Executive Summary

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the 2012-2016 Government of Croatia and UNICEF partnership took place in 2014. This comprehensive process resulted in a strong, reconfirmed commitment of all partners in pursuing joint efforts for the benefit of children in Croatia and abroad, as well as in further prioritisation in the use of Croatian expertise for beyond border engagement and horizontal cooperation.

Important progress for children was noted by the UN Committee on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) in its 2014 Concluding Observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Croatia. However, the Committee also identified a number of areas which needed improvement and expressed concern about, inter alia, the situation of disadvantaged groups of children in Croatia.

The long-term effects of the economic crisis resulted in a compressed fiscal space, increased debt, and a growing budget deficit. To date, social sector budgets at national level have been protected, but unequal regional development and disparities in availability of funds that come from the local level, particularly in the least developed municipalities, lead to uneven implementation of laws and policies. Recent research shows increase in children at risk-of-poverty rates. Children in single-parent families, children with disabilities and Roma children are at particularly high risk of poverty and social exclusion.

The National Strategy for Child Rights 2014-2020 was adopted in 2014. The Government established a new Council for Children that has, among other duties, a responsibility to coordinate and monitor the implementation of that Strategy.

Work on two major Programme components progressed well. UNICEF enhanced the national policy dialogue and strengthened its partnership with relevant stakeholders by generating evidence and knowledge to support the establishment of more effective and responsive national child protection mechanisms, both at the policy and implementation levels. Policy advice and a strong advocacy voice for children were systematically applied, particularly during the process of identifying priority areas and developing goals of the new national Strategy for Child Rights. UNICEF supported shifts in public discourse about disadvantaged children. The launch of the first comprehensive study on young child poverty, organised in partnership with the President of the Republic of Croatia, resulted in high interest of public, key stakeholders and media. The results of the study sparked the national debate throughout mainstream and social media and in the Parliament.

Significant progress was made in the area of development of diversion measures and child-friendly justice. Capacities for the provision of support to parents of young children, including children with disabilities, were developed and sustainability ensured. An agreement between the line ministries, commencing joint efforts for the improvement of early diagnostics and early interventions for children with autism, represents needed positive development of inter-sectorial
Intensive family support and family preservation measures were modelled and mainstreamed into the system. The only inclusive Children’s Rights Film Festival in the region fuelled creative participation of children in matters that are important to them, and introduced inclusive screenings into monthly film screening programme for children and adults in the cinema halls across the country.

An additional area of intervention during 2014, beyond the initially planned country programme, was the area of emergency response and early recovery. In the framework of its humanitarian mandate and in close cooperation with the line ministries, UNICEF provided assistance to areas affected by heavy rainfalls which resulted in large scale flooding. Immediate provision of drinking water, hygienic and other supplies for families with children was organized and delivered. Child-friendly spaces, integrating psycho-social support, creative and educational activities, were organized in the flooded areas, followed by assistance with the purchase of the textbooks, and training for parents and professionals in identifying post-emergency trauma in children.

Significant achievements were also noted in the area of leveraging resources from public and private sectors and fundraising to respond to emergency situations beyond borders. Joint action with UNICEF Bosnia-Herzegovina in early recovery from floods was organized. Growing solidarity and engagement of Croatian citizens for world’s children was additionally enhanced with the contribution of US$48,000 by the Croatian Government to Ebola prevention in Mali.

In spite of the six years of continuous recession in Croatia, the UNICEF fundraising programme was very successful. The diversity, strength and importance of the broad alliance for children convened by UNICEF - engaging the Government, civil society, corporate sector, academia, media and a large number of individual supporters - was highlighted by MTR and ensured significant progress for children achieved in 2014.

**Humanitarian Assistance**

In May 2014, heavy rainfalls in Croatia, as well as in neighbouring Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, resulted in severe large scale flooding. According to the official records, in Croatia there were two casualties, 27,255 people suffered the consequences of flooding, while 8,635 people from Vukovar-Srijem County in eastern Croatia were evacuated, leaving their homes either destroyed or severely damaged. Over 17,000 children were directly affected by the floods in Croatia. School buildings that were flooded suffered significant harm. Following this natural disaster, the Government of Croatia requested international assistance that would support its emergency response and recovery efforts.

