

Bulgaria

Executive Summary

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to support the realization of the rights of every child, with especial emphasis on the most disadvantaged and excluded children and families. In the first half of the year, a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Country Programme (CP) was carried out. The main conclusion was that the CP should continue to have a strong equity focus in line with the Strategic Plan. Partners highlighted as a key strength of UNICEF the cross-sectoral synergies of the interventions, combining policy advice and technical assistance, modelling, fostering national dialogue, monitoring and evaluation, and leveraging of public and private resources.

Critical contribution was provided to the realization of children's right to live in a family environment. The process of reducing the number of children living in residential care continued, with numbers decreasing to less than 2,000 at the end of 2015.

Home visiting services, established in two target regions – Shumen and Sliven – continued to support caregivers to provide nurturing, responsive care and stimulation to children from birth. As a result of UNICEF advocacy efforts, home visiting for young children was included into the National Programme for Improving Maternal and Child Health (2014–2020), and the Government of Bulgaria plans to provide such services in other parts of the country.

The adoption of a new Law on Preschool and School Education in September 2015 provided an important impetus to national efforts for including all children in quality education. UNICEF actively participated in all discussions and advocated for the introduction of inclusive education in all schools and for increasing the role of kindergartens and nurseries for early learning.

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice and with technical support and policy advice from UNICEF, reform in the area of juvenile justice continued with the drafting of a new Juvenile Justice Act. However, the submission of the draft law to the National Assembly was postponed due to a lack of consensus among key national stakeholders on some of the main changes. The resignation of the Minister of Justice at the end of December 2015 due to a lack of political support is another challenge that will likely be addressed in 2016. Meanwhile, UNICEF Bulgaria will continue its advocacy efforts to promote access to justice for all children.

Significant progress was achieved with the engagement of children and adolescents in planning and decision-making and with raising public awareness about the importance of the right of children to be heard. Nearly 7,000 boys and girls, from small villages and big cities, and with different ethnic backgrounds and social statuses, shared their views on topics related to family environment, education, leisure time, child participation and solidarity, and provided recommendations on how the Government and other institutions can improve the life of children and adolescents in Bulgaria.

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria implemented awareness and fund-raising campaigns with the three largest national television channels on the prevention of violence, inclusive education, child

participation and solidarity with children affected by the earthquake in Nepal in April. Several million viewers were reached and 40,000 pledge donors were engaged. Significant progress was achieved with the digital engagement of a broader audience, and particularly of millennials. Monthly, 2 million people were reached and 100,000 engaged on Facebook.

Despite challenges on the local market, 2015 was successful for the Country Office (CO) in terms of private-sector fund-raising with an overall income of BGN 2,171,056 (US\$1,222,153), which represents a 22 per cent increase compared with 2014. As a leader on the local fund-raising market, UNICEF Bulgaria paved the way for the expansion of individual monthly giving through the development of an innovative platform for regular donations and donor communication via SMS.

The CO continued to work with government partners, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure that the rights and needs of refugee and migrant children in Bulgaria are respected and met in accordance with the relevant national and international standards and actively participated in the regional response lead by the UNICEF Regional Office (RO) for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) through the collection of data, preparation of country situation reports, and attending the Emergency and Coordination Management Team meetings.

The year was concluded with the first-ever visit to Bulgaria of UNICEF's Executive Director, which took place in the December. The visit was a key advocacy event and stressed on the critical role of UNICEF for the realization of child rights in upper-middle-income countries and the European Union (EU) context.

Humanitarian Assistance

Since 2013, Bulgaria, with its strategic location on the EU's external border, has seen an increase in migrants and persons seeking international protection. Although in 2015 the majority of migrants and refugees entered the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia on their way to Western Europe, the number of people seeking protection in Bulgaria increased almost twofold – nearly 20,000 people applied for international protection in 2015, compared with 11,000 in 2014 – with almost one fourth of them children. The number of unaccompanied and separated children also increased significantly, although the number of people who have crossed the country undetected is unknown.

Throughout 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria worked with government partners, UNHCR and NGOs to ensure that the rights and needs of refugee and migrant children are respected and met in accordance with relevant national and international standards. UNICEF continued to participate in the Coordination Mechanism, established by the State Agency for Refugees to monitor the situation and to coordinate needs assessment, resource mobilization and response to the refugee and migrant crisis. With the support of an international consultant hired by the UNICEF RO for CEE/CIS, UNICEF Bulgaria developed a Preparedness and Response Strategy and provided training to national partners on the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which were also translated into Bulgarian and distributed to relevant stakeholders. A regional consultant assessed the scenarios of the water, sanitation and hygiene response in the country, and the Supply Division helped the CO to develop the Emergency Response Supply Logistics Strategy.

UNICEF Bulgaria participated in the working group, established by the Ministry of Interior, to

revise internal protocols and procedures in the Special Homes for Temporary Placement of Foreigners and the Registration and Reception Centres for refugees, and provided recommendations to ensure that child-friendly and gender-sensitive procedures are put in place. To enhance cooperation with the Government, UNICEF Bulgaria and the Ministry of Interior conducted a joint rapid assessment on the capacities of the Ministry to address the needs of refugee and migrant children and women. The assessment recommended concrete actions to ensure the protection of unaccompanied and separated children in the Centres and to monitor the situation of children on the move.

UNICEF Bulgaria provided trainings on child rights, child protection and age assessment of unaccompanied minors for the social workers of the State Agency for Refugees and the Agency for Social Assistance. Throughout the year, the CO continued to advocate for the improvement in the accommodation arrangements of unaccompanied children and for the establishment of a working mechanism for guardianship appointment and shared international best practices for care and protection with national partners. In partnership with UNHCR, UNICEF translated into Bulgarian, printed and distributed to all relevant stakeholders the joint 'Safe and Sound' publication on operationalizing the best-interest principle in all aspects of working with unaccompanied children seeking protection.

UNICEF Bulgaria continued to support educational and recreational activities for refugee children in the Registration and Reception Centres through the provision of School-in-a-Box kits and early childhood development kits to the NGOs, working with the children in the Centres. Negative attitudes towards refugees were addressed, and tolerance and social change were promoted through all communication channels and activities, including through an exhibition of pictures of refugee children in schools and public places, participation in a television production dedicated to unaccompanied refugee children in Bulgaria, and engagement in various conferences and events.

UNICEF Bulgaria actively participated in the regional response lead by the UNICEF RO for CEE/CIS through the collection of data, preparation of country situation reports, and attending the Emergency and Coordination Management Team meetings.

Mid-Term Review of the Strategic Plan

The MTR of the Strategic Plan coincided with the MTR of the UNICEF Bulgaria Country Programme (2013–2017), which was conducted in 2015. During the review, the CO aligned the Country Programme Action Plan with the Observations of Human Rights Committees, the Strategic Plan 2014–2017 and the national policies, plans and programmes adopted after the signing of the Action Plan.

Some of the lessons learned, which were identified during this process, are applicable to the work of UNICEF in the broader development context and could inform the MTR of the Strategic Plan. Partners recognized the strong equity focus of the CP in terms of aiming to reduce inequities and realizing the rights of every child. They highlighted as a key strength of UNICEF the cross-sectoral synergies of the interventions, combining policy advice and technical assistance, modelling of new approaches, fostering national dialogue, enabling knowledge exchanges and leveraging of public and private resources.

Disparities within the country, especially between the general population and Roma minority, and other disadvantaged groups (i.e., remote and rural communities) continue to be a challenge. In this respect, the strong equity focus of UNICEF interventions is critical for

accelerating progress in the realization of children rights and for closing in-country disparity gaps. The financial and economic crisis has had a disproportionately higher negative impact on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families and at the same has significantly decreased solidarity and social cohesion. With the recent rise of nationalistic and populist movements, policies to improve the situation of the most marginalized children (especially Roma, and recently also refugees) are often hampered by negative public attitudes, which should be tackled through advocacy and communication. Addressing social norms and discriminatory practices, and building social consensus on child rights, are at the heart of UNICEF's engagement in Bulgaria.

UNICEF Bulgaria tested an innovative mechanism for engaging children and adolescents by conducting the first-ever online national consultation with children, which was used by the CO to inform the MTR of the CP. The unexpectedly high response rate – nearly 7,000 girls and boys of various social statuses and ethnic backgrounds, from small villages and big cities, filled in an anonymous online survey – and clearly showed that children and adolescents are eager to make their voices heard about issues facing them. Respondents identified poverty, violence, the low quality of education and the easy access to drugs/alcohol as major problems for children in Bulgaria.

