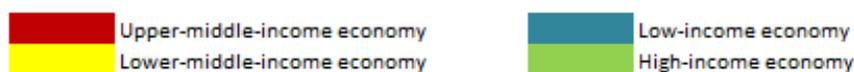


# REGIONAL ANALYSIS REPORT 2013



Note: The boundaries and the names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



## REGIONAL OFFICE FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CEE/CIS)

GENEVA, FEBRUARY 2014

## 1. Executive Summary

The roll out of CEE/CIS ‘results-based agenda for change’ in CEE/CIS accelerated in 2013 in response to rapid social and economic developments in the region. The year saw the economic situation improve, with an average 3.4 per cent GDP growth. Remittances, a critical economic lifeline for millions in the region, rebounded by 11 per cent. However, despite half of the Region’s 22 countries and territories<sup>1</sup> now being classified upper middle income, children continue to live in *extreme poverty*, with significant equity gaps affecting families with four or more children, those from rural areas, children with disabilities and those from ethnic minorities, such as the Roma in South Eastern Europe. One new trend which is becoming apparent is the development of shanty towns in rapidly expanding urban spaces hosting children of migrant workers from rural areas coming to the cities to take advantage of work and access to social protection systems lacking in rural areas. These inequities are the focus of the Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda (RKLA) in the Region, which is based on the UNICEF Strategic Plan, contextualised for the Region.

Under the leadership of the RMT engagement with governments, civil society and regional partners to further the 10 point RKLA agenda, was hastened and progress was achieved in **MoRES Level 4** results for children and system reforms, as detailed in Section 3 of this Report. It advanced along three parallel tracks: **Multi-Country Evaluations (MCEs)** to assess UNICEF’s contribution to outcomes for children; a series of high-level and technical **advocacy**; and the shaping of a new **partnership** engagement strategy with Croatia, Kazakhstan and Turkey, while the dialogue was also enhanced with the Russian Federation. An overarching purpose is for the region to generate knowledge which can be shared across borders, thus facilitating *horizontal cooperation*.

During 2013, CEE/CIS rolled out four<sup>2</sup> MCEs, the first of which was on inclusive education, which have been completed to a final draft stage. The MCEs’ purpose is to assess whether and how impact results, in terms of changes in the lives of children and reduction of equity gaps, occurred over the past decade in a significant number of countries due to national system changes. The MCEs, utilising regional as well as country-specific Theories of Change also aim to assess UNICEF’s specific contribution to these results for children.

**Advocacy and knowledge-sharing** around the RKLAs was stepped up in 2013 with three notable high-level conferences. In June high-level representatives from 21 countries and territories from the region, met in Brussels at a High Level Regional Conference on Justice for Children (RKLA 2) co-hosted by UNICEF and the European Commission. For the first time at such a scale in the region, particular emphasis was placed on equitable access to justice for all children and the integration of children’s issues in justice sector reforms. At the Conference, governments spelled out their policy priorities and commitments to address remaining challenges and further adapt their justice systems to child rights. These are currently being implemented, with UNICEF’s support.

In December a Regional Ministerial Education Conference, held in Istanbul, provided a launch platform for an agenda on ‘A Child Rights to Education’ (RKLA 4) and ‘Early Learning and School Readiness’ (RKLA 3). The Regional Office and Turkey CO provided strong leadership in setting the agenda and creating political buy-in for inclusive education and quality learning in partnership with the Government of Turkey. The main outcome of the conference is a “*Call for Action*” endorsed by the 17 participating countries, which provides a clear way forward and roadmap for regional and country-level education reform in the region for 2014-2017. Globally the region is being acknowledged as a leader in the area of Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities contributed in 2013 to global knowledge.

In Dushanbe, Tajikistan, the rights of children with disabilities (RKLA 4) were actively promoted in 2013 through the Central Asia Child Protection Forum where the five governments of Central Asia made commitments to reinforce national policies and systems to ensure the full inclusion of children with disabilities into society. Since the Forum,

---

<sup>1</sup> Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Moldova, Montenegro, the Russian Federation, Romania, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

<sup>2</sup> The MCEs cover the following areas: (i) A child’s right to a supportive and caring family environment, (ii) Justice for Children, (iii) A child’s right to early learning, and (iv) A child’s right to education: Including all children in quality learning.

the five Central Asian countries have been more actively engaging in a dialogue with civil society, working towards the signature and/or ratification of the UNCRPD, gathering much needed data, as well as engaging in multi-sectoral discussions on ways to enable the education, child protection, and health systems to better address the needs of all children.

CEE/CIS maintained its strong momentum for the 'A Promise Renewed' child survival agenda (RKLA 6). An important result achieved in 2013. The signing by the Regional Directors of UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA of a Joint Actions Framework (JAF) between UNICEF, WHO Euro and UNFPA marked the beginning of a concerted action for joint work on advocacy, policy formulation and country support activities to meet the targets of 'A Promise Renewed'. Also, a high level panel on the A Promise Renewed, the SG Every Woman Every Child Strategy and the post-2015 agenda was organized with UNICEF and WHO in support of the 35th Anniversary Conference of the Almaty Declaration in November in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The UNICEF delegation, led by the Director of Programmes, advocated to make the reduction of the equity gap in health the most important measure of success in further strengthening Primary Health Care, particularly when looking into the post-2015 era.

Three evolving models of partnership engagement with UNICEF are rapidly emerging in CEE/CIS. The dialogue with counterparts in the Russian Federation is continuing around a Concept Note for the Scaling-up of Effective Maternal and Child Health Interventions and Achieving health-related MDGs. The MoFA welcomed the proposals and suggested developing a Memorandum of Understanding. An important component of the dialogue between UNICEF and the Russian Federation is resource mobilization for the global organization. Horizontal cooperation with the Russian Federation technical institutions continued, primarily in the areas of HIV/AIDS and Maternal and Child Health. Another evolving partnership is with the Government of Kazakhstan which expressed interest in establishing a UN multilateral hub in Almaty and consultations have begun. Following these consultations, the Regional Office shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan a draft Concept Note on UNICEF's Evolving Engagement with Kazakhstan and Establishing a UNICEF Regional Office presence in Almaty. The Regional Ministerial Education Conference organized in Istanbul in December 2013 in collaboration with the Turkey Country Office was a strong illustration of a new and innovative mode of engagement and partnership developed by the Regional Office with the Government of Turkey.

In 2013 the RO strengthened its strategic engagement with the European Union - one of the key drivers for reform and an important donor in the CEE/CIS region. The objective was to ensure that child rights are firmly anchored in EU policies and programmes, as well as to mobilise and leverage resources for children. For EU enlargement countries, a high-level strategic dialogue with the EU and intensive follow up helped to ensure that child rights are reflected in the EU Enlargement Strategy, EU progress reports and European Parliament resolutions. Efforts to strengthen systematic engagement with the EU on child rights in Eastern Neighbourhood countries have started and will be reinforced in 2014. The partnership with the EU on Disaster Risk Reduction in the South-Caucasus and Central Asia was continued and intensified. A breakthrough in EU legislation was achieved by UNICEF and partners (the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-Based Care, co-chaired by the RO) with the decision that EU Cohesion Funds for 2014-2020 will not be used for institutionalization, but to develop community-based alternatives.

In 2013 the RKLA enabled UNICEF to identify potential for results and cross-sectoral innovation and exchange among countries. Through the RKLA Reference Groups, chaired by a Representative and supported by the relevant Regional Advisor, the Region has been able to better support horizontal cooperation. For example, the Reference Groups for 'A Child's Right to Social Protection' and 'Disaster Risk Reduction' RKLAs, secured funding for innovations linking resilience, social protection and disaster risk reduction, and for supporting cooperation beyond borders.

In 2013, the drafting of the regional flagship publication 'Social Monitor' on Social Protection contributed to knowledge generation to inform the setting or retooling of UNICEF strategic programme priorities and evidence-based advocacy and to document UNICEF's value added for overcoming systems failure in guaranteeing the right to all children to social protection. The first Regional Determinant Analysis Matrix (RDAM) on Social Protection complemented the 'Social Monitor', by consolidating the subset of indicators and presenting an overview of the

current challenges and reform priorities to overcome system bottlenecks at the regional level in the area of social protection, thus enabling trend analysis of key changes on a yearly basis.

The comparative review and further analysis of findings of MICS surveys in Roma settlements in South Eastern Europe fill a major gap in the lack of research and disaggregated data on Roma communities – particularly, Roma children and young people – and will contribute to more effective social inclusion policies and planning.

The RO has further strengthened the governance system to manage evaluations, by formalizing the Regional Evaluation Management Committee (RMEC), chaired by the Regional Director and attended by the Regional M&E Advisor and the concerned Regional Advisor. The main role of the REMC is to ensure a credible and quality evaluation management process in accordance with UNICEF standards and policy.

A new human resources initiative was launched in 2013: the CEE/CIS Talent Map was developed with the objective of highlighting and recognising the talent that exists in the region – staff members who have in-depth skills in common result areas for children, RKLAs and the cross-cutting roles of M&E and Gender Equality - and who are willing to share their expertise and knowledge with other colleagues and offices. This initiative is an integral part of the transformation agenda in the region, reinforcing and facilitating new roles and ways of working in the RKLAs, in particular sharing expertise beyond borders. It also responds to staff requests and organisational aims for development of professional skills and careers, as it offers valuable opportunities for broadening and enriching experience often at an international level.

## 2. Trends and Progress in the Region as affecting Children and Women

### **Social exclusion, poverty and disparities and the Right of the Child to Social Protection**

While the lingering impact of the economic crisis in 2012 thwarted poverty reduction efforts in the Region, 2013 presented a better economic outlook. The average regional *GDP* growth<sup>3</sup> (excluding the Russian Federation<sup>4</sup>) had slowed down from 5.5 to 2 per cent between 2011 and 2012, but it accelerated again to 3.4 per cent in 2013. However, the Russian Federation's economy – classified as 'High Income' by the World Bank's Atlas Method - expanded only by 1.3 per cent, compared to 3.4 per cent in 2012. The pick-up in 2013 was strongest in Central and Eastern Europe where output increased by 1.6 per cent. Turkey's economy grew faster in 2013, at 4.3 per cent compared to 2.2 per cent in 2012. Among energy-exporting countries Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, activity has remained strong. Growth in the remainder of the region was broadly stable at an estimated 3.5 per cent in 2013, despite a 1.1 per cent contraction in Ukraine attributable to the political crisis. Remittances to the region rebounded by 11 per cent in 2013, helping to support household consumption, particularly in Tajikistan where they represent 48 per cent of GDP, Kyrgyz Republic (31 per cent), and Moldova (24.1 per cent).

Despite this, in many of the region's 22 countries and territories, many children continue to live in extreme poverty, with significant equity gaps affecting particularly families with four or more children, those from rural areas, children with disabilities and those from ethnic minorities, such as the Roma in South Eastern Europe. Ineffective and inefficient social protection systems fail to provide minimum protection to excluded children, while public expenditure in social assistance amounts to a meagre 1.6 per cent of GDP.<sup>5</sup> Children are more likely to be poor, yet they are less likely than adults to receive any kind of social assistance.<sup>6</sup> In addition, new services for family and child support still cover mostly urban areas, leaving many rural areas unreached thus exacerbating inequities, and with the effect of creating a rural-urban pull resulting in rapidly expanding urban spaces hosting children of migrant workers

---

<sup>3</sup> This paragraph draws on World Bank, Global Economic Prospects January 2014 Europe and Central Asia [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/GEP/GEP2014a/GEP2014a\\_ECA.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/GEP/GEP2014a/GEP2014a_ECA.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> The regional average estimates, from the World Bank, exclude the Russian Federation. Estimates for the RF are presented separately.

<sup>5</sup> The WB, *The Jobs Crisis: Household and Government Responses to the Great Recession in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*, WB, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Gassmann, F., 'Protecting Vulnerable Families in Central Asia: Poverty, Vulnerability and the Impact of the Economic Crisis', UNICEF, Innocenti Working Papers 2011-05, July 2011, p. 4.

and increasing the number of children living in extremely poor conditions. Limited budgets for social protection translate into lack of skilled social workers and case managers to reach and help the most vulnerable families.<sup>7</sup>

On the positive side, the prevalence of *stunting* among children under five, while still significant, continues to drop in the Region (from 27 per cent in 1990 to 11 per cent in 2012), however the prevalence of overweight has almost tripled from 5.5 per cent to 15.7 per cent during the same period. Surveys show persistent geographical and gender disparities, as well as significant inequities between minorities and majority population groups.

The Government of Turkey has maintained its open border policy and provided assistance to a large number of refugees in 2012-13: as of early February 2014, there were over 700,000 Syrian refugees in Turkey, of which 214,968 were housed in government-run refugee camps. To accommodate this influx, the number and size of camps have expanded dramatically, with now over 21 camps operational, and a number under construction.<sup>8</sup> Syrian refugees have also travelled further north, with Armenia now hosting more than 11,000 Syrian Armenians displaced by the conflict in Syria and more than 10,000 refugees (approximately 70 per cent of these from Syria, and 30 per cent from Afghanistan and African countries) have entered Bulgaria since September 2013 alone.

In 2012-2013, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro ratified the CRC Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure. In the same period, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey and Uzbekistan reported to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. All countries recorded greater equity focus in addressing gaps in legislation and national plans of actions, in line with the CRC and its Optional Protocols, CEDAW and the Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities. Concluding Observations noted this progress in adopting legislative measures, but highlighted that gaps remained in fully aligning domestic legislation with the Convention, as well as weaknesses in secondary laws and overall implementation and monitoring. The Committee remained concerned by the lack of specific legislation, absence of services, outdated approaches and practices in addressing the rights and needs of the most vulnerable children, including children with disabilities. The Committee also pointed to failures to respond to the rights of minority groups who are over-represented among the poorest quintiles and excluded from many services and from mainstream society. Cross-border trafficking, sexual and labour exploitation of children were also raised by the Committee. Data gaps, especially regarding vulnerable groups, and weaknesses in the independent child rights monitoring mechanisms were consistently noted. Fifteen countries in the region have ratified the UN CRPD, including Bulgaria and the Russian Federation in 2012. Yet, the CRC observed ‘equity gaps in the provision of alternative family- and community-based options, such as foster care’; ‘social assistance schemes for example for children with disability remain weak’. The five countries of Central Asia committed to develop inclusive policies for children at a conference organized by UNICEF in July 2013 on the CRPD implementation.

### **The Right of the Child to grow in a caring family environment**

Perhaps the most persistent challenge in the region is deprivation of the right of the child to grow in a family environment: the number of children in Formal<sup>9</sup> Care remains very high, while Residential<sup>10</sup> Care is still widely used. According to TransMonEE (Transformative Monitoring for Enhanced Equity), around 1.2 million children in the Region<sup>11</sup>, 60 per cent of whom are in the Russian Federation alone, are in Formal<sup>12</sup> Care, making them among the

---

<sup>7</sup> “Public social expenditure remains relatively low and financial transfers attached to decentralization are absent or insufficient. This limits the provision of critical social services to disadvantaged children and their families”, CRC Concluding Observations for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Source: AFAD and UNHCR.

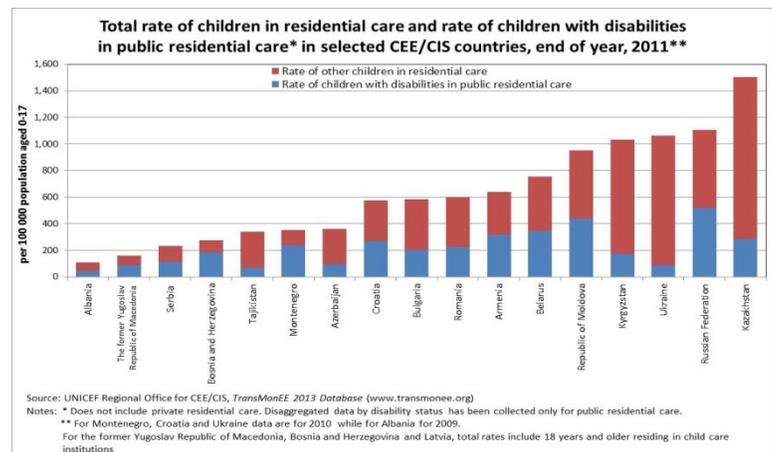
<sup>9</sup> According to draft UN Guidelines for the appropriate use and conditions of alternative care for children (para 30 II B), Formal Care is all care provided in a family environment which has been ordered or authorised by competent administrative body or judicial authority, and all care provided in a residential environment, including in private facilities, whether or not as a result of administrative or judicial measures

<sup>10</sup> According to Gatekeeping Services for children and vulnerable families, Changing Minds, Policies and Lives Toolkit (p. iv) Residential Care broadly refers to placements for children in care facilities including infant homes, children’s homes, orphanages and boarding homes and schools for children without parental care, boarding schools and homes for disabled children, family-type homes, in SOS villages, etc. Children in general-type boarding schools or punitive institutions are normally excluded but should be included if placement of children left without parental care in these facilities is common.