In the framework of UNICEF’s global humanitarian mandate, and largely due to the funds available through the donations of regular donors, but also to the specific fundraising activities undertaken in this context, UNICEF office in Croatia was able to intervene and start providing humanitarian assistance and delivering emergency response activities from the very onset of the crisis. UNICEF closely coordinated emergency and early recovery assistance with the Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs, which is the national coordinating body for the international organizations, as well as liaising with other line ministries responsible for the specific aspects of emergency response. UNICEF initial emergency interventions included the following:

- In coordination with the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, two days after the floods, UNICEF procured and delivered to the Red Cross warehouses in Slavonski Brod, Županja
and Vinkovci in eastern Croatia more than 4,000 kg of the hygienic supplies and drinking water;
• Following a request received from the Crisis Management Committee of Ministry of Health, UNICEF procured and delivered 1,000 kg of disinfectant, and repellents for children;
• Educational leaflets for children and parents, helping them to find quick answers to post-flood challenges (such as hygiene, breastfeeding, and diarrhoea prevention) were developed by UNICEF and distributed in the affected areas in coordination with the Ministry of Health.

Furthermore, in coordination with the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, UNICEF supported the organization and implementation of psycho-social support for children affected by the floods. Two child friendly spaces, integrating psycho-social support, creative and educational activities, were organized in the flooded areas, one of which is still being operated in the container settlement in the town of Gunja (eastern Croatia). Over 300 children participated in the child-friendly spaces activities.

Additionally, UNICEF Croatia supported the purchase of textbooks for 845 primary school students from floods affected areas and conducted training for parents, educators and other professionals in identifying post-emergency trauma in children. A series of lectures on how to provide psycho-social support for children after disasters, as well as individual counselling, were provided for teachers and parents of four elementary schools from the flooded area of Vukovar-Srijem County.

The overall experience of floods response in 2014 revealed a number of challenges in the emergency preparedness and response system of Croatia, both at national and local level. The response was particularly challenging in the areas of child protection and education in emergencies, as well as in the provision of adequate housing in the post-emergency phase. The need to strengthen the existing system, with particular focus on children, was recognized by the key state and non-state actors and UNICEF was invited to provide technical support and expertise in that process. Therefore, a process of strengthening “child-friendly” emergency preparedness and response systems, at national and local level, will be initiated in 2015.

In addition to supporting emergency response and recovery in the country, UNICEF Croatia also engaged in beyond border emergency response and recovery actions. In cooperation with UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovin, and Croatian State Office for Croats Abroad, the office ensured funds for the rehabilitation of the Elementary School in Vidovice, near Orašje (northern Bosnia and Herzegovina), which was severely damaged by floods. This new form of joint action reflects the joint commitment of the partners – UNICEF Croatia and Government of Croatia – to increase cooperation in supporting child rights beyond Croatian borders.

**Equity Case Study**

During 2014, the findings and recommendations of the UNICEF Croatia comprehensive study on the accessibility and the use of community parenting support services for parents of children aged zero to six (presented in the publication “How do parents and communities take care of the youngest children in Croatia” published in 2013) provided evidence-based grounds for a number of advocacy and policy advise activities enhancing equity. Most importantly, it was used in preparation of the National Strategy for the Rights of the Child in Croatia 2014 - 2020, adopted in September 2014.
The National Strategy used UNICEF’s study results and recommendations as a reference throughout the document: explicitly in the section regarding protection of children from violence, and in the section on the importance of community-based services and programmes contributing to the child’s wellbeing.