The successful integration of UNICEF core roles in the CEE/CIS region has led to some remarkable results, especially in the area of childcare reform, beyond the relatively short history and modest capacity of the CO (which was established in 2005 and is a typical small office). The integration has also greatly enhanced the ability of UNICEF Bulgaria to influence policies and create alliances at national and sub-national levels, and to engage the business sector as well as individual citizens. UNICEF is second (only after the Bulgarian Red Cross) among the humanitarian organizations in the country, and is recognized by the general public as the leading organization for children in Bulgaria.

Summary Notes and Acronyms

AMP – Annual Management Plan
BGN – Bulgarian Leva
BHC – Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
BPA – Bulgarian Paediatric Association
CAC – Child Advocacy Centre
CCC – Core Commitments for Children
CEE/CIS – Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
CIPFA – Certified International Public Finance Accounting
CMT – Country Management Team
CO – Country Office
CP – Country Programme
CPAP – Country Programme Action Plan
CPD – Country Programme Document
CPMP – Country Programme Management Plan
CRC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
DaO – Delivering as One
DLC – Dynamic Leadership Certificate
DO – Designated Official
DSA – Daily Subsistence Allowance
EC – European Commission
ECD – early childhood development

ERM – Enterprise Risk Management
EU – European Union
GS – General Service
GSSC – Global Shared Services Centre
HACT – Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers
ICSC – International Commission
ICT – information and communication technology
MCE – Multi-Country Evaluation
MoES – Ministry of Education and Science
MoU – Memorandum of Understanding
MTR – Mid-Term Review
NatCom – National Committee for UNICEF
NEETs – adolescents and youth not in employment, education or training
NGO – non-governmental organizations
NNC – National Network for Children
NOD – National Officer Category D
OR – Other Resources
PAS – Performance Appraisal System
PBA – Programme Budget Allotment
PBR – Programme and Budget Review
PCA – Project Cooperation Agreement
PER – Performance evaluation Report
PFP – Private Fundraising and Partnerships
PPP – Programme Planning Process
PRIME – Plan for Research, Impact Monitoring and Evaluation
PSB – Property Survey Board
PSV – Peer Support Volunteer
RC Resident Coordinator
RKLA – Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda
RO – Regional Office
RR – Regular Resources
RWP – Rolling Work Plan
SACP – State Agency for Child Protection
SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals
SitAn – Situation Analysis
ToR – Terms of Reference
UNCT – United Nations Country Team
UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund
VAC – violence against children
VISION – SAP System
VPN – Virtual Private Network

Capacity Development

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria supported the specialization of all professionals working with children in judicial proceedings, with a main focus on children in conflict with the law and child victims and witnesses. This included new curricula and training courses, development of rules and guides for the pilot specialized juvenile chambers in regional and district courts, and testing of new models and practices for prosecutors. UNICEF Bulgaria signed agreements with the

General Prosecutor's Office and the National Institute of Justice to set up a methodology for the inception and continuous training of magistrates and prosecutors on international and European standards on the rights of children involved in judicial proceedings. In the Sliven region, more than 70 professionals – social workers, police, prosecutors and judges – were trained on international standards and good practices on child-friendly justice. UNICEF also supported the implementation of specialized capacity development plans for the staff of two correctional facilities for children in conflict with the law.

Through two large-scale advocacy and fund-raising campaigns – #ENDviolence and Inclusive Education in Kindergartens – UNICEF Bulgaria built the capacities of two media partners to encourage the protection of child rights and comply with international standards on ethical reporting on children. The two campaigns promoted change in reporting and professional media behaviour towards some of the most vulnerable children, influencing public attitudes and positive social norms for zero tolerance towards violence against children and for solidarity and social inclusion of children with disabilities. As part of the campaigns, a strategic media partnership with the largest television channel in Bulgaria (bTV) enabled the creation of a demonstration model for ethical reporting on vulnerable children. A workshop is envisaged for 2016 where key journalists will be trained on the importance of child rights and the need for their protection in media.

Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

UNICEF Bulgaria continued to dedicate significant efforts to generating insights and evidence to inform national policies in priority areas. In 2015, a national study of adolescents and youth not in employment, education and training (NEETs) was completed, and its main findings and recommendations were discussed with decision makers at various events. The study showed that the group of NEETs is very heterogeneous and that the main risk factors for adolescents and young people are related to their family environment and socio-economic status. The poor quality of education, school dropout and lack of work experience were identified as a key contributing factors in the increase of NEETs.

In May 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria organized an international conference on NEETs to present national and international good practices in addressing this phenomenon and to promote national dialogue among government officials, civil society, the private sector and young people on effective prevention and early intervention measures in the areas of education and employment. The good practices presented at the conference were used by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) in the preparation of an early warning instrument for identification of children at risk of dropout. In line with the recommendations of the study on NEETs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy developed special measures for supporting and motivating adolescents with learning difficulties.

To complement the evidence generated through the study on NEETs, UNICEF Bulgaria conducted research on social norms related to child marriage in Roma communities, as Roma adolescent girls were identified as the group at highest risk of early school leaving and unemployment. The Family Centres and the Child and Maternal Health Centres in the Shumen region have integrated access to education and prevention of child marriage in their community interventions.

Partnerships

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to work actively towards strengthening and expanding its strategic partnerships in key areas. In line with programme priorities, special focus was put on

developing new partnerships for including all children in quality learning and promoting inclusive education, which was also identified as a new area of intervention during the Mid-Term Review (MTR). Through its active participation in public discussions and working groups related to the adoption of the new Law on Preschool and School Education, the Country Office (CO) strengthened its cooperation with the Parliamentary Committee on Education and the MoES and established new partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), kindergartens, schools, academia, resource centres and parent organizations.

In the last quarter of 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria initiated a number of actions aimed to strengthen corporate and civil society engagement, resource mobilization and programming in support of inclusive early education of children with disabilities. Through a broad consultative process, bringing together representatives of the MoES, municipalities, kindergarten teachers, educational experts, parenting organization and NGOs working in the field of early childhood development (ECD) and inclusive education, the CO identified areas of involvement to strengthen the rights of children with disabilities to quality inclusive education.

Building on these new and diverse partnerships, a large-scale national television campaign was launched with the support of the biggest national media group, to raise awareness on the benefits of inclusive education and the barriers to inclusion. The campaign culminated with a telethon, which engaged public opinion leaders and corporate and individual donors in support of UNICEF efforts to promote inclusive education. UNICEF Bulgaria will continue to strengthen these new partnerships and engage a wide variety of stakeholders in its work to promote the rights of children with disabilities to early education.

External Communication and Public Advocacy

Advocacy and external communication were focused on the engagement of a broader audience, particularly millennials. Child rights, equity and solidarity with those in need were at the heart of UNICEF Bulgaria's advocacy efforts. As a result of such efforts, 2 million people were reached and 100,000 were engaged on Facebook every month, while offline events reached 3.3 million people.

Two advocacy initiatives in partnership with the media, the corporate sector, NGOs and the Government of Bulgaria took place – #ENDviolence and #thisAbility – aimed to sensitize the public towards challenges faced by children victims of violence and children with special needs, by giving them voice and prompting actions by professionals and decision makers. Both campaigns culminated with two-hour prime-time telethons – 'Future Free of Violence for Every Child' and 'Together from Kindergarten' (inclusive education) – broadcasted pro bono on the largest television channel (bTV) in January and November, and supported by 120 celebrities. Millions of viewers were reached and 40,000 became pledge donors.

To promote the participation of children, a consultation with 7,000 boys and girls was implemented in partnership with Bulgarian National Television. A national forum was organized where children and representatives of the Government exchanged views on how to ensure a better life and future for children and adolescents in Bulgaria.

UNICEF Bulgaria supported global efforts after the Nepal earthquake through an advocacy and fund-raising campaign in partnership with Nova TV to boost solidarity with affected children, raising US\$140,000.

The World's Largest Lesson took place in more than 800 classrooms, engaging 17,000 students

with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The visit of UNICEF's Executive Director in December was a key advocacy event and supported the CO's efforts in critical areas by stressing the importance of ECD and the need for strengthening government support for the most disadvantaged families and children and for accelerating reform of the juvenile justice system.

South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria enabled knowledge exchange and sharing of experiences with other CEE/CIS countries in different areas.

A joint initiative with UNICEF Romania, which started in 2014, contributed to strengthening cooperation between the two countries in the field of adolescents and youth by facilitating knowledge sharing between national institutions on policies and programmes that address vulnerable adolescents and youth, fostering exchange of experiences between NGOs and strengthening bilateral cooperation linkages between the line ministries in the two countries. In May 2015, an international conference dedicated to NEETs brought together representatives of the Governments of Bulgaria and Romania, as well as international experts and researchers to discuss challenges and effective measures for integrating and reintegrating adolescents and young people in education and employment.

