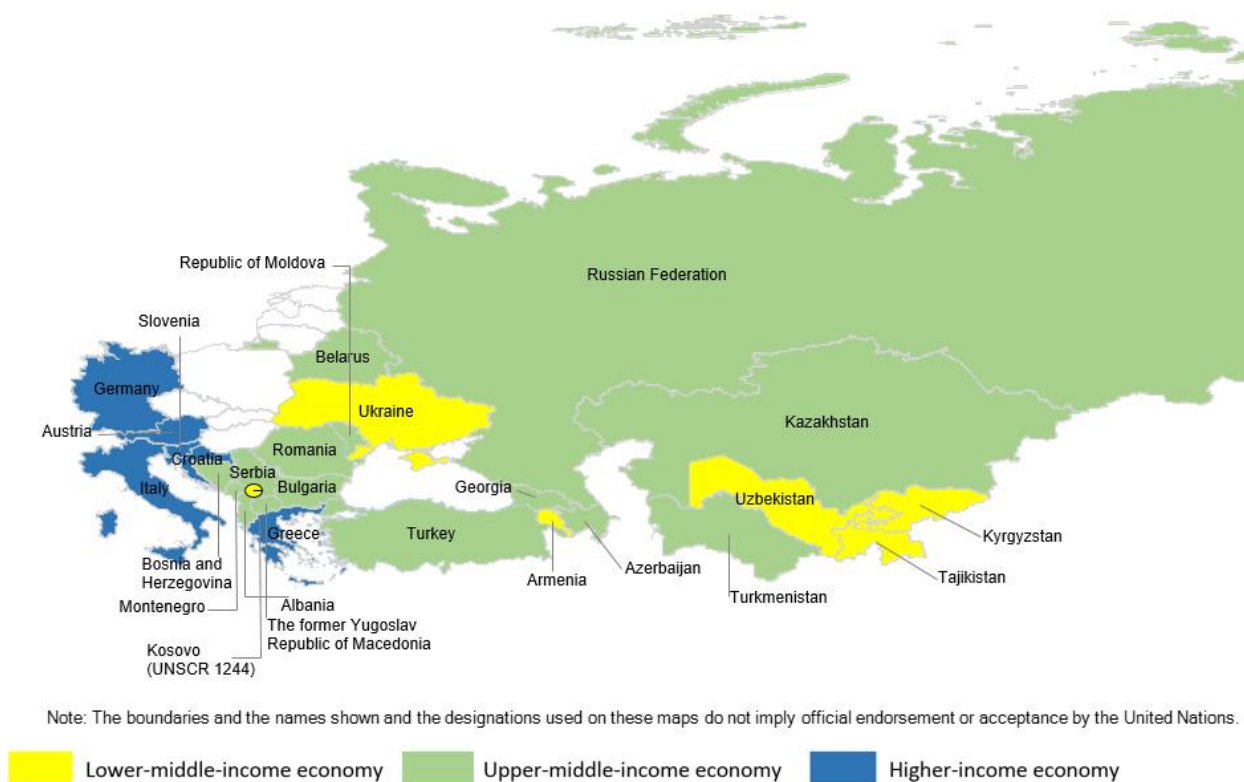


REGIONAL ANALYSIS REPORT 2016



**REGIONAL OFFICE
FOR EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA (CEE/CIS)**

GENEVA, MARCH 2017

Table of Contents

Part 1 Overview

Part 2 Analysis of programme strategies and results: Development Effectiveness

Part 3 Analysis of programme strategies and results: Global Regional Programme

Part 4 Management

Trends and Progress in the Region, as affecting Children and Women

Economic growth was maintained and slightly accelerated to 1.6 percent for the Region as a whole during 2016, in spite of continued low oil prices, banking sector vulnerabilities and ongoing challenges associated with the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe. In the Balkans growth averaged 2.7 percent, while Ukraine's economy returned to growth, while Turkey's remained steady in spite of political turmoil and reduced tourist earnings. Central Asian countries, especially oil exporters, were more severely affected, also by the contracting Russian economy and the effects of reduced remittances.

According to the findings of long-term research on incomes, equality, and life satisfaction under the transition from communism¹, incomes have also converged significantly towards richer countries, while inequalities have also become more entrenched, predominantly explained by inequality of opportunity associated with low parental education, gender, and place of birth. Increasing dissatisfaction with job opportunities, stagnant incomes, and increasing mistrust of institutions are contributing to rising political and social tension across most of the Region².

Numerous **political crises** affected countries in the Region during 2016: Turkey experienced an attempted coup; several Balkan countries experienced ongoing political instability and polarisation; there were renewed tensions and intensified fighting in Eastern Ukraine, while in Uzbekistan the change of leadership may have opened up fresh opportunities for progress on children's rights.

Since 1990, the declining trend in **child mortality** across the Region has been quite promising, however the rate of reduction between 2000 and 2015 has slowed considerably and inequities among and within countries remain as glaring and growing problem. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, carry the highest under-five mortality burden within the Region, with over 80 per cent and 70 per cent of the under-five child mortality occurring within the first year and first month of life, respectively. It is therefore of critical importance to prioritize maternal and new-born health programs. Child mortality rate comparisons between countries with similar GNI per capita reveal challenges with resource management and planning in some instances. It has been noted that countries with higher percentage of GDP spent on health achieve better results in child health. An agenda for targeted technical country support addressing systems strengthening and planning/expenditure reviews is warranted.

Gender inequality in the Region perpetuates cycles of social exclusion and violence. Despite educational gender parity, and in some cases advantage for girls over boys, there are obstacles to women's employment and public representation. Limited support for quality full-time daycare limits women's ability to return to full-time employment, and options for structured and safe facilities and services for children. A disproportionate load of unpaid care and domestic work provided is done by women and girls. Gaps in data and different methodologies used to measure violence against women undermines regional comparisons and programming, however, the UN Regional Working Group estimates that *"26 per cent of women in Eastern Europe, 23 per cent of women in Central Asia and 19 per cent of women in Western Europe have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by a non-partner"*. Gender-based violence (GBV) is exacerbated in emergencies, with GBV three times higher among women IDPs in Ukraine, compared to host community residents and in the refugee and

¹ European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Transition Report, 2016

² World Bank, 'Polarization and populism' Europe and Central Asia Economic Update, November 2016

migrant response. Finally, manifestation of '*retraditionalisation*' hamper girl's opportunities with harmful traditional practices are persistent in areas across the Region, and there is evidence of female genital mutilation/cutting in at least one country. Seven of the top ten countries with gender-biased sex selection are in the Region, indicating son preference and lower value of the girl child. Child marriage ranges from 27.2 per cent to 2.2 percent across the Region – with spikes among marginalized communities - thus impacting on girl's ability to complete secondary education and learning, and increasing chances of teen pregnancy.

To advance the realisation of children rights in the Region UNICEF continued to rely on strong **partnerships** with governments, international and regional organisations, networks of civil society organisations and national human rights institutions, the private sector and foundations. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provided a new momentum for deepening and expanding partnerships, in particular to ensure that policies and resources address the situation of the most vulnerable and excluded children. A key policy driver affecting UNICEF's partnership has been migration – with the rights of refugee and migrant children emerging as a key priority for UNICEF's advocacy and resource mobilisation agenda. While UNICEF has been able to forge new alliances and mobilise funding for the refugee and migration crisis response a growing concern has been politicization around issues of migration and security and the prospect of attention and development funding being diverted or made conditional to action in these areas.

Strategic Plan 2018-2021

A good number of contributions from CEE/CIS Offices and from RO Colleagues were provided to DRP and discussed in details at the Fall RMT. Such high level of engagement in the Region was certainly facilitated by the Discussion Paper being easy to read, focused and well-structured overall. The fact that this document was circulated early on was also highly appreciated by colleagues.

The new SP is clearly relevant for all settings: including **HICs and uMICs** and countries facing chronic conflict and fragility, which represent the majority of countries in CEE/CIS, particularly also considering the impact of economic crises and migration [and the challenges they both pose to social cohesion/social inclusion].

In this context UNICEF in the Region is increasingly aware of what others are doing in our core sectors and of the need for effectively leveraging partnerships to strengthen synergies and complementarities. Important to mention that disadvantaged children live in all country contexts.

UNICEF in the Region has a major comparative advantage in **social protection** for children, to overcoming disadvantage, leave no one behind, but also empowerment and transformation. Important to mention here child labour, which is linked to social protection as the absence of social protection frequently leaves children vulnerable to child labour.

