocating with government for scaling up and public financing of successful programmes, while continuing to demonstrate the impact of equity-focused programming through ongoing efforts.
Emerging areas of importance

Greater focus on the second decade. With young people accounting for nearly one-third of the overall population, the Government has placed increased focus on updating policies, strengthening services and improving programmes for adolescents and young people. Recognizing the existing bottlenecks of participation in decision-making and access to high-quality and youth-friendly services, UNICEF supported efforts to provide better access to services and other critical opportunities for adolescent participation and development. Advocacy to increase investment in adolescents and youth was to a great extent informed by the new Convention on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 20, which, once translated to Azerbaijani, was circulated among key government stakeholders to inform them on the measures necessary to ensure the realization of the rights of children during adolescence in the context of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Important results were achieved on youth participation and engagement through strengthening adolescents’ role in decision-making and resilience building at the sub-national level.

Two high-profile inter-agency youth initiatives were initiated: the re-establishment of the UN Youth Advisory Council (UNYAC) and the modelling of the joint UN-Government Youth House Initiative. The UNYAC was revived to create opportunities for young people to contribute to decision-making by the UN Country Team, through engagement of 13 selected young people aged 17-29 representing different social backgrounds and interests. UNYAC members were engaged as youth advisers in a number of UN Country Team-led activities, and as young facilitators and verifiers for individual UN initiatives, including discussions with young men on sex-selective abortions led by UNFPA, and data collection for UNICEF’s Youth Houses Baseline Survey. The new UNYAC membership will continue focusing on design, implementation and review of UN-supported youth policies, programmes and initiatives at the country level.

The two-year joint UN-Government Youth House programme aims to transform the cross-country system of Youth Houses into a unified system of integrated and specialized youth services fully led by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. A UNICEF-developed advocacy strategy allowed the UN team to secure the Government’s commitment to pilot the initiative at two Youth Houses using existing resources. The initiative was rolled out in September through a UNICEF-led baseline survey to collect evidence and data to inform the pilot. Over 2,600 adolescents and youth from six districts shared their opinions on the current situation of youth in realizing their rights to health, education, protection and participation and bottlenecks preventing them from achieving their full potential. They were also able to express their ideas for improving the situation of young people. Data collection was led by a group of nine UNICEF-trained young researchers in an effort to make the process transparent, ethical and youth friendly. UNICEF also engaged international expertise to design a basic life skills course that, once tested and evaluated, will be used as a core programme for the Youth Houses.

Effective advocacy and sensitization of key government partners, including the Youth Committee of the Office of the President and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, as well as selected academics, led to a critical decision to pilot an academic course for the preparation of youth workers in Azerbaijan. This profession is currently non-existent in the country.

The sport for development approach continued to yield tangible results and served as a gateway for inclusion of adolescents and youth with disabilities and girls into mainstream society. Data from UNICEF’s Accessibility Assessment allowed the Ministry of Youth and Sports
to equip all Olympic Centres with ramps, while the Ministry of Education made a critical commitment to include accessibility considerations into their construction standards to make all newly built or renovated schools universally accessible. The TOP inclusive physical education methodology, a legacy of the London Olympic Games and piloted in more than 70 schools across the country, was evaluated by UNICEF, and recommendations were made to the Government to scale it up nationwide. The 3rd National Children’s Paralympic Games were staged, increasing the number of sports from four to seven, and the number of competing children from 40 to 110 in just a two-year period. The process was underpinned by robust capacity building for government officials, teachers, coaches and psychologists, as well as young people themselves acting as peer educators, advisers to decision makers and researchers.

### Strategic Plan 2018-2021

UNICEF Azerbaijan will place significant focus on two key areas of the new Strategic Plan in the remainder of the current country programme cycle: early childhood development and youth and adolescent development. Early childhood development has, to date in Azerbaijan, been seen primarily as investment in child health and early learning, with considerable progress having been made in increasing preschool education opportunities. A more holistic approach, linking early learning, early child health and nutrition, social welfare support and parenting support, will enable UNICEF to create stronger linkages in its programming, and serve to encourage a similar ‘joined-up’ approach by government and other partners. In the area of youth and adolescent development, noting the large proportion of the population falling into the youth demographic (around one-third), the Strategic Plan will also enable UNICEF to increase its focus on encouraging investment in young people as vital human capital for national growth and development.

The Sustainable Development Agenda, and the alignment of the new Strategic Plan with the 2030 SDGs, will also enable UNICEF in Azerbaijan to encourage a longer-term view for public sector investments, and support advocacy around the importance of sustained social investment towards the goals of economic growth, stability and prosperity, which have been clearly defined as national priorities by the Government.

### Summary Notes and Acronyms

**Acronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFFA</td>
<td>Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan</td>
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<td>DRR</td>
<td>disaster risk reduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>MCD</td>
<td>monitoring of child development</td>
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<tr>
<td>HACT</td>
<td>harmonized approach to cash transfers</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>information technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey</td>
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<td>MIS</td>
<td>Management Information System</td>
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<td>MRE</td>
<td>mine risk education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children's Fund</td>
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<td>UNYAC</td>
<td>UN Youth Advisory Council</td>
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**Capacity development**
Training for primary health centre-level paediatricians on infant and young child feeding and the monitoring of child development (MCD) allowed local health service providers to support parents with information and practices for improving child health and nutritional care. Public awareness and knowledge were improved through the implementation of a communication strategy that was based on the recommendations of a rapid assessment on knowledge, attitude and practices on exclusive breastfeeding.

UNICEF Azerbaijan supported the capacity strengthening of civil society organizations in five rural districts to design and implement local communication strategies. Community awareness, knowledge and understanding of free legal aid services were increased, while more than 3,000 low-income families in those districts benefited from legal and social services over two years.

Significant efforts were made to generate evidence to support the development of programme and communication strategies. An ongoing study on knowledge, attitudes and practices on children with disabilities will provide comprehensive insights on barriers to inclusion of children with disabilities and support development of a communication strategy for inclusive education.

UNICEF further reinforced the capacity of the Ministry of Education to take full ownership of regular school readiness classes. An additional 3,244 primary teachers from 61 regions received training on school readiness preparation, leading to some 100,000 five-year old children attending school readiness classes in 2017.

The capacity of staff of social service divisions in the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population was developed on basic principles and practices of social work with children and families, reaching 120 persons who will function as “para- social workers” from 2018.

Working with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Emergency Situations, a life skills programme with a disaster risk reduction module was introduced in selected non-formal education institutions. Fifty trainers were involved, and over 1,500 children attended the programme.

**Evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy**

UNICEF Azerbaijan advocated for the introduction of a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, which was included in the State Programme for Statistics. When implemented in 2020, it will enhance disaggregated monitoring and reporting on the SDGs.

The second round of a Child Deprivation Study was conducted with the State Statistics Committee. UNICEF’s offices in Azerbaijan and Georgia worked with the State Committee for Family, Women and Children’s Affairs to undertake a multi-country qualitative study on street children.

With the UN Country Team, UNICEF engaged with the National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development and participated in the UN Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support Mission, advocating for greater focus on social development in the Government’s development agenda. UNICEF, with the World Bank and the European Union, advocated for justice reform and free legal aid services for children, through an evidence-based National Strategy on Juvenile Justice and an independent evaluation of a pilot programme, which provided evidence on legal aid models.

The UNICEF Regional Director met with senior officials and international partners, and
introduced a proposal for reactivating a draft national strategy for children to address children’s unmet social development needs. UNICEF senior management routinely engaged with international development partners to brief them on current issues affecting children, leading to expressions of interest in future engagement from a number of potential international actors.

Regular engagement between UNICEF senior management and representatives of the Government, Parliament, the Presidential Administration and State Committees galvanized action on issues such as flour fortification legislation, integrated early childhood development, and protection of children returning from the Iraq conflict.

UNICEF provided technical expertise to the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs and the Office of the Ombudsman to prepare inputs to their reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which are due in 2018.

**External communication and public advocacy**

In 2017, UNICEF Azerbaijan developed an integrated advocacy and communication for social change strategy, which allowed for greater synergy between external communication and advocacy and communication for development and social change. This included, for example, the development of a public health communication strategy to address low exclusive breastfeeding rates. Implemented with government partners, the campaign used social media platforms (campaign materials had 634,000 views and there were 208,700 interactions with UNICEF Azerbaijan's social media pages), mass media outlets such as cinemas, which ran public service announcements, and placement of information films in national citizen service centres. This was coupled with investment in training of journalists on public health reporting, and message development and skills building with frontline health workers to strengthen their knowledge-sharing abilities within communities.