The study clearly identified that parents living in rural areas, with low income and education, as well as parents of children with disabilities, are faced with specific numerous barriers in access to parenting support services, thus being some of the most vulnerable groups of parents. It also indicated a significant lack of professionals, services, training and intersectoral cooperation in delivery of community-based early childhood development (ECD) and parenting support services. Based on this, the National Strategy emphasised key strategic issues in protection of the rights of the child: (i) uneven accessibility of services to children and families in different parts of Croatia, which are guaranteed by law or foreseen by strategic documents, and; (ii) ineffective vertical and horizontal coordination in the area of ensuring the realisation of children’s rights. In accordance to that, the National Strategy also identified key priority objectives for the period 2014-2020, the majority of them fully aligned with the recommendations of the study, including the need to:

• Improve and ensure support and assistance to parents, families and other guardians of children in order to enable safe, respectful and encouraging environment for child’s growth and development;
• Develop a network of social services for children and families in order to support child’s development, protection and prevention of separation from a biological family;
• Improve accessibility of support services and programmes in order to enable and encourage conditions for optimal early childhood development, with special focus on the most vulnerable groups of children, those with disabilities, of the Roma community and those living in poverty;
• Ensure appropriate number of competent professionals in different sectors, providing services in support to children and families;
• Establish effective and sustainable mechanisms for intersectoral cooperation at all levels and ensure partnership and participation of all relevant stakeholders involved in activities related to child's wellbeing and promotion and protection of child's rights.

As shown above, the focus on the most vulnerable groups identified in UNICEF study was adopted in the National Strategy.

The UNICEF study also provided background information and arguments for the expansion and further development of the parenting support model developed by UNICEF (Growing up Together). This materialized through funding opportunities within European Union (EU)/government projects in two Croatian counties (Medimurje and Primorje) for the work with Roma parents and parents from other disadvantaged groups, as well as through development of a new model of parenting support programme intended to parents of children with disabilities.

The findings of the study were furthermore used in the development of UNICEF Croatia supported training for the health visiting nurses on ECD and positive parenting.

During 2014 the study was introduced and incorporated in the social work curricula at the Zagreb School of Social Work, as a compulsory literature of the graduate course 'Family policy, parents, children', and of a specialist postgraduate course 'Contemporary parenting and the rights of the child'.

The study was also used as a reference for the presentation at the Innocenti expert consultation.
In 2014 UNICEF Croatia developed and implemented a successful model of capacity development of criminal justice system in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, and supported by national and international experts. Despite advanced policy and legal framework in Croatia, a lack of knowledge and skills, and a lack of adequate equipment, were identified as two significant challenges that needed to be jointly addressed.

The Croatian Law on criminal procedures defines that child victim/witness involved in criminal proceedings can be interviewed only once (exceptionally twice). However, in practice there is a serious capacity and knowledge gap that results in children testifying numerous times and suffering high risk of secondary victimization. Most Courts possess out-of-date equipment which does not allow them to adhere to the policies and international standards.

To increase the capacity of criminal justice institutions and individuals to safeguard the best
interest of the child and prevent secondary victimization, UNICEF has developed an innovative, context-specific curriculum for a three day training on the protection of child victims/witnesses rights during the criminal proceedings. Over 100 investigative judges, youth judges, public prosecutors and other professionals across Croatia gained knowledge and skills necessary to conduct quality interviews with child victims/witnesses by using a multidisciplinary approach focused on the best interest of the child. The upscaling and sustainability of this model is ensured through national Judicial Academy, which will offer this training as part of its ongoing programme, reaching the remaining and the new justice professionals.

Responding to the need for adequate equipment, UNICEF equipped 10 Courts, which serve approximately 70 per cent of all child victims/witnesses in the country, with modern audio-visual equipment for interviewing child victims and witnesses.

UNICEF successfully developed written materials to answer important questions that justice for children professionals, as well as children, their parents and legal guardians have regarding their rights and procedures during the criminal proceedings. The Croatian edition of the Handbook for Professionals and Policymakers on Justice in Matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime was published and distributed to all criminal courts that serve child victims/witnesses, as an important resource.

**Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy**

In 2014, UNICEF Croatia enhanced the national policy dialogue and strengthened its partnership with stakeholders by generating evidence and knowledge to support the establishment of more effective and responsive national child protection mechanisms, both at the policy and implementation levels.

Policy advice and a strong advocacy voice for children were systematically used, particularly during the process of identifying priority areas and developing goals of the new National Strategy for Child Rights. In addition to research and analyses conducted by the UNICEF that enabled policy dialogue based on solid evidence and highlighted equity gaps, the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child have been used to frame the national policy in relation with the most excluded children.

Due to the global economic crisis, the significantly destabilised position of families with the youngest children has become alarming for the future outcome of those boys and girls, which made strengthening the social protection enabling environment one of UNICEF’s priority advocacy themes.

In partnership with the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, comprehensive research on preschool children’s poverty was conducted to generate evidence and grounds for policy and/or practices adjustments that will address child poverty. In addition to the field research, the composition and effectiveness of social expenditure for children and their families was analysed. All relevant ministries and governmental bodies were familiarized with the findings and recommendations at the internal presentation and discussion meeting that resulted in the acknowledgment of the need to: (i) utilise these findings through the prospective joint action plan, and; (ii) invest resources in conducting further child poverty analysis, especially relating to school-aged children.

To facilitate further engagement of policymakers in prioritising child poverty issues, provide inputs for improving the social protection system, and to inform the general and professional
public on key research findings and recommendations, the President of Croatia and UNICEF organized a thematic conference of the President’s Council for Social Justice in September 2014. The conference generated considerable interest among the media, professional and broader public, and resulted in an increased demand for swift and effective actions to decrease effects of the crisis on children living in poverty.

**Partnerships**

In 2014, UNICEF was active in exploring modalities of engagement with Croatia as a high-income country, with the aim of transforming its partnership with Croatia in a way that would best meet the common priorities of the partners, while maximizing the impact on children in Croatia and worldwide. The 2014 MTR process, which set the grounds for further discussions on this issue, recognized the great value and variety of actors in the existing alliance for children around the ongoing Country Programme, as well as the great important of the convening role that UNICEF was playing in that alliance. The high and growing commitment of citizens of Croatia in that alliance was particularly highlighted.

By the end of 2014, 35,500 individuals, or approximately one per cent of total adult population in the country, had been supporting programmes for children in Croatia and internationally through regular monthly donations to UNICEF Croatia, which amounts to 66 per cent of overall fundraising income generated by the office. Besides the financial stability obtained through regular donations from a large donor base, UNICEF Croatia supporters constitute a strategic partnership platform for promoting child-rights concepts and influencing social norms, as well as contributing to well-being of children worldwide through UNICEF international programmes.

The Schools for Africa campaign entered its seventh year of alliance with primary and secondary schools, as well as with kindergartens, focusing on a new beneficiary country, Burkina Faso. In 2014 the scope of the campaign remained on the 2014 level, further including kindergarten children, primary and secondary students, altogether involving more than 80,000 children, which represents 15 per cent of all children in Croatia.

A strong partnership with local governments in three major cities in Croatia, namely Zagreb, Rijeka and Split, contributed significantly to fundraising, local advocacy and support to programme activities in their respective regions.

A new partnership was established in 2014 with the Agency for Electronic Media.

**External Communication and Public Advocacy**

UNICEF Croatia was selected as one of the pilot countries for the roll-out of the organisation’s new Global Communication Strategy, and actively engaged with the Regional Office (RO) and the Division of Communication in that process. As one of the outcomes of that exercise, the office’s communication strategy was revised and adjusted.

External communication supported the shifts in public discourse about disadvantaged children. The launch of the first comprehensive study on young child poverty, organised in partnership with the President of the Republic of Croatia, resulted in significant media coverage and generated a high level of interest of the public and key stakeholders. The results of the study sparked national debate throughout mainstream and social media and in the Parliament.

In partnership with Ombudsperson for Children, UNICEF co-organised public launch of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s Concluding Observations on the combined third and
fourth periodic reports on Croatia’s State Party report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). By using contemporary communication tools, such as infographics, the Observations were shared and discussed through digital channels.