It is good to see that the latest version of the new SP included promoting equitable **access to justice** for all children as a means to enforce their rights, break intergenerational poverty cycles and challenge inequities (as per SDG 16.3). This is an issue at the core of child rights (no rights without accountability), sustainable development and rule of law. The SP's result on deinstitutionalisation is a good start to address the wider issue of **separation of children from their families**, which is becoming increasingly relevant in a number of countries/territories in CEE/CIS where there is significant resources to set up

"orphanages" and institutions. Institutionalization is linked with poverty, inequality, violence and social protection measures. Preventing children from being institutionalized is considered as an important focus area for UNICEF in line with the UN Guidelines on Alternative Care of Children (64/142, 24 February, 2010). The proposed SP does not reflect priorities in this particular area.

For CEE/CIS the trends on **violence, including conflict and protracted crisis**, its impact on children's well-being is going to be an important determinant that would need some discussion on how to engage in violence prevention and reduction.

Adolescents' health is becoming increasingly important in a number of CEE/CIS countries. WHO research shows that the five top causes of deaths for adolescents globally are (in this order): road injury, HIV, suicide, lower respiratory infections and interpersonal violence. Suicide rates are quite high in a number of countries and substance abuse is a driving health problems in the Region. This is a priority to be addressed in a number of Regions. As adolescents are a priority for the SP, this Goal Area should reflect what is relevant to them.

The Gender Action Plan 2.0 **gender equality** target priorities and mainstreaming strategies more closely reflect lessons learned and priorities in the CEE/CIS. Gender responsive adolescent health is a key priority in most country programmes, and in some a focus on GBViE, child marriage and girl's secondary education reflects national development challenges. Gender equality gaps are clear for girls as they relate to gender-based violence and the social norms and structural discrimination that perpetuates it, and boys experience barriers and bottlenecks to secondary education as well as access to youth-friendly health services. In line with the SP, there will be opportunities further develop the regional gender strategic framework focus on gender mainstreaming in DRR and humanitarian programming as well addressing socialization challenges that feed gender-biased sex selection and the disproportionate load of unpaid care and domestic work provided by women and girls.

The SP makes good reference to the CRC, the SDGs (apply to all countries...to all people...to all children... at all times) and the universal mandate of UNICEF, and reflects well UNICEF universal mandate, all Goals should be relevant for the most disadvantaged children everywhere. This sends a powerful message about how seriously we take, and carry out, our mandate.

The SP has several implications for broadening the scope of our strategies: more on leveraging resources for children; supporting alliances for children; fostering private-public partnerships for programmes for children especially at local level in marginalized areas; child rights and business; and direct involvement with civil society and young people (what was called UNICEF 3.0).

The HOW is linked to the core roles in CEE/CIS, where we not only focus on partnerships but also on horizontal cooperation, modelling, leveraging resources (mobilising budgets -nationally and internationally - for children), for example. Also, supporting the development of policy options (policy advise), leveraging resources and to contribute to capacity strengthening. In addition we should also reflect on CEE/CIS increasing scope to strengthen the capacity of national and sub-national systems to generate, synthesize and use evidence and data.

In the context of the new SP and also SDGs, UNICEF's role in global/regional/country level monitoring of child rights has never been more relevant. The RO is eagerly awaiting the final endorsed version of the global data strategy which will, inter alia, provide clear direction on UNICEF's leadership role in SDG monitoring.

Part 2: Analysis of programme strategies and results: Development Effectiveness

Progress on **nutrition** across the Region is recognized. However, countries continue to be challenged with stunting rates while overweight and obesity among children and adolescents continue to rise. It will therefore be particularly challenging to reach the Global Nutrition Targets for 2025 unless progress on these fronts take hold.

Many countries across the Region have made considerable strides in achieving Universal Salt Iodization (USI) targets. In 2009, 55 percent of household salt in the Region was adequately iodized, a significant increase from just a decade prior when only 25 percent of households were using adequately iodized salt. This notable improvement would not have been possible without public-private partnerships and key stakeholder commitments supported, both of which were supported by UNICEF.

Following a two year gap in regional **nutrition**-specific technical presence, the staff position was filled and occupied starting in July 2016 and based in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Following the recommendations from the Multi-country Evaluation (MCE), on reducing health systems bottlenecks, and to fulfill children's rights to health and survival, the RO provided technical assistance to 7 COs – Serbia, Macedonia, Tajikistan, Romania, Georgia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, to better align their Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and nutrition programs with the global Strategic Plan outputs and Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda (RKLA) priorities.

Overall, regional performance in the area of **Infant & Young Child Feeding** (IYCF) practices is relatively low, with an average of 26 per cent for Exclusive Breast-feeding. This low figure is also further threatened by aggressive marketing and branding policies of Breast Milk Substitute (BMS) companies, in clear violation of the national and international code of marketing of BMS. Further, in some geographic pockets across Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, services for the management of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM), will need to be further accelerated and enhanced.

The RO has also been providing support to the **emergency response in countries affected by the migrant and refugee crisis**, including Serbia, Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, primarily focused on coordination, advocacy and capacity building of partners to safeguard the optimum IYCF.

The Region maintained its **polio**-free status by successfully responding to an outbreak in Ukraine and by completing polio vaccine switch in all countries. However, due to global IPV supply constraints it is expected that some countries in the Region: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan will not be able to fully switch in 2017 as planned. Taking into account the close proximity to Afghanistan and Pakistan, the risk of importation of polio virus is an issue.

The Regional Office worked closely with Supply Division and COs to improve **vaccine** procurement capacities and sustainable financing which resulted in strengthening local vaccine Independence Initiative in Uzbekistan, strengthening of immunization supply chain data utilization in Tajikistan and strengthening procurement of cold chain equipment in Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine. More government ownership and support to the immunization programme is ensured as a result of continued support of Partnership Alliance with GAVI, WHO and UNICEF to countries in transition from GAVI support: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

In order to address equity gaps and vaccination hesitancy, the Regional Office supported Moldova, Armenia and Georgia in the development of evidence-based C4D strategies for immunization.

Implementation of the strategies next year will contribute to increase the vaccination coverage in the countries.

The results of the review of national immunization programme in Kyrgyzstan have been used as the evidence for the development of comprehensive Multi Year Plan, which will serve as a guidance document for the Government to improve immunization coverage and financing in the following years.

As part of the refugee/migrant response, UNICEF RO issued **joint guidelines with WHO and UNHCR for the vaccination of refugees** and facilitated the procurement of 50,000 doses of MMR, 11,000 doses of PCV and 1,200 doses of BCG for Greece as humanitarian assistance. The RO provided support to Ukraine CO for restoring routine immunization, reforming government vaccine procurement system, ensuring uninterrupted vaccine supply by temporary procurement of all routine vaccines through UNICEF, and maintaining polio-free status by successfully stopping the cVDPV outbreak within 6 months CO will be supporting in looking at more holistic approach to improve immunization program taking into account local context the office is operating.

Despite good average immunization coverage in the Region, some challenges remain, such as decreasing routine immunization in some countries (BiH, Bulgaria, Moldova, and Ukraine), in-country inequities in coverage (Roma, refugees, urban, poor); growing vaccine hesitancy in majority of countries; financial sustainability issues, especially in some country in transition (Tajikistan).

While the four **GAP priorities**: 1) promoting gender-responsive adolescent health; 2) advancing girls' secondary education; 3) ending child marriage and 4) addressing gender-based violence in emergencies, have clear resonance and relevance in the Region, gender programme reviews, assessments and audits to additional, specific areas where measurable and substantive gender-responsiveness can be achieved to strengthen gender equality results and developmental outcomes for girl and boy children. In addition, gender mainstreaming strategies can more effectively drive gender results at scale.