Social media has become an increasingly important tool to reach out to various audiences. According to data analysis, the main UNICEF Azerbaijan social media site (Facebook) has over 40,000 followers. UNICEF Azerbaijan websites (in Azerbaijani and English) continued to be a tool for knowledge sharing and external communication. At the same time, UNICEF continued to be prominent in the national media. Media monitoring showed about 1,000 UNICEF-related stories in the print and internet-based media during 2017, with the vast majority being favourable.

Communication was also enhanced with national and international partners through the reintroduction of a quarterly e-bulletin showcasing UNICEF-supported initiatives and the results being achieved for children.

**South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation**

In 2017, UNICEF Azerbaijan supported the collaboration between Turkey’s Ankara University and the Ministry of Health in developing a training package on monitoring child development and implementation of this methodology in Azerbaijan. UNICEF also sponsored two professionals of the Ministry of Health to participate in the 2nd International Congress on Developmental Paediatrics in December in India, where they shared the results and experiences of work in the area of implementation of monitoring child development in Azerbaijan.

UNICEF Azerbaijan also supported representatives of the Ministry of Justice to undertake a fact-finding mission to Slovenia to gather best practices on probation and mediation services for
juveniles. Participants were able to gain insights on practices of court-annexed mediation, school and peer mediation, penal mediation, probation, social welfare and reintegration of juveniles from their Slovenian counterparts and other experts.

UNICEF Azerbaijan also supported staff from the State Statistics Committee to participate in a regional workshop on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and the Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Network Meeting, as part of efforts to strengthen national capacity for data collection and management.

Support to integration and cross-sectoral linkages

A greater life-cycle approach was applied to implementation of the Country Programme during 2017, with an emphasis on integrated multisectoral cooperation. Five programme priorities were reformulated on early childhood development, inclusive education, social service and child protection, adolescent development and participation, and child right’s monitoring and social policy for children. These approaches will form the basis of future programming for the remainder of the current cycle until 2020.

The early childhood development approach involves multiple stakeholders working on young child health, nutrition and early stimulation, as well as child development monitoring, early education and learning, and protection of young children from exclusion, violence and abuse.

Based on a 2017 study on knowledge, attitudes and practices on children with disabilities, a comprehensive communication strategy will be developed to tackle stigma, discrimination and negative social norms and to encourage more favourable legislation in areas such as inclusive education.

The initial development of a child-centred and equity-focused social services strategy promoted a cross-sectoral model of social services and referral systems, with a strong focus on local-level coordination among different stakeholders to target children at risk, and design, implement and monitor social services.

The adolescent development and participation programme focused on establishing more integrated youth-friendly services for adolescents and youth, tapping into support from UN agencies, international organizations, and various government line ministries and civil society entities.

UNICEF’s child rights monitoring programme actively supported more integrated data collection and evidence generation and analysis to encourage development of better informed social policy and public financing for children.

Human rights-based approach to cooperation

During 2017, UNICEF Azerbaijan provided technical assistance to both the State Committee for Family, Women and Children’s Affairs and the Office of the Ombudsman to prepare their reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which are due in 2018.

Despite notable national progress in providing and protecting the rights of children to quality education, children with disabilities still face significant barriers to quality and inclusive education in Azerbaijan. UNICEF’s technical support and continuous advocacy with the Ministry of Education for the introduction of a State Programme on Development of Inclusive Education, as a national commitment to mandate inclusive education for all children, resulted in approval of
the State Programme by the President of Azerbaijan in late 2017. Among other things, the Programme envisages building on a model of inclusive education developed by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with UNICEF and pilot tested for two years in four schools.

In 2017, UNICEF Azerbaijan continued to support the National Preventative Group under the Office of the Ombudsman to enhance the Group’s capacity to better identify and prevent child rights violations. Group members and UNICEF Azerbaijan conducted joint monitoring of 48 childcare institutions including detention centres. For better data collection, analysis and management, a Management Information System (MIS) was developed for the National Preventative Group, with UNICEF technical support. Currently all monitoring visits, hotline calls and complaints from children are managed through this system. In 2017, the cases of more than 200 children were recorded and managed in this way.

**Gender equality**

The focus of UNICEF’s gender programming remained on increasing the profile of girls and young women as equal members of society through initiatives that promote the value added of girls within their communities. This approach is designed to tackle the underlying social perception of boys having a more integral value in the community.

Through the adolescent development and participation programme, UNICEF worked closely with the State Committee for Family, Women and Children’s Affairs and the Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan (AFFA) to promote positive role models of successful women and girls. Through the partnership with the AFFA, UNICEF supported a public campaign on gender-based violence. Special guidelines were developed to train coaches to engage and support girls in sports. Forty-two football coaches working with more than 600 girls received training using the new guidelines.

UNICEF Azerbaijan actively participated in the global ‘16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence’ through the promotion of campaign materials on its wide-reaching social media platforms and through the engagement of its existing youth and adolescent programmes at the district level. Awareness was raised with regard to gender-based violence, with over 120 people participating in roundtable discussions and distribution of communication materials.

UNICEF Azerbaijan also took part in a UN Country Team gender audit. While its programmes were found to be gender-sensitive overall, a more explicit focus on gender-disaggregation in terms of data and analysis undertaken by technical experts was recommended. These recommendations will be absorbed into future programme direction through the 2018 mid-term review of the UNICEF Country Programme.

**Environmental sustainability**

UNICEF Azerbaijan introduced climate change and environmental issues through the disaster risk reduction project supported by the EU’s Disaster Preparedness ECHO Programme, which ran from 2016 to 2017.

Under this initiative, UNICEF Azerbaijan provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Education to develop a new life-skills curriculum for use in non-formal education. This includes comprehensive components on disaster risk reduction and climate change. The curriculum targets 12-15-year-olds, and was introduced via extra-curricular institutions of the Ministry in 2017. It reached over 1,000 school-aged children in nine districts.
UNICEF supported the Ministry of Emergency Situations in 2017 to introduce and pilot a disaster risk assessment tool in an additional three districts with a high risk of floods and man-made hazards. District-based working groups in the three local authorities were established with UNICEF support. Work included causal analysis, and existing and potential triggers for natural disasters were identified.

Based on UNICEF-modelled school-based disaster risk management in two schools during previous years, a draft guideline was developed jointly by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and was submitted to the Ministry for national implementation in public schools.

UNICEF also initiated a climate landscape analysis for children in Azerbaijan. The findings and recommendations, expected in early 2018, will be used to guide UNICEF’s strategic discussions with the Government on climate change and the environmental impact on children, and also to establish possible future actions in this area.

**Effective leadership**

In 2017, UNICEF Azerbaijan further strengthened the country management team as the core advisory body for major programme and management decisions. Quarterly country management team meetings focused on close monitoring of office management performance against global indicators. A stronger, more results-focused annual management plan was produced, which was fully achieved by the end of the year.

UNICEF Azerbaijan also improved and standardized the programme management team mechanism, with monthly reviews of programme performance and cross-cutting issues. The programme management team now includes participation of senior operations staff to encourage closer cooperation and joint actions in supporting country programme results.

UNICEF Azerbaijan made efforts to increase staff knowledge and improve quality of programme management work through capacity building on the harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT), use of funding authorization and certificate of expenditure forms, and planning for programmatic monitoring visits. The quality of terms of reference and contract documents was improved. Monthly financial monitoring reports were prepared and shared regularly to ensure close monitoring and timely utilization of resources.

A strong focus in 2017 was placed on developing staff capacity on emergency preparedness and response. The business continuity plan was updated with full participation of all staff members. UNICEF Azerbaijan also worked closely with the UN Country Team to better assess potential programme and operational risks, which were routinely reviewed through country management and programme management team meetings. Risks related to conflict and natural disasters remain unpredictable, with UNICEF Azerbaijan working closely with the UNICEF Regional Office, the UN Country Team and neighbouring UNICEF country offices to develop an emergency contingency plan. Securing full engagement of national partners remains an ongoing challenge, but efforts were made to include partners in emergency preparedness efforts throughout the year.

**Financial resources management**

In 2017, UNICEF Azerbaijan managed its financial resources in line with organizational requirements, and with an effort to maximize efficiency and effectiveness in all financial operations.
UNICEF Azerbaijan used monitoring tools within VISION – the organizational financial management system – to track utilization of the annual budget and ensure timely expenditures. Funds were also managed through the HACT, which includes a range of financial and programme checks to monitor utilization of funds by partners. Partners’ management of funds was also closely monitored both through on-the-spot visits by UNICEF staff and through internal management reporting and assurance benchmarks. As a result, funds disbursed to be spent by partners were always fully utilized within three to six months.