In the areas of child protection, the cooperation initiated in 2014 between UNICEF and national authorities of Armenia and Bulgaria continued in June 2015 with the visit to Bulgaria of representatives of the Government of Armenia, NGOs and UNICEF Armenia. During the visit, the Armenian delegation learned about the Bulgarian experience with childcare reform, de-institutionalization and community-based services for children and families.

A new cooperation with UNICEF Ukraine started in July 2015 with the visit of the Bulgaria Child Protection Specialist to provide support on social protection reform, de-institutionalization and community-based social services. A Ukrainian delegation including government representatives and UNICEF staff visited Bulgaria in September. UNICEF Bulgaria's Consultant on Regional Planning of Social Services was contracted by the Ukrainian CO to support the development of guidelines for needs assessment and planning of services.

Identification and Promotion of Innovation

Ensuring participation and meaningful engagement of children and adolescents continues to be a challenge in Bulgaria. In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria tested an innovative mechanism to hear children's voices by conducting the first-ever online national consultation with children. An online survey, launched nationwide through different channels, provided an opportunity for children to express their views in relation to the update of the National Strategy for the Child.

Nearly 7,000 girls and boys of different social statuses and ethnic backgrounds, from small villages and big cities, shared their opinions on matters important to them, such as family, school, social protection, spare time, participation, solidarity and more. They identified poverty, violence, low-quality education and easy access to drugs/alcohol as major problems for children in Bulgaria. To ensure that the voices of children from marginalized and vulnerable groups were also heard, a direct consultation with 139 children from Roma communities, children with disabilities and children in institutions was carried out.

The consultation was promoted on Bulgarian National Television as part of a media campaign

on the right of the child to be heard. It concluded with a two-day National Child Forum where 50 girls and boys discussed the results of the survey with government officials, as well as their recommendations for improving the lives of Bulgarian children. It was also used by the CO to inform the MTR of the Country Programme (CP) and the results and proposals were summarized in a report shared with the Government.

By combining an innovative consultation tool – an easy-to-fill-in online survey opened to all children in Bulgaria (from 7 to 18 years old) – with a more traditional instrument for direct consultation (focus groups) and a national awareness-raising campaign, UNICEF Bulgaria was able to reach out and engage an unprecedented number of children and adolescents, including from disadvantaged groups.

Support to Integration and Cross-Sectoral Linkages

Through policy advice, capacity building, modelling, advocacy and public communication, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to promote cross-sectoral linkages and an integrated approach in the areas of child protection and ECD.

The Health Visiting Service, piloted with UNICEF support in two regions – Shumen and Sliven – aims to improve the growth, health and nutrition, social-emotional and cognitive development of children younger than 3 years old through support and education of parents. Traditional support on health and nutrition is accompanied by support for positive parenting and early stimulation from birth. The service also works on the identification of children at risk of abuse, neglect and abandonment, and provides early intervention. It has contributed to strengthening the capacities of the health-care system in child protection-related issues and to establishing mechanisms for cooperation between the child protection system and health services at the local level. Through policy advice, knowledge exchange and technical support, UNICEF Bulgaria promoted a more holistic approach to child health and development in national health policies and practices.

In parallel to the above intervention, the three Family Centres, established with UNICEF support in the Shumen region, provide health, social counselling, family planning, development of parenting skills, legal information to family members and caregivers, and facilitate access to mainstream services (e.g., housing services, health care, education, social benefits, employment). The two interventions – Health Visiting and Family Centres – complement each other and contribute to improving coordination and cooperation among all actors in providing adequate support to families and children, ensuring a good start in life and preventing family separation.

Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation

The realization of the rights of all children, particularly of those who suffer the worst deprivations, continued to be a main priority for UNICEF Bulgaria. In 2015, the CO supported the Government of Bulgaria in ensuring that children in correctional institutions are not deprived of their human rights. In two out of the seven correctional facilities for children in conflict with the law, the staff capacity to provide education and care conducive to the social reintegration of children was strengthened. Violations of children's rights were documented and reported to national authorities, raising awareness among stakeholders, and the cases were followed-up by the Government, NGOs and the media with monitoring visits. As a result, reporting procedures to denounce violence are in place, children improved their access to health care and education, and the placement of several children is under revision in the two Centres.

UNICEF Bulgaria worked with the Government, the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR) and NGOs to ensure the protection of the rights and needs of refugee and migrant children in accordance with national and international standards. As a result of the advocacy efforts of UNICEF and partners, the new Law on Preschool and School Education eliminated previous barriers to education for refugee children. The CO also supported the development of a referral mechanism for the protection and care of unaccompanied children seeking asylum, to be finalized in 2016. With regard to the protection of unaccompanied and separated children, UNICEF and UNHCR raised awareness about introducing the principle of best-interest determination through translating and publishing the 'Safe and Sound' publication and through capacity-building trainings.

UNICEF Bulgaria advocated for the ratification of the Third Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and presented a confidential report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in relation to the consideration of the consolidated report of the country in 2016.

Gender Mainstreaming and Equality

UNICEF Bulgaria worked on two specific gender-focused programmatic initiatives. The first one targets Roma adolescent girls – one of the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups in Bulgaria – and aims to prevent child marriage and promote their access to education. Child marriages and early pregnancies were identified as main reasons for Roma girls' early school leaving. UNICEF Bulgaria conducted a research of social norms related to child marriages among Roma communities to inform the design of measures and interventions for preventing school dropout and promoting education. The findings and recommendations were presented to the Centres for Maternal and Child Health, where many young Roma mothers and families receive support, and were incorporated in their interventions.

Access to education and prevention of child marriages were also integrated in the work of the Family Centres in the Shumen region. In 2015, the Centres provided support and counselling to more than 230 Roma adolescent girls and boys (in communities with high child marriage rates) who were involved in such integrated programmes as 'You have a choice – marriage or education' and 'Education – steps to a successful start'. Roma parents were also engaged in group sessions to learn about the risks of early pregnancies and marriages for adolescents' health, education, emotional development and social realization.

As a follow-up to the #ENDViolence initiative and national awareness and fund-raising campaign, three Child Advocacy Centres for child victims and witnesses of violence and crime were established during the third quarter of 2015 in Montana, Shumen and Sofia. The Centres address gender-based violence and support children and women victims of violence and their families during the judicial process (preliminary investigation, pre-trial and trial stages), as well as in the process of physical and emotional recovery of the victims.

The above two initiatives involved the Policy and Knowledge Coordinator (also Gender Focal Point), the Child Protection Specialist, and the Child Rights Monitoring Specialist. The budget for the study of social norms is US\$10,000, the annual budget of the three Family Centres is US\$262,000 and the budget (October–December) for the three Child Advocacy Centres is US\$88,550.

Environmental Sustainability

In 2015, the CO took part in the global UNICEF initiative and recorded for the first time its footprint on the environment.

Both global and country-specific environmental challenges were tackled in discussions with children organized by UNICEF Bulgaria prior to the adoption of the SDGs and during the World's Largest Lesson.

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to apply the following initiatives aimed at reducing its print on the environment:

- reduce travel and increase online collaboration, including trainings;
- responsible disposal of unusable electronic waste;
- use of battery collection spot;
- separation of paper, plastic and glass garbage for recycling, and avoiding use of plastic bottles and glass;
- use of recycled paper for printing in the CO, with double-side printing as the standard setting; and
- use of electrical taxis for work-related transportation within the city, when no office car is available.

Effective Leadership

The Country Management Team (CMT) monitored compliance with the priorities and results of the Annual Management Plan (AMP) and Rolling Work Plan (RWP), as well as the correct application of policies and procedures.

Throughout 2015 the CMT approved the AMP, the institutional and programme budgets, the update of the CO Risk Assessment Input Form (RAIF), the MTR Report and the CO Preparedness and Response Strategy. Management indicators were frequently monitored using InSight, especially the Management Dashboard and the Management Reports.

Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) was implemented and business continuity was part of the work plans. The CO identified the risks, applying ERM in all spheres of its work. The RAIF was updated in InSight in April, identifying seven moderate-risk areas. The Early Warning Early Action plan was updated in December.

To reduce risks in programmes and operations, the separation of functions and 100 per cent compliance with the Table of Authorities were applied. The structure of the statutory committees and the Table of Authorities were reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect changes (newly recruited staff and staff on maternity leave). The constant monitoring of the programmes' financial implementation enabled the CO to avoid having liquidations pending after more than nine months.

Staff retreat was used for thorough discussion of the MTR and the subsequent proposal to the Programme and Budget Review (PBR).

In 2015, the PBR endorsed the updated Country Programme Management Plan (CPMP) and the new office structure, approved by the CMT in accordance with the MTR recommendations.