- GBViE: Gender-based violence prevention and response has been integrated into programming in the Refugee and Migrant Response, and to a more limited extent, in the humanitarian programming in Turkey and Ukraine. Prevent Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) measures have also been undertaken, however with the roll out of the GBViE Game Plan and the Resource Pack, this area of work can be strengthened.
- Girls Secondary Education: In most countries, barriers to girl's secondary education is associated with membership in an ethnic or linguistic group or other factors such as poverty and living rural settings – in most these barriers impact on boys as much if not more than on girls. In countries such as Turkey and Tajikistan, the CPD priorities have focused on promoting girl's secondary education as an empowerment approach. In Turkey UNICEF led in framing the UNDAF process to focus on education outcomes. In Tajikistan, the Country Office has joined the organizational initiative to develop and implement a Game Plan for Girl's Secondary Education, sharing lessons learned across the organization and documenting what works in promoting girl's lower secondary education. In other countries, such as Kyrgyzstan, the country office is monitoring data of girls' drop-out rates in urban areas, and in areas where there is increased '*retraditionalization*' – recognizing that these trends may reverse hard-fought gains on gender equality made during the Soviet era. In most countries in the Region, compulsory education only goes through lower secondary.
- Ending Child Marriage: As with Girl's Secondary Education, some countries have prioritized child marriage in their country programme development both as a *target priority* (such as Turkey), however, most countries for which child marriage is relevant report rates well below the GAP benchmark of 25 percent prevalence, nationally, with significant variance by Region and specific

ethnic and linguistic groups. According to a UNFPA report, *“Rates of officially registered marriages involving girls aged 15-19 were highest in Turkey (23 per cent), and Kyrgyzstan (19.1 per cent), and lowest in Kazakhstan (0.9 percent), Ukraine (2.2 per cent), and Serbia (5.9 percent). Secondary research on this Region indicates that in the former Soviet Republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus, rates of child marriage have increased since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, as has the number of girls in the 15-19 age group becoming pregnant and giving birth, a proxy variable for the number of girls in child marriages.”* According to the UNICEF KPI and SMQs, only 10 percent of the 33 percent of the countries in the Region that have a national plan/strategy, have one that is costed. CEE/CIS country programmes are addressing child marriage through joint programming that tackles the myriad dimensions of this traditional harmful practice, particularly in marginalized communities. Working with government and other UN agencies, country offices in Turkey, Serbia, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Armenia and Azerbaijan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have taken different steps: hotlines have been established and strengthened to prevent child marriage, social norms research is underway to understand the drivers of this phenomena and referral mechanisms are being put in place to strengthen prevention as well as support for the girls.

- Gender-responsive adolescent health: Promotion of HIV/AIDS prevention and response, as well as responding to teen pregnancy are prioritized in several CEE/CIS countries. Although 82 percent of countries have national HIV/AIDs strategies, only 18 percent have done a gender audit or review based on UNAIDS or UN Women guidelines. Similarly, while 87 percent of countries have a current national policy or plan to address anaemia, only 25 percent of them have specific approach to addressing anaemia among adolescent girls. Only 13 percent have had a UNICEF supported gender review of the nutrition policy/strategy. As an example of a good practice, the Kyrgyzstan CO, addressed a fragmented gender mainstreaming approach that was not reaching scale by “bundling up” programmes across sectors to address different dimensions of gender-responsive adolescent health, including health programming, youth programming, and social protection measures, drawing on C4D strategies and sound data collection and analysis. Concrete results in terms of impact, system change and increase in knowledge and attitudes was also achieved in Belarus, Tajikistan, Kosovo* (SCR 1244), Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Romania, Moldova and Kazakhstan.
- Early Childhood Development and Gender. Several COs strengthened their focus on father involvement in nurturing parenting during the early years (e.g. Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkmenistan), using one of the specifically dedicated modules on fathers, and Serbia started to work on maternal depression, including father involvement. Through strengthening the home visiting nurse outreach, there is a chance to address the social norms that perpetuate gender inequality and rob children from the full engagement of fathers.
- There are two good practices related to promoting women and girl's empowerment and gender equality in the Region. First, UNICEF Offices have sponsored positive and gender-responsive social media campaigns linked to programmes, focusing on the value of education for all, highlighting the long term generational benefits of girls' education and the larger impact on the growth and development of the country as a whole. Engagement of adolescent girls as drivers in many campaigns was key, using innovative use of new technology. Moving beyond campaigns to building on and adjusting programming to aim for gender-transformative results makes this a promising practice both for advancing adolescent participation and addressing social norms, barriers and bottlenecks to gender equality.

In addition to the above target priorities, CEE/CIS countries have begun to chart new ground in gender mainstreaming through the RKLAs, with a focus on gender-responsive justice, gender and DRR and gender-biased sex selection. Kazakhstan and more recently Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have also invested in studies and programmes on adolescent mental health. However, the challenges here as with the target

priorities are programming at scale and with UN partners, such as UNDP, UN Women and UNFPA, and leveraging funding from the EU and Asia Development Bank (ADB).

Early Childhood Development. Just as the focus on the critical first 1000 days has increased organization-wide at UNICEF, interest in health-sector led home visiting for young child health, development, and wellbeing --the primary approach supported by the CEE/CIS RO to support nurturing and responsive parenting in a safe and stimulation home environment -- has expanded in the Region. Approximately 4-5 CO were working with their partners on home visiting in 2012 compared to 14-15 in 2016. Home visiting services for pregnant women and families of young children are provided by ministries of health and reforms move in line with ministry plans, in 2016 countries differed greatly in the current stage of reform efforts: “new countries” were conducting assessments and/or engaged in advocacy (e.g., Uzbekistan, Montenegro, Armenia); other countries were expanding the health and nutrition home visiting package to include comprehensive early child development and a multi-sectoral approach (e.g., Kosovo* and Kazakhstan); and some countries were working on quality improvement and preparing the ground for evaluations of maturing pilots or national services in 2017 (Romania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria). Several countries (Bulgaria, Kosovo*, BiH) have been scaling up their pilot activities with the government to cover additional vulnerable regions of their countries. A regional/multi-country evaluation of the impact of home-visiting on young child well-being, and UNICEF's contribution to home-visiting approaches, is in the planning stage.

Commitment to improving early identification of **disabilities and/or developmental difficulties** in children under three has grown significantly across the whole Region. Countries, such as Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkmenistan are introducing a new specialty in developmental or social pediatrics as a follow-on to regional trainings at Ankara University in 2014 and 2015. Capabilities for early identification are being strengthened significantly during home visits, as well as at the PHC level. Several countries are introducing/building the capacities of developmental counseling units (Serbia, BiH, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan) and are training providers such as pediatricians in the use of valid and standardized tools (Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan) to identify young children early and refer them to needs-based intervention services.

In parallel, UNICEF is working to address social norms related to **children with disabilities**. Efforts to measure changes in social norms have been laudable and the regional office is currently in the process of validating tools and methods in this respect – with the view to standardizing some of our evaluative approaches.

Second, **School without Violence (SwV)** Programme has been implemented in the Region and has been evaluated in Serbia and Kyrgyzstan. This programming aims at creating a safe and enabling school environment for children, and protecting children affected by violence. It adopts a whole-school approach and has proven evidence of results (1) greater sensitisation, with many teachers now able to recognise GBV, making referrals to school psychologists, some of whom were also mentors; (2) greater openness on the topic of GBV, including recognition of the existence of Gender-Based violence (GBV) in broader society, including association with social/political crisis experience in the past; (3) increased understanding of gender stereotyping including perpetuating gender stereotypes and increased sensitivity to the gender content of teaching. In Kyrgyzstan, the programme acknowledged the important role that children can play in preventing violence in their schools, notably through the setup of school reconciliation teams, which provides a platform for RKLA 10 strategies around engaging adolescents in peacebuilding.

UNICEF Offices' reviews from around the Region reveal an encouraging range of results and progress in the area of social inclusion and **social policy**. In particular, many country offices have made progress with policy and legislation on social protection, and with analysis and recommendations for extending social protection benefits for children in poverty, frequently at no additional cost to the government. Two countries report that this work has directly led to increased numbers of children receiving benefits during 2016. Other countries/territories have made progress in securing financial mechanisms, commitments, and in some cases funds, to expand and sustain local social services using government funds. Two particularly innovative developments are also reported: the design and costing of the extension of the national education cash transfer to refugee children in Turkey; and the establishment of a real-time monitoring mechanism to track the impact of macro-economic crisis on children in partnership with the World Bank in Tajikistan.

In 2016, engagement and support by the RO Child Protection section to the response to the **Migrants and Refugees Crisis in Europe** remained as extensive as the year before. All nine Country Offices and/or One UNICEF Response teams providing Humanitarian Assistance in relation to the Migrants and Refugees Crisis in Europe integrated Child Protection in their response. Above all, the CP component represents in most cases, the core aspect of this response. A stocktaking exercise was organized in March 2016.