Effective use continued to be made of bank optimization and cash forecasting tools, and organizational requirements were met in relation to closing bank balances, bank reconciliation and replenishment of accounts. There were no delays in providing routine reports on financial management during the year.

By the end of the reporting period, financial resources from all budget sources had been fully utilized, with some funds carried over to 2018 to ensure programme continuity.

**Fundraising and donor relations**

UNICEF Azerbaijan updated its resource mobilization framework and action plan during 2017, and remained cognizant of the challenges inherent in raising external funds in a middle-income country context. The updated framework identified possible partners within the traditional donor community, and efforts were made throughout the year to build ongoing relationships with these partners. Proposals were submitted for funding to the European Union and the Government of the Netherlands in support of inclusive education and youth programming respectively. UNICEF Azerbaijan also prepared proposals to solicit thematic funding from within the organization, resulting in resources being allocated for 2018 in the child protection and education sectors.

UNICEF Azerbaijan also opened discussions with the UNICEF National Committee in Turkey, noting the strong relationship between Azerbaijan and the Turkish private sector. By the end of the year a number of proposals had been developed, to be submitted to potential donors via the National Committee in early 2018.

As part of efforts to improve regular communication with the donor community inside the country, UNICEF Azerbaijan launched a new electronic newsletter in 2017 focusing on programme activities and their impact on children and families across the country. This newsletter was shared every quarter with the majority of the international donor community in Azerbaijan.

Effective resource management resulted in more than 90 per cent of available funds being fully utilized in support of programme activities during 2017. Of the 39 per cent of funds spent on human resources, the vast majority were invested in technical assistance in support of programmes for children, with only 16 per cent of total funds being spent on operational costs.

**Evaluation and research**

A summative evaluation of the European Union (EU)-funded project on ‘Promoting Access to Justice for Children in Azerbaijan through National Capacity Building for State and non-State Actors’ was undertaken with an independent international evaluator.

Following the standard operations procedures for quality assurance and ethical standards in UNICEF-supported research, studies and evaluations, the terms of reference, inception report and draft evaluation report were reviewed by an external reviewer, Universalia, and assessed
as highly satisfactory and of high quality.

The evaluation results and recommendations were presented to and validated by government and non-government partners, including the European Union as the primary donor. The final report of the evaluation, including feedback received from partners, will be available in January 2018. UNICEF Azerbaijan will work with programme partners to further develop a management response to address all recommendations, in particular to develop a strategy to secure sustainability of the project.

**Efficiency gains and cost savings**

UNICEF Azerbaijan continued to optimize staff time by identifying opportunities to combine or merge transactions in VISION – the organizational financial management system – wherever possible.

UNICEF Azerbaijan also worked closely with UNICEF’s Global Shared Services Centre in Budapest in the areas of finance, payroll, and master data management. Staff found the internal 'MyCase' tool very helpful in the effective processing of personnel-related issues.

Most supplies were procured locally, thereby supporting local markets and enabling procurement of quality supplies at competitive prices.

Cost savings were continuously sought in all possible areas. While the fall in currency exchange rates led to a natural reduction in communication costs, UNICEF Azerbaijan continued to optimize the use of communications and information technology (IT) tools with the help of favourable mobile communication tariffs, use of free facilities, and virtual modes of meetings and interviews. Staff members were encouraged to use voice over internet protocol (VOIP) systems for international telephone calls.

Based on the initiative of one staff member, an analysis was undertaken of the costs of translation and interpretation fees, which were incurred on a piece rate. This analysis led to a decision to move all translation and interpretation services to a planned in-house contract, with an estimated future saving of US$36,000 per annum.

Wherever possible, official meetings were organized in meeting rooms provided free of charge within the UNICEF Azerbaijan building. This reduced expenses and time spent on event organization.

UNICEF Azerbaijan continued to advocate for more inter-agency collaboration on cost-saving through the UN Operations Management Team. While there was little progress in 2017, the UN Country Team prioritized this for acceleration in 2018.

**Supply management**

During the year, UNICEF’s supply component increased slightly in comparison to previous years. Most procurement was related to administrative supplies and printing of reports and project materials, as well as visibility items from local suppliers. The local market is improving in terms of timeliness of delivery and quality. The number of consultancy contracts continued to increase during 2017 due to local legislation that places constraints on partnership agreements with non-government actors.
UNICEF Azerbaijan assisted the Ministry of Health to access global procurement services in 2017. The value of government orders through UNICEF’s global procurement services increased, with US$2.4 million worth of vaccines and safety injection supplies procured with UNICEF support during the year.

UNICEF Azerbaijan continued to utilize long-term agreements for IT maintenance services and translation services. Previous long-term agreements for transportation, hotel and conference facilities managed by another UN agency expired and were not subsequently renewed, resulting in a high workload for staff to manage individual arrangements.

UNICEF Azerbaijan procured IT supply items mainly from the organization’s supply division and from global suppliers through long-term agreements in line with UNICEF’s global policies.

There was no loss in local and offshore procurement in 2017. The office does not have a warehouse.

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<th>DOC TYPE</th>
<th>AMOUNT US$</th>
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<td>Service contracts</td>
<td>ZLCO</td>
<td>35,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct ordering (computer equipment)</td>
<td>ZLAM</td>
<td>28,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme supplies</td>
<td>ZLC</td>
<td>52,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>539,306</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Security for staff and premises**

In early 2017, UNICEF Azerbaijan undertook a comprehensive security review of its premises, systems and functions. As a result, a number of physical enhancements were undertaken to the office premises, and practices were updated to reflect recognized, if low-likelihood, risk scenarios.

In addition, working with the UN Department for Safety and Security, all staff were provided with training on personal security.

The security risk to programme implementation in Azerbaijan is very small. However, towards the end of 2017 following the return of displaced populations to liberated communities along the Line of Contact, where there remain noted risks to children including prevalence of landmines and close proximity to possible lines of fire, UNICEF Azerbaijan raised questions within the UN Country Team about the extent to which the UN can support such returns in the face of those risks to both beneficiaries and staff. This will be an issue requiring a coherent and common UN Country Team position in light of public expectations for the UN system to actively support resettlement of displaced families in these reclaimed areas.

**Human resources**
Noting the challenges of delivering results in the health and nutrition sector without a dedicated professional in the office, a temporary position was created and filled during 2017 to support the health and nutrition work plan. In addition, in recognition of the centrality of data and research to the country programme, the child rights monitoring specialist position was moved to a more secure budget source.

One new position will be created in early 2018 – finance assistant – while additional capacity will be created with the return of the Information communication technology assistant position to a full-time role. These changes will also enhance delivery of results in the operations area.

Local capacity was supported through the use of stretch assignments, including the deployment of one staff member to support an overseas country office, and the lateral reassignment of another colleague within the office to develop skills in the programme administration field.

In support of improved performance management, UNICEF Azerbaijan undertook a series of training sessions with all staff at every level, including a workshop on delivering and receiving feedback, an issue that had been identified as needing attention through previous staff surveys. The country management team reviewed the frequency of performance discussions and career development conversations as part of its regular indicators.

Two members of staff undertook a one-day orientation on the UN Cares initiative, and will be focal points for this initiative within UNICEF Azerbaijan.

As part of an ongoing emergency preparedness effort, UNICEF Azerbaijan also identified potential technical gaps in the current staffing structure and worked with neighbouring countries to develop a sub-regional human resource plan in the event of a sudden demand for specialist humanitarian support.

**Effective use of information and communication technology**

UNICEF Azerbaijan transferred all physical servers and a large part of its IT services including email, file management and backup systems to the Cloud as part of the Light Office initiative. The elimination of physical servers reduced information and communication technology (ICT) maintenance costs and created physical space than can now be used for alternative purposes. Migration to the Cloud is expected to create energy efficiencies, as five physical servers are no longer required.

The move to the Cloud-based structure also enabled the office to ensure data availability in case of laptop loss or malfunction, as all data is now synched with the online server. The Cloud-based approach also ensures mobility in the event of a sudden office relocation or evacuation. The move to replace all desktop computers with laptops also contributed to agility as part of emergency preparedness.

The office migrated its connectivity from ADSL (asymmetric digital subscriber line) to fibre optic, which considerably increased connection speeds and increased the effective use of Cloud storage. The higher bandwidth also enabled staff to use voice over internet protocol (VOIP) for e-meetings.