The CO continued to contribute to the required budget optimization in relation with the Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC) project by decreasing its institutional budget by US\$5,500 per year for the remaining duration of the programme cycle.

In September, there was a change of the Representative in Bulgaria.

In December, UNICEF's Executive Director visited Bulgaria and learned about the achievements of the CO and the role of UNICEF in upper-middle-income countries and the European Union (EU) environment.

Financial Resources Management

In 2015, the CO adopted and implemented a new approach to managing and recording private sector fund-raising contributions. Procedures are in place to ensure systematic and accurate recording of such income on a timely basis.

Bank reconciliations were performed in a timely manner to ensure matching between bank data and data in VISION.

In 2015, the CO started applying the new Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) regulations. In total, 1 macro-assessment, 7 micro-assessments, 11 spot-checks and 20 programmatic visits were conducted. Liquidations were processed based on evidence that the activities were performed and had been approved by respective Programme Officers.

During 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria applied new methodology for zero value-added tax with its vendors. As a result, more than US\$50,000 savings were made, which directly increased the funds available for programme needs.

For the fourth consecutive year, UNICEF Bulgaria occupied rent-free premises provided by the Government of Bulgaria, realizing savings of US\$50,000, which is already beyond the break-even amount from the initial analysis.

An inventory/physical count of the assets was performed in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards requirements. All items correspond to VISION records.

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria received additional funds from the Regional Contingency Fund to upgrade its computer equipment to correspond to the upcoming LIGHT migration, and for purchase of a new official vehicle.

Global Performance Indicators include:

- No outstanding direct cash transfers over nine months at year-end;
- Regular Resources (RR) and institutional budget funds are utilized at 100 per cent; and
- Some 47 per cent of available Other Resources (OR) in 2015 was utilized, and the remaining 53 per cent was re-phased to 2016.

Fund-Raising and Donor Relations

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria raised funds from different sources, nationally and internationally. Funds were received for programme activities from the Velux Foundation (US\$606,821 for community-based social services) and the French National Committee (US\$719,775 for juvenile justice). Thematic funds (US\$359,285) were also received.

The main focus of local fundraising was on maximization of income from existing corporate partners, acquisition of new pledge SMS donors via integrated media campaigns, and retention of active pledge donors via regular communication, reporting and other engagement activities

as per the internal donor communication cycle. Public reports were submitted as per the internal donor reporting calendar.

Key achievements in 2015 include:

- Overall income from local fund-raising received in the bank was BGN 2,171,056 (US\$1,226,995), which represents a 22 per cent increase in BGN in comparison with 2014, and is 11 per cent above the target for 2015.
- The income from corporate partnerships amounts to BGN 990,990 (US\$560,417) – a 10 per cent decrease in BGN in comparison with 2014, but this is aligned with the fundraising strategy focused on pledge and individual donors.
- The income from individual donors is BGN 1,180,066 (US\$666,578) – a 73 per cent increase in BGN in comparison with 2014; of which the income from monthly pledge donors is BGN 936,097 (US\$528,607) – a 58 per cent increase in BGN in comparison with 2014, and with 56,847 regular monthly donors at the end of the year.
- Contributions to global RR (16 per cent of pledge) are BGN 146,000 (US\$82,165).

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria reached 53 per cent of the approved OR ceiling for the five-year CP cycle (US\$6,648,544 out of US\$12,500,000). Some 28 per cent of OR in 2015 came from local private-sector fund-raising.

All donor reports were sent on time.

Evaluation

In 2015, the Plan for Research, Impact Monitoring and Evaluation (PRIME) included assessments, research, surveys and monitoring and evaluation capacity development activities in line with UNICEF Bulgaria programme priorities and government plans. Out of 18 activities, 11 were completed, 1 activity is on track, 5 were rescheduled for 2016 and 1 was reformulated and rescheduled for 2016.

In 2015, no evaluations were carried out by UNICEF Bulgaria, but the CO focused on the results from the Multi-Country Evaluation in the area of children's rights to a supportive and caring family environment, which was conducted by the UNICEF RO for CEE/CIS. A separate report on Bulgaria was prepared, and the main findings and recommendations from the evaluation were discussed with all the relevant stakeholders and informed the development of the new Action Plan on De-institutionalization.

The CO conducted an assessment of the capacity of the Ministry of Interior to adequately respond to the special needs of refugee and migrant children to address protection gaps and improve monitoring and data collection. In 2016, the CO will continue to collaborate with counterparts at country level to ensure the availability of quantitative and qualitative information on refugee and migrant children and contribute to the establishment of a regional child rights monitoring system.

With respect to the limited availability of disaggregated data on children, the CO performed a data gaps assessment and discussed options with the National Statistical Institute for more accurate and complete data collection on the situation of children in Bulgaria. All assessments, surveys, studies and research, together with the data generated by the special tool for monitoring the implementation of the home visiting services, contributed to generating evidence

for policymaking and programming with a focus on the most disadvantaged children and families.

Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

The following cost savings and efficiency gains were achieved in 2015 by UNICEF Bulgaria:

Some 88 pay-runs were performed in 2015, in comparison to 91 in 2014 and 131 in 2013. This optimization allowed streamlined processes and organization of activities, provided proper use of staff time, better cash flow forecasting and optimal processing of cash replenishment requests.

During 2015, the CO applied new methodology for zero value-added tax with its vendors. As a result, more than US\$50,000 in savings were generated, which increased the funds available for programme needs.

For the fourth year in a row, UNICEF Bulgaria occupies rent-free premises provided by the Government of Bulgaria, realizing savings in the amount of US\$50,000, which is already more than the break-even amount from the initial analysis.

Additional savings and optimizations were made on mobile telephony, standard value-added tax and excise reimbursement, performing of competitive procurement processes and efficient management of resources.

Supply Management

UNICEF Bulgaria does not have dedicated supply staff members or significant supply activities. Procurement functions are performed by the Programme Assistants and the Administrative Assistant/Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Focal Point, with overview from the Operations Officer.

In 2015, the main procurement was of services (consultants, translation), followed by other programmatic services, office equipment and an official vehicle.

The procurement of goods and services with programme funds represented 18 per cent of the implementation or US\$494,478, of which 92 per cent was funded with programme resources and 8 per cent with funds from operations. In all, 98 per cent went to goods and services and 2 per cent to supplies.

The CO initiated procurement of programme supplies (a vehicle). Deliveries were made directly to counterparts and supplies were monitored through field visits.

The value of the operational supplies in 2015 reached US\$39,759. The office procured 12 laptops and 2 desktops, replacing old equipment in relation to the migration to LIGHT. A new official vehicle was purchased to replace one from seven years ago.

The procurement of services was mainly for consultancies supporting programme implementation, HACT-related (macro- and micro-assessments), organization of communication/fund-raising campaigns and printing services.

The CO uses predominantly local providers. International expertise is sought for highly specialized consultancies or specialized equipment not available in the country. For local procurement, UNICEF Bulgaria follows the general supply processes guidelines, adhering to standardized global payment terms and delivery options.

UNICEF Bulgaria does not operate a warehouse. In 2015, the CO continued the distribution of previously received branded materials from private fund-raising and partnerships, used to support UNICEF advocacy.

| UNICEF Bulgaria 2015 | Value in US\$ |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Programme supplies | 9,232 |
| Administrative supplies | 39,759 |
| Procurement of services | 445,487 |
| Total | 494,478 |

Security for Staff and Premises

The Security Risk Assessment was updated and approved by the Senior Management Team in September 2015, and the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) approved the Minimum Operations Security Standards and Minimum Operating Residential Security Standards (in December of the same year).

Staff and personnel are informed about security protocols, and safety precautions were issued where needed. Staff responsible for receiving postal packages were informed about the procedures and requirements in terms of safety. A security guard from a private security company provided services throughout the year, ensuring a safe work environment. Drivers completed a safety driving course and provided safe and reliable transportation throughout the year.

An evacuation drill was performed to test staff readiness and response. The calling tree is updated to enable quicker transmission of information.

Access to the premises was enhanced by the installation of a control system using biometric data.

UNICEF Bulgaria also facilitated and conducted activities related to the safety and security of all United Nations staff in Bulgaria and their dependents. The Representative is the Designated Official for safety and security, and the Operations Officer is Country Security Focal Point.

In 2015, a satellite phone was obtained. The CO also has at its disposal a satellite terminal capable of transmitting data. Both devices have active subscriptions.

Throughout the year UNICEF Bulgaria premises did not have security-related incidents. There was one burglary-related incident affecting UNICEF personnel.

In October, the UNDSS Security Adviser undertook a mission to Sofia and recommended training all United Nations personnel on initial response and survival skills during earthquakes. Recommendations were also made to update the warden system and train wardens, and provide all UN personnel with a bag to be used during an emergency.