In regard to HPM indicators, through its regional capacity building initiative of frontline workers, the RO has contributed directly to the 'number of frontline workers trained on CP' in four countries out of the eight (Croatia, fYROM, Serbia and Slovenia) that have reported on this indicator. Through the leadership and guidance provided on the **Blue Dot** initiative in the Balkans (Children and family support Hub), the RO contributed in increasing the quality of the services delivered by UNICEF in Croatia, the fYROM, Greece, Serbia, Slovenia, to more than 88,000 children.

Child Protection in CEECIS Region has been for years and remains till today one of the main areas of engagement with national governments. CEECIS still has the highest numbers in the world of children who are deprived of their right to grow up in a supportive and caring family environment, where policies for preventing family separation are not yet effective. The Region, where many children with disabilities remain trapped in the care system; institutional care remains an instrument of hidden discrimination against minority groups such as the Roma, single parents and their children, including children left behind by migrating parents who rely on institutional care as a solution; minimum set of services at local level with particular focus for children below three years and children with disabilities is lagging behind.

Following key recommendations of the MCE (2013) on a child's right to a supporting and caring family environment, a new Theory of Change (ToC) on RKLA 1 was developed and approved by RMT in 2016. Newly adopted ToC formulates the way to achieve key result area 1 based on three-pronged approach and contributes to the achievement of UNICEF SP (2018-2021) Goal 3:

Prevention of family separation: up to 21 countries and territories in the Region are involved in child care reforms. The shift from supporting the quality of formal care responses to the prevention of family separation is currently on-going in most countries of the Region. RO continued investing its core resources to support the UNICEF Offices to generate strong evidences to inform non-fragmented child protection related decisions with greater emphasis on prevention rather than response through ensuring access to sustainable social and alternative care services as well as adequate skills of caregivers to practice non-violent parenting.

Care and protection of children deprived of parental care and placed in formal care: work is on-going in majority of the countries/territories of the Region in advocating with governments to engage into comprehensive child care reforms; to support the development of national plans involving all relevant sectors and actors and monitor the process and its impact on children and vulnerable families. As a result, many countries managed to progress in policy and legislative aspect of the reforms through approval of National Plans, inter-sectorial protocols of cooperation, ban of Corporal Punishment and so on.

Support the development of community-based services: all COs have been engaged in advocating for financial investments in the development of community-based services. Countries have been defining, through consultative processes with concerned beneficiaries, minimum set of services to be put into place at local level, with particular focus on services for children below three years and children with disabilities. RO has engaged with OAK foundation in the development of a communication/advocacy messages targeting major stakeholders on the value of investing in the transition from institutional to community-based care. Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Belgium are part of priority countries for this exercise.

Within their programmatic responses some COs limited it to specific violence related issues (such as domestic violence, child marriage, etc.) whereas in other countries/territories the process of building a proper VAC response started at a system level. RO coordinated and provided technical support to Albania, BiH, Kosovo³, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey within EU-UNICEF regional initiative on VAC and social inclusion of children with disabilities (CWDs).

After the first year of the initiative, partnerships with various NGOs on VAC issues, and Disability Persons Organizations (DPOs) (for the first time) to address social inclusion of CWDs was established; issue of data on VAC has been defined as one of the priority areas of response; local level multi-disciplinary teams are in the process of being established with participation of all key stakeholders; important legislative initiatives on VAC are on-going, with many other important developments planned for upcoming two years. The RO also established partnership with European Disability Forum to strengthen advocacy efforts towards social inclusion of children with disabilities at the EU level. To contribute to a stronger partnership with the EC and ensure children's rights are incorporated in national development agendas, the RO (CP section in collaboration with Partnerships) supported the roll out of the EU-UNICEF Child Rights Toolkit for government, CP professionals, CSOs/DPOs and international development agencies (200 stakeholders) in BiH. Training had strong links with EU accession process and regional initiative on VAC and CWDs. Further roll out is being planned in other countries – part of the regional initiative on VAC and CWD.

In 2016 the Regional Agenda on Children's Equitable Justice has been developed and approved by RMT. It defines a theory of change, including results for children (L4) and system level changes (L3), and provides a detailed monitoring framework, enabling UNICEF Country Offices and their counterparts to measure progress in achieving L4 and L3 results. The Regional Agenda has been developed by the RO with inputs from COs. The roll out of the Regional Agenda is now driven by a Steering Group composed of CP Specialists from the following countries, all having made concrete progress in this area of work: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro; and chaired by the UNICEF Representative in Bulgaria. The Regional Agenda and theory of change are used by the HQ Child Protection section as a model for other regions. A Yammer page – Access to Justice for All Children – moderated by the RO enables COs of the Region, and increasingly beyond the Region, to exchange on the issue.

³ UN Security Council Resolution 1244

Overall, in 2016, the majority of the COs continued advocacy on access to justice through communication efforts, development of road maps, initiation of legislative developments and expanding partnerships with national HRIs to monitor violation of all child rights. Some countries/territories were involved in Juvenile Justice System assessment including fiscal impact analysis, leading to draft recommendations on social rehabilitation approaches, penal reform, prevention of offending and addressing gaps in technical capacities and processes compared to international standards; others tested new approaches to support children who get conflict with the law, child victims and witnesses of crimes and vulnerable families facing legal problems. Efforts were done on ensuring the participation of children in civil and administrative proceedings. Finally, a number of countries (mainly members of the RKLA 2), piloted a self-assessment to identify where they stand vis-à-vis a set of 50 benchmarks related to justice for children. The process helped to identify the main bottlenecks in achieving results for children and the corresponding system level changes that would need to be promoted.

Country visits revealed the complexity of working on **social policy and social inclusion** in the Region, including the reluctance or resistance of many governments to recognize child poverty as an issue (despite an estimate of over 20 million, or almost one in three, children living under national poverty lines across the Region); the persistence of deep patterns of exclusion and discrimination; economic challenges and austerity in several countries, along with a lack of transparency in public financial management in some cases. One Country Office so far has decided to support an assessment of the disaster responsiveness of its social protection system and another office will be conducting an impact evaluation of social protection reform.

Jointly with other UN agencies (principally ILO and UNDP), the RO supported guidance to countries through disseminating tools for social protection analysis. In connection with **Europe's Refugee and Migrant Crisis**, the RO continued to offer support on the issue of **cash-based assistance** where country offices were considering this option. In addition, advocacy briefs on Entitlements to education and health in support of integration of refugee children were produced.

In Romania, the Ministry of **Education** adopted a desegregation action plan that re-defines school desegregation to go beyond ethnicity-based segregation and to include segregation based on disability/SEN, social status of parents/families, residence area, and school performance criteria. Inclusive education is making progress in several other countries in the Region – Albania, BiH, Kosovo*, Moldova, Serbia and Tajikistan.

Additionally, the support provided by the RO to COs over the past years on teaching and learning practices through the regional child-friendly initiative, and the contribution made by UNICEF at country level are starting to produce results. Among the countries in the Region which participated in PISA, trends since 2000 show that Albania, Georgia, Moldova, and Montenegro have made significant progress in their students' performance in reading, math and science. Croatia had the highest share (86 percent) of 15 year olds performing at baseline proficiency in all three subjects in the Region.

In 2016 the RO made a significant contribution to the **education response** in both Turkey and Ukraine as well as in countries affected by the **refugee and migrant crisis**, notably Greece and Germany. More specifically, the RO provided critical technical assistance in the development of major funding proposals, which resulted in a significant mobilization of additional resources. In spite of major challenges, progress in access and quality of education is taking place in these countries. In Turkey, over 470,000 refugee children were supported to enroll in regular schools in 21 provinces, in both camps and host communities; for the first time since the beginning of the crisis, there are more Syrian children in school in Turkey than

out. In Greece, UNICEF is modelling a structured package of non-formal and formal education which is already benefiting 800 children out of a target of 5,000 children in camps and host communities. In Ukraine, UNICEF-supported education response to the conflict – consisting of peace education and psycho-social support – will serve as an entry point to a major reform of the education sector led by the MoE. In Germany, UNICEF advocated for the inclusion of early childhood education into the Minimum Standards for the Protection for Children, Adolescents and Women and supported the training of refugee center coordinators and the development of training material for them.

The RO supported cross-sectoral work on inclusion of **children with disabilities**. The most significant contribution was provided as part the Regional IPA project “Violence against children and Social Inclusion of Children with Disabilities” to all involved country offices (Albania, BiH, Kosovo*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey) for the selection of DPOs and DPO coalition building, as an important mechanism for advocacy for children with disabilities. The UNICEF partner in the project, the European Disability Forum (EDF) was guided to provide high quality and relevant support in building the capacity of these coalitions at national level. Two countries in the Region (Kosovo* and BiH) were supported in conducting situation analyses on children with disabilities in line with the UNICEF international guidelines.