<sup>11</sup> The figure does not include Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

<sup>12</sup> According to the TransMonEE’s database definitions, Formal Care is all care situations where the child’s placement was made by order of a competent authority. It includes children placed in all types of Residential Care establishments (both public and private) and children placed in formal Fostering or under Guardianship.

most vulnerable group of children in the region. As many as 600,000 of them remain in large-scale residential<sup>13</sup> Institutions<sup>14</sup>, a legacy of the Soviet times<sup>15</sup>. Children under three years of age and children with disabilities are still over-represented in Residential Care. In many countries, adoption legislation does not meet CRC standards, and the best interests of the child are not the primary consideration for placement of children without parental care. The most vulnerable groups face significant barriers<sup>16</sup> in accessing the social protection system, to which they are legally entitled. Several countries in the region, in particular in South-East Europe and Central Asia have reported an increase in the placement of children below three years in infant homes. On the positive side, thanks to concerted efforts by UNICEF in support of governments' action, the number of children under three year of age deprived of the right to live in a family environment has decreased in at least five countries, as a result of policies that better identify and support most vulnerable families at an early stage and promote foster care.



**Violence against children** is often considered a fact of life rather than a violation of rights, and social norms make it unacceptable for many children to file a complaint. Some groups of children are more affected than others, including the children living in poverty, those who are from minorities, children with disabilities and children living in institutional care. On the positive side UNICEF's focused attention to addressing violence against children, with the support of the EU, has helped a number of countries to strengthen their national child protection systems to address violence against children and has facilitated constructive dialogue between decision makers and civil society.

## The Right of the Child to access to justice

Children face countless obstacles in **accessing justice**. Procedures in police stations and courts are generally not respecting or protecting children's rights, professionals are not adequately trained to work with child victims, witnesses or parties to civil proceedings. Most children are not aware of their rights and of the entitlement to claim redress. An increasing number of children in conflict with the law benefit from alternatives to detention, but prevention policies and social support are still seriously lacking, pushing children deeper into poverty and exclusion rather than supporting their reintegration. Conflict with the law is often the result of exclusion, while deprivation of liberty is regularly used where the solution ought to be of social nature. Violence in detention is still widespread, and sometimes it amounts to torture.

<sup>13</sup> According to the TransMonEE database definitions, Residential Care is care given to children outside of the patient's home. Residential care services take into account the needs and wishes of the individual, weighed against the resources and policies of statutory agencies. There are various residential care options available, depending on the needs of the individual.

<sup>14</sup> According to the TransMonEE database definitions, a Residential Care Institution is a collective living arrangement where children are looked after by adults who are paid to undertake this function. These include public (infant homes, children's homes, institutions for physically/mentally disabled, family-type homes, general boarding schools, temporary placement centers/shelters) and non-public (children's villages and other non-public) institutions.

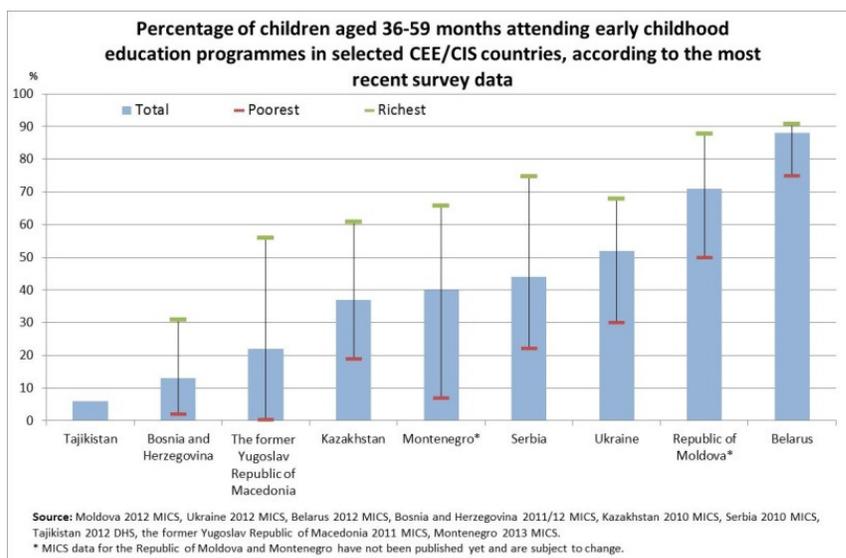
<sup>15</sup> TransMONEE database 2012

<sup>16</sup> "Insights: Child Rights in Central Europe and Central Asia Issue 1/2012 – Keeping families together, making social protection more effective for children"(2012), available at [http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/2012\\_on\\_social\\_protection.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/2012_on_social_protection.pdf)

## The Right to Quality Education on the basis of equal opportunity

While many countries in the Region have primary school enrolment rates above 90 per cent, significant inequities persist: as many as 2.5 million children are *out of basic education*, and an estimated 12 million adolescents are not in secondary school. While in three countries, Moldova, Romania and Serbia, primary school enrolment rates have decreased in the past decade<sup>17</sup>, there has been some progress in other countries: as a result of their renewed commitment to the Right of the Child to Quality Education, in most countries the numbers of out-of-school children have been decreasing and, in some countries, there is also an increase in enrolment among the most marginalized groups of children. For example, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, primary school attendance rate for Roma children increased from 61.1 per cent in 2006 to 85.6 per cent in 2011<sup>18</sup>, and in Serbia, primary school attendance of Roma children increased from 66 per cent in 2005 to 89 per cent in 2010<sup>19</sup>. Roma children and children living in the poorest communities also make up a large proportion of the out-of-school children. For example, in Bulgaria 23.2 per cent of Roma children do not attend school compared to 5.6 per cent among ethnic Bulgarians. Among those attending, Roma girls are more likely than boys to drop out. *Gender parity remains a concern* in some countries at the lower secondary level, despite the fact that most countries have achieved or are on track to achieve MDG 3 – gender parity in primary school. An estimated 3.6 million children with disabilities are still out-of-school.

In addition, across all levels of education, there are millions of children who are enrolled and physically present in school, but who are silently excluded from learning. Indeed, equity gaps in learning achievement represent a major challenge in the Region. In countries that took part in the 2009 PISA survey, about half of 15-year-olds do not master basic skills in reading, mathematics and science. Children from the poorest quintiles scored on average almost one year of schooling behind their peers from the wealthiest quintile. Children living in rural areas are about two years behind their urban peers.



There is greater recognition of the importance of preschool education in the Region and young children's participation rates have improved over the last several years. The average gross enrolment rates are: in Central Asia 32 per cent (a 13 point improvement since 1999) and 72 per cent in Central and Eastern Europe (an improvement of 21 points). However, averages mask the wide range in access: 17 per cent in Bosnia and Herzegovina as compared to 103 per cent in Belarus; 9 per cent in Tajikistan as compared 53 per cent in Kazakhstan.<sup>20</sup> Several countries are unlikely to reach the pre-primary enrolment target of 70 per cent by 2015: countries such as Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan are very far from the target, but considered to be making systematic progress. *Equity* continues to be a major concern affecting those from the lowest wealth quintiles, children living in rural areas, children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities, such as the Roma. There is a need for robust preschool Management Information systems to support the monitoring and improvement of coverage and quality.

<sup>17</sup> UIS 2012

<sup>18</sup> Data from MICS3 2006 and MICS4 2011, respectively.

<sup>19</sup> Data from MICS3 2005 and MICS 4 2010, respectively.

<sup>20</sup> All figures refer to GER. Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2013/14.

## **The Right to the highest standards of health and development**

Overall, the Region of comparatively low Under 5 Mortality Rate (U5MR), thanks to an almost 60 per cent reduction in U5MR between 1990 and 2012. This progress, however, remains uneven, leaving several countries and population groups lagging behind, particularly in the Caucasus and Central Asia. These sub-regions, with an average U5MR of 36/1,000 in 2012 (down from 73 in 1990) are significantly above the regional average. Striking inequities persist within countries with low U5MR where children from some ethnic groups (primarily Roma) as well as from rural and remote communities are at considerably higher risks of dying before their fifth birthday.

Neonatal causes (e.g. prematurity, asphyxia and infections) remain responsible for about 60 per cent of U5MR in all the Region countries. While there was a substantive reduction in mortality of children under 5 from diarrhoea and pneumonia in all countries in the region, these conditions still require attention.

The number of countries where minimum immunization coverage rates are 95 per cent at national and 90 per cent at district level increased from 11 to 12. Although the national immunization coverage rates are usually high, immunization inequalities persist within countries at district level, especially among populations living in poverty and marginalized, as well among unregistered and migrant populations. Ukraine is the country with the highest risk of outbreaks like polio, measles and diphtheria with just 50 per cent immunization coverage over the last years. Persisting problems with vaccine procurement and public trust in immunization as a safe and effective intervention remain the main bottlenecks.

Inequalities also remain with respect to incidence and prevalence of adverse childhood experiences (e.g. poverty, abuse, neglect, lack of nurturing relationship with caregiver) closely associated with lifelong low productivity, non-communicable diseases and poor mental health. Early identification and rehabilitation services for young children with disabilities and developmental difficulties continue to be extremely limited, particularly affecting children living in rural areas.

## **The Right to be born and remain HIV-free**

***The HIV/AIDS-related MDG 6 goal will not be met.*** While global trends indicate a stabilization or decrease in HIV infections, in the Region the HIV epidemic continues to expand. In some parts of the Russian Federation, as many as 8 per cent of 15 to 45 year-old-men are living with HIV. The Region is one of only two in the world where HIV prevalence in young men increased between 2001 and 2012. With an overall HIV prevalence of 0.9 per cent among the adult population<sup>21</sup>, the Region is the second most affected Region by HIV in the world, after Africa.

The absolute annual number of HIV positive pregnant women tripled between 2001 and 2011. Although important progress has been achieved in reducing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, resulting in less babies born HIV infected, much more needs to be done to keep their mothers alive. Major challenges for the Region are the high levels of AIDS-related deaths and low access to life-saving ARV treatment. Despite some recent improvements, only 30 per cent of those in need of treatment are able to access it, making the Region the second lowest in the world in treatment access, despite the middle- and upper-middle income status of 20 of its 22 countries<sup>22</sup>. The alarming rates of Tuberculosis, including multi-drug-resistant TB, and HIV/TB and hepatitis co-infection represent a critical public health threat, likely to disproportionately affect the most disadvantaged children and families. Stigma and discrimination continue to be important barriers. In many countries, including those most affected by HIV, legislative environments reinforce discrimination so that people living with HIV face a number of restrictions, including on residence and movement. Discriminatory and intolerant attitudes make it more difficult to work on sensitive issues, such as drug use and prevention of HIV transmission in same-sex relationships. The sustainability of results achieved to date is threatened by diminishing financial resources as many countries become ineligible for support from the The Global Fund Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Additional concerns relate to the ability of civil society organizations (CSO) to remain strongly engaged in the response with the most vulnerable populations, as their activities are reportedly being restricted by new government regulations and monitoring procedures and decreasing funding.

---

<sup>21</sup> UNAIDS, 2011 World AIDS Day Report

<sup>22</sup> UNAIDS, 2012 Regional Fact Sheet for Eastern Europe and Central Asia

## The Rights to Protection from the risks of disaster

Environmental risks continue to have an impact on the achievement of MDGs in the Region, especially those related to health, education and protection of children. In early 2013, several countries in Eastern Europe, and countries in Central Asia experienced sub-zero temperatures and heavy snowfall, impacting access to basic services. On 10 November 2013, an earthquake measuring 5.2 on the Richter scale erupted in central Tajikistan causing significant damage to infrastructure. These events serve as a reminder that the region continues to be highly exposed to disaster hazards. Globally, children typically represent more than 50 per cent of those affected by disasters. The region's DRR programming is contributing to increasing the resilience of children and their communities to mitigate the impact of disasters. Most countries in the Region have disaster management systems in place, but their focus tends to be more on rescue and relief interventions rather than mitigation and prevention aspects. The trend is slowing changing with support through DRR programming. The regional DRR programme contributed to the Government of Armenia developing and endorsing a comprehensive Disaster Management toolkit designed to help education facilities (including schools) in establishing profound and functioning disaster risk reduction mechanism. Building on their existing disaster management systems, the governments of Armenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina have initiated the process of strengthening their legislative and institutional frameworks to systematically address disaster risks through establishing national platform on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and integrating DRR strategies into their national development planning processes.

UNICEF has successfully supported governments in the region (Central Asia and South Caucasus in particular) to integrate disaster risk reduction into education development policies and plans resulting in the inclusion of DRR into education curricula, establishment of school-based DRR protocols and establishment of coordination structures, within the framework of national HFA implementation. The Government of Tajikistan has introduced, Life Skills, including DRR, into the National Education Standards and in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, DRR is now part of the formal education curriculum. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova, UNICEF has supported local governments to conduct DRR analysis, which contributed to local government structures to analyze hazards and vulnerabilities to develop risk-informed development and emergency planning.

### 3. Analysis of programme strategies and results in the region

#### 3.1. Overview of programme strategies

##### Enhancing UNICEF Partnership Engagement

UNICEF in the Region is actively exploring to further expand its **partnerships** with countries using **new models of engagement**. Enhancing UNICEF's partnership engagement to leverage the Child Rights agenda, ***domestically and beyond borders***, continued to make good progress, especially with Croatia (High-Income countries), Turkey and Kazakhstan (soon to become High-Income Countries), as well as Bulgaria and Romania (EU Member States). In 2013, UNICEF maintained a close dialogue with these governments on partnership modalities that would support their emerging roles beyond borders, as donors and knowledge centers, while maintaining an engagement with their domestic child rights agenda. This will enable UNICEF to strengthen its support to governments in more economically advanced countries in the Region to address persisting and chronic equity gaps, affecting a significant number of excluded and marginalized children. Dialogue also continued on a new form of partnership with the Russian Federation, which will focus on Maternal and Child Health.

In the RKLA result areas relating to education 'A Child Rights to Education' (RKLA 4) and 'Early Learning and School Readiness' (RKLA 3) the RO provided strong leadership throughout the year in setting the agenda and creating political buy-in for inclusive education and quality learning in the region. This culminated with the organization in Istanbul of a ***Regional Ministerial Education Conference***, in partnership with the Government of Turkey. The main outcome of the conference is a ***Call for Action*** endorsed by the 17 participating countries, which provides a clear way forward and roadmap for regional and country-level education reforms in the region for 2014-2017. The Regional Ministerial Education Conference was an illustration of a new and innovative mode of engagement and partnership developed by the Regional Office with the Government of Turkey.

The dialogue with partners indicates that UNICEF is a trusted ally to validate and share these countries' emerging national capacities and best practices, and to advise on ODA's strategies towards priorities for children. In at least the four countries mentioned above, there is also considerable potential of *mobilizing core resources* for the organization. In the new EU member states, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania, there are growing opportunities for UNICEF to leverage EU Structural Funds, by assisting governments in investing these funds for children. In Romania, for instance, UNICEF will provide top-notch technical assistance to advise the Government on the use of structural funds for public programmes benefitting marginalized groups.

Since 2006 the Russian Federation has been providing US\$1 million yearly contribution to RR, while the total contribution to Other Resources Emergency (ORE) has been US\$6 million for the last three years (2010-13). The efforts of the RO to mobilize resources for priorities of the Country Programmes in the Region, which are mostly 'donor orphans', also gained momentum: The Russian Federation's contributions to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan increased from US\$2 million in 2012 to US\$3 million 2013. Additionally, interest was expressed to expanding the number of countries supported (Belarus and Armenia), thus a funding proposals package was submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation for a total of around US\$ 7 million, covering four countries.

Another evolving partnership which is UNICEF is actively engaged in is with the Government of Kazakhstan which expressed interest in establishing a UN multilateral hub in Almaty and consultations have been initiated through several meetings between UNICEF and the Government of Kazakhstan. Following these consultations, the Regional Office shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan a draft concept note on UNICEF's Evolving Engagement with Kazakhstan and establishing a UNICEF regional presence in Almaty. The Government of Kazakhstan has already started providing development assistance to other countries and is preparing to establish "KazAID" (Kazakhstan Development Assistance Agency) to increase its bilateral support to other countries. The contribution from the Government of Kazakhstan to UNICEF RR increased from US\$20,000 in 2011 to US\$100,000 in 2012. The Government of Kazakhstan also made an OR contributions of US\$ 3.5m for the UNICEF component of the UN Joint Programme for disadvantaged regions in Kazakhstan.