Social media remained the main engagement tool for UNICEF Azerbaijan, with a significant number of followers accessing photos, videos and other materials through the main social
media site. In 2017, preparatory work was undertaken to move the website to a new operating platform in line with the global digital transformation initiative.

**Programme components from RAM**

**ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS**

**OUTCOME 1** Effective and efficient programme management and operations support are in place

**Analytical statement of progress**
The office worked continuously to identify efficiencies in all possible areas. Well-managed programme and financial operations resulted in full utilization of allocated funds by the end of the reporting year. Management of data mobility and security practices were continuously developed as part of the pilot ICT project implementation.

**OUTPUT 1** Effective and efficient governance structures and systems established to adequately manage risks and achieve programme results

**Analytical statement of progress**
UNICEF Azerbaijan developed its annual management plan in line with the new organizational format. Five programme priorities and two management priorities were established for 2017, all of which were on track by the end of the year except one (monitoring of the State Youth Programme was cancelled due to late approval of the state programme). UNICEF Azerbaijan strengthened its management mechanisms, including the establishment of a clear agenda for quarterly country management team meetings, and reformulated terms of reference for the programme management team, which met monthly to review and monitor programme implementation. The programme and operations team worked closely during the year to accelerate implementation of the country programme rolling work plans. Funding utilization, security and capacity strengthening of staff were priorities of the senior management team. Specific efforts were made during the year to further clarify working procedures on the HACT, use of the standard funding authorisation and certification of expenditure form, and HACT assurance activities, including micro-assessments, spot checks and programmatic visits. Violations related to segregation of duties in the VISION system were solved locally through more precise task distribution, despite the small size of the office.

The office statutory committees and the designation of authority were systematically reviewed and updated.

**OUTPUT 2** Effective and efficient management and stewardship of financial resources is implemented, including administration, finance, office security and equipment, maintenance and vehicles

**Analytical statement of progress**
Financial resources were managed in line with organizational requirements, with efforts to maximize efficiency and effectiveness in all financial operations.

The budget was precisely monitored using reports from VISION and insight reports for timely utilization.
The office also managed funds through HACT, which included a range of financial and programme checks to monitor utilization of funds by partners. Management of funds by partners was closely monitored both through on-the-spot visits by UNICEF staff and through internal management reporting and assurance benchmarks. Micro-assessments were carried out by an external audit organization for one implementing partner that received over US$100,000.

Financial management reports were provided with no delays throughout the reporting year. The office had no direct cash transfers to implementing partners with outstanding balances over nine months throughout the year.

Due to reliability, price and quality of service, the Government decided to use UNICEF Supply Division for procurement services. Procurement of vaccines and safety injection supplies valued at US$2.45 million were efficiently managed by UNICEF Azerbaijan throughout the year.

By the end of the reporting period, financial resources from all budget sources had been fully utilized, with some funds carried over to 2018 to ensure programme continuity.

Quality of cash management practices increased due to closer cooperation with the programme team and better planning.

**OUTPUT 3** Effective and efficient management of human capacity is established, including staff development and learning

**Analytical statement of progress**

The lack of a dedicated health and nutrition professional in the staffing structure and its impact on implementation of work plans in the sector were recognized, and a national temporary assignment position was created. By the end of 2017, four vacant posts had been filled with qualified candidates through well-developed recruitment process.

The local human resource development committee was convened to develop the office learning and training plan, which was implemented with more than 82 per cent completion by the end of year.

Key investments in office-wide skills development in 2017 focused on performance management, including piloting the new performance management training programme in collaboration with NY Headquarters’ Human Resources Division, with a specific focus on feedback issues.

Performance appraisal reports for 2016 for all staff were completed with 100 per cent rate as of 28 February 2017.

UNICEF Azerbaijan held a staff retreat in 2017 that aimed to build team trust in a relationship-based culture such as in Azerbaijan, build more effective feedback mechanisms, and set up a common vision of the office’s purpose and goals.

**OUTCOME 2** Programme Effectiveness Outcome

**Analytical statement of progress**
UNICEF Azerbaijan strengthened internal programme management capacity with new senior leadership in a context of a programme team that also included new staff (three of six programme professionals were newly recruited in the previous twelve months). Programme management team meetings were standardized, and regular programme performance monitoring and coordination discussions were carried out to achieve the smooth implementation of planned activities and high quality of deliverables.

External relationships were further expanded to broader partners for child development. UNICEF Azerbaijan developed strong partnerships with senior government authorities, including the National Coordination Commission on Sustainable Development led by the Vice Prime Minister, the Department of Youth Development under the Presidential Administration, and all key ministers relevant to child-related issues. UNICEF strengthened its coordination with other UN Agencies through the UN Country Team and joint initiatives such as UN-Government Joint Youth House Initiative. In 2017, the partnership with international organizations and donors were further developed, including strengthened partnerships with the European Union, the European Commission and the World Bank. UNICEF continued to engage in partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) in a challenging environment by organizing a meeting with NGO representatives and capacity building through joint projects (legal aid, adolescent and youth participation and the Children's Paralympics).

An expansion of social media outreach and improved content, combined with initiatives to strengthen ties with parliamentary bodies and non-governmental advocacy partners, helped to solidify public engagement on key child rights issues. UNICEF supported the State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs to organize the fourth National Child Forum with the presence of UNICEF’s Regional Director of the Europe and Central Asia, which highlighted the role of UNICEF in supporting child rights and the SDG agenda in the country. In 2017, UNICEF gained stronger respect of counterparts and civil society through the Cooperation Programme.

**OUTPUT 1** Programme Coordination

**Analytical statement of progress**

Efforts were made in 2017 to further conceptualize key programme components with a strong focus on inter-sectoral linkages and programme coordination.

A conceptual framework was developed for the social service and child protection programme, highlighting the need for an inter-sectoral strategy on social services and a local social service referral system involving multiple stakeholders including health, education, social protection, youth development and central and local government authorities and NGOs/CSOs.

The inclusive education programme was further developed with a national study on knowledge, attitude and practices on children with disabilities, going beyond education to assess the core bottlenecks in social norms, stigma and discrimination as the underlying causes of isolation and exclusion.

The joint UN-Government Youth House Initiative created the framework for a strong multisectoral programming approach through participation of seven UN agencies and multiple government ministries with the objective of developing a multisectoral youth service for adolescents and young people, especially the most disadvantaged youth.
UNICEF is introducing an integrated early childhood development concept by reformulating relevant programmes for children below the age of eight. These cover health and nutrition, early stimulation and development monitoring, preschool early learning and school readiness, and parenting education on care and protection of children.

OUTPUT 2 External Relations

Analytical statement of progress

In 2017, UNICEF Azerbaijan developed an integrated advocacy and communication for social change strategy, which allowed for greater synergy between external communication and advocacy and communication for development and social change. This included, for example, the development of a public health communication strategy addressing low exclusive breastfeeding rates. Implemented with government partners, the campaign used social media platforms (campaign materials had 634,000 views and 208,700 engagements with UNICEF Azerbaijan’s Facebook page), mass media outlets such as movie theatres, which ran public service announcements, and placement of information films in national citizen service centres. This was coupled with investment in training of journalists on public health reporting, and message development and skills building with frontline health workers to strengthen their knowledge-sharing abilities within communities.

Public communication also spotlighted the issue of disability through communication materials, integrated social media packages promoting the abilities and talents of children with disabilities, and support for major public events such as the Children’s Paralympics. Similar focus was placed on tackling negative or limiting perceptions of the role of girls and women in society, for example through a public information campaign in partnership with the AFFA to highlight the successes of girls and young women in the community.

Social media has become an increasingly important tool to reach out to various audiences. According to Facebook statistics, the UNICEF Azerbaijan page has over 40,000 followers. UNICEF Azerbaijan websites (in Azerbaijani and English) continued to be a tool for knowledge sharing and external communication. At the same time, UNICEF continued to be prominent in the national media. Media monitoring showed about 1,000 UNICEF-related stories in the print and internet media, with the vast majority being favourable.

OUTCOME 3 Children, especially the most deprived, access and utilize quality and equitable protection, education, health and nutrition services

Analytical statement of progress

In 2017, UNICEF Azerbaijan supported the Ministry of Health to develop and implement a communication strategy for the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding and increase awareness and knowledge of infant and young child feeding practices, reaching over 500,000 people.