Human Resources

As a result of the MTR and PBR approval, UNICEF Bulgaria established a new Education Officer (NO2) post. Recruitment is under way, with the aim of having the selected candidate start in early 2016.

The CMT decided, through a participatory process, to respond to other needs with Temporary Assignments. Data analysis and donor loyalty, a General Service (GS)-5 post and a GS-4 post strengthened the fund-raising team. The post of Driver GS-2 was abolished, after the retirement of the incumbent in June.

Completion of the 2014 end-year Performance Appraisal System (PAS) and 2015 PAS objectives was 88 per cent at the end of February 2015 due to staff on maternity leave at that time who completed their PAS upon returning.

All staff discussed results from the Global Staff Survey 2014 and made recommendations for addressing the main issues of concern. A compressed working-hours schedule was introduced to improve work-life balance, allowing staff to leave the office earlier on Friday while keeping the same weekly working hours. The working climate remained harmonious, as it has been in past years.

Staff developments and trainings included:

Policy and Knowledge Coordinator – Equity, Quality and Leadership in Education;
Operations Officer – Mentor of Romania Operations Officer; Certified International Public Finance Accounting (CIPFA) online diploma certification is ongoing
Child Rights Monitoring Specialist – Trainings on Monitoring and Evaluation and Disabilities Measurement
ECD Officer – Home Visiting Nurses Workshop and Care for Child Development Course
Fundraising Assistant – Digital Fundraising Workshop
Resource Mobilization Officer – participation in Pledge Forum
Human Resources Assistant – CIPFA online certification programme completed
Group HACT Training, Emergency Preparedness Training

The CO has also planned for Presentation skills group training, which was postponed for next years.

The need to align the actual complexity of the institutional budget funded posts with the existing level will be explored based on the results of the institutional budget review that the RO will conduct in 2016.

Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to improve its ICT system. A number of adjustments were performed in line with UNICEF's requirements, including procurement of new hardware for end users and new mobile phones – smart devices with access to email – and Virtual Private Network (VPN) Cisco AnyConnect access installation for office laptops.

In addition, Internet access through Wi-Fi router coverage was improved. The office equipment now provides more timely, reliable and secure information flow, and the possibility to work from anywhere with Internet access.

As all business applications and email servers are based in the RO or headquarters, UNICEF Bulgaria continues to rely on information technology services provided. Overall support for end users in the office was simultaneously provided, such as mission control firewall replacement, share data reorganization, procurement of new equipment and its installation, and so on.

The office has started updating the DRP and will finalize it in early 2016, reflecting all current changes and corporate developments.

The CO's communication and fund-raising strategies are supported online through its website, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, SMS communication and other channels. The office handles content management internally and outsources support services such as hosting and maintenance, and management of the CMS platform.

Programme Components from Results Assessment Module

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1: By 2017, more children from excluded and poor families benefit from equal access to education and protection systems.

Analytical statement of progress:

In the third year of the CP, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to promote equity and support social inclusion for the most disadvantaged families and children. This was done by providing policy advice and technical assistance in critical areas, facilitating national dialogue, enabling knowledge exchange, monitoring and evaluation, modelling new approaches and services, leveraging resources from different sources, and acting as an independent voice for children and adolescents.

The process of reducing the numbers of children living in residential care continued with the development of new services and alternative forms of care and the successful completion of five national projects in the area of de-institutionalization. At the end of 2015, the number of children in residential care fell to less than 2,000. UNICEF actively participated in the development of the new Action Plan on Deinstitutionalization (2015–2018) and contributed through sharing the main findings, recommendations and lessons learned from the Multi-Country Evaluation on Child Care Reform, commissioned by the UNICEF RO for CEE/CIS. In addition to this, UNICEF initiated an external assessment of the different approaches applied for the closure of infant homes to inform the planning of the next phase.

Despite the progress in de-institutionalization, the risk of family separation remained high for children from the most disadvantaged groups, as well as for children with disabilities. The lack of adequate community-based support for children with disabilities and the extreme poverty in some communities, combined with stigma and discrimination, are the main contributing factors for family separation. In this respect, the modelling work of UNICEF in three target regions – Montana, Shumen and Sliven – provided critical evidence on the importance of family support programmes. The network of new integrated services in the Shumen region, including the Family Centres and the Child and Maternal Health Centres supported by UNICEF, has already proved its effectiveness in preventing family separation and promoting social inclusion of the most disadvantaged children and families. UNICEF dedicated special efforts to document and share the insights and experience generated in order to inform national programmes and policies. In 2015, the Government allocated US\$14 million to de-institutionalization and US\$25 million to foster care from EU funds.

In 2015, a number of ECD services focusing on parenting support and family counselling, early intervention, inclusion of children with disabilities in early education, health promotion and early education and care were established in more than 68 municipalities across the country with

support from the EU and the World Bank. More than US\$32 million was invested in building ECD infrastructure and services, and another US\$20 million from EU and national funds are committed for the next three years. These positive developments also contributed to creating an enabling environment for the establishment of a national strategic framework on ECD.

In December 2015, the National Assembly adopted the National Health Strategy 2020, which includes a number of measures for reducing infant mortality and improving maternal and child health. In addition, the Government allocated 1 million euros to support targeted measures for promoting maternal and child health under the National Programme for Improving Maternal and Child Health 2014–2020. The preparation of both documents was influenced by UNICEF, and both take into consideration the results from UNICEF modelling work at the local level.

The adoption in September 2015 of the new Law on Preschool and School Education provided an important impetus to national efforts for including all children in quality education. The Law introduces, for the first time, inclusive education in all schools and makes a clear reference to the role of kindergartens and nurseries in early learning. To support the Government of Bulgaria with effective implementation of the Law, UNICEF focused its efforts to pre-service and in-service teachers' training on inclusive education and continued its modelling work in the area of early learning. In 2015, the Government allocated US\$100 million from EU funds for the implementation over the next two years of different measures targeting school dropout prevention and the inclusion of children with disabilities and special needs, children from ethnic minorities and from other disadvantaged groups in mainstream preschool and school education.

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice and with technical support and policy advice from UNICEF, reforms in the area of juvenile justice continued with the drafting of a new Juvenile Justice Act. However, submission of the draft law to the National Assembly was postponed due to the lack of consensus among key national stakeholders on some of the main changes. Important progress was achieved in the piloting of specialized courts and the training of magistrates. The resignation of the Minister of Justice at the end of December 2015 due to lack of political support is another challenge that will be addressed in 2016.

To help leverage resources, UNICEF continued to actively participate and contribute to the work of Monitoring Committees for the implementation of the new Operational Programmes, funded with EU Structural Funds 2014–2020.

The work towards the achievements of this outcome contributed to advancing the CEE/CIS Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda (RKLA) in several result areas, including a child's right to a supportive and caring family environment, a child's right to access to justice, a child's right to early learning, a child's right to inclusive quality education, a young child's right to comprehensive well-being, a child's right to social protection and an adolescent's right to a second chance.

OUTPUT 1: By the end of 2017, based on the results of tailored approaches in three regions, key stakeholders at the central level (especially the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Health) ensure that relevant regulatory provisions and budget allocations incorporate effective, culturally sensitive and accessible prevention and protection services for vulnerable and marginalized children, especially children at risk of family separation, children living in institutions and children with disabilities

Analytical statement of progress:

UNICEF Bulgaria continued to support child protection reform in the country by addressing all determinant areas – enabling environment, supply, demand and quality. Policy advocacy was focused on vulnerable families, marginalized communities, children at risk, child victims of violence, and children in conflict with the law, and was supported by evidence generated through demonstration interventions, research and analysis. The visit of UNICEF’s Executive Director in December 2015 conveyed a very strong message on the need for strengthening efforts to address inequalities and ensuring that the Government’s budget envisages sufficient investment in family support programmes and services.

UNICEF supported legislative developments in the area of social services and the protection of child victims and witnesses of crime and violence through participation in the task forces established by the Government of Bulgaria.

A round table on childcare reform discussed the report from the Multi-Country Evaluation (MCE) on childcare reform 2005–2012, which had been commissioned by the UNICEF CEE/CIS RO, and informed the development of the new Action Plan on De-institutionalization. To inform further planning, UNICEF initiated an external assessment of the different projects for closure of Infant Homes in the country.

At the request of the Agency for Social Assistance, UNICEF supported the regional and municipal social services in the development of guidelines for needs assessment and planning.

Management capacities on child protection and coordination with other systems (e.g., juvenile justice, health and education) were strengthened in three regions – Montana, Shumen and Sliven – through technical assistance and trainings.