UNICEF continued to focus on issues of access, quality and equity in **Early Childhood Education**. In Azerbaijan, UNICEF’s advocacy led to the introduction of publicly funded school readiness classes increasing participation rates from 14 percent to 55 percent during 2016. Turkey saw a 10 point increase in the participation of 5 year olds from 43.5 percent in 2013-2014 to 53.8 percent. In Montenegro the expansion of a 3 hour pre-school programme led to an average 22 percent increase in enrolment in 6 of the least covered municipalities. In Kosovo*, alternative financing scenarios were designed in order to increase the coverage and efficiency of ECE services. New preschool curricula were developed in Albania and Turkmenistan and Early Learning and Development Standards were approved/adopted at national level in Kyrgyzstan and Albania. In Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia advances were made in the inclusion of Roma children, while in Armenia multi-disciplinary approaches to including children with disabilities in preschools were modelled. Belarus raised US\$ 2.4m for among other things, inclusive preschool education. Awareness raising activities with regard to the benefits of early education were supported in Montenegro, Tajikistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Moldova, UNICEF focused on building the capacity of early education professionals to monitor preschool quality and the use of ELDS based quality monitoring tools. The RO supported the documentation of the roll out of mentoring for the professional development of early childhood educators in Moldova and facilitated preschool quality capacity development in four Central Asian countries. Additionally, the RO initiated two multi-country studies one on decentralization and its impact on access, quality and equity in ECE and the other on available and needed data and indicators to monitor ECE.

The Regional Office provided support to the Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova in 2016, advising them on approaches to **country programme evaluations**. The results have been very rich and a synthesis exercise is planned for 2017 to examine in particular UNICEF strategic positioning in the Region. These strategic evaluations have provided important analytical inputs and recommendations for new CPDs in the three countries. Several other evaluations were conducted by Country Offices in 2016 (see table under section 3), all of which benefited from the RO quality assurance system resulting in final reports that all received satisfactory or highly satisfactory ratings. A synthesis of these evaluations and the country programme evaluation for Uzbekistan (completed in 2015) will be undertaken in 2017 to fully capture common lessons and good practices.

Influencing global/regional discourse and policy

Through an innovative partnership, the Regional Office, jointly with the Kazakhstan office, formulated the concept of a **Regional Nutrition Partnership Platform**. This partnership is aimed at raising the profile of nutrition in national policies by enhancing the system and policy capacities around the building blocks of a strong and functional nutrition enterprise. Following the 2015 sub-regional **workshop on USI** in Almaty, a regional consultation was convened in Sarajevo in 2016 for the remaining countries. These consultations have enhanced the policy capacity of 9 states (Bosnia- Herzegovina, Moldova, Macedonia, Albania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Serbia, Romania and Kosovo⁴), contributing to the sustainability of their Universal Salt Iodization programs.

The comprehensive resource package of **14 modules for home visiting** professionals that was first disseminated in a regional ToT in 2015, is being used in full or in part 11 countries respectively and an additional 7 countries are planning to use the package. Only three countries appear to have no plans in using the modules. Some or all of the modules have been translated into Russian, Serbo-Croatian-Bosnian, Albanian, Bulgarian, Georgian, and Uzbek. Interest in the modules has also come from outside the CEE/CIS Region. A follow-up regional workshop in Sophia, Bulgaria in late 2016 included national master trainers from 12 countries, and work on four additional modules also started during the year.

The RO has also supported, co-organized and/or facilitated the participation of Country Offices to HQ initiatives and regional events about **UASC** which addressed issues such as guardianship, care arrangements and alternatives to detention and prevention of violence and exploitation of children building alongside synergies with regular CP programme. The IRC-UNHCR-UNICEF consultations with practitioners from most countries of arrivals, transit and destination countries in Europe, have been central in defining common ways forward between civil society, UN agencies and governments. The participation to these initiatives strengthened regionally as well as nationally UNICEF's positioning around priorities included in its work-plans and strategies to the R&M crisis.

Other important contributions of the RO was to co-lead the **Blue Dot Initiative** in the Balkans together with UNHCR and ICRC, co-lead the Regional CP Working Group in response to the R&M crisis in Europe with UNHCR, and develop the concept paper that should shape the collaboration between both agencies, develop guidance on minimum standards for protection of children in refugee shelters as well as writing a learning paper on smuggling and trafficking.

As demonstrated by COs' Annual Report and new CPDs, the issue of **Violence Against Children (VAC)** with particular focus within child care and child protection systems reforms, is emerging as one of the priority areas of programmatic response. Given multi-disciplinary nature of response on VAC, RMT in 2016 decided not to opt for a separate RKLA on VAC but rather incorporate it among all result areas. While a regional level advisory group to conceptualise such a response is still in making, Child Protection Section took a lead in addressing the issue of VAC at a child protection system level.

As demonstrated by recent UNICEF and EU evidence, only a fraction of the children whose rights are violated come forward and seek redress, and even fewer obtain an effective remedy. In the CEE/CIS Region as in others, UNICEF justice for children work has for many years focused mainly on children in conflict

⁴ UN Security Council Resolution 1244

with the law, and led to some noticeable results. At the same time, these positive results indicate that **juvenile justice** reforms have gained sufficient traction in many countries of the Region and provide a justification for broadening the agenda to Children's Equitable Access to Justice in most countries so as to tackle other areas neglected so far. Access to justice is part of the new UNICEF Strategic Plan (Goal 3), mainly as a result of this RO's advocacy.

Access to justice is one of the priorities of the EU in both its internal and external action but does not include children's issues. Within advocacy with EU, for UNICEF, EU Accession and Association Processes offer particularly important opportunities to leverage EU policies as this is often when the momentum for reforms is greatest and countries are keen to meet EU conditionality.

The publication and launch of ***The Social Monitor: Social protection for child rights and wellbeing*** early in the year provided a strong evidence base on the effectiveness of social protection in the Region, and the bottlenecks and barriers for the most vulnerable children to access social protection. An online launch was supplemented by five country level launches that provided a platform for policy dialogue on social protection. Regional webinars took place with international experts on social protection, resilience and disaster risk reduction; and on impact evaluation for social protection.

In 2016, the RO continued to play a leading role globally in **quality inclusive education**, recently engaging with the UNCRPD Committee to support the development of a General Comment on Inclusive Education (Article 24 of the Convention) which will be instrumental for initiating advocacy and policy dialogue on this issue in many countries.

The toolkit on **Education Participation and Dropout Prevention**, made of two volumes, produced by the RO as a follow up to the global Out of School Children Initiative (OOSCI) was finalized in 2016. The first volume, *'Monitoring Education Participation: Framework for Monitoring Out-of-School Children and Children At Risk of Dropping Out'* jointly published by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) provide guidance to COs on improving data and information systems on OOSC so as to enhance the evidence base for national and local policy making and response. The second volume *'Improving Education Participation - Policy and Practice Pointers for the ECA Region'* presents a wide range of country best practices in the Region and beyond on policies and interventions in the area of education inclusion and dropout prevention and response at key "risk points" in the educational cycle.

Evaluation and Research, and Data

In 2016, the following evaluations were finalized and uploaded in the ERDB. Several other evaluations are in the process of finalization (Bulgaria, Ukraine, etc.).

Croatia	Evaluation of the Parenting Support Programmes: "Growing up Together" and "Growing up Together Plus"
Kosovo*	Evaluation of the Child Rights Monitoring System in Kosovo*
Kyrgyzstan	Country Programme Evaluation
Kyrgyzstan	Evaluation of MLE component of the Unity in Diversity UNICEF/OHCHR project
Macedonia (The former Yugoslav Republic of)	Evaluation of the 2010-2015 Child Protection programme

Serbia	Country-led evaluation on the impact of inclusion in the education system in Serbia
Moldova	Evaluation of models for ECD services for children under 3

The following research/studies were finalized and uploaded in 2016.