Critical to the realization of results for children in the Region is maintaining and strengthening *alliances with strategic partners*, notably with the larger and better resourced actors such as the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe, other key sub-regional entities, selected bilaterals and National Committees, as well as with Civil Society Organisations.

In 2013 the RO strengthened its strategic engagement with the European Union - one of the key drivers for social sector reforms, and an important donor in the Region. The objective was to ensure that child rights are firmly anchored in EU policies and programmes, as well as to mobilise and leverage resources for children. The RO pursued a targeted sub-regional approach focusing on the EU policies and funding instruments: In Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia the RO supported the three Country Offices in their advocacy for social inclusion of the most vulnerable children as part of the EU 2020 Strategy. Building on the 2013 *European Commission Recommendation on Investing in Children* UNICEF in these countries aims to mobilise action, leverage EU Cohesion Programmes and act as provider of technical assistance. Regarding EU Enlargement countries a high-level strategic dialogue with the EU and intensive follow-up helped to ensure that child rights are reflected in the EU Enlargement Strategy, EU progress reports and European Parliament resolutions. This commitment now needs to be translated into EU programming for enlargement for 2014-2020 (IPA-II). Efforts to strengthen systematic engagement with the EU on child rights in Eastern Neighbourhood countries have started and will be reinforced in early 2014. The partnership with the EU on Disaster Risk Reduction in the South-Caucasus and Central Asia continued and intensified.

Progress was also made in focusing the *EU partnership on realising the rights of the most vulnerable children*. A breakthrough in EU legislation was achieved by UNICEF and partners (the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-Based Care, co-chaired by the RO) with the decision that EU Cohesion Funds for 2014-2020 will not be used for institutionalization, but to develop community-based alternatives. UNICEF and the EU share a common commitment to protect children from violence through strengthening child protection systems. Protecting children from violence is at the heart of the EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child and remains a priority as confirmed by the recent announcement of the European Commission to develop EU guidelines on child protection

systems in the course of 2014. Lessons learned from a two-year EU-UNICEF initiative to protect children from violence in South Eastern Europe were shared at a regional experts` meeting in Tirana in November 2013. The four countries directly involved in the EU-UNICEF initiative - Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Turkey - and seven other countries were represented by Government officials, experts, practitioners, ombudspersons, parliamentarians and civil society organizations. Participants concluded that the two-year initiative had enhanced the effectiveness and efficiency of networks for the protection of children who are victims of violence. More needs to be done, however, to consolidate the progress made by strengthening cooperation between government institutions, international organisations and civil society to better detect violence against children and to increase awareness about children's rights and wellbeing. Participants expressed their strong commitment to continuing this partnership.

In June 2013, high level representatives from 21 countries and territories from the region, met in Brussels at a **High Level Regional Conference on Justice for Children** co-hosted by UNICEF and the European Commission. For the first time at such a scale in the Region, particular emphasis was placed on equitable access to justice for all children and the integration of children's issues in justice sector reforms. At the Conference, governments spelled out their policy priorities and commitments to address remaining challenges and further adapt their justice systems to child rights. The highlighted that access to justice for children, especially the most vulnerable, must be a key priority in justice reforms supported by the EU.

On ***Roma inclusion***, the RO achieved the results set for the biennium, largely in partnership with the EU. The 8th EU Platform for Roma Inclusion with a focus on children and youth allowed UNICEF to highlight promising practices from the region on integrated and inclusive early childhood education and care. The comparative review and further analysis of findings of MICS surveys in Roma settlements in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and related Advocacy Brief, fill a major gap in the lack of research and disaggregated data on Roma communities – particularly, Roma children and young people – and will contribute to more effective social inclusion policies and planning. Entry points for advocacy and dissemination of the study in 2014 have been identified. The RO also advanced on establishing a more strategic partnership with the EU, by engaging with the EU Roma Platform in June – where UNICEF's work in Romania was praised publicly – and with the newly created “EU Coalition of International Organizations for Roma Inclusion”, where other stakeholders such as UNDP and the World Bank already participate. This created a favourable environment for the COs in Bulgaria and Romania to advance in positioning themselves as providers of technical assistance for the implementation of EU structural funds to help scale up successful models of inclusive services that work for Roma children. Lastly, the RO helped leverage funding from the Austrian Development Cooperation which will serve to advance implementation of programmes for Roma inclusion in three Balkan countries.

The RO and UNICEF Brussels Office partnered with the EU and the European Disability Forum (a network of European and international disability persons' organisations) on a conference on 'Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities' in enlargement countries which fostered policy dialogue on inclusive education, child-focused advocacy and alternative care.

Under an EU–UNICEF regional initiative, governments and civil society actors increased access to HIV testing and counselling reaching the most-at risk adolescents in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine - UNICEF's niche role was recognised in an EU monitoring mission.

With the **Council of Europe**, the visit of the Regional Director to Strasbourg in July 2012 re-affirmed the strong collaboration between the two organisations. The Regional Office in 2013 continued to promote the rights of Roma children through its support to the Council of Europe and strengthened partnership with OHCHR Regional Office for Europe. Already engaged in a stable partnership with the Council of Europe, the RO drafted in 2013 a background paper which served as major input for the CoE Parliamentary Assembly's “*Recommendation on Ending Discrimination of Roma children*”, adopted in April 2013. In addition, in partnership with the Government of Turkey, the Council of Europe and the UN Special Representative on Violence against Children, UNICEF contributed to organizing a European conference “*Stepping up progress in combating violence against children*” in Ankara.

In line with RKLA 6 *A child's right to health: infant and U5 mortality* and the Regional Roll-out Plan of the **A Promise Renewed (APR)** Initiative endorsed by the RMT meeting in November 2012, the UNICEF RO focused its

support on regional advocacy and partnership strengthening, and providing support to Country Offices in scaling up equity focused and effective interventions on child survival and development. An important result achieved in 2013 was the signing by three Regional Directors of UNICEF, **WHO and UNFPA** of a *Joint Actions Framework (JAF) between UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA* to outline joint advocacy, policy formulation and country support activities. Also, a high level panel on *the A Promise Renewed, the SG Every Woman Every Child Strategy* and the post-2015 agenda was organized with UNICEF and WHO support during the *35th Anniversary Conference of the Almaty Declaration* which was held on 6-7 November in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The UNICEF delegation, led by UNICEF PD Director, advocated to make the reduction of the equity gap in health as the most important measure of success in further strengthening Primary Health Care, particularly when looking into the post-2015 era.

Using the findings of the Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Overview Report, the RO engaged extensively with the EU, civil society and development partners in support of Early Childhood Education for Roma children. The RO continued to work closely with the International Step by Step Association (ISSA) on Early Childhood Education.

## **Horizontal and Triangular Cooperation**

UNICEF enhanced core roles in the Region also increasingly include evaluation of public policy models to generate lessons of what brings results for children. In 2012-2013 five multi-country evaluations covering topics such as education, child care reform, juvenile justice, early learning and health were launched. Their objective is to demonstrate how impact results, in terms of changes in the lives of children and reduction of equity gaps, were made possible over the past decade in a significant number of countries through changes in the national (regional/local) systems, and document UNICEF's contribution to these changes through its core roles. The five evaluations will create a body of evidence on best practices related to the realization of child rights with equity that have the potential to influence and steer changes within national systems and beyond borders. By systematizing, evaluating, documenting and disseminating "good practices" which are in line with international standards and the best interest of children, and UNICEF is better positioned to broker horizontal mutual learning among countries.

An important strategic intent of the RKLA is to identify emerging areas of child rights violations that show potential for results and innovation across a number of countries. Central to the work of the RKLA Reference Groups<sup>23</sup> has indeed been to find the nexus between capacity development, particularly through support to *horizontal cooperation*, effective advocacy, strategic partnerships and knowledge management. For example, in 2013, the Reference Groups for 'A Child's Right to Social Protection' and 'Disaster Risk Reduction', each, secured funding for innovations linking resilience, social protection and disaster risk reduction, and for supporting cooperation beyond borders with other regions on social protection.

UNICEF is now more effectively engaging countries to move the child rights regionally and globally. In the Region the Organisation is positioning itself as a broker between public sector and civil society, and the private sector, and fully embracing a "UNICEF 3.0" expanded partnerships. This is very timely as a few more economically advanced countries are developing their ODA strategies and priorities, as mentioned above, while the private sector is growing steadily in Emerging Markets. UNICEF can be a strong and credible ally to influence the design and implementation of ODA as well as corporate priorities towards programmes for children and to support horizontal cooperation.

Horizontal cooperation with the Russian Federation technical institutions continued primarily in areas of HIV/AIDS, and Maternal and Child Health. A first Expert Conference on "Current Methods of Treatment of HIV Infection Among Children and Adolescents" was organized in Irkutsk (RF) in September 2013 by the St. Petersburg-based Federal Center for the HIV Prevention and Treatment of HIV/AIDS among Women and Children of the Ministry of Health in partnership with the Pediatric European Network for the Treatment of AIDS (PENTA) and UNICEF, involving over 110 pediatric AIDS care providers from the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, United Kingdom, Spain and Switzerland. Also, following the visit of a delegation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation to the UNICEF Supply Division in October 2012, an orientation workshop for the Russian vaccine producers is being planned jointly with the Ministry of Health of the Russian

---

<sup>23</sup> Each RKLA Reference Group is chaired by a Representative and supported by the relevant Regional Advisor.

Federation for the first quarter of 2014. The horizontal cooperation resulted in the establishment of a network of over 200 care providers from across the Region who are now able to stay connected and share their experiences.

**Leveraging resources** for children is most relevant in MICs, but also to protect social expenditures from fiscal consolidation. In view of Turkmenistan's large reserves of natural gas and fiscal revenues, and progress towards bringing the legal frameworks in line with international standards and building national capacity, UNICEF developed a financial plan for scaling up ECD investment, as an investment with the highest return for children and to promote equity. In Albania, UNICEF leveraged EU funding for children of migrant families left behind, a group identified as particularly vulnerable, to ensure their access to Social Protection cash benefits and support services. In Tajikistan, it analyzed potential impacts on children and women of worsening economic conditions and budget cuts under an IMF adjustment programme, and advised on protecting social spending of greatest relevance for poor families and marginalized children in the event of economic shocks. In Ukraine, UNICEF signed an agreement with the EU on supporting social protection reforms, which will hopefully lead to continued support once the current political difficulties are resolved. Also, the RO helped leverage funding from the Austrian Development Cooperation which will serve to advance implementation of programmes for Roma inclusion.

## **Communication for Development and Overcoming Social Norms Bottlenecks**

Mind-set issues at individual, societal and institutional levels were addressed in 2013 accelerating the refocus on equity and contributing to social change in the Region. Most country offices outlined improved **Communication for Development** strategies in their CPDs. COs' Annual Reports clearly show positive changes. This is in line with the findings of a global review in 2013 where C4D reached the quality threshold of over 80 per cent for the first time. Noteworthy is the Montenegro 2013 KAP study revealing that since work began in 2010, the percentage of people who believe children with disability belong in mainstream education increased from 36 per cent to 80 per cent. Marking the 2013 Global Immunization week and as part of the work in RKLA 6 'A child right to health' the working paper *Tracking anti-vaccination sentiments in Eastern European social media networks* was widely disseminated through the Global Immunization News and blogs, generating a lively debate. The in-house capacity certified by UNICEF global C4D and social norms courses has reached staff members in 12 offices in the region. A 2013 review of the Child Rights Syllabus found that the approach of embedding a locally adapted syllabus on journalism education and child rights in tertiary institutions was wide reaching and sustainable. Five years of work resulted in over 4,000 students exposed to the syllabus in 45 tertiary education institutions in 10 countries. Graduates are now practicing journalists and producing media reports on child rights or have become media studies academics or advisors to government.

Also related to the persistence of adverse social norms, it is important to note that **gender inequality** remains one of the key determinants of exclusion in the Region, affecting both girls and boys in different contexts. The spring RMT discussed progress achieved and reflected on ways to move forward within limited means and resources. Following the RMT, Situation Analyses undertaken as part of MTR processes in six countries were gender reviewed, as were the Terms of Reference for the RKLA Multi-Country Evaluations and three of the draft Inception Reports. The ongoing evaluations will contribute to documenting results for boys and girls and reduction of related equity gaps, as well as to identify what has worked well in terms of system-level changes and UNICEF's programmatic strategies in the Region to achieve results that contribute to overall greater gender equality. The Region participated actively in the ongoing consultation process for the drafting of a new Gender Action Plan 2014-17, with a delegation attending the Global Technical Consultation in Bangkok in November 2013. The Region is now taking steps to operationalize the commitment to achieving gender equality by putting in place precise processes, clarifying accountabilities and roles, identifying champions, mapping existing talent across offices and designing targeted capacity building initiatives. The Region is also pioneering a new approach that combines together drivers of inequities in children's and women's rights related to gender, disability, ethnic & linguistic minority and migration. The RO will be conducting in 2014 a rapid assessment of these dimensions related to the ten Regional RKLAs, using the MoRES and Determinant Analysis frameworks: the results of this exercise, will help inform the regional agenda to move more decisively towards gender equality and addressing other drivers of inequities, and inform global priorities.

## 3.2 Overview of each MTSP Focus Area

### Focus on sharing innovations and documenting results for children – RKLA and MoRES

Since 2012 the RMT in the Region has been re-focussing its work around a 10-priority<sup>24</sup> Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda (RKLA), with results clearly set to benefit excluded and disadvantaged children. In 2013 the RKLA enabled Country Offices to collaborate among themselves and to secure a stronger ‘compact’ with the Regional Office. The RKLA also enabled offices to systematically apply the **MoRES** analytical framework to each of the 10 priorities, and contributed to sharpening results formulation, monitoring and documentation. This has begun to show results in terms of *generation and sharing of knowledge*.

To document how, despite the many challenges related to child rights and equity in the Region, results are emerging – many of them rooted in public sector reforms, UNICEF is working on five Multi-Country Evaluations (MCEs) in the RKLA results areas highlighted with a purple colour in the above table, involving several Country Offices as well as the Regional Office (see also section 5). The MoRES Determinant Analysis and the Theory of Change tools played a critical role in the design of the Terms of Reference as well as in the methodology adopted for the five Multi-Country Evaluations.

The MCEs are assessing where equity gaps have been reduced, where UNICEF has made a significant contribution, and where there are emerging results to build on and bottlenecks to overcome. In each country and for each of the five result areas, the MCEs look at the environment that surrounds children - the policies, services and programmes - the demand for improved child well-being, and the quality of the services being provided, always through a human rights lens. The results of these exercises, expected in the summer 2014, will provide some evidence of what it takes for policies to translate into results for children. This knowledge, including on gaps and opportunities, is what we expect to contribute to our counterparts and partners.