Demonstration modelling in the Shumen region continued. Since 2010, the three Family Centres have supported more than 3,300 vulnerable and poor families with children; prevented 215 cases of family separation; assisted 300 children for admission into kindergarten; provided individual counselling to 1,320 children; and provided family planning services to 760 women. The innovative network of child and family support services and alternative care contributed to the closure of the Infant Home in Shumen in December 2015. The knowledge and evidence generated through the modelling was regularly shared with stakeholders.

UNICEF continued to support the reform of the juvenile justice system through the development of new services and the closure of correctional boarding schools. A Centre for Psychological Support, a Centre for Intensive Socio-Pedagogical Support, and Transitional and Supervised Homes Services were established in the Sliven region for children in conflict with the law. The capacities of the child protection and juvenile justice systems in the region were strengthened through training and technical assistance.

As a follow-up to the #ENDViolence initiative and public awareness and fund-raising campaign, three Child Advocacy Centres for child victims and witnesses of violence and crime were established in Montana, Shumen and Sofia. The Centres support child victims of violence and their families during the judicial process as well as with physical and emotional recovery.

Horizontal cooperation in the areas of social protection and de-institutionalization continued. UNICEF Bulgaria hosted two visits of delegations from Armenia and Ukraine and provided support to the UNICEF COs in those countries.

OUTPUT 2: By 2017, relevant stakeholders at all levels in the health, education and social protection systems apply inter-sectoral protocols of cooperation that enable the effective provision of integrated ECD services for the most disadvantaged and marginalized families and children, including from ethnic minority groups.

Analytical statement of progress:

UNICEF Bulgaria continued to promote national policies and services that support the healthy growth and development of young children through modelling of innovative interventions, provision of policy advice and technical assistance, advocacy, enabling knowledge sharing and promoting supportive social norms.

The home visiting services in Shumen and Sliven regions supported caregivers to provide nurturing and responsive care to children from birth. The services facilitated early identification of children at risk of developmental difficulties, abuse and neglect, and early intervention through close cooperation with child protection and social services and health-care providers. More than 5,500 pregnant women and families benefited from different packages of services depending on their needs and resources. Access of pregnant women without health insurance to antenatal care was also ensured.

Training and supervision was provided to the staff providing the services, including practice teachers and professional health visitors from England. Experts from the Medical University in Varna participated in a Training of Trainers event organized by the UNICEF RO for CEE/CIS, and will serve as a resource for future training.

The Ministry of Health integrated home visiting in the plan for the implementation of the National Health Strategy (2014–2020). A study aiming to assess the effects of the service on child development was initiated. Scientific evidence on the role of home visiting during the early years – particularly for the most disadvantaged children – with the aim of improving child health and development was presented by leading international experts at a dedicated round table. The visit of UNICEF's Executive Director in December 2015 conveyed a very strong message on the importance of early childhood and the need for further developing and expanding ECD services for young children.

UNICEF strengthened its cooperation with the Bulgarian Paediatric Association (BPA) to promote a stronger focus on ECD in the routine practice of paediatricians and general practitioners. An ECD session at the National Congress of the BPA raised the awareness on key issues relating to ECD. BPA members participated in the first International Congress on Developmental Paediatrics in Istanbul and exchanged knowledge with leading experts.

At a session on ECD, the National Council for Child Protection reached consensus on the need for adoption of a National ECD Strategy, although further advocacy is needed to initiate the actual process.

Positive parenting was promoted through workshops in partnership with local partners in 15 localities countrywide. More than 360 parents of young children improved their knowledge and skills to provide a nurturing and supportive environment for the healthy development of their children.

UNICEF continued to support a model service providing early learning to 3- and 4-year-old children from the most disadvantaged and excluded families in the town of Kotel. Evidence generated about the effectiveness of the intervention to reduce learning inequalities was used to

inform national policies.

The Early Learning and Development Standards for children 0–3 years of age were disseminated among professionals and were used in the trainings of the staff of the services, established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Health.

OUTPUT 3: By the end of 2017, the Government at all levels, with the support of NGOs and education institutions, implements school enrolment, dropout prevention and second-chance education strategies for children, especially Roma girls and children with disabilities, who are not enrolled in, have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of compulsory education

Analytical statement of progress:

UNICEF Bulgaria continued to support the Government to realize children’s rights to education and to include all children in quality learning, with a special focus on inclusive education and prevention of violence in schools.

Policy advice and technical assistance was provided to the MoES for addressing bullying at school. In May 2015, MoES representatives participated in an international conference on the prevention of violence in schools, organized by UNICEF Croatia in Zagreb, and integrated good practices in the updated mechanism for addressing bullying in schools.

The new Law on PreSchool and School Education, adopted in September 2015, introduced the concept of inclusive education in all Bulgarian schools. In March 2015, representatives of the MoES, NGOs and academia participated in a Training of Trainers workshop on inclusive education, organized by the UNICEF RO for CEE/CIS in Zurich. UNICEF will support the development and implementation of pre-service and in-service teachers’ training on inclusive education, and the formulation of the State Educational Standard on Inclusive Education.

UNICEF Bulgaria initiated an awareness-raising campaign on the importance of including children with special needs in early learning and the creation of inclusive environments in all kindergartens. Modelling work started in partnership with the MoES, municipalities and NGOs on the development of an approach for inclusive education in nurseries and kindergartens.

An international conference on NEETs in May 2015 presented the findings and recommendations from a national study on NEETs conducted by UNICEF Bulgaria. Government officials, representatives from civil society and the private sector, and young people discussed challenges and effective measures for integrating and reintegrating adolescents and young people in education, employment and training. The key recommendations from the study informed the planning of new programmes and interventions aimed at addressing the phenomenon. As a follow-up, UNICEF initiated research on social enterprises and their potential to serve as an instrument for the reintegration of NEETs.

To inform effective measures for the prevention of early school leaving by Roma adolescents girls, UNICEF Bulgaria conducted research on social norms related to child marriages in Roma communities. The findings were presented and discussed with the Centres for Maternal and Child Health, where many young Roma mothers and families receive support. Access to education and prevention of child marriage in Roma communities were also integrated in the community outreach work of the Family Centres in the Shumen region.

The modelling work on introducing an innovative approach for improving the educational

outcomes of marginalized children through the use of an online educational platform was expanded to other services supported by UNICEF Bulgaria. Some 30 children participated in a special diagnostic test and followed an individual educational programme.

UNICEF Bulgaria supported the launch of the World's Largest Lesson initiative through the development of teacher and students materials. In September 2015, more than 17,000 Bulgarian students participated in a special lesson dedicated to the adoption of the SDGs.

OUTPUT 4: By the end of 2015, the Government enacts revised legislation that introduces inter-sectoral coordination and alternatives to custodial service for children in conflict with the law.

Analytical statement of progress:

UNICEF Bulgaria continued to promote equitable access to justice for all children through advocacy for legislative changes, policy advice and technical assistance to key stakeholders, modelling integrated practices and new services, and working in close cooperation with the Government, national institutions, local authorities, civil society and professionals from the justice, law enforcement, child protection and education systems.

UNICEF took a leading role in the working group, established by the Ministry of Justice, for the drafting of amendments to the Penal Procedure Code, Juvenile Justice Act and other relevant primary and secondary legislation. In the area of child victims and witnesses of crime, UNICEF actively participated in the drafting of amendments to the Penal Procedure Code, which introduced child-sensitive procedures in the pre-trial and trial phases, and aims to ensure specific protection and support measures for children and their families.

Despite this progress, the process of juvenile justice reform was slowed down by the lack of consensus among the main national stakeholders on the changes and on the role of different institutions. To address this challenge, UNICEF, in partnership with civil society and key national experts, developed an advocacy plan. The visit of UNICEF's Executive Director in December was a major advocacy opportunity, and the importance of reforming the legislation related to children in conflict with the law was stressed at all high-level meetings.

UNICEF Bulgaria continued to support the specialization of all professionals working with children in judicial proceedings, with a focus on children in conflict with the law and child victims and witnesses. This included technical support for preparing the rules and guidance for the pilot specialized juvenile panels/chambers, established in regional and district courts by the Ministry of Justice.

UNICEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the General Prosecutor's Office for strengthening the capacity of prosecutors to effectively uphold the rights of children by developing and testing models, mechanisms and practices. Specialized trainings for prosecutors started in March 2015 and continued until November 2015 with a Training for Trainers.

A methodology and training curricula were developed for professionals working with children in judicial procedures. More than 70 professionals – social workers, police officers, prosecutors and judges – in the Sliven region were trained on international standards and good practices, as well as on the implementation of Bulgarian legislation in line with the principles of the CRC.

An MoU with the National Institute for Justice was signed in October 2015, which envisages the development and implementation of the educational curriculum and programmes for the

inception and continuous training of magistrates in the area of international and European standards on the rights of the child and especially the rights of children involved in judicial proceedings.