Armenia	Assessment of Livebirth and Stillbirth Registration and Reporting
Armenia	Child Needs Survey
Armenia	National Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (N-MODA)
Belarus	Assessment and documentation of best practices of ECD, with focus on early learning and preschool programming in the Republic of Belarus
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Analysis of two entity Strategies for persons with disabilities in 2015
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Focus group research about human security in Canton 10.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Voices of Youth Survey
Bulgaria	Joint assessment of the capacity of the Ombudsman office in Bulgaria in regards to child rights independent monitoring and promotion
Bulgaria	Review and analysis of the national legislation in relation to prevention, recognition, reporting, reaction and interventions on violence against children in Bulgaria
Croatia	Survey on family habits in watching TV
Georgia	Study of Disability Stigma in Georgia
Georgia	Welfare Monitoring Survey
Georgia	Ethical (Media) Coverage of Children's Issues in Georgia 2016
Kazakhstan	KAPB assessment on Justice for Children and Violence against children
Kazakhstan	Prevalence of anemia, vitamin A and I in urine in East Kazakhstan oblast and Kyzylorda oblast
Kazakhstan	Documenting Family Support Services in East-Kazakhstan oblast
Kazakhstan (and Turkmenistan)	MICS Round 5 Final Reports
Kazakhstan	Study on Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan
Kazakhstan	Review of the existing barriers to developing the continuum of modernized child protection services for children in difficult life situations and in justice processes and development of recommendations for policy improvement
Kosovo*	Qualitative research on social norms around domestic violence, peer violence and physical punishment of children and communication strategy
Kyrgyzstan	Formative research on girls hygiene at schools
Kyrgyzstan	Appraisal of the governance of the Social Protection and Child Care System in Kyrgyzstan
Kyrgyzstan	Child Poverty Profile analysis and trends
Kyrgyzstan	Analysis of the Inclusive education Policy, programs and practices in the Kyrgyz Republic
Kyrgyzstan	Joint National-International Review of the National Immunization Programme

Moldova	Assessment of Water Quality, Sanitation and Hygiene Practices in Pre-school Institution in Moldova
Montenegro	Montenegro's children online safety, risks and opportunities
Montenegro	Beneficiary Satisfaction Survey - Social and Child Protection Services
Montenegro	Analysis of existing services and youth support programmers (focus on supporting employability)
Montenegro	Youth and obstacles to employment - Focus on recognition and development of social/emotional skills and key competences
Montenegro	KAP prior and after the "Pre-school for All" campaign
Romania	In-depth assessment Social Inclusion through the Provision of Integrated Social Services model in Bacau County
Romania	CHILDREN IN PUBLIC CARE: ROMANIA 2014 (former "Well-being of children and their families, with special focus on children deprived of, or at-risk of being deprived of parental care")
Romania	Financial impact analysis for scaling up a model of community based services at national level
Romania	Non-cognitive skills development in adolescents in Romania
Serbia	Follow up assessment to the Study on Children in Care (in domain of case management in Centres for social work)
Serbia	Inclusiveness of preschool education in Serbia
Tajikistan	Formative research on infant young child feeding practices and maternal nutrition
Tajikistan	Baseline study on Knowledge, Attitudes, Behaviours, and Practices related to children and women with disabilities in Tajikistan

Implementation Strategies

A wide range of **partnerships** continued to influence policy and public discourse. These included horizontal cooperation between countries across all RKLAs, with the aim of learning from and disseminating good practices. Several study tours and exchanges emerged from the RKLA7 collaborative environment. BiH and Serbia conducted a country exchange study tours and training of health professionals on early identification and intervention. The Turkmenistan CO organized a training at the Department of Developmental Pediatrics, Ankara University, with Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan and shared lessons-learned on its introduction of ECI to the government of Turkmenistan with Kyrgyzstan. Likewise, strong cross-country cooperation continued, for example in the areas DRR and prevention of family separation.

UNICEF's strong **partnerships** with governments, UN agencies, regional organisations, civil society networks and the private sector helped to advance the realization of children rights in the Region: A key strategy has been to strengthen **advocacy and alliances for children's rights** around the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a strong focus on the key regional equity dimensions (gender equality, disability, migration and minorities). UNICEF's approach on strengthening systems for the realization of children's rights and its equity focus is also reflected in the new Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2016-2021 which was launched in 2016 and in the revised European Union Guidelines to Promote and Protect the Rights of the Child (to be launched in March 2017). Activities around the EU-UNICEF Child Rights Toolkit continued to promote partnerships for children with launches and workshops having taken place in Armenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Strong support was provided to Offices to engage with the European Union and the Council of Europe on **gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment**. This focus will continue in 2017 with an EU-UN Regional Gender Consultation planned for Q2 to identify opportunities for joint action. A new regional EU-UNICEF initiative on **Violence against Children and Social Inclusion of Children with Disabilities** in cooperation with the European Disability Forum is strengthening UNICEF's networks with disability person's organisations at regional and country level in the Western Balkans and Turkey. UNICEF input on **children with disabilities** was also well reflected in the new Council of Europe Disability Strategy and the Progress Report for the current EU Disability Strategy. The priority focus of UNICEF advocacy in 2017 was undoubtedly the **rights of refugee and migrant children** which helped to ensure that key UNICEF policy asks were included in relevant EU and CoE policy documents. UNICEF advocacy on rights of **Roma children** continued and ensured that children and young people feature prominently in the EU Council Conclusions on Accelerating the Process of Roma Integration (Dec 2016).

Resource mobilization, i.e. leveraging policies and programmes of partners as well as **mobilising funding** for UNICEF remained another strategic objective for UNICEF's partnerships activities. Funding from the EU, bilateral donors and National Committees was key to support the **response to the emergencies** in the Region, in particular Ukraine and Turkey and the **refugee and migrant crisis in Europe**, including in Serbia and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. For the first time UNICEF received EU funding for the crisis response within the EU, i.e. in Greece for education, child protection and child rights monitoring. UNICEF also continued its EU cooperation on **disaster risk reduction** in Central Asia and continued to explore funding opportunities for **resilience and peace-building**. The RO also supported Offices in the Region on capacity building for resource mobilization through technical advice, webinars, presentations and targeted events. A CEE/CIS Regional Workshop on "Partnerships for Resources & Results for Children" co-organized with PPD and PFP in Brussels in September 2016 was well received by Offices in the Region.

With the recruitment of a **Communication for Development** Advisor to join the RO team, the Region can build on and sustain previously successful communications programmes with a clear gender-responsive focus to facilitate breaking taboos and understanding the harmful effects of **Violence Against Children** (VAC). In addition, research on the intersectionality of VAW and VAC as well as the establishment of a Technical Advisory Group on VAC, working across the RKLAs will further support advocacy and programming to end gender-based violence.

Child rights monitoring continued to be an important core role/strategy in the Region – with country offices (and new One UNICEF teams) working to promote evidence informed decision making for children through efforts to strengthen both the supply of evidence (data/research/evaluation) and the demand for evidence (supporting Ombuds, Parliaments, sectoral accountability frameworks, civil society coalitions, etc.) towards the realisation of rights for children on the move.

In the context of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), the Regional Office has conducted a number of analysis looking at how the RO and COs can support SDG monitoring. In fact, an SDG Plus approach is needed insofar as many but not all of the SDGs for Children are relevant in the ECA Region, and some important results for children in our Region (e.g. children in caring family environments, children's access to justice, etc.) are not well reflected in the SDGs. In this respect, an important regional workshop, convened by the RO, was held in Geneva in October 2016 which sought to strengthen the capacity of national statistical systems to generate information and analysis on trends related to child care reform in the Region. Over 100 representatives from Government, partners and UNICEF staff participated – partners who have been helping to track progress for children for a quarter of a decade in the Region under the framework of the TransMonEE (www.transmonee.org). UNICEF RO was also requested present and to submit a paper on our data work – the paper was published in the global Better Care Network Newsletter in Nov 2016.

http://www.iss-ssi.org/images/editorial-monthly-review/Editorials_eng/2016/Editorial_206October-November_2016.pdf

The last two **MICS surveys** under round 5 were completed in 2016 – [Turkmenistan](#) and [Kazakhstan](#). Both surveys were very well done with an important success in the introduction of real time survey tools in Turkmenistan (tablet-based). Planning is already underway for MICS round 6 and the RO has contributed significantly to the refinement of questionnaires and related tools/methods. More than half the countries in the Region have expressed interest in undertaking a MICS over the 2017-2019 period with particular interest in the social protection, child functioning and early childhood development modules.

Child rights monitoring in emergencies: ensuring reliable information and analysis on the situation of children affected by humanitarian crisis is critical for an evidence informed response. The Regional Office has carefully monitored the situation of children, in particular providing support for data gathering and partnerships (UNHCR, IOM) around information management in the context of the refugee and migration crisis in Europe: developing a regional approach paper and core child rights monitoring indicators, securing DG Justice funding for our monitoring work, and providing guidance and support to One UNICEF Response countries.