To improve child nutrition and reduce prevalence of anaemia, especially among pregnant women and children, advocacy was undertaken to introduce legislation and programmes for flour fortification. Support was provided to the drafting of a flour fortification law and organizing multisector roundtable consultations.

The school readiness programme and the community-based early learning programme were developed through capacity building and led to full government ownership for scale-up. The
one-year preschool attendance rate increased from 14.2 per cent in the 2014-2015 school year to 65 per cent in 2017-2018. Community-based early learning centres were piloted in 50 rural districts reaching about 1,000 children aged three to four years of age by the end of 2017.

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to develop and implement a comprehensive State Programme on Inclusive Education through policy and programme development, capacity building and piloting, and awareness-raising to reduce stigma, discrimination and negative social norms towards children with disabilities.

A child-centred and equity-focused social service strategy was under development at the end of 2017 with the focus on the most vulnerable children and their families. UNICEF supported the first steps in the development of a social worker workforce and strengthened coordination among social service providers to overcome the bottlenecks of insufficient human capacity and governance.

The UNICEF-supported adolescent development and participation programme supported adolescent and young people to participate in decision making, particularly through sport for development for girls and children with disabilities in close cooperation with the AFFA and the Paralympic Committee of Azerbaijan. Working in three Line of Contact districts, UNICEF provided support to young people on active dialogue with local authorities to propose and implement projects that young people themselves developed. UNICEF also led the initiation of a joint UN-Government Youth House Programme to develop integrated youth-friendly services for young people.

OUTPUT 1 National and subnational institutional mechanisms established to identify, refer and report instances of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children

Analytical statement of progress
During 2017, UNICEF’s cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population was further strengthened with the clear commitment of the Ministry to improve social services for the most vulnerable children and their families. Institutional change was initiated to establish a social worker workforce in the country including both professional and “para-social” workers. UNICEF supported consultations with the Government, NGOs and international organizations for the development of a child-centred and equity-focused social services strategy. With the support of an international expert, a draft strategy and action plan was prepared. The strategy will be piloted in selected districts in 2018 to support the establishment of national and subnational institutional mechanisms to identify, refer and report instances of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children.

UNICEF continued to advocate for the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability and the adoption of the new Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2017. A high-level conference was held on “Azerbaijan’s Commitments on UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability: Achievements, Challenges & Perspectives”, organized jointly by UNICEF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population with the participation of the Head of the Social Policy Committee of the Parliament and Head of the Baku office of the Council of Europe. The conference provided an opportunity for cross-sectoral discussions on key achievements and challenges/gaps on implementation of the Convention and ways of strengthening the functions of the working group.
It also covered cooperation among stakeholders for effective implementation of the Convention and expansion of reforms to fulfil the rights of persons with disabilities.

There are still many challenges in the social protection system. Major components of social protection – social insurance, social assistance, social services and labour market interventions – function in isolation, and opportunities for achieving synergies have been missed. The efficiency of cash benefits is relatively low due to gaps in targeting and insufficient integration with non-monetary benefits (social services and labour market interventions). There is no single coordination mechanism for social service provision with social work (i.e. a referral system). The availability of various social services at the community level is insufficient, and some have applied outdated standards or none at all. All these factors create barriers in developing a child-centred social protection system with an equity principle. This will remain a focus for UNICEF engagement in 2018.

A number of issues regarding the full integration of persons with disabilities into mainstream society remain. The medical approach to disability; stigmatized attitudes towards persons with disabilities; lack of inclusive education and reasonable employment opportunities; and poor accessibility of physical infrastructure (roads, public buildings, transportation) for persons with disabilities are the main bottlenecks. Coordination of actions and cooperation among stakeholders for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability need significant improvements. UNICEF will continue work with the government to address these barriers in 2018.

OUTPUT 2 The list of state-funded services for deprived children established and fully funded

Analytical statement of progress
In 2017, UNICEF provided technical support for developing two regulatory documents: Guidelines on Social Work with Children and Families in the Child Protection System, and Guidelines on Social Work with Children and Families in the Justice System. These are expected to be officially endorsed in 2018 as standards for providing social work services.

Technical assistance was provided for capacity development of staff members of social services divisions at all local branches of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, through intensive training modules on basic principles and practices of social work with individuals (including children) and families. Around 120 staff members who would function as “para-social workers” acquired knowledge and skills in areas such as introduction to case management, core assessment processes, theories and practices supporting child-centred social work and ethical principles of social work.

UNICEF also conducted capacity development for 14 staff members of Child Rehabilitation Centres of the Ministry, covering basic principles and methods of social inclusion services for children with disabilities through theoretical and practical sessions.

As social work is a relatively new concept in the country, there is a lack of understanding among government stakeholders on coordination mechanisms of social work and social services. The capacity of social services providers is not in line with international standards. All these issues raise concerns over service quality, which requires a comprehensive approach to capacity building of service providers and promotion of quality standards, accreditation and certification mechanisms.
OUTPUT 3 Mechanisms established at national and subnational levels to identify, refer, report and intervene to protect children from violations of their rights

Analytical statement of progress
Due to the delay in developing the social services strategy, the pilot of the local social service referral systems was also postponed. However, UNICEF supported the drafting of a Concept Note and Terms of Reference for Case Management in 2017.

The conceptual framework developed for the pilot local social services and referral system considered the proposals and opinions of social work professionals, key government structures, and NGOs. The referral mechanism focuses on strengthening the role of local executive authorities in child protection services and establishing coordination among key government stakeholders (social protection, education, health, employment, youth, the police) in social service provision. UNICEF will support the testing of the framework in selected districts in 2018.

OUTPUT 4 Children's access to justice is ensured through specialized justice system

Analytical statement of progress
Provision of free legal aid services continued in 2017 with the EU and UNICEF’s support, reaching 980 children through 804 cases in 10 districts. The EU-funded project on "Promoting Access to Justice for Children in Azerbaijan through National Capacity Building for State and non-State Actors" was completed in 2017. A summative evaluation was carried out by an independent consultant. The overall findings were very positive regarding relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact. The challenge of sustainability was discussed with national stakeholders through a joint validation meeting, and both the Government and UNICEF committed to continuing efforts to integrate legal aid services into the minimum social service package under development as part of the Social Service Strategy.

With the support of the World Bank, UNICEF supported the drafting of the National Strategy on Juvenile Justice that was finalized and submitted to the Ministry of Justice.

In 2017, UNICEF monitored the work of the pilot child-friendly court room and specialized team at the Baku Court of Grave Crimes, and also provided recommendations for improvement of the services and procedures regarding juveniles.

UNICEF provided technical support to introduce best practices on probation and mediation services for juveniles from other European countries through a two-day training for representatives of key government entities by an international expert. A fact-finding mission to the Republic of Slovenia was also carried out.

OUTPUT 5 National capacity enhanced to ensure equitable, universal access to early learning

Analytical statement of progress
Following continued advocacy by UNICEF, the Minister of Education took full ownership of regular school readiness classes for five-year-old children, with relevant policy support and financial resources. UNICEF’s school readiness programme, adopted by the Ministry, was expanded and reinforced through enhancement of the in-service teacher training programme
and delivery of the training programme for 3,244 primary school teachers from 61 regions of Azerbaijan. Those teachers were engaged in school readiness programmes reaching about 100,000 five-year-old children in 2,795 schools, increasing the coverage of school readiness from 55 per cent to 65 per cent during the year.

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in the design and piloting of a new community-based early learning programme for children three to four years of age and a family education programme in 50 underprivileged communities of 11 regions of the country. A training module on developmental needs of the target group was designed and the capacity of 50 caregivers (teachers, parents) and over 20 community leaders was developed. About 1,000 children three to four years of age were enrolled into the community-based early learning programme in 2017.

The Ministry of Education with UNICEF support developed six in-service training modules and assessment tools for continuous professional development of preschool and primary school teachers based on identified needs. The modules submitted to the Ministry for approval are expected to be integrated into the formal in-service teacher training systems and enable schools and other educational institutions to run a diagnosis and address training needs of teachers effectively.

The Ministry of Education with UNICEF also developed professional standards and in-service training modules for school management staff addressing identified needs and competencies, including management and organisation, leadership, communication, assessment, teacher performance evaluation, data analysis, finance, and human resources management, among others. The standards and the training modules will be further used by the Ministry for selection and capacity development of school principals.

UNICEF also aimed to enhance capacity of schools in curriculum design, thus promoting school autonomy and diversity of learner-centred study programmes. The National Curriculum Framework for general education and alternative study programmes addressing various needs of learners in different contextual environments, such as children with disabilities and upper-secondary level streaming, were developed to foster curriculum reform and enable schools to better address different needs of learners.