OUTCOME 2: By 2017, a national alliance for children (involving the Government, international community, civil society, private sector and media) mobilizes support, capacity and resources to significantly advance the rights of Bulgarian children and youth.

Analytical statement of progress:

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to provide technical assistance and support for strengthening the capacities of the Government, national institutions and civil society for better child rights monitoring. A special emphasis was placed on the realization of the rights of the most disadvantaged children – children in correctional institutions, children in conflict with the law, and refugee and migrant children.

At the request of the Ministry of Interior, a rapid assessment on the capacities of the Ministry to respond to the needs of refugee and migrant children and women was conducted. The assessment recommended concrete actions for strengthening the capacities to better protect the rights of refugee and migrant children and women.

Significant progress was achieved with the engagement of children and adolescents in planning and decision-making and with raising public awareness about the importance of the right of the child to be heard. To inform the MTR of the CP as well as the update of the National Child Strategy (2008–2018), UNICEF Bulgaria conducted a first-of-its-kind national consultation with children. Nearly 7,000 boys and girls from small villages and big cities, and with different ethnic backgrounds and social statuses, shared their views on topics related to family environment, education, leisure time, child participation and solidarity, and provided recommendations on how the Government and other institutions can improve the lives of children and adolescents in Bulgaria. The children's opinions were presented to the Chairperson of the State Agency for Child Protection, the Bulgaria Permanent Representative to the United Nations, the Bulgarian member of the working group for the preparation of the Child Strategy of the Council of Europe, and the UNICEF Representative in Bulgaria at a two-day National Child Forum in April. The views of the children were taken into account by UNICEF Bulgaria and, in line with the recommendations, the CO strengthened its support to the MoES for the prevention of school violence and initiated work on the introduction of the Child Rights Education initiative in schools.

UNICEF Bulgaria and two NGOs – the National Network for Children (NNC) and the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) – presented confidential reports to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child with regard to the consideration of the consolidated third, fourth and fifth reports of the country at the seventy-second session of the Committee in 2016. The reports provided exhaustive information on the implementation of the concluding observations and recommendations of the Committee and focused attention on some serious violations of the rights of vulnerable children and families, and on emerging issues regarding the promotion and protection of the rights of children in Bulgaria. The reports of UNICEF and the NNC took into consideration child views – collected through the national consultation and through a special child panel at the NNC's annual meeting, facilitated with UNICEF support. Representatives of UNICEF, the NNC and the BHC, as well as two adolescent girls, participated in the pre-session meeting with Committee members in 2015.

The decision taken by the National Council on Child Protection at its last meeting for 2015

regarding the signing and ratification of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on a communications procedure constitutes an important achievement and is the result of the continuous joint advocacy efforts of UNICEF Bulgaria and NGOs.

Television continued to be the most popular medium and instrument for public awareness raising and citizen engagement. In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria implemented combined awareness- and fund-raising campaigns with the three largest national television channels. The #END Violence and Inclusive Education campaigns, in partnership with bTV, included two telethons that were broadcast live in prime time in January and November, reaching several million viewers and engaging 40,000 pledge donors. A partnership with Nova TV, focused on solidarity with children affected by the Nepal earthquake raised US\$100,000, and an awareness-raising campaign was conducted in partnership with Bulgarian National Television to support the national consultation with children. Many Bulgarians increasingly use social media – 71.3 per cent, or 2.2 million people, according to the National Statistical Institute – with Facebook being the most widely used platform. In 2015, significant progress was achieved, with digital engagement of broader audiences, particularly of millennials. Monthly, 2 million people were reached and 100,000 were engaged on Facebook.

Despite challenges on the market, 2015 was successful for UNICEF Bulgaria in terms of private-sector fund-raising, with an overall income of BGN 2,171,056 (US\$1,222,153), which represents a 22 per cent increase compared with 2014. As a leader in the local fund-raising market, UNICEF Bulgaria paved the way for the expansion of individual monthly giving through the development of an innovative platform for regular donations and donor communications via SMS. UNICEF pioneering work is used by several major NGOs (SOS children's villages, DMS – Bulgarian Donors Forum). This further contributed to developing donor culture in Bulgaria and, as a result, the number of pledge donors in the country has increased significantly. The latest national research on philanthropy showed that 57 per cent of Bulgarians donate or are willing to donate, and that 85 per cent of donors or potential donors prefer to donate via SMS. The average individual donation amounts to BGN 8 (US\$5). In this context, UNICEF Bulgaria reached average individual donations of BGN 30 (or US\$15), which is the result of its successful strategy based on integrated programme, communication and fund-raising efforts.

OUTPUT 1: By 2017, an independent child rights monitoring system, with capacity to regularly collect reliable data on the situation of children, is operating in the country.

Analytical statement of progress:

UNICEF Bulgaria presented a Confidential Report for the pre-sessional meeting of the Committee on the Rights of the Child based on UNICEF's direct observations, analyses of cases of violation of child rights with inputs from UNICEF's partners and from the national consultation with children. Two Bulgarian NGOs – the NNC and the BHC – also provided comprehensive alternative reports on CRC implementation.

UNICEF supported government and national institutions – the State Agency for Child Protection, the Agency for Social Assistance and the National Statistical Institute – as well as civil society (the National Network for Children) – to improve the quality of their monitoring work. An assessment of the data gaps on children was performed together with the National Statistical Institute, and a joint analysis with the NNC of cases of violation of child rights was also prepared. Key reports and studies such as the research on social norms related to child marriages in Roma communities, the study on violence and health behaviour in school-age children and the study on NEETs provided important information on the situation of children in Bulgaria.

UNICEF Bulgaria continued to actively advocate for the signing and ratification of the Third Optional Protocol to the CRC and a decision about its signature and ratification was made by the National Council for Child Protection in December 2015.

The Office of the Ombudsman performed an independent assessment of correctional facilities for children, resulting in additional evidence on the violation of the rights of children placed in such institutions and the need to urgently reform the juvenile justice system. UNICEF assisted the Office in developing a joint initiative with the Government of Norway aimed at exchanging experience with the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children.

The NNC, supported by UNICEF Bulgaria, continued its work on elaborating mechanisms and tools for effective monitoring and evaluation of commitments to children and published the fourth 'Report Card on Child Rights', with concrete recommendations to the Government in the areas of family policy, education and health care. The findings laid the basis for the alternative report presented by the NNC to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

UNICEF Bulgaria supported NGOs and experts conducting independent surveys and assessments in the areas of ECD, protection of children from violence, access to education, health care and justice, with specific focus on vulnerable groups and inequalities.

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria continued to monitor the situation of refugee and migrant children in the country and took part in the UNHCR annual participatory assessment. A rapid assessment of the capacity needs and gaps in the work of the Ministry of Interior in relation to the protection of refugee and migrant children and families in Bulgaria was also conducted. The CO works on establishing a monitoring programme of the situation of refugee and migrant children as part of a regional effort for improving monitoring, enhancing national capacities and promoting exchange of experience across countries.

OUTPUT 2: By 2017, central, regional and local governments have put in place policies and mechanisms ensuring the meaningful participation of children and adolescents in decisions concerning their well-being.

Analytical statement of progress:

In line with the priorities of the RKLA on 'Adolescents: Second decade, second chance', UNICEF Bulgaria promoted the engagement of children and adolescents through awareness raising and advocacy, capacity development and modelling of mechanisms for participation. The pilot testing of student councils was successfully completed and the evidence generated supported the elaboration of handbooks on child participation for students, teachers and facilitators.

UNICEF conducted a national awareness-raising campaign, My Voice Matters, and an online consultation with children related to the update of the National Strategy for the Child 2008–2018. Nearly 7,000 children and adolescents shared their opinions on topics related to family environment, education, child participation, solidarity and leisure time, as well as on the main challenges that affect the life of children in Bulgaria. To ensure that all children had an opportunity to express their views, direct consultations with children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities and children in the care system were conducted on the same topics through focus groups. The consultative process concluded with a two-day National Child Forum in Sofia, where 50 girls and boys provided concrete proposals and recommendations for addressing the main challenges faced by children and families in Bulgaria. The results from the

national consultation were presented at the National Assembly on 1 June 2015 and summarized in a report submitted to the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP). The recommendations were taken into account by UNICEF in the MTR of the CP.

In May 2015, UNICEF organized a two-day workshop on the Assessment Tool on Child Participation developed by the Council of Europe. In 2016, UNICEF will support the SACP and other national stakeholders to conduct a baseline assessment of child participation in order to identify gaps and concrete measures to achieve real and active child participation in all settings, provide benchmarks to measure progress over time, and strengthen monitoring and accountability.