In 2016 significant efforts have gone into following up on recommendations, lessons learned and good practices highlighted in the 5 **multi-country evaluations** which were conducted over the 2013-2015 period. The RO and COs have moved forward on tackling important identified bottlenecks to child rights including, for example, social norms – a number of new country and multi-country initiatives have been

launched in 2016 (IPA programme, Beckham fund project, etc.) to tackle social norms related to violence against children, stigma and discrimination towards children with disabilities, etc. Public sector financing was also identified in the MCEs as a critical issue for UNICEF to look at – and in 2016, the ESP section has been working with ECD colleagues to explore sustainable options for financing child care and early learning in the Region – towards the greater inclusion of children from poorer households in early learning opportunities and improved access to the labour market for their mothers. The global evaluation management response tracker documents these and many other efforts to use evidence generated to improve strategies and operational approaches in the Region.

The findings and recommendations of the **Multi Country Evaluations (MCE)** as well as the priorities of the RKLA on Child Health were considered and incorporated when reviewing the development of Country Strategy Notes and CPDs (Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine). In addition, a rapid mapping exercise was undertaken based on **MoRES** framework. The findings of the exercise will inform regional prioritization plans for 2017 as well as revision of the RKLA, with the aim of taking needed iterative steps towards ensuring that every child has access to quality health and nutrition services. No regional or multi-country evaluations (MCEs) were completed in 2016, however preparations are underway to conduct evaluations over the next biennium on two key areas of UNICEF work: home visiting and social protection. Initial steps have been taken by the RO to develop guidance on documenting and validating promising practices.

With respect to research and studies, the Regional Office provided significant support – in particular, proposing SOPs and establishing LTAs and a pre-qualified **Consultants' Roster** towards the generation of high impact evidence across the Region. In terms of overarching regional research and studies, **two** studies were completed in 2016: *“Documentation of promising practices in social protection in CEE/CIS”* and *“Entitlements for children on the move in Europe – desk review of legal provisions and implementation capacities”*. The findings of the entitlements desk review have been largely used to inform the advocacy work in the context of the Migrant and Refugee Crisis and were already utilised in other pieces of research. Eight other regional studies were initiated in 2016 which will be finalized in 2017.

Normative Principles

The RKLAs continue to be the regional strategy for UNICEF to achieve results for children by 2020, grounded in human rights principles. The human rights-based approach guided efforts across all RKLAs, including through the engagement of rights-holders and strengthening of accountability mechanisms. Cooperation with National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) was mapped across 17 countries in the Region, and complemented with collaboration with European networks of ombudspersons for children and other NHRIs.

Gender Equality. GAP benchmarks cover human capacity, plans and budgets and evaluations of **country programmes**, **financial resources** and **knowledge management** and **communications** on gender equality. With regard to implementation of the GAP, CEE/CIS country benchmarks regarding institutional effectiveness, there has been a steady improvement. According to a HQ review of evaluations, as in other regions, most UNICEF CEE/CIS offices had not done a full gender analysis, or if they had, promoting gender equality was not well reflected in programme design or highlighted as a programme result area. In 2015 and 2016, total of 9 gender programme reviews or assessments were completed and two gender audits were done. With technical feedback on strategy notes and support in RBM, an increasing percent of country of CPMPs specifying accountability for GAP results (from 67 percent to 81 percent to 90 percent from 2014-2016).

However, the gender equality marker is still not used consistently and as a result, gender expenditures per GAP formula have gone from 6.7 percent in 2014 to 8.1 percent in 2015 to 5.2 percent of total expenditures in 2016 (organizational benchmark is 15 percent). The percent decrease in 2016 still represents a total increase of \$400,000 in gender expenditures over the previous year. Finally, with the establishment of a Gender Focal Point network, that has a strong and active core group and widening engagement, there is an increase in knowledge management and communications: a Yammer page and Team Site hosts all available resources for exchanges between offices and a quarterly newsletter includes an overview of policy changes and partnership opportunities, and it highlights gender results across the Region.

In large measure, development effectiveness depends on capacity of staff to undertake gender-responsive programming. On a positive note, all 21 Offices and some RO sections and the Brussels liaison office all have Gender Focal Points, however, the two country offices that would qualify to have gender specialists (Turkey and Ukraine with budgets over 40mm) have not appointed one. A capacity assessment has been carried out, and training on the GAP and gender equality principals began in 2016. In COs there are still mixed levels of skills and understanding of gender responsiveness and gender mainstreaming. In many instances, internal CO capacities are not sufficient for achieving the ambitious gender results envisaged in all CPDs, the GAP and the SP. Staff who have a better understanding of gender-responsiveness often have large workloads that do not allow for a focus on gender-responsiveness and gender results as per CPDs and UNDCS/UNDAF.

Internal capacity gaps relate to how to apply and translate an understanding or awareness of gender in/equality into practice (programming) that achieves gender results; and how to document such work for learning and knowledge-sharing. These findings echo throughout UNICEF, and as a result an organization-wide gender equality capacity building programme is being developed which will include credentialing of gender focal points and gender specialist.

Management and Operations

The RO's accountability for governance, oversight, quality assurance, technical assistance, advocacy and strategic engagement – under the Outcome 800 Support-Management – is coordinated through a number of RO and CEE/CIS Regional Committees, which provide advice and support to the Regional Director to ensure that the RO delivers on its accountabilities. The Terms of Reference and composition of these Committees are reviewed and updated annually.

The RO continued to promote cross-office arrangements in 2016 to better manage risk and to improve efficiencies, particularly in offices with limited operations staff missions in the Region. In 2016 the RO Operations provided technical support in the areas of finance, administration, HR management, IT and Security to newly established One UNICEF response at the Regional office and four other non-programme countries in the Region. In addition, the RO Operations has visited country offices for oversight and technical support and in the recruitment of operations staff. In 2016, the country visits included Albania, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Serbia, Ukraine, and remote support in recruitment (interviews) for Bulgaria, Kosovo*, and Tajikistan as well as desk review for other operations staff.

The RO Operations continues to oversee and coordinate UNICEF's programme of supporting the operations team, mentoring and peer reviews. The operations experience was taken as the base for the Region thus it has further been strengthened in 2016 with HR streamlined guidelines and procedures and extending the programme to other areas of programmes. In addition to on-site support, COs continued to support each other off-site, taking advantage of technology e.g. on Vision-related issues, IT-Common Services/Geneva, on line webinars and participation in interviews for candidates. The support between offices go beyond the Region; Turkey CO supported MENARO, Yemen CO, Iraq CO, CEE/CIS RO and UNICEF's Istanbul hub in several goods and service procurements.

GSSC: The CEE/CIS Region transition of transactions to the Global Shared Service Centre (GSSC) was completed very smoothly in the areas of invoice processing, payments and master data management. The Region transitioned in two phases; March and April for country offices, while the Regional Office moved together with the Geneva based entities in September 2016. The offices ensured that the relevant operations staff complete all online training/learning activities, and also organized training for all staff ahead of transition date and relevant workflows were revised to the new working modality accordingly. The transition required an increased level of planning for the Country Office to ensure timely completion of transactions. Two operations staff in the Region were deployed to the GSSC Team in Budapest to support the transition.

The services from the GSSC, as assessed by many country offices in the Region, has improved significantly in terms of quality and quantity. GSSC operations helped to streamline work processes, concentrating most of the technical Vision-related work in the operations section and allowing programme staff more time to focus on programme delivery

While it brings quality assurance to the processes and saves time and effort by removing some processes completely at the CO level, there were two country offices that reported that it is time-consuming to prepare and submit and upload documents for GSSC processing, and that shifting processes to GSSC posed a risk for the CO due to payment mistakes, lengthy processing time, and high transaction load. The RO

has taken the issue with the GSSC management and added controls were implemented at the CO and the GSSC to address and mitigate the issues raised.

Audit: Seven offices were audited in 2016; four internal audits took place in BiH, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine while three external audits took place in Serbia, Turkey and the CEE/CIS Regional Office. Some of the areas raised include Risk Identification & Mitigation, Ethics, Resources Mobilization Strategies, HACT and DCT management.

Action points for prior years' audits for Tajikistan and Turkey were fully closed, while Kosovo* had only 2 remaining open action points by the end of the year.