UNICEF CEE/CIS - Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda - 10 key result areas

	1. A child's right to a supportive and caring family environment	2. A child's right to access to justice	3. A child's right to early learning	4. A child's right to inclusive quality education	5. A child's right to be born free of HIV	6. A child's right to health: 'A promise renewed'	7. A young child's right to comprehensive well-being	8. A child's right to social protection	9. A child's right to protection from the risks of disasters: reducing vulnerability	10. An adolescent's right to a second chance	31-Jan-14
Albania (2012-16)		RG						RG Chair			
Armenia (2010-2015)		RG	RG	RG				RG	RG	RG	
Azerbaijan (2011-2015)	RG	RG							RG	RG Chair	
Belarus (2011-15)	RG				RG Chair						
Bosnia and Herzegovina			RG				RG Chair	RG	RG		
Bulgaria (2013-17)	RG Chair						RG				
Croatia (2012-16)	RG						RG				
Georgia (2011-15)	RG	RG Chair			RG		RG	RG	RG	RG	
Kazakhstan (2010-15)		RG			RG	RG				RG	
Kosovo* (2011-15)		RG	RG Chair	RG			RG			RG	
Kyrgyzstan (2012-16)		RG	RG		RG	RG		RG	RG Chair	RG	
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia			RG	RG				RG			
Moldova (2013-17)	RG	RG	RG		RG	RG Chair		RG	RG	RG	
Montenegro (2012-16)	RG	RG								RG	
Romania (2013-17)										RG	
Russian Federation											
Serbia (2011-15)	RG			RG		RG	RG				
Tajikistan (2010-15)		RG			RG					RG	
Turkey (2011-15)	RG			RG Chair			RG			RG	
Turkmenistan (2010-15)							RG		RG		
Ukraine (2012-16)	RG	RG			RG			RG		RG	
Uzbekistan (2010-2015)						RG		RG		RG	
* under UNSCR 1244	RG	Reference Group									
		part of multi-country evaluation									
		Results at impact level									
		Results at system level									
		Emerging results									

The MCEs will also contribute to the regional's new approach in the Region, which aims to foster networks and partnerships to achieve results, and fosters the active engagement of governments and partners regionally beyond

<sup>24</sup> The 10 RKLA priorities are: (1) A child's right to a supportive and caring family environment; (2) Justice for children: enabling justice systems to respect and protect child rights; (3) A child's right to early learning; (4) A child's right to education: Including all children out of school in quality learning; (5) A child's right to be born free of HIV; (6) A child's right to health: infant and U5 mortality; (7) A child's right to comprehensive wellbeing ; (8) A child's right to social protection; (9) A child's right to protection from the risks of disasters: Reducing vulnerability; (10) An adolescent's right to a second decade, a second chance.

their national borders through mutual learning amongst countries, peer learning and support, and cross-border cooperation.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

### **A Child's Right to a Family Environment**

Despite the remarkable social and economic changes and reforms that have swept through the region, most countries still rely heavily on the policy and practice of placing children in institutional care as a core response in child protection. The aggregated rate of children under the age of 18 in formal care has remained relatively stable since the year 2000, even as the Region experience a decline in its child population. Children with disabilities still face isolation and discrimination; community-based services responding to their needs remain underdeveloped and existing legal frameworks do not systematically enforce their social inclusion; in several countries, children with disabilities represent as many as 60 per cent of all children in institutions. In some of the countries, disadvantaged ethnic minorities such as the Roma are significantly over-represented in child institutional care. At least 31,000 children below three years of age are placed in institutional care, but only 2 to 5 per cent of these children are orphans. This situation indicates that vulnerable families are not being provided with the support they need from social protection systems (combining cash transfers, services and social work) in order to cope with the impact of the current economic crisis. Research shows that families most in need of support face the biggest obstacles when seeking assistance, and, in many instances, they are not even eligible for it. Many countries continue to benefit from external support for maintaining their institutions for children. This tends to thwart the efforts to develop new forms of care and protection of vulnerable children. In order to address such obstacles, UNICEF has joined the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care (the EEG) aiming at influencing the allocation of EU funds in the social sector towards promoting person-centred, quality and empowering models of services and formal and informal care that fully respect the human rights of all people and address support needs and their families.

*Violence against children and women* is a major problem in many countries of CEE/CIS region. It has also become obvious that violence has not been addressed in a systematic and sustainable manner. The fact that there is an apparent increase in the number of *suicides and attempted suicides* amongst children, especially boys, in several countries, and that *domestic violence* is found as a key factor contributing to suicidal behavior is an issue of serious concern. Harmful traditional practices, inadequate parental skills, lack of preventive health care and family planning services, early school drop-out are noted as the reasons for young girls becoming mothers, sometimes as early as at the age of 12.

Tangible results for children, visible at impact **MoRES Level 4**, are emerging in several countries and are currently documented through a Multi-Country Evaluation. Twenty governments took commitments at the end of 2012 at the Ministerial Conference in Sofia hosted by the Government of Bulgaria to adopt national operational plans for the prevention of the placement of children below three years in formal care. Based on a preliminary assessment conducted at the end of 2013, *the number of children below three years placed in formal care decreased by almost 3,000 in 2013, a decrease of 10 per cent for the whole region*. While official statistics will be released in mid-2014, information collected at country level provides a clear picture of the positive development in the situation of young children. This also demonstrates that, despite the impact of the economic crisis on the most vulnerable families, some governments have kept up the momentum to improve their social protection policies and responses. Such rapid results are mainly due to the prompt and efficient efforts of the Governments of Bulgaria, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Serbia and Turkey. In addition, new initiatives have been taken in other countries: Albania, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Romania and Turkmenistan could achieve more positive results shortly.

A particular mention must be made of the progress achieved in Turkey. In parallel to the reinforcement of its support schemes for vulnerable families, the government has launched a major campaign for promoting foster care. As a result of this campaign, 3,667 families applied to become foster families in 2013; *the total number of children placed in foster care has increased from 1,492 in 2012 to 3,123 at the end of 2013* in 2,587 foster families (compared with 1,350 foster families at the end of 2012). To date, 468 children below three years are now placed in foster care in Turkey (data for 2012 were not reflected in statistics).

At outcome **MoRES Level 3**, results in Bulgaria, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Serbia and Turkey were achieved through a range of strategies tailored to the specific situation of each country, which have systematically involved addressing more than one bottleneck at a time, focusing on legislative reforms, budgetary allocations, development of standards, provision of capacity building and acceleration in the setting up of new services. Cash benefits for families of children with disabilities have been put in place and reinforced in most countries. Geographical coverage of services and the capacity of the most vulnerable to access these services, however, remains an issue.

Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia have adopted legal provisions prohibiting the placement of children under the age of three in institutions. This has been done in parallel with efforts to develop alternative services, reform practices in the health sector, including reinforcing the work of home visiting nurses, and to further develop social welfare services for prevention. As demonstrated with the example of Romania which had adopted such a measure some years ago with mixed results, policy development requires developing first the new services required for enforcing such policy.

In Albania, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia some progress has been reached in fostering inter-sectoral cooperation in prevention of institutionalization and supporting family preservation through the improvements of the capacity of primary health care system to provide accessible, quality outreach home visitation care for children with developmental difficulties and children from socially deprived communities (such as Roma). Successful modelling of a Home visits/patronage programme targeting Roma children and parents has been piloted in Albania. Bulgaria and Georgia have developed solid plans backed-up by political commitment and financial support to close infant homes and develop further family support schemes. In Bulgaria, this is part of an ambitious national plan for putting into place a wide range of new support aided by funding from the European Commission including the development of specialized foster care for children below three years. In Georgia, the closure of institutions needs to be consolidated with the development of appropriate services at municipal level.

Kazakhstan has mainly engaged in developing social work and outreach services such as home visiting nurses as well as bringing changes to gatekeeping decision-making mechanisms. Several countries have invested in the systematic enforcement of foster care, such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Romania and Turkey. Some of these countries have further developed specialized training of foster families in charge of children under three years and children with disabilities; this has been generally combined with an increase in the allocation provided to these foster parents.

The rights of children with disabilities were actively promoted in 2013, through awareness raising campaigns which are underway in several countries, such as Armenia and Montenegro, and more specifically through the organization of the Central Asia Child Protection Forum in Tajikistan, where the five governments of Central Asia made commitments to reinforce national policies and systems to ensure the full inclusion of children with disabilities into society.

Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania have engaged in major campaigns to address violence against children. UNICEF in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Turkey, in cooperation with the EU, supported the development of systemic responses to violence against children with a particular focus on the strengthening of mechanism to monitor how the different elements of the CP system are able to provide appropriate responses; on clarifying and reinforcing the role that civil society can play as a partner; and promoting the policy dialogue between all actors involved in improving policies, responses and promoting behavior change. In several countries, through quite innovative partnerships with the Parliament and/or Ombudsman office, specific changes in the Penal Code related to violence against children were introduced.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

### **A Child's Right to Accessing Justice**

In 2013, twenty of the 21 Country Offices continued to bring justice systems in line with international child rights standards through technical assistance and advocacy for legislative and policy reforms, capacity building integrated within regular national training curricula, support to improved data collection and management and the expansion of alternatives to deprivation of liberty and support services to child victims and witnesses of crime.

These efforts have yielded results at **MoRES Level 4** results in many countries: In Albania, resort to *alternative sentences has expanded to reach about two third of cases involving juveniles in 2013*, an important shift since the beginning of the reforms a decade ago when the vast majority of convicted children were receiving custodial sentences. In Moldova, *probation and community work are now used as alternatives to detention in more than 75 per cent of the cases*. In Montenegro, there was a *52 per cent increase in cases of conflicts with the law which were successfully resolved through victim/offender mediation in 2013*. In Georgia *the number of imprisoned children decreased by 38 per cent in 2013*.

At **MoRES Level 3**, sixteen countries and territories in the region now have the principle of detention as a last resort mentioned in their national legal and policy framework, and most countries are involved in institutional and professional capacity building. More than half of the countries are making progress towards introducing child-sensitive police and court procedures for child victims and witnesses of crime. A new law including specific provisions on the rights of children victims and witnesses, designed with UNICEF's support, entered into force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2013. Additional child friendly interview rooms were established in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) and Tajikistan. In Azerbaijan, 110 children were provided with UNICEF-supported free legal aid and psycho-social support services – a 12 per cent increase from 2012.

The Regional Office contribution to these reforms was mainly in terms of setting a common agenda, providing and facilitating access to technical support, facilitating exchanges across countries and generating knowledge. Concrete outputs in 2013 include a high-level regional conference with the European Commission in Brussels where all Governments from the region renewed their commitments to reform; an analysis of the 'state of juvenile justice in CEE/CIS; capacity building of national training institutes (such as Police Academies and Schools of Magistrates) in developing national training curricula in line with international standards. The Regional Office also addressed some of the existing gaps in the reforms, including the preparation of guidance on the role of social work in juvenile justice and support to Ombudsman offices and civil society in eight countries in issuing national reports on violence in the juvenile justice system. A regional report on torture and ill-treatment in detention was published, consolidating national findings from eight countries. In 2013, the RO also launched a ground breaking study on equitable access to justice for children, together with the International Development Law Organization, laying the foundation for a more comprehensive approach to justice for children. The preliminary findings of the study will be shared with the Human Rights Council in March 2014 during the Annual Full-day Meeting on the Rights of the Child, dedicated to access to justice for children.

## **EDUCATION**

### **A Child's Right to Education: Early Learning and School Readiness**

The key expected result in this RKLA is an increased access to Early Childhood Education (ECE) services for the most marginalized children and improving the quality of ECE services. In 2013, the regional initiative launched by RO to advance children's right to Early Learning and School Readiness services progressed actively. Nineteen countries joined the initiative and are committed to working together to advance the common regional agenda in ECE. Based on wide consultation with COs, counterparts and partners, ECE formed one of the four key messages of the Call for Action that was released at the Regional Ministerial Education Conference, "Including All Children in Quality Learning" held in Istanbul in December 2013, giving new vigour and commitment to the area of early education and early learning.

Common bottlenecks included in this area include an overall lack provision; gaps in political commitment and technical capacity; lack of early education management information systems, weak monitoring and regulatory frameworks. Demand side barriers included poor accessibility and unaffordability.

**MoRES Level 4** results include: increased enrolment in preschool education in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In the latter, according to recently released MoE data, *3-6 year olds access increased from 26 per cent in 2012 to 34 per cent in 2013*. In Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Tajikistan, UNICEF assisted in the opening of community-based early childhood education centres. Building on UNICEF's model, the Tajikistan MoE established 600 new ECE centres. In Serbia, UNICEF supported the expansion of preschool coverage through the adaptation of existing state-owned premises and in Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) municipalities were influenced to open additional pre-primary classes funded through local revenues.

Some results at **MoRES Level 3** have begun to emerge: in order to improve the enabling environment for universal access to diversified forms of quality early childhood education, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Tajikistan developed and adopted new laws and sub-laws and Georgia initiated the development of such a law. In Turkey a policy package featuring alternative, free of charge community-based early education models was adopted by the Ministry of Education for nationwide dissemination. Tajikistan's and Uzbekistan's new national education plans gave clear priority to early education. UNICEF supported Georgia's national strategy for inclusive economic growth to include a focus on early childhood. UNICEF facilitated the preparation and submission of a proposal to GPE which resulted in Kyrgyzstan receiving US\$ 12.7 million to expand ECE services, including universal access to 1-year of pre-primary education. UNICEF also leveraged funds from the Austrian Government for a sub-regional initiative covering Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia to mainstream diversity and multiculturalism in ongoing reforms and to expand early learning opportunities for Roma children. In Bosnia and Herzegovina with UNICEF support and a "matching fund modality" one-year of pre-primary education was made available to 100 per cent of eligible children in one part of the country. UNICEF continued to provide support in Turkmenistan to strengthen capacity of the national multi-disciplinary Working Group on ECD for planning, implementing, coordinating and monitoring the National Programme on ECD and School Readiness. Awareness raising activities to address social norms and change attitudes towards effecting improvements in preschool participation were conducted in Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Turkey and Uzbekistan. In partnership with UNICEF, Serbia's education working group held public hearings on the importance of investing in ECE.

UNICEF supported capacity development and pilot projects for cost-effective, inclusive early education/school readiness programmes, with a particular emphasis on children with disabilities, Roma children and children from rural areas, in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia, Turkmenistan and Turkey. In Tajikistan, UNICEF contributed directly to expanded access by supporting the establishment of 164 low-cost, quality ECE settings in 9 districts. Alternative models of early learning are now recognised by Government and mentioned in the early education law. MoE independently established 888 centres, based on the model promoted by UNICEF. The most recent Global Partnership for Education grant includes further funds for the expansion of early learning opportunities. In Bulgaria, Early Learning and Development Standards were validated and provided the basis for an assessment instrument to detect learning difficulties at the start of preschool.

## **EDUCATION**

### **A Child's Right to Education: Including All Children Out Of School In Quality Learning**

In 2012, within the RKLA 4 'A child's right to education', the Regional Office launched a Regional Education Initiative to include all children in quality learning. The initiative focuses on two priorities: increasing the *inclusiveness* of education systems and closing equity gaps in learning by improving the *quality* of education systems. Eighteen Country Offices have now joined the initiative, each undertaking national-level efforts aimed at removing key system-level bottlenecks causing exclusion in education. COs aim at enhancing the quality of teaching and learning processes and making schools more child-friendly for the most marginalized children; improving data on Out-of-School Children; enhancing the management and coordination of related information; reducing discrimination; making schools more accessible for the most marginalized children and strengthening financing mechanisms to better support inclusion. These regional and country-level initiatives provide sharper focus on access to, and quality of, education for children with disabilities and children from ethnic minorities, mainly Roma children.

Results at **MoRES Level 4** overall include education systems in the region slowly becoming more *inclusive*. In many countries, the numbers of out of school children is decreasing and some countries have managed to increase enrolment among the most marginalized groups of children, in particular *Roma children*. For example, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, *primary school attendance rate for Roma children increased from 61.1 per cent in 2006 to 85.6 per cent in 2011*<sup>25</sup>, and in Serbia, *primary school enrolment of Roma children increased from 66 per cent in 2005 to 91 per cent in 2010*<sup>26</sup>.

Barriers preventing the inclusion of *children with disabilities* were reduced in several countries. In Armenia, the Law on Education was amended to better reflect principles of inclusive education and ensure access of children with disabilities to regular schools. As a result, *the number of children in special schools decreased by 60 per cent in 2011-12 compared to 2007-2008*, and the number of children with certified special education needs receiving additional state budget-funded support in inclusive schools increased from 0 in 2006 to 1700 in 2011-2012. In Montenegro, as a result of a holistic approach combining C4D, legislative interventions and capacity building, the *number of children with disabilities included in mainstream education increased by 10 per cent in 2013*.

At **MoRES Level 3** the *quality of teaching* and the *level of learning outcomes* have improved in some countries. For instance, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNICEF provided technical expertise and capacity development in the areas of early literacy and numeracy as well as inclusive education. As of the end of 2013, 70 per cent of all early grade teachers have been trained in early numeracy and 44 per cent in early literacy programmes, in line with international good practices. Preliminary results of the progress assessment in student outcomes and teacher knowledge in literacy in schools that have been implementing the programme since 2010 show a 6 per cent improvement in student outcomes related to reading.

The RO provided strong leadership throughout the year in setting the agenda and creating political buy-in for inclusive education and quality learning in the region. This culminated in of the ***Regional Ministerial Education Conference***, organized in partnership with the Government of Turkey. The main outcome of the conference is a ***Call for Action*** endorsed by the 17 participating countries, which provides a clear way forward and a roadmap for regional and country-level education programming in the region for 2014-2017. The conference also represented an opportunity to share and disseminate knowledge generated by the region and UNICEF partners on children out of school, learning outcomes, education financing and policy models that work. More specifically, a Regional Analysis of the 2009 PISA results was published in order to help COs to provide the evidence that will support governments' efforts to improve the quality of education through monitoring of learning outcomes and equity in student achievement. Based on a ***Regional Study on Out-of-School-Children*** (OOSC) in the Region, the RO moved forward – supported by research to action - to improve the way in which OOSC or children at risk of dropping out are identified and tracked; a regional OOSC monitoring tool was developed and will be piloted at country level.