UNICEF’s external communication facilitated a change in the public perception of child rights during the flood emergency. The example of the UNICEF-supported psycho-social interventions was used to communicate about the importance of support to children after the emergency, but also the need for children to participate in the recovery from floods.

International solidarity for children was supported through an intensive campaign in print, online and TV with focus on Ebola. The “Guardians of Childhood” campaign conducted over 45 days mobilised 505 new donors.

More than 6,000 children and adults participated and contributed to the Sixth Edition of Children’s Rights Festival that continued to raise awareness and standards on the importance of inclusion and child participation through film. This year’s Festival reflected the “End Violence” campaign, and provided a platform for children to speak out about this important issue.

UNICEF Croatia was successful in reaching a wide audience with key messages on child rights and equity, with more than 515 media clips recorded in the top tier media, with digital media the most prominent. Engagement through social media increased by 37 per cent compared to 2013.

**South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation**

Strengthening partnerships and engagement in the area of knowledge exchange, knowledge brokering and beyond border engagement was confirmed as a joint priority of Government of Croatia and UNICEF. In line with that, UNICEF facilitated Croatia’s knowledge and experience sharing both regionally and globally.

Croatian Government representatives shared their promising experience in the area of the right of a child to live in a supportive and caring family environment, at a side event organised during the UNICEF Executive Board meeting in New York in September.

A cutting-edge instrument for early detection of developmental risks in infants “Guide for monitoring child development”, developed by the Turkish paediatrician Dr. Ilgi Ertem, was presented in Croatia for health professionals from Croatia and Serbia, who were trained in its use.

UNICEF country offices in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia jointly organised a conference to launch UNICEF “Communicating with Children” resource pack in local languages. Participants, including around 100 TV professionals, representatives of electronic media regulatory agencies, referral ministries and academia, opened a debate on the quality, appropriateness, relevance, and inclusiveness of children’s TV programmes in the region. Since the countries from this region share similar lingual, cultural and media space, the cross-border collaboration between the TV stations and media regulators was discussed as a natural way for productive use of limited resources in the co-production and exchange of inclusive child-friendly TV programmes.

During early recovery from floods, cross-border exchange of communication for development materials and other tools informing children and adults about disease prevention and safety was organised in cooperation with UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina.
The office mobilised around US$50,000 from the private sector in Croatia for recovery from floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Joint support of UNICEF Croatia and the Government of Croatia for the rehabilitation of elementary school in Vidovice, north Bosnia-Herzegovina, was agreed upon.

The Croatian Government contributed to Ebola prevention in Mali with U$48,000.

UNICEF Croatia, in cooperation with schools and kindergartens, mobilized around US$63,000 in the framework of “Schools for Africa” programmes, benefiting children in Burkina Faso.

### Identification Promotion of Innovation

The role of children as agents of change, was supported within communication around the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC@25) in an innovative way. The initial idea was born after receiving survey results on the awareness of child rights among children in Croatia, which indicated the lowest level of awareness among children in the age group seven to 10. In order to address this challenge, UNICEF created the “Get it Right!” online computer and board game about child rights, launched in December. In the first 20 days after the launch, 1,410 players registered and completed the online game. A board game will be distributed to 240 public libraries in January 2015. The preparation of an inclusive version of the game, adapted for the use of children with visual impairments, is also in progress.

### Support to Integration and cross-sectoral linkages

Cross-sectoral cooperation has been identified as one of the challenges in the realization of child rights in Croatia. The role of UNICEF as a promoter and facilitator of cross-sectoral linkages was stressed out in the MTR Analytical Report as one of the major contributions of the organisation in Croatia.

In 2014, a complex initiative aiming at improving the screening and diagnostic framework related to Autistic Disorder Syndrome (ADS) in children was developed and initiated. The core participants in this initiative are three line ministries, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Policy and Youth (MSPY), UNICEF, the Faculty for Education and Rehabilitation, and representatives of civil society and parents of children with ADS.