The CO supported the SACP with the analysis of the different forms of child and adolescent participation and engagement at the municipal level. The findings clearly showed the need to improve the understanding and strengthen the capacities of local authorities to engage and consult with children and adolescents. To address this need, UNICEF developed guidance for municipalities on consulting with children to be used in the preparation of regional strategies for social services.

UNICEF supported the introduction of child rights education in schools as an extra-curricular activity through the establishment of UNICEF Clubs. The introduction of child rights education in schools was one of the recommendations made by the children and adolescents who participated in the National Child Forum. The main objective of the initiative is to enhance awareness of children's rights among students and teachers and to create a more participatory environment in school. The development of the pilot programme was finalized in December and it will be tested in six pilot schools during the second term of the school year between February and June 2016.

OUTPUT 3: By 2017, media, NGOs, businesses, children and adolescents participate in partnerships and alliances for monitoring, advocacy and promotion of children's rights.

Analytical statement of progress:

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria focused its advocacy and communication efforts on child rights and equity, prevention of violence against children, child participation and inclusive education, as well as on promoting solidarity with children in other countries and disseminating the SDGs.

The comprehensive violence against children campaign, initiated in 2014 and implemented in line with the global #ENDviolence campaign, culminated with a two-hour prime-time advocacy and fundraising Telethon broadcast live on the biggest television channel in Bulgaria – bTV – at the end of January 2015. Some 60 well-known people raised their voices to ensure a 'Future free of violence for every child'. As a result, about 23,000 people became UNICEF's pledge donors.

In March, UNICEF launched the first-of-its-kind for Bulgaria national online and focus-group consultation with children and partnered with Bulgarian National Television to raise awareness on the right of the child to be heard through a series of human-interest stories in the news and discussions on talk shows on the importance of child participation.

After the devastating earthquake in Nepal, UNICEF Bulgaria launched an integrated advocacy and fund-raising campaign to boost solidarity with the children and families affected by the natural disaster. In total, BGN 176,070 (US\$100,000) was raised, mainly as a result of a strategic media partnership with Nova TV, the second-largest television channel in Bulgaria, and

the support of more than 20 online media and digital platforms.

UNICEF's World's Largest Lesson global initiative took place in Bulgaria, with thematic discussions and interactive presentations in more than 800 classrooms across the country. More than 17,000 students committed to providing their own contribution for the realization of the SDGs.

In September 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria launched a broad advocacy and fund-raising campaign in the media aimed at raising awareness about the challenges faced by children with specific needs and their families; changing attitudes in society towards children with disabilities in terms of supporting their inclusion in kindergarten, revealing the barriers that hinder that process as well as developing a model for ethical reporting (in the media) on topics related to children with specific needs and ensuring the establishment of a supportive environment for all children in kindergartens. The intensive campaign with the largest Bulgarian television channel – bTV – culminated with a prime-time telethon in November 2015 that lasted 2.5 hours, through which millions of viewers were reached and thousands were engaged. More than 16,000 pledge donors committed to donate monthly through their mobile phones to UNICEF and partners for the creation of a model for an inclusive environment. More than 100 popular public figures participated in a live concert televised on Bulgaria's highest-rated television channel. The telethon also demonstrated an ethical approach for media reporting on vulnerable children with specific needs, and promoted a shift in public perceptions regarding children with disabilities.

OUTPUT 4: By 2017, the general public and the private sector mobilize financial resources in support of most disadvantaged children in Bulgaria and worldwide.

Analytical statement of progress:

In 2015, UNICEF Bulgaria's efforts were directed towards maximization of private-sector income through two major streams: strategic corporate partnerships and monthly individual pledge giving, in line with the UNICEF Bulgaria Fundraising Strategy 2013–2017 and the UNICEF Private Fundraising and Partnerships Plan 2014–2017. Based on one of UNICEF's key objectives in Bulgaria – to develop the donor culture by contributing to a change in social attitudes regarding individual philanthropy, corporate social responsibility and NGO business collaboration – income-generation activities were successfully linked to broader social change based on a culture of rights, alliances that benefit all children and enhance equity, and solidarity in the country.

The funds raised during the year amounted to US\$1,222,153 (BGN 2,171,056), exceeding by 11 per cent the annual fund-raising target and resulting in a 22 per cent increase compared with 2014.

The income raised from corporate partnerships in 2015 amounted to US\$557,206 (BGN 990,990), which represents a decrease of 10 per cent compared with 2014. The income from individual donors amounted to US\$664,947 (BGN 1,180,066), representing an increase of 73 per cent compared with 2014. Contribution to global Regular Resources (RR) (16 per cent of pledge) amounted to US\$82,165 (BGN 146,000).

In 2015, monthly contributions from individual pledge donors grew by 58 per cent, reaching US\$527,080 (BGN 936,097). UNICEF Bulgaria focused additional efforts on the recruitment of new pledge donors through two telethons (pro-bono television and prime-time radio slots were received for free), integrated advocacy and fund-raising campaigns. While pledges proved to be one of the most reliable income sources, the high level of attrition of SMS monthly donors is one

of the main challenges for the fund-raising team. To address this challenge, the CO focused on activities aimed at sustaining the pledge income and reducing the attrition of SMS donors, such as telemarketing, SMS and voice call campaigns, e-mail campaigns, etc. The additional communication cycle, specialized for mobile pledge donors, was updated, and various activities for donor engagement through regular communication and reporting were implemented (electronic newsletters and telemarketing).

The development of an innovative platform for mobile donations – MOBilizer – by UNICEF Bulgaria, as a result of a long-term partnership with Bulgarian mobile operators and a local information technology partner, contributed to shaping the fund-raising market in the country by enabling local non-profit organizations to benefit from the new fund-raising model.

UNICEF Bulgaria succeeded in maximizing income from corporate contributions, including customer and employee fund-raising, cost-related marketing and events. Efforts were focused on the maintenance of existing corporate partnerships and the renewal of agreements. The contract with 'Happy' was renewed for approximately US\$190,000 (330,000 BGN). Two new partnerships were launched with Giuliani (luxury watches and jewellery) and BG Menu (home delivery services).

OUTCOME 3:Programme Support

Analytical statement of progress:

All major operational benchmarks and objectives for 2015 were met, as described in detail in the corresponding sections of the CO Annual Report.

OUTPUT 1: Governance and systems are in place.

Analytical statement of progress:

In the summer of 2015, the Bulgaria CO changed its Representative, as the mandate of Tanja Radocaj in the country expired. Currently, Maria Jesus Conde is the Representative of UNICEF in Bulgaria.

During the year, the CMT met regularly and when necessary to monitor key indicators of Programme and Budget Implementation, completion of the priorities of the AMP and the RWP, and HACT activities, as well as to discuss the PBR submission of the CO. In addition, ad hoc decisions on important topics were solicited among CMT members via mail polls.

The rest of the statutory office committees meet when needed, ensuring participation of their respective members. In addition to UNICEF policies, the office uses internal processes and procedures to complement where more customized regulations are needed in respective areas (*see Effective Leadership*).

OUTPUT 2: United Nations joint arrangements are in place

Analytical statement of progress:

UNICEF is the leading United Nations agency in Bulgaria, operating in an environment without the United Nations Country Team (UNCT).

OUTCOME 4: Cross-sectoral costs

Analytical statement of progress:

All major operational benchmarks and objectives for 2015 were met, as described in detail in the corresponding sections of the CO Annual Report.

Document Centre

Evaluation and Research

| Title | Sequence number | Type of report |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------|
| My Voice Matters | 2015/004 | Survey |
| Assessment of the Mechanism for Child Participation | 2015/003 | Review |
| Research on the Social Norms which Prevent Roma Girls from Access to Education | 2015/002 | Study |

Other Publications

| Title |
|--|
| Access to Justice for all Children – video |
| Video with children from the school councils in Bulgaria |
| Interview with Mary Young – paediatrician and specialist in global health and child development with broad experience in both developed and developing countries |
| Video interview with Kristine Fiel – Director of ‘Children’s House’ in Norway – Centre for advocacy and support for children, victims of violence or witnesses of crimes or violence |
| UNICEF Bulgaria’s Annual Report – 2014 – not a year like any other for children in Bulgaria and around the world |
| National De-institutionalization Projects: Achievements and challenges – Critical review |
| Assessment of the humanitarian response to the floods in Bulgaria |
| Rapid Assessment on the Capacity of the Ministry of the Interior to Respond to the Specific Needs of Children and Women Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Including Unaccompanied Minors |
| ECD – first 7 |
| Video interview with Professor Philip Jaffe – Professor of Psychology and Children’s Rights; director of the Centre for Children’s’ Rights Studies |