Through its knowledge generation and convening roles, the RO provided drive and technical leadership to the 18 Country Offices engaged in RCLA 4. For instance, the Region has been recognized as the leading region in UNICEF in the area of Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities and, as such, the RO has contributed in 2013 to global knowledge, while rolling out concrete results at regional and country level. The high-level side event on Inclusive Education organized by the RO in the margins of the 2013 First Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board provided an important opportunity to share good practices and lessons learned from Armenia, Montenegro and Serbia, contributing to the global recognition of the importance of inclusive education in general, and in particular in connection with the post-2015 agenda.

The RO provided substantial technical assistance to advance efforts to reduce education exclusion and to build capacity in education in emergencies in five countries and territories. As a result, national and municipal programmes and action plans on out-of-school children and dropout prevention were developed in Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) and Moldova. In Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Prevention and Response Teams of Students Drop Out, mandated by legislation, were set up in six municipalities as inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms to address the issue of out of

---

<sup>25</sup>Data from MICS3 2006 and MICS4 2011 respectively.

<sup>26</sup>Data from MICS3 2006 and MICS4 2011 respectively.

school children. Early warning systems and dropout prevention interventions were developed in Serbia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and will be piloted in 2014. In Serbia, 2013 saw the adoption of new laws on primary and secondary education, containing inclusive provisions, in line with UNICEF's advocacy, and a study visit to the Netherlands contributed to the on-going design of a core package for drop-out prevention. In Romania, evidence from local models, together with the launch of the Study on Out-Of-School Children was used by UNICEF to advocate for the inclusion of early school leaving prevention into the Government's 2014-2020 programming in education; the draft National Education Strategy includes a pillar on prevention and reduction of early school leaving and earmarks 30 per cent of the potential 2014-2020 EU funding. Together with NGOs and schools, UNICEF continued to address social norms impeding full access and participation of vulnerable children to quality inclusive education through the promotion of parenting programmes and positive Roma role models. This was recognized as a good practice at the European level and is being evaluated for potential replication.

In Armenia, the education programme honed in the focus on policies targeting the most disadvantaged groups in the population, primarily children with disabilities. Special education needs assessment process and tools were revised based on the International Classification of Functioning, Children and Youth version (ICF-CY), as the most advanced conceptual framework for the promotion of a social model of disabilities; in addition, a system allowing the identification, referral and case management of children out of school and at risk-of-dropping out was developed and is being piloted. At least 8 countries in the region have programme plans that are specific to inclusive education for children with disabilities and there is growing momentum in working cross-sectoral on definition and categorization of children with disabilities, notably in Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Armenia.

## **HIV/AIDS AND CHILDREN**

### **A Child's Right to be Born and Remain HIV free**

The dwindling resources for HIV as a result of disengagement and ineligibility of many countries to access Global Fund grants is threatening the sustainability of the responses to HIV and threatens reversals in gains in many countries. The dramatic re-emergence of HIV in countries such as Romania, where HIV incidence among injecting drug users has risen from 3 per cent in 2010 to 30.6 per cent in 2012, is a case in point. Continued and increasing mistrust towards civil society, lack of political will, lack of support for a strong human rights agenda and widespread stigma and lack of data on the prevalence of drug use and drug dependency in the population are some of the key obstacles to scaling-up integrated effective service provision. Gaps in access to ARVs by HIV-infected women and the associated high mortality rates from HIV-related causes, such as TB and HCV, are resulting in more and more children growing up without their mothers and at risk of being placed in institutions.

During 2013, a number of Country Offices have continued to support national responses – including those of governments and civil society organizations - towards achieving the goals of MDG6 and moving towards an AIDS-Free Generation. The focus has been on realizing the rights of all children to be born HIV free by supporting national efforts towards the Elimination of Mother To Child Transmission of HIV (EMTCT) and ensuring that children and adolescents, particularly those at highest risk, remain HIV-free into adulthood. It is well recognized that the Region has achieved important progress towards EMTCT. Most national governments have prioritized and secured national funding for this area of work.

**Level 4 MoRES** results on HIV include *reductions in HIV transmission from mothers to children*. All countries in CIS are reporting systematic testing for HIV in ante-natal care settings and provision of treatment to prevent HIV transmission from HIV positive mothers to their infants. Several countries, including Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine have reported significant decreases in rates of HIV transmission to infants. Additional assessments/evaluations to document impact level results are planned for 2014.

Outcome results at **MoRES level 3** include the continued commitment by governments to ensure that PMTCT services are fully integrated within local MCH services thus facilitating nation-wide implementation. Most countries of the Region have adopted “*universal opt-out HIV testing*” and provide access to ARVs for HIV infected pregnant women. The main challenge to achieving true elimination of MTCT is to ensure more equity in access to quality services by marginalized, socially excluded women. UNICEF has continued to work with national authorities in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan to design models of service provision for *pregnant women using drugs and their children*

who are facing high levels of stigma and rejection in society. Drug-dependent pregnant women usually tend to hide their drug dependence for fears of reprimands and of their children being taken away. UNICEF, working with government and civil society partners (OSF, CHAI, local harm reduction NGOs), has been working to change mind-sets and attitudes of service providers towards these women and provide comprehensive services for them by integrating addiction, family planning, pregnancy, parenting and outreach support. An e-learning tool on pregnancy and drug use developed by the RO with international experts has been shared for pretesting, and the feedback received will support its finalization and broader distribution in 2014.

One of the key priorities in addressing HIV in Europe is to increase the number of people who know their HIV status. This is a prerequisite for reducing HIV transmission and for ensuring that those who are HIV positive are connected to care and treatment services. Over the last two years, UNICEF has been working with governments and NGOs, in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine on effective approaches to increase access to confidential and anonymous ***HIV testing and counselling and HIV prevention, care and treatment for most at risk and socially excluded adolescents***. This programme, co-funded by the European Union (DG DEVCO) has reached over 16,000 adolescents and built the capacity of over 2000 service providers. Over 3,300 adolescents from the five countries were consulted on their use of HTC services through computer-assisted surveys the results of which helped inform improvements in service provision. Special efforts were made to reach the most vulnerable adolescents (such as street-connected children) by administering the surveys on computer tablets on the streets, in clubs and at other hot-spots. The programme was evaluated at interim stage in 2013 through an independent Results-Oriented Monitoring mission requested by the EU. The mission which visited all five countries rated the results of this programme as very good and clearly pointed to the value added of UNICEF's work on most-at-risk adolescents (MARA) which was identified as a clear niche that is not covered by any other organization.

***Infections acquired in paediatric care settings*** as a result of poor infection control have been the predominant mode of HIV transmission and transmission of other blood-borne infections among children in Central Asia. Over 7,000 children diagnosed with HIV acquired in hospitals over the last six years. Infections with other pathogens, such as Hepatitis C virus in children undergoing invasive medical procedures have also been reported but poorly documented. Improving infection control in health settings is a priority for governments. UNICEF, working with CDC, WB and EU/GIZ, developed a comprehensive package for the prevention of HIV and blood-borne infections in pediatric health facilities. The package includes an interactive computer-based training platform for health workers, tools for ensuring uninterrupted supply of injecting commodities; communication materials on risks and prevention of blood-borne infections. The package is currently being adapted for further use in pediatric hospitals and maternities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and will be evaluated in 2014.

To ensure timely diagnosis of HIV exposed infants and their optimal access to care, UNICEF mobilized a number of national and international partners to establish a **system of Early Infant Diagnosis** using Dry Blood Spots. The new system will enable diagnosing HIV in infants born to HIV positive mothers before the age of 2 months, a significant decrease compared to 18 months by using current diagnostic technology. All countries in Central Asia were supported to develop implementation plans and mobilize additional resources for this new service. To ensure horizontal cooperation between counters and technical partners, a joint planning workshop was organized in 2013 and joint capacity building and networking activities have been planned for 2014.

## YOUNG CHILD SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT

### A Child's Right to Be Healthy: from survival towards Young Child Wellbeing

Two RKLAs were launched in 2012 to further strengthen progress towards Child Survival and Development in the Region: RCLA 6 “*Child's Right to Health: A Promise Renewed*” and RCLA 7 “*Young Child's Right to Comprehensive Wellbeing*”.

While the Multi-country Evaluation currently underway will assess UNICEF contribution to **MORES Level 4 results**, countries continue to gather evidence of *decreasing trends in U5MR* and the achievement of the related MDGs. For example, the IGME visit to Kazakhstan validated the robustness of the national vital statistics and confirmed U5MR at 19 per 1,000, which makes the country very close to achieving the MDG target (18). There is also evidence of reduction in equity gap between rural and urban population (Kazakhstan) or ethnic minorities and general population (Serbia). Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan documented improvements in quality of care as a result of UNICEF supported programmes which translated in improving child survival.

*Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH)* received new impetus following the launch of the “*A Promise Renewed*”, which was joined by all countries and territories in the region, except Azerbaijan. While mainstreaming the equity focus of the APR, several Country Offices have been engaged in advocacy and national strategic planning for further reducing the equity gap in child mortality and improving child development. Strategic research, technical advice and advocacy resulted in significant **MORES L3 results**. Specifically, country offices assisted partners to undertake a comprehensive health system analysis focusing on MCH, which translated in policy recommendations to address persisting bottlenecks (Georgia, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Montenegro, and Turkmenistan). In order to further address gaps in the enabling environment, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan worked with partners on new strategic plans in the area of MCH, while Tajikistan supported a Marginal Budgeting for Bottlenecks analysis that contributed to further refining and scaling-up the Basic Benefit Package and influence the implementation of the World Bank Results Based Financing project. Kazakhstan engaged in policy dialogue by conducting an analysis of inequities in MCH and the implementation of the Basic Benefit Package which resulted in Government's commitment and budget allocations to further invest in nutrition and equity focused services for children. Also within the MORES Level 3 determinants, particular attention is directed to improving quality of MCH services. A number of Offices have been active in supporting the development of a national framework for continuous health quality improvement (i.e. Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).

The Regional Office provided strategic technical support and knowledge sharing opportunities within the RCLA 6 Workplan with focus on Management for Equitable and Quality Health Services in Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. Particularly noteworthy was the regional workshops on Equity and Quality MNCH Services and on LQAS, which resulted in a regional approach and draft plans to strengthen the delivery of equity-focused and quality health services and the implementation of L3 monitoring at national and sub-national level. As validity of data remains an issue of concern, a *Regional Workshop on Infant and Child Mortality Estimates* was conducted with support from the UNICEF HQ and experts of Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimates (IGME) to enhance the understanding of the methodology used by IGME and clarify the time-line and requirements for reporting on MDGs.

In the area of *Immunization*, at **MORES Level 4**, the number of countries where *immunization coverage rates are 95 per cent at national and 90 per cent at district level* further increased from 11 to 12. The national immunization coverage is also high (17 countries reporting 95 per cent national coverage). The Region maintained its polio-free status, although the risk of importation remains high in several countries. In-country immunization inequalities however persist at district level, but also among poor, marginalized, unregistered and migrant populations.

A significant **MORES Level 3** result was achieved in ensuring financial sustainability of programmes. Governments' Immunization spending increased from 15 to 17 countries. The remaining GAVI eligible and graduating countries (Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) were supported in collaboration with WHO and GAVI to develop graduation plans and to mobilize additional government resources. Protection of children from vaccine-preventable diseases was expanded: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova were supported to introduce vaccines against pneumonia and diarrhea. Immunization quality was strengthened: Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan were supported to improve cold chain and vaccine logistics systems according to the Effective Vaccine Management (EVM) standard

framework. Although the national immunization coverage are usually high in the region (17 countries reported 95 per cent national coverage) the main barrier is immunization inequalities within the country at district level, but also among poor, marginalized, unregistered and migrant populations. Immunity gaps in populations continue putting regional disease control goals at risk (measles-rubella elimination, polio eradication). Governments' political will remains a barrier in achieving high routine immunization coverage and in systematically reaching out unregistered and marginalized groups.

In order to address another major bottleneck in the region - *the anti-immunization sentiment* –the RO, in partnership with HQ, supported a social media monitoring to track anti-vaccine sentiments. This was the first time such social media monitoring was done in UNICEF. Azerbaijan and Ukraine were supported to develop immunization/polio communication plans, messages and materials, while Ukraine continued to train front-line health staff on communication skills. RO provided support to Azerbaijan for the introduction of the pneumococcal vaccine, and Turkmenistan completed the health promotion/health communication system assessment.

In the area of *Nutrition*, at **MORES Level 3** a more enabling environment now exists which will enhance partners' ability to strengthen and scale up nutrition programs in the Region, especially in countries and territories that are addressing micronutrient deficiencies, such as Universal Salt Iodization and Mandatory Flour Fortification. Legislation, policies and standards on mandatory flour fortification were developed and adopted in several countries and territories, such as Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Albania, Armenia, and Georgia are in various stages of adopting the legislation. As a result of UNICEF advocacy and technical support, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan joined the Scale Up Nutrition (SUN) initiative.

These efforts translated into **MORES Level 4 results**. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have shown *reduction in stunting rates from 29 per cent in 2006 to 18 per cent in 2012 for Kyrgyzstan and from 39 per cent in 2007 to 26 per cent in 2012 in Tajikistan* (DHS, 2012). This reduction is attributable to the continued efforts to improve IYCF practices and WASH conditions in both countries. *Exclusive breastfeeding rates increased from 35 per cent in 2006 in Kyrgyzstan to 56 per cent in 2012*. Additionally, among children 12-24 months of age in Kyrgyzstan, *significant declines in anemia (from 55.6 per cent to 44.0 per cent)* and in total *iron deficiency (from 84.5 per cent to 67.2 per cent)* and *iron deficiency anemia (53.0-34.3 per cent)* as a result of the scaling up of the home fortification (Gulazyk) program which was combined with counselling on IYCF and hygiene promotion.

The Regional Office provided strategic advice, technical assistance and capacity building opportunities in support of developing strategies, adopting policies, strengthening and integrating IYCF programs in health, the most noteworthy being two technical consultations conducted in 2013, one jointly with MENA regional office *on Home Fortification* where five countries from our region participated (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan). The second sub-regional consultation, supported by HQ, focused on *Stunting strategies* with the participation of Albania, Armenia and Georgia which resulted in three national strategies to address stunting.

The Russian Federation and Ukraine remain the two countries that have shown very slow progress in implementing Universal Salt Iodization. However, a USI technical consultation held in Russia recommended to the Ministry of Health the development of new legislation/regulation. The Ministry of Health has included this recommendation into the draft of the report (Policy Paper) on food fortification that was to be submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers by end of 2013. In Ukraine, advocacy support of GAIN, UNICEF, and ICCIDD, the Institute of Endocrinology and Academy of Medical Sciences initiated a legislative process with good chances of being approved in 2014.

**RKLA 7** is focused on **Young Child Wellbeing** and promotes inter-sectoral approaches to the comprehensive survival, health development and protection of children in the age group 0-3 years. This leadership area contributes to regional advocacy and policy guidance, modeling of innovative approaches and operational research to generate evidence for scaling up modern and evidence-based home-visiting systems aiming at providing better support to parents, care-givers and young children, and focusing in particular on families that are socially excluded.

A *Technical Advisory Group (TAG)* on young child wellbeing was established with the participation of renowned international experts to support the process. The TAG supported the development of regional guidance to implement home visiting programmes with a focus on the needs of children from socially excluded groups, children living in

poverty, and/or children with developmental delays or disabilities. The guidance package includes policy options, standards for a blended or differentiated (universal and progressive) home-visiting model, a core training package for home visiting personnel, and a framework for evidence generation through research and evaluation. Eight countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkmenistan) are actively working on establishing or improving home-visiting/community nursing systems. Two countries were supported in planning the national roll-out of home-visiting services.

UNICEF's regional mapping of early identification and intervention services for young children (0-3) with developmental difficulties and/or disabilities has shown that most countries in the region lack enabling legislation and protocols, as well as rehabilitation specialists, particularly in rural areas – a significant bottleneck to the comprehensive development and wellbeing and the social inclusion of these children. An increasing number of COs are actively advocating for the rights of young children with disabilities and developmental difficulties in line with the Convention of the Rights for People with Disabilities and this has contributed to the willingness of government partners to engage more fully in addressing the rights of these children and their need for comprehensive services. In 2013, six offices (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, and Turkey) supported working groups on early childhood intervention (ECI), advocated for national councils, assisted with drafting of new regulations, and supported revisions in the determination of benefits and eligibility for rehabilitation services for this group. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Croatia completed assessments of the pre-service training components related early identification and intervention, integrating inter-sectoral approaches of assisting this group of young children. This will lead to a more competent cadre of home visiting professionals in 2014, which will contribute to better developmental outcomes for these children. Country experts in ECI from Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia and Turkmenistan, charged by their governments with establishing modern ECI services for young children with disabilities, were oriented to developmental pediatrics and the use of evidence-informed tools for assessment in the framework of the evolving horizontal partnership with the Developmental Pediatrics Unit at Ankara University, Turkey, facilitated by the Regional Office.