The challenges faced included insufficient capacity of teachers at schools in the delivery of school readiness programmes for all children. In addition, pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes have limited capacity to adapt quickly and effectively to the emerging priorities of the education reform process. Cooperation between educational institutions and communities is either fragmented or lacking altogether, and there is a lack of family education opportunities for better parenting skills, especially in rural and underprivileged communities.

**OUTPUT 6 Political commitment, accountability and national capacity enhanced to legislate, plan and budget for scaling up quality and inclusive education**

**Analytical statement of progress**

The State Programme on Inclusive Education 2018-2024 was approved by the President at the end of 2017. With UNICEF’s support, an inclusive education model was provided in four schools in Baku by the Ministry of Education for two years, with 40 children with disabilities receiving education in an inclusive setting. UNICEF provided ongoing mentoring and professional support for teachers of inclusive classes in the four schools. The pre-service teacher training curriculum was revised by the working group, addressing special and inclusive education in pre-service
bachelor’s and master’s degree programmes on special education. The draft curriculum will require further review in 2018.

The Ministry initiated the amendment of the Special Education Law with some improvements to promote inclusive education, however it is still not fully compliant with the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and other international standards. The amendment was under review by the Cabinet of Ministers at the end of 2017. A Study on Knowledge, Attitude and Behaviours towards Children with Disabilities was initiated in 2017 to support the development of a communication strategy to address social norms, reduce stigma and discrimination towards children with disabilities and build a more inclusive society and enabling environment for inclusive education.

UNICEF Azerbaijan participated in the regional project ‘Advancing National and Local Efforts to Reduce Disaster Risks to Children in Central Asia and South Caucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan’. Working with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Emergency Situation, a life skills programme with an integrated DRR module was introduced in the non-formal education system. Fifty trainers from the Ministry of Education’s extracurricular institutions were trained. Over 1,500 children participated in the initial phase of the programme. The Ministry of Education is considering further expansion of the programme to other extracurricular institutions countrywide. A new curriculum and syllabus of the DRR course in the Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University was developed and submitted to the Ministry of Education for approval. The training of trainers course was conducted for the teachers of the Civil Defence Department of the University. A case study on disaster risk analysis methodology was carried out and recommendations for replication of the methodology at the national level were provided.

There are still significant challenges in inclusive education, including: limited awareness and understanding within the Ministry of Education, and among experts and practitioners, on the concept of inclusive education; a lack of a holistic system vision for education for children with disabilities and children in disaster prone areas; limited accessibility of schools and kindergartens for children with disabilities; strong social stigma and stereotypes towards inclusive education for children with disabilities; and lack of disaggregated data by gender, age and disability status of children.

OUTPUT 7 National capacity enhanced to provide access to essential high-impact child health interventions

Analytical statement of progress
Promotion of infant and young child feeding practices remains one of the priorities in the UNICEF Azerbaijan health and nutrition programme. The completed review of local legislation on IYCF noted that in general the National Code on Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes is in line with international standards. However, the implementation of the legislation is uneven, with no system in place for monitoring.

In 2017, the UNICEF programme focused on development of a training package on IYCF for primary healthcare staff (mainly paediatricians), which was incorporated into the curriculum of the Azerbaijan State Advanced Training Institute for Doctors, ensuring sustainable training to new paediatricians. Four-day mobile training activities on IYCF were conducted in three regions
of the country, with 177 paediatricians from surrounding districts receiving on-the-job training and capacity strengthening.

A communication strategy with a focus on exclusive breastfeeding was developed with UNICEF’s technical support, based on a rapid knowledge, attitudes and practice analysis. With UNICEF’s technical and financial support, large-scale communication activities were organized by the Ministry of Health during National Breastfeeding Week in October, with public information supported through distribution of one video and radio PSAs, 500 posters, 1,000 flyers, and two billboards located in Baku. The launch of Breastfeeding Week and other activities among health workers, the general population and young mothers were organized in different places. Local journalists were trained by UNICEF to build increased knowledge and understanding to support public advocacy on exclusive breastfeeding. Overall, activities during National Breastfeeding Week reached more than 500,000 people.

UNICEF continued to support the Ministry of Health to review its data collection tools and methodologies for newborns with low and very low birth weight. It was discovered that analysis of low birth weight newborns is possible only during the perinatal period, after which all medical records were mainly paper-based, making further follow-up of this group of children almost impossible. Since 2015, the Ministry has been using the International Live Birth Definition, which has led to some improvement in newborn birth and death registration. Due to the application of the new definition and improved recording, official infant mortality rates increased slightly from 10.2 per 1,000 live births in 2014 to 11.0 in 2015 and 11.4 in 2016.

UNICEF continued its support for vaccine procurement, enabling all children in Azerbaijan to receive basic routine vaccinations.

OUTPUT 8 National capacity increased to provide early detection, prevention and early interventions services

Analytical statement of progress
The Early Detection and Early Prevention of Childhood Disability Initiative continued in 2017 with further implementation of a local training plan. UNICEF supported the development of a two-day training package on monitoring child development (MCD) for local master trainers (staff of Azerbaijan State Advanced Training Institute for Doctors) with all relevant materials developed and piloted at the Institute. Guidance was provided by specialists from Turkey’s Ankara University. Six local master trainers are now trained and able to provide this training for primary health centre-level paediatricians. With UNICEF’s technical support, three mobile training activities were organized in the regions with participation of paediatricians from surrounding districts. A total of 210 paediatricians had been trained on MCD by the end of 2017. UNICEF supported the participation of two people from Azerbaijan (one from the Ministry of Health and one of the local master trainers) in the 2nd International Congress on Developmental Paediatrics that took place in December in India. They were able to share the results and experiences of Azerbaijan’s work in the area of implementation of MCD.

Lack of monitoring systems makes it impossible to track further performance of trained staff. The Ministry of Health prioritizes training of the health workforce over monitoring their work and services provided. This will be an ongoing advocacy focus for UNICEF.
OUTPUT 9 Strengthened public and private sector commitment and accountability to legislate and implement nutrition interventions

Analytical statement of progress
The participation of a national multisector delegation in the Regional Summit for Improving the Health of Women and Children through Flour Fortification, organized by the UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) in Almaty in April 2017, provided a key opportunity for restarting the dialogue on introduction of flour fortification to Azerbaijan. This is one of the key strategies to address high anaemia prevalence rates, particularly among pregnant women and young children. Following the Summit, delegates agreed on follow-up activities, which included UNICEF supporting the Ministry of Health to prepare a draft Law on Flour Fortification that was presented to a roundtable consultation jointly organized by UNICEF and the Ministry with participation of all relevant stakeholders. These included officials of state agencies, Members of Parliament, academics, and representatives of local NGOs, the milling industry and international organizations. The roundtable strengthened the commitment of important policy-makers and stakeholders on the importance of a national flour fortification programme as an effective way to address high rates of anaemia and neural tube defects. The draft Law is under review and will be submitted to the Parliament for discussion.

Cross-sectoral coordination remains critical to this initiative. UNICEF will continue efforts to engage relevant stakeholders in promoting the legislation and required financial investment and other actions.

OUTPUT 10 Relevant central and district government agencies equipped to implement communication for development interventions for behaviour and social change

Analytical statement of progress
Communication for development and social change is one of the key strategies for addressing barriers of limited awareness, knowledge, attitude and behaviours towards child rights. In 2017, UNICEF Azerbaijan focused on three key programme areas with strong communication for development approaches: a communication campaign on promotion of exclusive breastfeeding, evidence generation for knowledge, attitude and practices towards children with disabilities, and community engagement on communication for access to legal aid services.

The capacity of the Ministry of Health on development and implementation of public communication strategies was strengthened with technical support from UNICEF and an international expert. The Ministry was able to lead the development of several communication materials and organize various social mobilization activities during National Breastfeeding Week in October to disseminate and promote the benefits of breastfeeding for young children’s health and nutrition.

The study on public opinions on children with disabilities was the first step towards the development of a comprehensive communication strategy to support an inclusive education programme in the coming three years through removing social barriers and building an open and inclusive environment for the equal rights of children with disabilities.

Through the EU-supported legal aid project, UNICEF helped build the capacity of civil
society representatives in five districts, equipping them with new skills in designing local communication strategies through district-level support. As a result, community awareness, knowledge and understanding about the free legal aid services for children in these five districts was increased, and over 3,000 low-income families in those districts benefited from the legal and social services.