According to the available data, the prevalence of ADS in the Republic of Croatia is about two to three per every 100 persons; whilst amongst children aged up the age of eight, it is around one per one thousand, with an incidence three times higher in boys than girls. Early detection, developmental and diagnostic assessment, and early intervention services for children aged up to seven years with ASD and their families are not standardized in Croatia. It often takes several years from the first parental concern to receiving a diagnosis for their child. The average age of autism diagnosis in the Croatia is close to five years, and even later for families from rural area and poor families.

Factors leading to high levels of late diagnosis of ADS in children cut across many sectors, and this is why the cross-sectoral approach was crucial. The implementation experience so far shows that the coordination of this cross-sectoral initiative is particularly demanding and time consuming. However, it has opened up the necessary broad dialogue in the country on this important issue and encouraged the involved partners to think and act “outside the box” of their own institution or organization. The clear division of tasks and responsibilities, as well as the
effective leadership, were observed as crucial in this process. The process itself and the approval of its outcomes is guided by an inter-ministerial committee, which plays a key role in terms of establishing linkages and coordinating between ministries, setting up standards, developing human resource and securing financial resources.

**Service Delivery**

Based on two comprehensive surveys related to parents of the youngest children in Croatia (2007, 2013), UNICEF initiated the development of innovative comprehensive models of positive parenting support. These are intended for parents of the youngest children in general population (“Growing up Together”, 2008) and for parents of the youngest children with disabilities (“Growing up Together PLUS”, 2014). These models were developed within the UNICEF Croatia campaign “The first three are the most important!” promoting early childhood development for young children, and support to the youngest children with developmental risks and challenges. The “Growing up Together PLUS” programme was successfully finalized and introduced during 2014. Both programmes provide community-based parenting support services to parents of children with developmental delays, disabilities, or chronic illness, and were subjected to continuous internal process of evaluation to assess the impact.

For development and implementation of both programmes, cooperation with the State Education and Teacher Training Agency was established, in order to ensure sustainability and training for future professionals implementing the programme within the educational system (mostly kindergartens and educational organizations providing services to children with disabilities).

Furthermore, in 2014 the establishment of the NGO “Growing up Together Centre” was encouraged and supported. The Centre was established by the leading national experts in positive parenting and ECD, as well as other professionals with long-term experience in providing the programme to parents all over Croatia. The Centre regularly monitored the implementation of both programmes in kindergartens and other organizations all over Croatia, provided information to parents and professionals, ensured sustainability in service provision quality standards, provided continuous support to programme implementers and promoted the programme in national and international occasions. The synergy between UNICEF, who initiated the development of the service model, the State Agency, who provides sustainability in training new professionals, service providers (kindergartens and other organizations and incorporating the service into their regular programmes, and the specialized NGO, who monitor continuous quality assurance, has provided a solid foundation for sustainable and expanding service delivery in support to parents of the youngest children in Croatia.

**Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation**

In 2014, UNICEF Croatia supported the Government to further advance its capacities to respect, protect and fulfil child rights, and to achieve equitable development for all children. Policy dialogue, communication with the general public, and an advocacy voice for the most deprived children was shaped to accomplish sustainable progress and results integrating the human rights-based approach.

The CRC and equity agenda was the foundation for all UNICEF Croatia activities; from generating a wide spectrum of evidence/data (through the Situation Analysis and conducted research) and advocating for the establishment of functional and reliable child rights monitoring mechanisms, to modelling new approaches in addressing inequity and child rights violations.
In 2014, Croatia’s combined third and fourth periodic report was reviewed by UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF provided an alternative report and supported the provision of the children’s report to the UNCRC. In addition to the progress achieved, numerous challenges related to the protection and realization of the rights of the most vulnerable groups of children – children with disabilities, children facing poverty, children in residential care, children within the justice system, and Roma children – have been noted in UNCRC Concluding Observations, issued in 2014.