## **POLICY ADVOCACY AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

### **A Child's Right to Social Protection**

In 2013, the development of new Social Monitor publication on Social Protection contributed to knowledge generation to inform the setting or retooling of UNICEF strategic programme priorities and evidence-based advocacy and to document UNICEF's value added for overcoming systems failure in guaranteeing the right to all children to social protection. Using the MoRES determinant analysis and the RKLA frameworks, the analysis is innovative in attempting to address policy issues related to the realization of child rights with equity in a "systemic" and comprehensive way. By consolidating and synthesizing the key issues and available evidence about child rights and the impact of social protection, it aims to serve as a comprehensive cross-country reference document for policy makers and practitioners. A technical consultation held in 2013 leveraged this research to facilitate knowledge sharing between CO specialists and international experts and deepen the dialogue on priorities for a common reform agenda. The publication of the Social Monitor report in 2014 will serve to mobilize political commitment around an agenda for action articulated around core priorities: increasing public finance for child-sensitive social protection; expanding coverage towards universality; ensuring adequate value of social transfers; scaling up social support services; developing, enforcing and training on implementation of standards and protocols on coordinating/integrating administration and management of social transfers and social services; putting in place strong oversight mechanisms for regular and timely review of the delivery of benefits and support services and of the effectiveness of policies in overcoming socioeconomic disadvantages.

The first Regional Determinant Analysis Matrix (RDAM) on Social Protection complements the Social Monitor with a sharper programme lens. By consolidating the subset of indicators common across a number of COs who conducted and submitted a DA to identify barriers, the RDM presents an overview of the current challenges and reform priorities to overcome system bottlenecks at the regional level in the area of social protection, and enables trend analysis of key changes on a yearly basis. The definition and limits of social protection were discussed at the RMT among representatives, with some COs, DPS and DP sharing experiences with context-specific innovations to overcome the challenges and buttress the opportunities for using child-sensitive Social Protection as effective and efficient multi-sectoral and crosscutting approach.

RO's contributions to advancing the equity agenda benefitting children in a sustainable way helped shape the *Post-2015 Agenda for Europe and Central Asia*, and were reflected in the Regional Advocacy Paper and the Brief on Ensuring quality education for all, as well as the outcome of the regional dialogue in Istanbul on the regional agenda for SDG.

Results at Outcome **MoRES Level 3** were recorded in 2013 in countries with longer experience in supporting reforms of social protection systems. In Albania, the Parliament adopted a resolution on child right protections and explicitly linking **CRC commitments and the budget**. The Child Rights Observatory published a 'report card' on child poverty and other deprivations, with new statistics disaggregated by gender and ethnicity from sub-national levels, which can be used for results-based budgeting and the development of a coherent national vision of the priorities for overcoming the barriers faced by vulnerable populations, among them children from impoverished rural and suburban families and Roma communities. In Armenia, **integrated social services** started operating in March 2013, and were progressively expanded and improved through capacity building, increased accountability and enhanced cooperation across service providers and administrative units. In Ukraine, to address inadequacy in budgets mechanisms for funding specialized social services for the most vulnerable, a Presidential Decree called for the development of a mechanism enabling **NGOs and charitable organizations to become service providers**, while expansion of social workers is resulting in increased number of families being registered, thus having potentially access to social services.

The RO's support for RCLA 8 lead an increasing number of COs indicating social protection as a core pillar of their work programme, a total of 16 COs, not including partnership beyond borders with the Government of the Russian Federation. Sixteen countries reported advances towards more child-friendly and equity-focused legislation, social budget and better designed and implemented social protection programmes. Among these, Turkey introduced universal health insurance of all children. Success has been achieved in regard to protecting social expenditures benefitting children and expanding coverage, even in the face of sometimes difficult economic or political environments. Furthermore, Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Ukraine, Uzbekistan now regularly share with each other and with other COs their experiences on accompanying reforms to enable every child to be protected from poverty and overcome the financial barriers to access services.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, in a complex and fragmented institutional and political context, UNICEF effectively combined knowledge generation with evidence-based advocacy at all levels of government and strategic partnerships to link analysis to action. Commitments made at the high level ministerial conference around Social Protection and Integration Roadmaps/ Strategic Directions paved the way towards a country-wide vertical and cross-sectoral **coordination framework**, which could be supported by development partners. Bottom-up consultation, institution building and technical support and advice at municipal level already resulted in increased budgets in the majority of municipalities and strategic innovations benefitting the most vulnerable children. Significant progress has also been made in Uzbekistan regarding the elimination of child labour in the cotton sector, according to an ILO/IPEC's observations. The establishment of the Social Protection Interagency Group (SPIG) was another milestone towards institutionalizing collaboration between various government ministries and civil society and research institutions. Yet, challenges remain for UNICEF to influence budget decisions in favor of children, as illustrated by the decisions, in Armenia to increase salaries of public servants and decrease expenditures on family benefits, and in Uzbekistan to tighten eligibility criteria for social allowances, thus restricting access for families with children.

Social protection reforms are also gaining momentum in Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), where the **Parliamentarian Assembly's first public hearing of ministers** on the implementation of its recommendations on investing in children, and the dissemination of a comprehensive review of the legal framework of child rights, are important milestones in enhancing accountability on child rights, and child allowances was increased, benefiting mainly the most vulnerable children. In Turkmenistan where social protection is considered within a common framework prioritizing ECD, a stock taking of existing social protection instruments and an analysis of the effectiveness of cash transfers for vulnerable children generated key evidence to inform decision making.

With the support of UNICEF, young people are increasingly making their voices heard, and expressing their desire to take part in policy making and implementation. In Turkey, they have contributed substantially to the dialogue and

agenda setting on post-2015 SDG, and the institutionalization of child rights committees will in principle facilitate their participation. In Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), UNICEF also contributed to engaging 25,000 young people in voicing their views on the post-2015 consultation.

## ***DISASTER RISK REDUCTION***

### ***A Child rights to Protection from the Risks of Disaster***

The region continues to be highly exposed to natural hazards, political and social instability, major economic challenges, deteriorating social infrastructure and outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases. In humanitarian situations, these challenges have multiple impacts on the survival and well-being of children and mothers, including loss of life, injuries, displacement, protection concerns, health problems and lack of access to quality education. The RKLA Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) has established a compact amongst country offices and the regional office and provides a venue to discuss programming approaches for advancing resilience through DRR programming

In 2013, the RKLA Reference Group successfully completed the documentation of four good practices, which provides evidence on innovations and serve as models for replication across the region, namely: (i) Disaster Risk analysis, (ii) School safety assessment methodology, (iii) Good practices in DRR in education and (iv) Compendium of DRR in education resources. At **Mores Level 3** UNICEF in Kyrgyzstan, using the RO-developed school safety assessment concept, led the government in a nationwide school and preschool safety assessment where over 3,000 educational facilities were assessed. This has supported advocacy efforts and the development of a state programme on school and pre-school buildings. UNICEF Offices in Central Asia and South Caucasus continued to support their governments to integrate DRR in the education sector. After a few years of using donor funding to model DRR initiatives at national and sub-national level, several governments (e.g. Kazakhstan) have now started to increase its financial contribution to mainstreaming DRR in education.

During the year the Region has also embarked on a new initiative to support local governments in Disaster Risk Analysis (DRA) with a new RO-developed Disaster Risk Analysis tool, which enables local government structures to analyse hazards and vulnerabilities for risk-informed development and emergency planning, especially targeting girls, boys and women. Based on the DRR tool, UNICEF in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova supported the respective governments to conduct the DRA in identified hazard-prone regions. Through the RKLA, the first ever regional DRR consultation was convened, bringing together staff from Country Offices, Headquarters and partners to contribute to the development of the Regional Roadmap on DRR and resilience, which ultimately aims to strengthen capacities and governance systems; by contributing to the understanding of disaster risk faced by children, adolescents and women in the region, examining how to mitigate such risks as well as how strengthen capacities to respond and recover, and eventually increase resilience.

In the area of Humanitarian Action, the RO conducted on-site emergency capacity workshops for UNICEF and its partners in Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) and emergency workshops and simulation exercises in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as jointly facilitated inter-agency contingency planning in Azerbaijan in collaboration with OCHA which contributed to improved emergency preparedness. As part of the L3 Corporate response to the Syrian refugee crisis, the RO continued to provide technical support to the CO in its delivery of emergency response interventions in support of the government-led response to the humanitarian crisis. The RO supported country MTR processes by assessing emergency risks and integrating strategies to address specific risks to girls and boys through country programmes. As part of its oversight, the RO completed a quality assurance review of Country Office's emergency preparedness in the Early Warning–Early Action database, so as to support Country Offices in strengthening their emergency preparedness to respond to potential disasters.

## 4. Management and Operations

### 4.1 Overview of achievements in 2013 against 2012-13 ROMP and 2013 Work Plan

Using the ROMP 2012-2013 as a basis for assessing progress, the key results achieved against the 2013 RO workplan are categorised in the following pages by Programme, Development Effectiveness and Management.

At the beginning of the biennium, the roll-out of the *Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda* (RKLA), and the incorporation of the MoRES methodology in the RKLA as the main tool for the analysis of the determinants of child rights deprivations informed the work of the RO under ***PCR Programmes***. The RO intensively supported the use of MoRES and provided HQ with regular 6-monthly updates on the systematic rollout of the MoRES framework. The latest CEE/CIS MoRES update contains a survey among COs, which shows that the application of MoRES led to greater consolidation and focus in a number of programme areas, as well as equity results being achieved more effectively at both MoRES Levels 3 and 4.

Under the ***PCR Development Effectiveness***, the RO in 2013 provided significant support through both on-site and remote assistance to Country Offices, with special attention given to the 12 Offices which prepared and finalized ***Mid-Term Reviews***. As a result, MTR Reports shared with partners feature robust documentation of progress, key results, lessons learned and analysis. With the support of the RMT and COs, the RO made significant contribution to the generation of evidence and knowledge by initiating and managing four Multi-Country Evaluations on key priority results areas for children, which will be finalized during 2014. Based upon the review of emergency risks in the region, the RO conducted in-country and remote support to country offices and UN country teams to strengthen emergency preparedness capacity based upon risk levels.

***RO support to COs*** in several MTSP and RKLA areas include the following examples.

In RKLA 3 “*Children’s right to education; early learning and school readiness*” a survey of early childhood intervention approaches and systems in all countries of the Region was conducted. This provided a sound basis for in-country actions required to effectively address the rights of young children with developmental delays and disabilities. The RO advocated and arranged capacity building of government counterparts and civil society actors for family-friendly approaches to ECI for children with developmental difficulties. The RO also supported the development of a toolkit of recommended curricula and measures for early childhood home visiting, as well as an advocacy film on good practice in home visiting. A Technical Advisory Group (TAG), comprising prominent international experts with skills in a number of areas was set up to develop regional guidance and to support the work of individual countries in Young Child Wellbeing (RKLA7).

Under the “*Children’s right to education: including all children in quality learning*” (RKLA 4), technical leadership and support was provided to advance country-level work on including all out-of-school-children (OOSC) in quality learning. A Regional Analysis of the 2009 PISA results was published in order to help COs to improve the quality of education through monitoring of learning outcomes and equity in student achievement. A Regional Position Paper on the Right to Education for Children with Disabilities provided technical guidance to COs on how to include children with disabilities in education. A Regional Study on Out-of-School-Children in CEE/CIS, helped COs to improve the way in which OOSC or children at risk of dropping out are identified and tracked; a Regional OOSC Monitoring Tool was developed.

Strengthened consensus and commitment from governments, UN agencies and multilateral organisations on key regional programme strategies and result are accelerating progress at country programme level throughout the Region, through the invigoration of ***regional partnerships*** by the RO.

To this end, the RO supported the efforts of key regional actors in Early Childhood Development to establish the Early Years Regional Alliance for Europe and Central Asia (EYRA). In regional fora such as *APEC* and the *MDG4 Forum* the RO helped to obtain the signature of almost all countries to *APR* (RKLA 6); the follow up to the Ministerial Conference in Bulgaria secured strong political commitment from 24 countries towards accelerating work in child care reform and ending the placement of children under three in institutions (RKLA 1); a new alliance with OHCHR

is promoting the rights of Roma children out of school, complementing and reinforcing the existing partnership with the Council of Europe (RKLA 8); the Inter Agency Standing Committee for the Caucasus and Central Asia is assuring adequate levels of emergency preparedness and effective responses to humanitarian situations, while with the Central Asia Regional Risk Assessment and ECHO, the RO is helping to convene UN, IFIs, INGO and other multilaterals around the DRR agenda (RKLA 9).

UNICEF in CEE/CIS has stepped up the generation and sharing of knowledge as the main vehicle to document good practices in supporting system changes and impacts on children, with the defined objective of promoting the use of this knowledge to strengthen the effectiveness of evidence-based advocacy, partnerships and alliances, external relations, social and resource mobilization. Innovation derived from research and analysis generated through the RO in 2013 facilitated the application of new technologies and better informed policy advocacy positions by country programmes. For example, the “*Summary Analysis of the Situation of Out of School Children*” is now driving OOSC initiatives at country level (RKLA 4); new conceptual frameworks on effective service provision models for excluded populations at risk of HIV are informing MARA programming and contributing to global learning (RKLA 5); and new research and analysis is helping addressing underlying and structural causes and barriers to the realization of children’s and women’s rights to social protection (RKLA 8). In addition to the above studies the RO disseminated key publications, such as “Justice for Children Overview”, the, the “*Education Equity Now: Call to Action*” and the “*Equity in Learning PISA 2009 Assessment*” (RKLA 4) and the “*Disaster Risk Reduction Compendium of Knowledge and Learning Resources*” (RKLA 9). All publications were promoted through an integrated communication and social media packages and through a specially designed microsite (for education publications) or through the regional website. Content on the regional office Russian language website was further revamped and promoted.

In addition to operational research, the RO also produced a number of e-learning tools using the ICATT platform (interactive computer assisted training tool). Several interactive learning tools were developed that have been used to build capacity of service providers on various issues including: (i) support to care providers on management of pediatric HIV, through a separate course for CEE/CIS developed to complement the basic IMCI course (integrated management of childhood illnesses). The RO coordinated with WHO and UNICEF health teams to ensure that the IMCI trainings include the focus on HIV. UNICEF CO in Ukraine organized training for pediatricians using this ICATT tool in 2013; (ii) Basic course and advanced course on management of pregnancy and substance use, with two courses developed in draft form using the same ICATT platform. Based on field tests conducted in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan the tools are now in the final phase, to be shared with other countries. Top world experts were involved in the development and review of these learning materials, the first of its kind. (iii) ICATT training tools on infection control in pediatric care settings, a course developed with GIZ and CDC to support care workers to introduce basic infection control in hospitals, and that includes advocacy materials. (iv) HIV testing and counselling, an ICATT tool for outreach workers working with adolescents to encourage them to know their status and provide counselling based on appropriate risk assessment. The tool has been developed with Belarus in Russian and is currently being adapted to local languages and circumstances in four other countries.

Under **Communication and Advocacy**, the RO extended monitoring further into Russian language media. KAP surveys were undertaken countries undergoing mass mobilization campaigns such as in inclusive education in Armenia. A regional survey of anti-vaccine activities online was launched. Programmatic support was provided for C4D, both at a regional and country level. The RO supported youth voice activities in seven countries through the one-minute junior project and the Young People’s Media Network and social media in all 21 countries and territories. Advocacy and partnerships were well supported, in particular the five high level conferences.

Horizontal cooperation, including knowledge sharing and exchange of know-how and technology, is also progressing well and influencing the adoption by partners of proven approaches to tackle equity gaps and rights violations. Multi-country consultations with regional partners are helping to advance, for example, the adoption of specialised juvenile justice systems and overall justice sector reforms (RKLA 2); the implementation of effective child development approaches that reduce exclusion and drive improvements in service quality (RKLA 4). The cooperation between UNICEF and the PENTA Network (Pediatric European Network for the Treatment of AIDS, which is part of the European Society for Infectious Diseases) and involving selected centers of excellence on HIV/AIDS (e.g., Ukrainian AIDS Center, Russian Federal Center on HIV in women and children, Siberian AIDS Center in Irkutsk) are good examples. Two horizontal cooperation seminars, one in Lvyy and one in Irkutsk were organized in 2013 bringing

together dozens of pediatric HIV care providers from CIS countries and top experts from Western Europe. The horizontal exchange seminars and the on-line training course preceding the seminars resulted in sharing of state-of-the-art knowledge and updating of protocols on pediatric and adolescent HIV. The work led to establishment of a network among 200 pediatric care providers who are now able to regularly maintain contact, consult each other and exchange knowledge on complex clinical cases of HIV in children/adolescents.