OUTCOME 4 Government and other actors monitor child rights and contribute to evidence-based equitable state policy formulation, programming and budgeting

Analytical statement of progress
Progress was made in strengthening national data collection structures in relation to child rights and building capacities on monitoring and reporting of child rights violations. In a context where data management is a sensitive issue, progress was made in establishing UNICEF as a trusted partner of government for data through advocacy of the Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey in partnership with the State Statistics Committee to support national SDG monitoring and reporting. The availability and use of the MIS in both the State Committee on Family, Children and Women Affairs and the National Prevention Group under the Ombudsman’s Office helped improve the quality of social services for the most disadvantaged children. It is expected the completion of the Child Deprivation Study and the Child Functionality Study will contribute to the policy discussion and programme development for child poverty and children with disabilities.

OUTPUT 1 Relevant Government agencies adequately equipped to generate, collect and analyse disaggregated data from an equity and gender perspective

Analytical statement of progress
Efforts were made in 2017 to advocate with the Government to undertake a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in Azerbaijan. Together with the UN Country Team, UNICEF used the occasion of the preparation of the country’s Voluntary National Report to introduce the MICS to the governmental National SDG Coordination Committee and the State Statistics Committee, linking the data value of the MICS with the requirements of national SDG reporting. Final agreement was reached to hold the MICS after the 2019 census. UNICEF supported the capacity building of the State Statistics Committee staff through participation in regional MICS training, the preparation of a sampling framework and questionnaire review, and the development of an MICS implementation plan and estimated budget.

UNICEF continued to support the State Committee for Family, Women and Children’s Affairs in developing the National Centralized Child Databank, which included basic demographic data of almost 1.7 million children by the end of 2017. UNICEF provided technical support to develop data transfer systems for relevant entities to enable automatic synchronization from sectoral databases to the Child Databank. The main challenge is lack of accountability by the relevant government entities that are expected to integrate their database into the databank. UNICEF is working with the State Committee to demonstrate the importance of the databank to the relevant stakeholders.

In 2017, UNICEF supported government counterparts to conduct several research efforts and studies aimed at increasing knowledge and understanding of the situation of children and bottlenecks in different areas. The second round of a Child Deprivation Study was conducted jointly with the State Statistics Committee, covering around 6,000 households. The Child
Functionality Measurement methodology of the Washington Module was adapted to the local context and a study was initiated with the Statistics Committee to be completed in 2018. Working with the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs, a multi-country qualitative study on street children was conducted jointly by UNICEF Azerbaijan and UNICEF Georgia, covering target districts/towns in both countries. The draft report is expected in January 2018. Several challenges were faced while implementing these activities, including bureaucratic obstacles that delayed implementation of the Deprivation Study by seven months. The planned Child Functionality Study was postponed, as it will be part of MICS6, which will be undertaken in 2019.

Supported by UNICEF, the State Statistics Committee continued to update the Regional Child Development Database (TransMonEE) with data from 2016.

**OUTPUT 2** State and non-state institutions equipped to independently monitor child rights situation aligned with Committee on the Rights of the Child recommendations

**Analytical statement of progress**

In 2017, UNICEF continued to support the National Preventative Group under the Office of the Ombudsman to improve its capacity to better identify and prevent child rights violations at the national level. Group members received practical and theoretical training with tools and methodologies provided by UNICEF international experts. During 2017, the Group members and UNICEF conducted joint monitoring of 48 childcare institutions including detention centres. Seven cases of child violations were identified by the Group, three less than in 2016. For better data collection, analysis and management, an MIS was developed for the National Preventative Group, with UNICEF’s technical support. All monitoring visits, hotline calls and complaints from children are managed through the MIS, and in 2017 the cases of more than 200 children were recorded and managed in the system. The main challenge is that the Group is responsible for monitoring closed facilities and penitentiaries for adults as well, which hinders effectiveness in dealing with complaints and cases of children. UNICEF continues to advocate for allocation of more staff for the Group, or to have separate members of the Group responsible for dealing exclusively with child-related issues.

The MIS with a development assessment tool component was established for Children and Family Support Centres of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs with UNICEF support. The MIS helps case management by providing real-time data and progress reports on each child registered in the centres, managing and tracking cases of children and generating summary reports. The MIS is being tested in one of the centres where around 40 cases of children are registered monthly, and about 100 new cases added to the system each year. When rolled out to all 11 centres across the country, the MIS will manage approximately 500 cases monthly. The challenge of this process is that the State Committee does not have the necessary technical and human capacity to host and maintain servers for the MIS and the databank. It is vital for additional government funds to be secured by the State Committee to ensure the sustainability of the services.

An online platform for national and intercountry adoption was developed for the State Committee with UNICEF’s support. The platform will provide an opportunity for potential adopters to apply for adoption of children in institutions through the system. The State Committee is working with relevant government entities to make this platform part of the e-Government system. It is expected that the platform will manage approximately 200 cases annually.
At the request of the Government, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the State Committee and the Office of the Ombudsman for capacity building in preparation of the State Report and the independent Ombudsman’s report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Some 26 staff from 16 relevant government entities received training on report writing and developed a timeframe for the reports’ preparation. An international consultant provided tools and guidance for drafting the report and will also support review of the draft reports in 2018.

OUTPUT 3 Government capacity enhanced to formulate evidence-based, child-centred budgets

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF supported the State Statistics Committee to conduct a Child Deprivation Study in 2015 through cooperation with the Ukrainian Statistical Committee. The second round of the survey was conducted in 2017. Comparative analysis of both the first and the second surveys is to be completed in early 2018 to provide key insights on the impact of the 2015 financial crisis on child deprivation and enable practical recommendations on reduction of further vulnerabilities. It is important that this approach is seen as a key part of building resilience and safeguarding families from future economic shocks.

Analysis of public finance for children has not progressed. Currently, there is no strong national capacity in terms of data analysis and there are sensitivities around engaging external experts on a matter of such domestic importance. UNICEF continued its advocacy with the Committee to identify a constructive way forward.

OUTCOME 5 The most deprived adolescents empowered and resilient to become social change agents towards creating more tolerant, peaceful and inclusive societies

Analytical statement of progress
Important results were achieved in the area of youth participation and engagement through strengthening adolescents’ roles in decision-making and resilience building in the Line of Contact districts. The UN Youth Advisory Council was re-established, and advocacy was successfully carried out for the transformation of the cross-country system of youth houses into a unified system of integrated youth services. Work was also undertaken to strengthen inclusion of adolescents and young people through sports and physical education. The process was underpinned by robust capacity building for government officials, teachers, coaches, psychologists and young people themselves as peer educators, advisers to decision-makers and researchers. On the strategic level, critical evidence-generation activities were completed, including the adolescent baseline survey to formulate the youth house initiative and the evaluation of the physical education methodology to advise the government on its potential scaling up to the national level.

During the year, more than 2,600 adolescents and youth shared their opinions on the current situation of young people in relation to health, education, protection and participation and bottlenecks preventing them from developing their full potential. Their ideas for improving the situation of young people were solicited. Thirteen young men and women aged between 16 and 29, representing different social backgrounds, including disadvantaged and marginalized communities, were selected and supported to be youth advisers to the UN Country Team. A total of 110 children with disabilities were involved in the Paralympic Games, and children and
youth from 36 districts benefited from improved access to local Olympic Centres. Sixty boys and girls aged 11-18 from three Line of Contact districts were actively engaged in decision-making with the district authorities to promote youth voices. As a result, joint projects were developed that will benefit more than 2,000 adolescents in their districts. Over 360 adolescents participated in MRE supported by these young leaders, and more than 2,500 children from 15 schools benefited from UNICEF-developed materials on MRE.

OUTPUT 1  Costed, equity and gender-sensitive state youth programme available, fully informed by adolescents’ opinions

Analytical statement of progress
The 2017-2021 State Youth Programme was endorsed by the Government at the end of 2017. Designed as an action plan for the State Youth Development Strategy 2015-2025, the programme focuses on areas such as entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, civic engagement, sports and recreation, promotion of human rights and equality and environmental issues. No additional budget was allocated by the Ministry of Finance for implementation of the Programme in December 2017, and additional expenditures were covered by available Ministry of Youth and Sports funds.

Baseline data and evidence on the situation of adolescents and youth are now available to inform UNICEF youth programming, specifically the joint Government-UN Youth House Initiative aimed at revamping the cross-country system of youth services (Output 3.3).