Additionally, in 2014 UNICEF Croatia provided information to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, addressing challenges in the behaviours and practices related to children with disabilities, particularly within the education, health and social protection systems, that hamper their access to quality ECD and Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) family-based support services.

During the floods related emergency situation in Croatia, UNICEF Croatia advocated for and directly supported the rights-based approach to children affected by a natural disaster.

UNICEF Croatia consistently applied an equity approach and the human rights based concepts and principles throughout the MTR process.

A workshop on human rights and their relevance in the context of working with UNICEF was provided for all staff members during the yearly retreat in June. Members of the team demonstrated a strong commitment for continuous upgrading and expanding their knowledge and expertise in this area.

**Gender Mainstreaming and Equality**

UNICEF Croatia continuously worked on mainstreaming and integrating the gender perspective in the planning, implementation and monitoring aspects of its activities. This was evident, inter alia, in generating evidence on the most vulnerable groups of population, such as Roma children and adults (e.g. through the recently published UN national Roma Report) and when advocating for improving gender-disaggregated data collection mechanisms in order to enhance monitoring systems.

A newly developed UNICEF programme was implemented in selected counties for supporting the most marginalised groups of children to participate in quality and inclusive preschool education. The programme addressed gender-based discrimination within the anti-bias training provided for preschool professionals and other relevant community stakeholders. Although data showed that there were no differences in enrolment of boys and girls into preschools, the preschool teachers often endorse cultural gender stereotypes.

The principle of addressing gender-based prejudices and practices was integrated in training developed by UNICEF within the areas of capacity building and technical assistance. For example, when home visiting nurses were trained to improve service quality of their work in relation to the needs of the most vulnerable groups of youngest children and their families, special attention was dedicated to empowering fathers for an active, participative role in the upbringing of their children.

Due to the already existing high level of national policy and legislation frameworks (Gender Equality Act and the National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality), as well as
institutionalised gender equality monitoring mechanisms (the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality and the Government’s Office for Gender Equality), UNICEF Croatia did not have programmes which specifically address gender equality in 2014. Therefore, information on targeted resources (budgets and human capacities) invested in gender equality programmes cannot be extracted.

An entire communication framework applied by UNICEF, at all instances and both in dialogue with partners and the general public, integrated gender equality themes. The gender approach was continuously promoted through media relations, always considering gender topics and gender balance in representation.

**Environmental Sustainability**

Certainly influenced by the ongoing climate change, in 2014 Eastern Croatia suffered from severe flooding which resulted in two deaths and 27,255 people suffering the consequences of flooding. A total of 8,635 people were evacuated and over 17,000 children directly affected by the floods. UNICEF Croatia immediately supported emergency response and recovery actions. These included the organization of two green child-friendly spaces with psychosocial support and non-formal pre-school education.

The 2014 floods experience revealed a need for investing in Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience programmes in Croatia, with a focus on children and child rights. The MTR reaffirmed this need and recognized the potential for responding to it in the framework of the current and future partnership between UNICEF and Croatia, counting on UNICEF’s global expertise in this area.

Regarding the internal UNICEF processes and their impact on the environment, the office advanced waste management separating paper waste, PET, old batteries, and used cartridges, amongst others. Beside waste management, CUNICEF used FSC/PEFC certified printing paper with EU Ecolabel and only printed necessary documents. Additionally, stickers reminding staff to switch off the lights when not needed are present on several locations in the premises. The office continued to use low-carbon emission cars. All these actions were undertaken in order to reduce the environmental impact from disposal and the environmental footprint of the office.

**Effective Leadership**

The Country Management Team (CMT) continued to provide strategic direction, overall leadership and oversight to ensure that the country programme is aligned with the changing requirement of the country and that the planned results are achieved.

The CMT regularly reviewed, as per standing agenda items, implementation of Biannual Management Plan (BMP) as per agreed indicators, the budget utilisation and monitored the fundraising strategy. Major initiatives taken by the CMT during 2014 included: revision of staffing structure in relation to the transition to Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC); strengthening programme priorities within the MTR process; effective response to emergency, and; self-assessment and implementation of the Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT).