In order to reinforce country efforts to produce *reliable and adequately disaggregated data* for robust equity analysis, the RO supported eleven MICS surveys in seven countries in 2013. Four of these surveys were either sub-national or specific for Roma families, one of the especially vulnerable minorities in many countries of the Region. The findings of MICS, disaggregated by sex, age, wealth status, ethnicity and a number of other potential markers of disparities, constitute the basis for policy-makers and policy planning to address inequities in the realization of child and women rights. Further analysis of MICS data in Roma settlements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia has shed light on substantial intra-country heterogeneity in fulfilment of child rights. In addition, the RO continued to enhance the TransMonEE database, by collecting additional data on children in residential care and testing the availability of additional disaggregation of key child protection indicators by disability status of children. The analysis conducted on the basis of already collected data, disaggregated by sex, age groups and in some cases by disability status, has helped to identify good practices in terms of equitable realization of child's protection rights in selected countries. It also restated the importance of filling in data gaps and further improving data collection methodology. .

Under the *PCR Management*, the accountability of the Regional Office for governance, oversight, quality assurance, technical assistance, advocacy and strategic engagement is coordinated through a number of regional office and regional committees, which provide advice and support to the Regional Director in delivering on the accountability of the Office. The terms of reference and composition of these committees were reviewed and updated to reflect current requirements and expectations as defined in the Regional Office Management Plan (ROMP) for 2014-2017. The review was completed in 2013, coinciding with the preparations for the new ROMP, and the list of these committees and their composition was submitted as part of the ROMP 2014-2017.

The Regional Management Team (RMT) met twice in 2013, in Geneva in May and in Montenegro end October/early November. The RMT, in addition to regular business issues, focused on taking forward the regional knowledge and leadership agenda (RKLA) which were defined and agreed to in 2012. In 2013, the RMT, with support of the RO, guided the preparations for the Multi-Country Evaluations for five of the ten leadership agenda. A Reference Group, composed of representatives of COs engaged in the RKLA, chaired by a Representative and supported by the relevant Regional Adviser, carries out the regional work for each RKLA. In 2013, all ten RGs met regularly through teleconferences and reported back to the RMT during its meetings. The RMT meetings in 2013 also addressed the roll-out in the Region of a number of global initiatives and strategies, including A Promised Renewed (APR) and related initiatives under E&E. Other key issues on the agenda of the RMT in 2013 were the centrality of human rights in the work of the UNCTs; renewed focus on gender equality; focus on the most excluded and marginalized groups of children and adolescents by discussion on our work on and with minorities. In between meetings, the RMT and the Regional Staff Association have been regularly informed of key global discussions, including through feedback by the Regional Director from the discussions in the Global Management Team (GMT).

At the Regional Office level, the Regional Office Management Team (ROMT) functioned as the RO's management body, providing advice and support to the Regional Director in delivering on the RO accountabilities exercising leadership in RO functional and programme sections. These functions are reflected in the revised TOR of the ROMT. The ROMT meets regularly and is chaired by either the Regional Director or, in her absence, the Deputy Regional Director. In 2013, it met 25 times or at an average of twice a month. The ROMT covers all management related issues as well as more substantive and programmatic issues.

The Regional Office Team Work Weeks, which were instituted in December 2011, have been now fully institutionalized as the key moments in the year for all RO staff. In 2013 the Regional Office had a total of six TWWs (January, March, April, July, September and December) coinciding with key moments in the year. The TWWs have enabled the development and nurturing of a more coherent and commonly shared understanding of the programmatic priorities among all RO staff. The TWWs – together with the introduction of the RKLA – have led to greatly improved

coherence within the RO leading towards more cross-sectoral, coherent and strategic regional positioning and guidance.

Building on the work that was done in 2012 to encourage inter-office exchanges of *human resources*, a new talent mapping initiative was launched in 2013. The CEE/CIS Talent Map was developed with the objective of highlighting and recognising the talent that exists in the Region – staff members who have in-depth skills in common result areas for children, RKLAs and the cross-cutting roles of M&E and Gender Equality - and who are willing to share their expertise and knowledge with other colleagues and offices. This initiative is an integral part of the transformation agenda in the Region, reinforcing and facilitating new roles and ways of working in the RKLAs, in particular sharing expertise beyond borders. It also responds to staff requests and organisational aims for development of professional skills and careers, as it offers valuable opportunities for broadening and enriching experience often at an international level.

Changing and developing new roles is also key to the transformative agenda in the Region, and this is facilitated by the creation of a number of generic job profiles which have been developed to cater for the specific requirements of UNICEF presence in middle- and upper-middle-income countries. The roles of the Representative, Deputy Representative and several programme specialists have been re-profiled to now include the competencies of advocacy and partnership, policy, M&E (child rights monitoring) and influencing social norms.

In terms of staff well-being, the UN Cares and Peer Support Volunteer (PSV) programmes have continued to provide support to staff in the regional and country offices with trained advisors ready to give one-to-one advice or group briefings. The HR section of the Regional Office also continued to provide support to country offices, providing workshops/trainings in career development, managing change and performance management; providing professional HR advice and input on all HRM functions to ensure fair and effective processes; promotion and facilitation of staff development initiatives; and general assistance and advice to strengthen staff and management relations and effective people management in the offices.

In 2013, the RO has continued to promote flexible arrangements among offices in the Region to manage risk and gain efficiencies. These include *processing centers* in Georgia (Tbilisi processes for Sokhumi), Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) (Pristina for Zvecan), Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek for Osh), and Kazakhstan (Astana on behalf of the RO the zone office in Almaty); as well as beyond borders support (Armenia supporting the financial transactions for Sokhumi in view of the difficulties in the country. In November 2013, DFAM has approved opening a bank account in Rubles in Yerevan to facilitate the support. The two offices have worked on an initial SOP to be reviewed and finalized early 2014. In addition CEE/CIS continued the use of *mentoring and Peer Reviews*: with the RO coordinating this programme and facilitating of inter-office peer reviews.

As part of continued effort for *increased cost efficiencies* a number of steps were taken in the Region over 2013 in the areas of telecommunications costs and piloting procurement of on-line airline tickets.

#### **Related to telecommunication costs:**

- The RO participated, together with the UNICEF in Geneva Offices in June 2013, as the pilot office in using the Lync as the telephone system. This was found useful and is expected to bring more cost savings in communications after global roll out in 2014;
- The IT Common Services in Geneva has concluded a revised contract with the mobile service provider which will result in better service and anticipate significant cost savings. The contract was signed in November 2013;
- Video-Conferencing: since all offices, including RO zone office in Almaty, and CO zone offices in Osh and Sukhumi, are equipped with video conferencing facilities, VC has been used as a matter of routine. During 2013 approximately 200 video conference calls were held in the Region, reducing the need for inter-country travel;
- Skype continues to be used by all Operations Managers and increasingly by other staff in the Region for bilateral discussions as well as for meetings;
- Other free means of communication e.g. Viber, Magic Jack, instant messaging, are being used;
- Following the recommendation of the 2013 PBR, the Regional Office took action to compile and analyse telecommunication expenditure throughout the Region. The purpose of this analysis was to ascertain if we are

making savings from using alternative cost effective media (Skype, VoIP, VC), in our Region. In order to have a holistic understanding of the trends and decisive factors affecting telecom expenditures, the analysis spanned over three years, namely from 2010-2013. It is worth mentioning that between 2011 and 2013 costs have decreased by 14 per cent. The analysis identified the key factors in achieving the reduction and also made recommendations for future steps to be taken to gain higher efficiencies in telecommunication costs.

#### **Related to piloting the procurement of on-line airline tickets:**

As an efficiency and cost saving measure the on-line procurement of airline and train tickets with credit cards was introduced as an alternative option of travel arrangements. It was preceded by development of the special operating procedures and an adjusted workflow and the pilot phase of four months (between May and September 2013). The assessment of the pilot was very positive and revealed that:

- the use of credit cards proved the highest efficiency when buying ticket for low cost carriers, trains and long haul flights and business class travel;
- further work process efficiencies can be achieved if the current travel workflow is re-designed;
- the use of credit cards can be expanded beyond air travel for miscellaneous online purchases, such as conference registration, subscriptions, and bus/rail tickets;
- credit cards and procurement through the travel agent are not mutually exclusive;
- credit card risk mitigation needs to be formalized, validated, and included in the ToA.”

Based on the assessment, the ROMT agreed to continue with the pilot. *In addition to the above two specific examples, the Region continues to introduce and benefit from a number of cost saving measure that were reported in the 2012 RAR, e.g. office-Rental reduction* either by moving to free premises or negotiate reduced rates, procurement of restricted air tickets, renegotiation of services (e.g. ISP agreements, bank charge, UNDP tendering)

The extent to which governments and other partners avail themselves to Procurement Services remains limited in CEE/CIS. The Region carries only a 2 per cent share of global supplies received. Procurement Services that are contracted primarily concern vaccines/biologicals and pharmaceuticals. Of these, ARV medication and related products are prominent. This is crucial in countries where, according to Supply Division estimates, only 20 per cent of children below 15 have access to ARV therapy.

A number of good practices were followed in the Region; Azerbaijan CO assisted National Partners, namely MOH and GAVI to use Procurement Services. In this regard, an expert from SD Procurement Service visited Azerbaijan to organize a one day training to explain Procurement Services procedures to local partners to avoid miscommunication during the procurement process and also introduced new vaccine to MOH of Azerbaijan Republic; to facilitate and simplify processes, the offices coordinated with other UN Agencies in the countries and used UN Long Term Agreements (LTAs) for goods and services (e.g. printing, design, translation, travel agencies, ICT equipment and supplies, transportation and hotels), as well as using LTAs issued by Supply Division for off-shore arrangements; COs continued to review the business processes and revise in view of VISION transaction (e.g. Romania); in Tajikistan one of the suggestions the CO is considering to follow in 2014 is to create a Common UN website, where all suppliers will have easy access to tender advertisements and related information.

**Regarding Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**, the IT section in Geneva continues to serve as an infrastructure hub for VPN and system hosting support for the countries in the Region that runs key mission critical applications like E-Mail, VISION Access and Intranet. During 2013, the availability of these systems was as per industry standard SLA of 99.9 per cent. Under the supervision of the IT sections, a number of IT roll-outs have been concluded that includes regular systems and security updates. The data for the 2013 rollout implementation is available with the global ICT operations. The IT section has also been providing second level helpdesk and system admin support to the countries in the Region. The number of service calls for both IT and Business Applications (VISION) has been recorded in the service manager.

## **4.2. Oversight function and oversight-related accountabilities**

In accordance with the UNICEF ***Risk Management*** Policy (CF/EXD/2009-006), in 2013 the Regional Office reviewed the nature and significance of risks impacting on the achievement of the objectives of the Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda, as well as the fulfillment of its core accountabilities. Issues across ***five risk categories*** (namely *Organisational Strategy and Neutrality, Result-Based Management and Reporting, Funding and External Stakeholder Relations, Natural Disaster and Epidemics, Governance and Accountability*) were identified. The effectiveness of internal controls to address each risk was identified within a risk management framework that clarified risk management practices by the RO in each area.

The Regional Office continued to publish ***the Monthly Monitor*** that was introduced in 2012 as a tool to monitor Country Office and Regional Office programme and operations performance. This report, which is shared with COs and among RO staff, evaluates nine performance areas, namely: (i) Core Resources Management (Allocation & Utilisation), (ii) Donor Reporting; (iii) Grants Expiring, (iv) DCTs; (v) Audit Observations; (vi) Premises; (vii) Regional Contingency Fund; (viii) Travel (for the RO, only); and, (ix) Outstanding Budgetary Obligations (for the RO, only). The report also include a Monthly Action Tracker where the key points raised for the CO attention and follow up and the list is updated accordingly with status of the issues as Open or in-progress. The report continues to be well received by all country offices and reviewed by the CMTs. The Report was also acknowledged by the Budget Section and at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Regional Chiefs of Operations as an example for a standard organizational monitoring tool.

Regarding weaknesses in operations management which have been identified in COs, a prominent one facing several Country Offices is the unpredictability of OR funding, coupled with minimum RR ceilings and limited Institutional Budget allocations. In 2013, the Region continued the realignment of Core Resources to Core Roles to ensure that the Region's core mission would be maintained even in the event of OR funds fluctuation.

In 2013, the RO engaged CEE/CIS Deputy Representatives in a drive to improve the performance of COs in meeting the standard benchmarks listed in the ***'InSight Regional Dashboard'***, the majority of which are derived from UNICEF programme guidance and financial policy. The RO provided specific technical support to COs to help improve performance and, through this action, identified a number of concerns related to the perceived inaccuracy of some of indicator values listed in the dashboard view, which may reduce CO confidence in and the utility of the dashboard as a management tool. The RO engaged actively with DPS at technical level to address the specific concerns raised by COs and, more generally, to help improve the overall utility of the Dashboard. While some important items are still to be addressed, with the close collaboration between RO and headquarters colleagues-including responsiveness to queries and openness to consider alternative views on the appropriateness of specific indicators - the majority of concerns were resolved.

**VISION** continues to add additional workload and stress on the small Offices that typify the Region, and have raised the risk exposure to Offices as a whole. The Region is looking forward to the establishment of the Global Shared Service Center (GSSC) on the promise for a global transaction efficiency and effectiveness, provided that this does free time from transaction and does not negatively affect our support structure. VISION remains overly complex; for example one striking weakness is the inability to see the continuum of transactions once a step in the process has been taken (e.g. travel). The SME functions will cease as of end 2013 however the contracts of the two SMEs were exceptionally extended for three months (for the P3 post to cover as a transitional period) and one month (for the P2 post due to bridge the gap between contracts on transfer of the incumbent) into 2014. It will be interesting to see how the offices will manage without dedicated support.

The region benefitted from **OIAI audits** in eight (38 per cent) of the country offices in 2013. Based on programme throughput criteria, all eight of the reports were desk review audits, and resulted in 53 audit recommendations. Four (8 per cent) of the recommendations were high priority, two of which were regarding contracts for services, one regarding HACT, and one regarding operational issues in a zone office in a conflict area. All other recommendations were considered medium priority, and for all eight offices the audit conclusion was that control processes were generally established and functioning.

An analysis of the eight CO audits reveals that 50 per cent of the audit recommendations were attributed to programme management, while the remaining audit recommendations fell equally between governance and operations support.

All audited offices received observations on IMEP and HACT issues, which will guide the ROs quality assurance activities during 2014.

Almost a third (31 per cent) of all governance recommendations (4 offices) concerned the COs annual management plan weaknesses in relation to the offices' Risk Control Self-Assessment (RCSA), as there was a lack of alignment between the risks identified in the RCSAs and the priorities defined in the AMPs. Almost half (46 per cent) of all operations support recommendations (6 offices) were regarding the management of contracts for services, offices being cited for non-compliant in various areas of the organization's guidance on this subject, most commonly the lack of competitive selection for individual contractors and the lack of timely planning for contractor needs. Also concerning operations recommendations, the RO helped several COs draft their clarifications to OIAI regarding various audit observations in the draft audit reports. The RO also helped a CO draft the request to HQ for the necessary approval to close several recommendations.

Regarding the programme management recommendations, 33 per cent were concerning IMEP and 30 per cent related to HACT, collectively accounting for 63 per cent of all programme recommendations. The IMEP recommendations commonly included observations regarding strengthening evaluation plans, strengthening and prioritizing surveys, studies & evaluation activities, and ensuring that baselines & targets were defined for each indicator, which must be aligned to planned results. The RO has actively supported the preparation of all CO IMEPs, providing guidance and comments on all draft IMEPs, encouraging countries to: (a) prioritize their evaluations, studies and research (b) make sure that all the major programme components are evaluated during the programme cycle (c) justify and document deviations from and changes to the multi-year IMEPs (d) realistically plan the time required to complete the evaluations, studies and surveys in the plan. The RO also compiled all the key activities from COs together to bolster horizontal cooperation and synergies. The large number of studies and research planned in IMEPs was discussed during the spring RMT, and the DepReps and M&E meetings to encourage a better prioritization for the 2013 IMEPs. At the request of the RMT, the RO developed a template for TOR of studies and research undertaken in the region. In addition, the RO conducted regular monitoring of the evaluation section of the IMEP implementation.

Direct Cash Transfer payments by the region in 2013 constituted around 2.5 per cent of global UNICEF's DCT volume, but the region's DCT payments were around 33 per cent of the region's total RR/OR programme expenditure, excluding salaries, therefore a significant feature of our regional programming. At year-end, the RO undertook a detailed review of the status of HACT implementation within the region to evaluate the quality of the HACT assurance plans and monitoring activities amongst the 18 implementing COs (three offices within the region currently have a HACT deferment). Under current HACT operating guidance, CO assurance monitoring matrices are being individually designed in the offices, and the resulting lack of standardization in the reporting and monitoring tools has encumbered the RO in ascertaining the quality of the review processes or whether remedial action is being taken based on observations of weakness in operations practices of our implementing partners. Our review nevertheless revealed a widespread attempt at correctly implementing HACT amongst the offices.