The sport for development approach continued to yield tangible results as a gateway for inclusion of adolescents and youth with disabilities and girls into mainstream society. The level to which schools and Olympic Centres are accessible for adolescent and youth with disabilities, particularly those who use wheelchairs, was determined through an accessibility assessment that was supported with UNICEF technical input. The collected data allowed the Ministry of Youth and Sports to equip all 36 Olympic Centres with ramps and the Ministry of Education to make a critical commitment to include accessibility considerations into its construction standards aimed at making all newly built or renovated schools universally accessible.

The TOPS inclusive physical education methodology, the legacy of the London Olympic Games piloted in more than 70 schools across the country, was evaluated by UNICEF upon the request of the Ministry of Education. Recommendations were made to the Government to scale it up to national level by including it into the standards and curricula, as well as pre- and in-service training of specialists.

The 3rd National Children’s Paralympic Games were held. The number of sports was increased from four to seven and the number of competing children from 40 to 110 in a two-year period. The Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Education and specialists of the State Sport and Physical Education Academy increased their knowledge and understanding of how to include children with disabilities into the mainstream educational and training processes. The technical capacity of 42 football coaches working with more than 600 girls was improved with new guidelines for coaches developed jointly by UNICEF, the AFFA and FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association/the International Federation of Association Football).

OUTPUT 2  Adolescent participation is institutionalized at subnational governance system
Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF continued to support the Azerbaijani Youth Advocate Programme to promote participation of adolescents and young people in decision-making and resilience building in three Line of Contact districts affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Sixty boys and girls aged 11-18 undertook training in leadership, child rights and digital media. As a result, they developed their roles as peer educators and youth advisers to the local authorities. Consultations with youth were conducted to canvass their opinions on issues affecting their development as well as ideas to inform joint projects between the young people and local authorities. Letters of agreement specified roles and responsibilities of each of the four parties, including youth, local authorities, UNICEF and local implementing partners. These initiatives will engage at least 2,500 marginalized adolescents and youth in the three districts.

With support from the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action and the Ministry of Education, 60 youth leaders also continued their activities as MRE facilitators for their peers at schools, reaching a total of 360 other adolescents. UNICEF supported upgrading and printing of 5,500 copies of MRE textbooks, including student manuals and teachers’ guides for primary and secondary schools. These were circulated among 15 schools in the three Line of Contact districts.

OUTPUT 3 Adolescents have equitable access to comprehensive services provided by Youth Houses, functioning in compliance with national standards

Analytical statement of progress
In 2017, UNICEF led two high-profile inter-agency initiatives, including the re-establishment of the UNYAC and modelling of the joint Government-UN Youth Houses Initiative.

The UNYAC was revived to construct a more youth-responsive and inclusive UN through meaningful participation of youth in decision-making related to issues affecting their lives. UNICEF coordinated the selection of 13 young men and women aged between 16-29, representing different social backgrounds and interests, including disadvantaged and marginalized communities. The group received orientation on the work of the UN Country Team and the global development process through a series of training activities organized jointly by the Resident Coordinator’s Office, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF. As a result, UNYAC members were engaged in a number of activities led by the UN Country Team, as well as individual UN initiatives. This included facilitating focus group discussions with young men on sex-selective abortions led by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and supporting the verification of a UNICEF-designed questionnaire for the Youth Houses Baseline Survey. The membership of the new UNYAC will continue focusing on design, implementation and monitoring of the UN-supervised youth policies, programme and initiatives at the country level.

UNICEF was also charged by the UN system with developing and piloting a two-year joint Government-UN programme to transform the cross-country system of youth houses into a unified system of integrated and specialized youth services fully led by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. A UNICEF-developed advocacy strategy allowed the UN team to secure the Government’s commitment to pilot the initiative at two selected youth houses using existing resources. The initiative was launched in September through a UNICEF-led baseline survey to collect evidence and data to inform the pilot. More than 2,600 adolescents and youth from six districts of Azerbaijan shared their opinions on the current situation of youth in relation to their
rights to health, education, protection and participation and bottlenecks preventing them from development of their full potential. Their ideas for improving the situation of young people were also solicited. Data collection was led by a group of nine UNICEF-trained young researchers who contributed to making the process truly transparent, ethical and youth-friendly. The data analysed by UNICEF international and national experts will guide programme implementation and measure the impact of interventions.

In parallel, UNICEF engaged international expertise to design a basic life skills course that, once tested and evaluated, will be led by the Ministry as a basis for the core programme for the youth houses and will support enhancement of skills and capacities of young people. In addition, support was provided for the design and piloting of an academic course for preparation of youth workers with the aim of strengthening the professional support available to young people through Youth Houses. Both interventions resulted from effective advocacy and sensitisation of key government stakeholders, including the Youth Committee of the Office of the President and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, as well as selected academics.

OUTCOME 6 Effective development, planning, coordination, delivery and monitoring of country programmes results

Analytical statement of progress
Through advocacy with external partners, including the UN Country Team and donor agencies, efforts were made throughout the year to position child rights within the purview of other organizations, and within broader advocacy efforts related to the SDG agenda.

The efforts made throughout the year to improve programme management effectiveness and efficiency, through introducing and standardizing management policies, procedures and tools, contributed to significant programme progress and results. UNICEF Azerbaijan is now better positioned in the development partner landscape in the country and seen as an important, strong and committed partner on the social and child development agenda. The continuous focus on cross-cutting issues enabled support for the improvement of an enabling environment and a better approach to emerging development issues affecting children.

In 2018, UNICEF Azerbaijan will consider how to bring climate change and environmental protection into the country programme, and how to develop a more specific strategy on gender equality and mainstreaming. Partnerships will be initiated further with broader government, NGOs and international partners and the private sector with a focus on child rights promotion, programme and communication innovations and leveraging resources for children.

OUTPUT 1 Guidance, tools and resources to effectively design and manage programmes are available to UNICEF and partners

Analytical statement of progress
An annual review meeting was held in March 2017 with all implementing partners to present achievements and good practices from 2016, identify challenges and develop a new work plan for 2017. The updated Rolling Work Plan 2016-2017 not only ensured continuity of programme interventions, but also introduced more details on strategies to achieve planned results. UNICEF further strengthened programme monitoring during the year with an increased number of field visits using the new standard programmatic visit reporting format following the HACT Assurance Plan.
Strong support was received from the UNICEF Regional Office, NY Headquarters and external experts in 2017. The two visits of the Regional Nutrition Specialist contributed significantly to repositioning flour fortification on the government agenda. The Regional Emergency and DRR team provided valuable support to UNICEF Azerbaijan on strengthening the office’s capacity for emergency preparedness and response, and programming with counterparts on introducing DRR and environmental issues in Azerbaijan. UNICEF Azerbaijan engaged with the Regional Office and NY Headquarters to ensure UNICEF’s participation in the UN Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) mission to Azerbaijan. Technical support from the education, child protection, social inclusion, monitoring and evaluation, and gender teams of the UNICEF Regional Office were also received remotely, enabling the country programme to be better aligned with regional priorities. Global and regional good practices and lessons learned were shared with government counterparts.

OUTPUT 2 Strategies to address cross-cutting issues related to child rights implemented

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF Azerbaijan focused on three key cross-cutting issues in 2017: emergency preparedness, public advocacy and communication for programmes, and human rights including gender equality.

UNICEF Azerbaijan strengthened the business continuity plan and emergency preparedness plan (EPP). An office-wide simulation exercise was organized in April to test the office’s ability to respond to a potential crisis. UNICEF Azerbaijan staff also participated in a UN regional simulation exercise for the Southern Caucasus countries. During the year, training was organized to introduce the new UNICEF global guidelines on EPP, and the development of the UNICEF Azerbaijan EPP was ongoing as of the end of 2017. It was a challenge to identify and engage corresponding government partners for emergency response, and as a result, there was limited information about the government’s plans and capacities in relation to emergency preparedness and response for children.

More efforts were made during the year to integrate communication and programming, especially in relation to public engagement. In 2017, UNICEF introduced media monitoring through a professional company to provide a more accurate assessment of key child development issues reported through the media and media coverage of child-related issues and UNICEF’s programmes in the country. Three issues of the UNICEF e-newsletter were produced and circulated among partners during the year to maintain interest in UNICEF initiatives and results.

UNICEF continued to partner with the UN Country Team and other UN agencies in Azerbaijan through joint events and activities in 2017, including International Human Rights Day, International Day for People with Disabilities, the 25th anniversary of the UN in Azerbaijan, the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, and the joint UN-Government Youth House Initiative.

Document centre
Evaluation and research

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Lessons learned

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Programme documents

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