The RO continued to **monitor CO and RO programme and operations performance** through regular follow ups with COs and regional advisors, which resulted in significant improvements in the implementation rates of programme activities and fund utilization. In 2016, the RO started to publish a quarterly report, and monthly reports in the last quarter of the year. The report included priority Indicators, such as (1) core resources management (allocation and utilization and lost funds in expired grants), (2) audit open action points, and (3) gender. The RO also sends regular reports and email reminders on expiring and lost funds to ensure full implementation of the programme. The end of year reports show great improvement over previous years on the implementation rates.

Operations teams across the Region have provided reliable and timely support in **budget utilization, HACT compliance, Human Resources (HR), staff morale, security, the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and emergency risk assessment**. The teams were also instrumental in ensuring that results-based governance systems are in place and functional. Country Management Teams (CMTs) function as a platform for risk management, monitoring programme priorities as stipulated in the AMPs, identifying potential risks, and addressing them through mitigation measures. In addition, operations teams continued to support their COs in monitoring programme developments, the implementation of rolling work-plans (RWPs), budget expenditure, grant expiration and the submission of donor reports. Management indicators were often monitored using InSight, i.e. the *Management Dashboard* and *Management Reports* and many COs have taken the initiative of building capacity of all staff on managing performance for results (MP4R), results-based management (RBM), ethics, integrity, and gender mainstreaming.

Cash and Banking: The offices continued to make effective use of its bank optimization and cash forecasting tools and meet the closing bank balance targets. Two offices implemented the electronic payment system with support from DFAM, and one office introduced the corporate procurement card in its offices. The Regional Office continued the use of the corporate credit card which proved adding efficiency and reduction of cost for the purchase of air-tickets.

HACT: The RO finalized the Regional HACT Action Plan for 2016-2017 and continued to provide oversight, technical assistance and quality assurance support to strengthen HACT implementation in COs. In 2016, successful HACT and IP management training sessions were conducted in Serbia, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Bulgaria, Tajikistan, Greece and RO. All COs had HACT micro-assessment and assurance plans in place and completed the HACT status reports in line with global requirements. Overall, the Region completed 113 percent of the minimum required programmatic visits and 98 percent of the minimum required spot checks, exceeding the overall global target of 90 percent completion of assurance activities by the end of 2016. The post of an Implementing Partnership Management Specialist (P4), funded by FRG until December 2017, was established for the Region, and the incumbent joined the RO in mid-December 2016.

The RO also provided support, in coordination with FRG, on the eTools planning process for the Region which will be rolled-out to selected COs in 2017.

Efficiency gains and Greening: Continued efforts for effectiveness and efficiencies in implementing programmes and doing business have always been pursued by country offices, this included use of modern technologies and software packages allowing free of charge communication, virtual modes of meetings and interviews and teleconferences, introduction of the LIGHT project, reduced tariff rates in the country coupled with negotiating for better packages and offers to UNICEF. For premises and utilities, the identification of economical use of energy and water, expansion of use of common LTAs on different services and supplies provided opportunities for better offers and reduced rates, more economical motion-sensor lighting in the office public areas, greening of the office, having interns and volunteers, local purchases, partnership with media outlets. On travel related, the offices were able to reduce number of field trips, staff opting to use economy class tickets for trips of more than 9 hours rather than business class tickets, better travel planning and coordination, early booking, and non-refundable tickets vs full fare. In addition, offices benefited from low cost meeting venues, use of government stakeholder's conference facilities for small meetings, outsourcing office services, and using local LTAs with audit companies increased effectiveness of the HACT implementation and brought cost savings.

On individual cases, one office reported that they started dissemination of e-publications and restrict hard copy on expected demand only, establishment of e-catalogue of publications, and in some cases printing is undertaken by the partners directly. And in another office, there has been a substantial transaction cost reduction in terms of cross border bank transfers since the introduction of GSSC this business process was performed from UNICEF global not from CO local accounts.

Following the SG's initiative on green policy, the Office of Turkistan submitted a report on emission gas, calculating the number of office utilities expenses and travels thus achieving high percentage of reduction in operating costs.

Offices across the Region welcomed the DED announcement of the 8 opportunities to enhance efficiency; two offices reported the increase of the threshold of the CRC to be in line with the guidelines, therefore mainstreaming the process.

Business Operations Strategy (BOS) and UN Common Services: Country Offices continue to coordinate with other UN Agencies in the country for common UN procurement and other services, therefore enhancing the efficiency gains in their offices. In some instances, the UNICEF is taking the lead in the UN procurement interventions on behalf of all agencies. The Romania office is the UN House administrator. The Office was the first one in the world to sign the Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the UN with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the use of the UN House in Romania. As a result of negotiation by UNICEF with the Government, the building of the UN House was fully refurbished in 2016 with no cost to UN agencies.

Business Continuity (BC) and Security related: The Region is fully compliant with the global requirement of having the BCP updated regularly with testing at least once a year. In addition, some offices conduct regular warden, building evacuation, communication tree and security drills. To enhance security and safety of the office and staff, several Country Offices benefited from the security funds support from HQ to install shatter resistant film, upgrade CCTV and security and fire alarm devices and access control, as well as initiating fire detection and video surveillance in their offices.

The Region benefitted from the temporary appointment of a Regional Security Advisor to support the Region in security assessment and enhance the preparedness in the office. The Regional Security Advisor visited 9 offices in the last quarter of 2016 including two offices in the non-programme countries, as well as Copenhagen and Florence and have provided technical advice on how to improve the safety and security of staff and premises.

ERM: as part of the annual management plan, offices continue to update the risk library and ensure office-wide discussion and participatory exercises. The Regional Office continues the oversight and review of CO ERMs.

ICT: The ICT Section in Geneva continued to provide technical, procedural, operational and oversight support to the Region, and to the RO. In 2016, five country offices were supported with adoption of LIGHT Infrastructure namely Belarus, Bulgaria, Serbia, Ukraine and Romania. A dedicated LIGHT Service Center was established in Kiev to serve the field offices in Ukraine; whereas, the Geneva LIGHT Service Centre was extended to cater the need of the rest. This improved staff mobility, data-accessibility and business continuity with reduction of operational cost. Skype for Business Telephony was extended to two office locations (Albania and Rome) to enhance Unified Communication Telephony experience and improve staff mobility with reduction of communication cost. A number of stretch assignments were arranged to support ICT learning and development. Two ICT staff from the Region were provided with Advanced Telecommunication Training. A number of ICT staff were trained as the SMEs for upcoming ICT projects who are expected to be highly instrumental in implementation of new ICT tools being rolled out in 2017. Establishment of the Migrant Cell offices in Geneva and around the Region brought sheer volume of workload into the ICT team which is ever increasing. It is also worth mentioning that the Regional Chief of ICT reports to the PFP while serving for the CEE/CIS RO, the Region, EMOPs-Geneva, Geneva Liaison Office.

Supply management: In general the establishment of the One UNICEF Response in CEE/CIS Region has increased the total amount of procurement reported for the Region, with a total amount of \$108.6 million value of supply procurement (including procurement services) in 2016 in the Region. The main items procured include vaccines, syringes, cold-chain equipment, safety injection supplies, antiretroviral medicines, micro-nutrient products, and premix for flour fortification. Services from Supply Division were always rated as high quality, with timely delivery. The role of the COs in procurement also included facilitation and collaboration between Supply Division and Ministries of Health, and assistance with ordering, customs clearance and the settlement of financial accounts. Several programme and non-programme country offices were involved in supporting procurements related to the Slovenia migrant crisis, delivery of goods i.e. NFI items – clothing for children) to support the reception centers for asylum seekers, summer and winter clothing/shoes, language books, school bags, hygiene items, food supplements from SD (Multi Nutrition Powder and Plumpy Sup; as well as purchase of mosquito screens that were mounted on migrants living containers in both transit; contribution to construction works of two children's playgrounds and one soccer field, toilets and draining and sewage systems.

Status of the 2014 Global Staff Survey (GSS) Follow-up Actions: The RO engaged in the design and implementation of two staff retreats (one for management and a second one for all staff) and subsequent one-to-one and team coaching to enhance leadership and impact on the Team performance and cohesion. In addition, the RO continued to working with Common services on LTAs to streamline and harmonize business processes identified as priority, as well as providing feedback on the development of e-tools to gain work efficiencies. Finally, the practice of information sharing and discussing recent regional and global developments and plans during weekly stand-up meetings, all staff meetings with RD and TWWs was carried forward.