The audits that took place within the region in 2013 confirmed the evaluation undertaken by the RO, which is that many of our COs, which are small offices, are facing challenges in interacting with UNCT members who may be indifferent to implementing HACT. This leads to issues around a shared macro-analysis and little UNCT coordination in preparing a HACT assurance plan with shared implementing partners, a concern which affected five of our audited offices. The uncertainty around UNCT buy-in to HACT creates delays in preparing assurance plans, implementing them and keeping them updated. The most common problem for all offices in the region, including six out of eight audited offices, is that the HACT assurance plan does not correlate with the risk assessment of the individual implementing partner. This weakness indicates a lack of understanding of the basic premise of HACT, which is to focus management attention on risk areas and redirect management time and effort by relaxing control procedures on reliable partners. We understand that new HACT guidance, with long-awaited standardized tools for assurance activities (instructions, templates, checklists) will be issued shortly, which will be helpful for the offices by giving them clear outlines of expectations, and will assist the Regional Office in better monitoring and evaluating HACT implementation throughout the region.

## 5. Evaluations, Research, Studies and Publications<sup>27</sup>

### The Evaluation Function in CEE/CIS

**Multi-Country Evaluations (MCEs).** During 2013 the Region rolled out four of the five<sup>28</sup> MCEs that were launched by the RMT at the end of 2012. The MCEs' purpose is to assess whether, over the past decade, impact results, as measured by improvements in the lives of children and reduction of equity gaps, were made possible in a significant number of countries thanks to changes in the national (regional/local) systems.

The MCEs, by reconstructing a Theory of Change specific to each MCE, also aim to assess UNICEF's contribution to these changes through its presence and Core Roles. The MCEs are unique in UNICEF, in that they: (a) assess achievements across a number of countries, (b) follow the MoRES analytical framework and (c) are led through a HQs/RO/COs 'compact'. The "Compact" was implemented fully in 2013, as each MCE was actively supported by the RCLA Reference Group, chaired by a Representative, and with the participation of all concerned COs and Regional Advisors; at HQ level, the Evaluation Office and Programme Division were consulted at each key step of the evaluation process and provided very useful and timely inputs on ToRs, draft and Final Inception and Evaluation Reports. The MCEs are managed as per the regional evaluation management process, set up in 2012.

Work on the MCEs proceeded as planned in 2013: the selection of Evaluation Teams, the Inception Missions and the pilot visits for four of the five MCEs took place, while the fifth MCE will begin in 2014. The first draft Evaluation Report for the Inclusive Education evaluation was submitted in December 2013, and the final draft is expected in spring 2014. Field visits for the remaining four MCEs are scheduled to take place in the first half of 2014 and the first draft Evaluation Reports are planned for June 2014. Results from all five MCEs will be available by end 2014.

**Governance.** In 2013, in order to ensure quality, impartiality and integrity of the MCEs all key draft TORs, Inception Reports (IRs) and Evaluation Reports (ERs) were shared with the Office of Evaluation and Programme Division for their technical review, and with UNICEF Representatives from participating COs. An external high-level Senior Evaluator, contracted by the Regional Office, also reviewed all draft IRs and ERs prior to final clearance of each deliverable. Lastly, in order to make sure that the MCEs adequately reflect and incorporate human rights, equity and gender equality issues, the RO CEE/CIS piloted in 2013 an additional quality assurance step: two draft standardised templates, for the review of IRs and ERs were developed based on the UNEG and UN SWAP standards, which facilitated the mainstreaming of multiple cross-cutting human rights, equity and gender equality issues into MCEs in a coherent and comprehensive manner.

The RO further strengthened the governance system to manage evaluations, by formalizing the Regional Evaluation Management Committee (REMC), chaired by the Regional Director and including the Regional M&E Advisor and the concerned Regional Advisor. The main role of the REMC is to ensure a credible and quality evaluation management process in accordance with UNICEF standards and policy. In 2013 the Committee focussed mainly on the MCEs. Key outputs for each MCE (TORs, IR and ER) were cleared by the REMC only once all the above steps were finalised and when the independent feedback from the Regional M&E Facility rated these outputs of good quality (green). The Regional Director then reviewed and approved the final draft documents.

With the on-going recruitment for the Regional M&E Advisor in the second half of 2013, the RO re-assigned staff to assist the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Section, under the leadership of the Regional Chief of Planning and Programmes, to ensure timely and effective follow up, good coordination and sharing of lessons learned across MCEs.

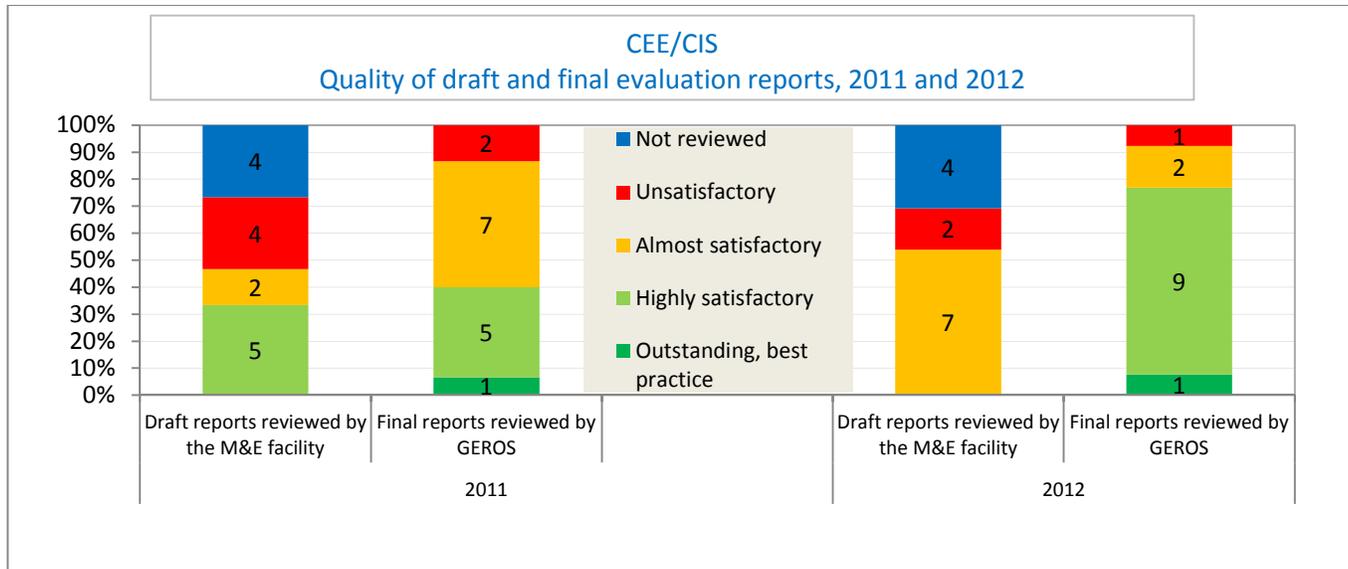
**Quality assurance.** The use of the Regional M&E Facility to review key evaluation-related deliverables (ToRs and draft evaluation reports), is mandatory since 2010, and is free for COs. In 2013, the review process was also expanded

---

<sup>27</sup> Please refer to Annex III for a list all studies, surveys and evaluations which were completed by the Regional Office in 2013, as well as other publications issued during the year.

<sup>28</sup> (i) A child's right to a family environment, (ii) Justice for Children: enabling justice system to respect and protect child rights, (iii) A child's right to early learning and school readiness, (iv) A child's right to education: Including all children out of school in quality learning; and (v) A child's right to health: reducing IMR and U5MR.

to cover, in addition to the TOR, the Inception Reports and the draft Evaluation Report, with these services to be funded by requesting COs.



Thanks to the renewed RMT commitment, the utilization of the M&E facility has increased considerably since 2010. While only 20 per cent of evaluation ToRs were reviewed in 2010, this increased to 100 per cent in 2012 and 2013. The proportion of draft Evaluation Reports being reviewed has also increased from 41 per cent in 2010 to 69 per cent in 2012 and, according to the preliminary estimates, to 84 per cent in 2013. The increase in the utilization has been possible due to RO's follow-up with the CO M&E focal points and the full support of the RMT. Subsequently, as shown by the above graph, the quality of evaluations has continued to improve: the proportion of evaluations rated by the Global Evaluation Report and Oversight System (GEROS) as highly satisfactory or outstanding rose from 25 per cent in 2010 to 40 per cent in 2011 and to 77 per cent in 2012. The graph below also indicates the positive impact of the regional M&E Facility on the quality of Evaluation Reports: the quality has improved remarkably for many reports before they were finalized, which can be clearly traced to the feedback and suggestions received from the M&E Facility.

**IMEPs.** The RO has actively supported the preparation of IMEPs, providing guidance and feedback on drafts and encouraging countries to prioritize their evaluations, studies and research. The Regional Director's letter providing feedback on Annual Reports systematically included an observation to all COs that did not carry out any evaluation during the previous three years. Recommendations to ensure the implementation of the evaluation policy stipulating that all major programme components be evaluated during the programme cycle were also provided to COs throughout the year. The RO reviewed all Annual IMEPs and compared them against the multi-year IMEPs and, whenever there was a cancellation or postponement of an evaluation, the concerned CO was requested to provide the rationale for doing so. Meanwhile, all COs were part of at least one multi-country evaluation. COs with low IMEP implementation in 2012 were advised to prioritise the completion of ongoing surveys, studies and evaluations before embarking on new ones.

**Management Response of Evaluations.** The corporate evaluation Management Dashboard indicators show that the Region had 100 per cent Management Response for 2012 evaluations. As of end 2013, as many as 34 per cent of actions were completed, while 48 per cent were underway. The RO will continue to monitor closely the timely uploading of 2013 evaluations, as well as timely update of planned actions.

**Capacity Development.** The RO participated in the recruitment process of all M&E posts in the Region in 2013, helping country offices to identify the right competencies for child rights systems monitoring. In the absence of the Regional M&E Advisor in the second half of the year, some selected evaluation-related tasks were entrusted to two M&E specialists from COs. Not only has this exercise helped to partially fill in the gap in the RO capacity, but it also served as a very important capacity development opportunity for the concerned M&E staff, who performed

remarkably well. The RO, as member of the International Programme Evaluation Network (IPEN) board, extended its support the regional IPEN conference in Moldova in September.

***Knowledge Management in M&E – lessons learning.*** In order to improve the sharing of evaluation findings and recommendations across countries, in 2013 the RO supported the development of ten 2-pager evaluation briefs with key findings from evaluations that GEROs rated either ‘highly satisfactory’ or ‘outstanding’.

***Publications.*** The RO continued its efforts to systematize knowledge management, focusing in 2013 on the commissioning and dissemination of publications. In 2013, the key flagship publications were *Justice for Children Overview*, the *Summary Analysis of the Situation of Out-of-School-Children*, the *Education Equity Now Call to Action*, the *Equity in Learning PISA 2009 Assessment* and the *Disaster Risk Reduction Compendium of Knowledge and Learning Resources*. All publications were promoted through an integrated communication and social media packages, a specially designed microsite (for the education publications) and the regional website. Content on the Regional Office Russian language website was further strengthened and more widely promoted to increase access of Russian speakers to key knowledge related to children.

## 6. Report on UN Reform and Inter-Agency Collaboration

UNICEF continued to engage and contribute to improved coherence of the UN system at regional level and at country level through the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Europe (RCM), the Regional UNDG for Europe and Central Asia (UNDG-ECA), the UNCTs and their committees.

During 2013, the *Regional UNDG for Europe and Central Asia* met formally twice, both times back-to-back with the **Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM)**. The Regional UNDG-ECA workplan was followed to large degree, but it is worthwhile to note that some activities, which were part of the common work plan, were undertaken unilaterally by some agencies, without the necessary discussions in the Regional UNDG-ECA. As anticipated last year, the interaction within the Regional UNDG-ECA has improved and the new chairperson of the Regional UNDG-ECA has been facilitating and contributing to a constructive and positive spirit of cooperation.

In 2013, the RCM and the Joint Working Group on the *post-2015 agenda* of the Regional UNDG-ECA, established in 2012 and which led to the production of an inter-agency publication on the post-2015 agenda for the Region, successfully coordinated a regional Post 2015 consultation that took place in Istanbul in November 2013. UNICEF contributed very actively to the Working Group to highlight the need to address the existing pervasive forms of social exclusion and marginalisation and for more investment to address inequalities and strengthen human rights. Three hundred fifty participants from 40 countries participated in the Istanbul consultation, including from governments, civil society organisations, the academia and the private sector. UNICEF facilitated and supported the successful engagement in the consultation of young people representing different countries in the Region as well as marginalized groups, including children with disability. Partners appreciated the meaningful contributions from young people and their active engagement. The event was preceded by a dedicated Civil Society Forum, and the increased role given to non-governmental actors in the Conference was noted as a welcome innovation.

At country level, UNICEF Albania is implementing *Delivering as One (DaO)*, while UNICEF COs in Montenegro and the Kyrgyz Republic participate in the DaO Expanded Funding Window. In Moldova, the UN is a DaO “self-starter” and 2013 was the first year of the UN Partnership Framework 2013-2017. In 2013, UNDP led the negotiation for an MDTF to address the needs of the Transnistria region of Moldova. Several COs also continued to engage in UN joint programmes and participate in MDTF initiatives. Feedback from COs during 2013 on the effectiveness of the MDTF modality is mixed. All UNICEF Offices in the Region are active members of the UNCTs and a number of UNICEF Representatives have served as Resident Coordinators a.i., frequently and some for extended periods. UNICEF also chairs many UNCT working committees.

The DaO in Albania is now in its second programming cycle and in 2013, it at its mid-point in the implementation of the 2012-2016 programme framework. The emphasis of the DaO on joint UN business processes, rather than on programmatic and advocacy coherence, continues to weaken the capacity of the UN system to influence national policy priorities. While in light of the small share of the UN’s total financial contribution (about 3 per cent of

Albania's ODA), it was thought that it would be useful to have joint UN Annual Work plans; however, the high number of participating UN agencies (20 in all but with only eight having a resident status in Albania) resulted in considerably increased workload for the UN. This also contributed to the further fragmentation of results and advocacy messages. Managing as many as 40 Joint UN 2013 AWP's was also extremely challenging. This was especially so to the low engagement of non-resident agencies, a problem already flagged in 2012, and which persisted in 2013. This lower level of participation in the Albania One UN Programme was mirrored in 2013 by the reduced level of interest and engagement on the part of counterparts, which has been particularly striking since the post-election period. No immediate solution is foreseen.

In Montenegro, there are five resident and seven regionally-based UN agencies under the DaO umbrella. This arrangement rather than putting too much emphasis on joint UN processes broadly aims to support government and civil society in advancing the human rights and development agenda through the country's EU accession framework. UNICEF benefits from the DaO funding window and the UNICEF 2012-16 CPD was framed by the DaO UN Programme, in which UNICEF takes the lead in key relevant areas in social protection. UNICEF has used this opportunity to promote child protection and social protection, social inclusion and justice for children as part of the national agenda. The Office participates in a major EU funded joint project on social inclusion under the DaO umbrella, reinforcing the strategic cooperation amongst UNDP, UNICEF and the Government of Montenegro in a crucial area where UNICEF has established its added-value.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is the first country rolling out the CCA/UNDAF after the new set of guidance was issued regarding the Standard Operating Procedures, as requested by the last QCPR. The UNCT is seeking ways to implement those elements of the SOPs which add value in the development context the UN operates in, paying particular care to reduce complexities and focus on enabling Agencies to deliver their support to government and the work with civil society. The BiH Office is also among the first UNICEF Offices to prepare a CPD following the new CPD template and Results and Resource Framework, and is pioneering a more participatory process for CPD development which makes more extensive use of the 'HQ/RO/CO compact'. UNICEF in 2013 continued to serve for a second consecutive year as Chair of the Regional UNCT-ECA CCA/UNDAF Peer Support Group (PSG), convening PSG meetings, analysing and consolidating feedback from all Agencies to the CCA/UNDAF documents in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and facilitating the process of preparing the CCA/UNDAF roadmap and the Strategic Prioritisation retreat. UNICEF Regional Director actively participated in the RC assessment, which shows that the role of the RC is improving with more focus on Coordination instead of the previously prevailing role of the Resident Representative function