During 2014, the Table of Authority was updated to reflect changes in reporting structure and staff-related changes and responsibilities. Segregation of Duty conflicts were reviewed regularly through UNICEF Division of Financial and Administrative Management Dashboard. As part of the enterprise risk management (ERM) approach, the risk assessment was updated in February 2014.
The following formal governance structures were in place: Country Management Team, Contract Review Committee, Project Cooperation Agreement Review Committee, Fundraising Strategy Committee, Local Property Survey Board, Joint Consultative Committee, as well as Local Staff Development Committee. The Terms of Reference and memberships of office committees were updated in 2014.

During the year, five CMT meetings were held, along with five all-staff meetings, one Operations Team meeting, eight fundraising team meetings, and three Fundraising Strategy Committee meeting In addition, 13 programme team meetings were conducted to assess progress in implementation and review the standard set of programme implementation indicators, and three internal business processes meetings were organised to share and discuss changes in policies and organisational changes.

In 2014 UNICEF Croatia underwent changes in leadership and organizational reporting structure following the discussions with the Government which started in 2013. Change in the organisational reporting structure was made effective in 2014 and as per the UNICEF CEE/CIS Regional Office Management Plan 2014-2017, the office reports directly to the Regional Director.

The Mid-Term Review of the Government of Croatia and UNICEF Partnership, in the framework of 2012-2016 Country Programme of Cooperation, took place during 2014. The process resulted in the fine-tuning of the current programme focus, addition of disaster risk reduction and resilience component to the existing programme, and consequently in the adjustments in the programme indicators, in order to optimise results for the most vulnerable children in Croatia and beyond.

Financial Resources Management

The CMT held 15 meetings in 2014 and discussed management issues related to office strategic directions, including contribution management, budget allocations, budget control and utilization, and outstanding Direct Cash Transfer (DCT) advances. Performance indicators were monitored by the CMT through in-house developed Monthly Monitor Report, performance management reports, and the online Manager’s Dashboard.

The office implemented additional measures in order to ensure efficient, timely, cost-effective and transparent utilization of financial and human resources. In line with efficiency and effectiveness initiative, the office reviewed and abolished all self-imposed procedures and duplication of functions that were not organisationally mandated. Using in-house software a UNICEF Croatia Business Planner was developed and fully implemented in 2014. The Planner ensured tracking of incoming Invoices and enabled the combining of invoices from the same Vendor in order to reduce number of transactions in SAP, automated processing of Value-Added Tax exemption forms, tracking of projects/tasks, events, absence list for staff members and consultants within the office, staff roster, a unified list of suppliers, an automated monthly Supply Plan, as well as chronologically managing documents received and sent.

The office submitted Bank Reconciliations regularly and before the deadline in SAP. All financial closure activities were successfully completed and in full compliance with prescribed deadlines, including 2014 Accounts Closure activities.

Expenditure rates for 2014 were 100 per cent for Regular Resources 86 per cent for Other
Resources-Regular, and 68 per cent for Other Resources-Emergency due to postponement of some activities in post-emergency response phase. All expiring grants were utilised to 100 per cent before their expiration.

HACT is not fully adopted by all UN, however UNICEF managed all direct cash transfers to implementing partners as per the HACT policies. The office did not have any outstanding DCT for more than 9 months in 2014.

### Fund-raising and Donor Relations

In 2014 UNICEF Croatia raised US$2.721 million through local private sector fundraising which represented an increase of 26 per cent compared to 2013 result in local currency; and succeeded in securing 100 per cent of planned targets within the Other Resources ceiling for the country programme activities.

UNICEF Croatia contributed US$260,000 to global Regular Resources which is almost double the amount compared to 2013, US$63,000 to the Schools for Africa Campaign (international Other Resources), and US$335,000 to the Global Emergency Fund (Other Resources-Emergency) primarily for emergency response for the Balkan Floods (US$315,000).

The income for 2013 Cards and Products activities amounted to gross income of US$362,000 with a grant of US$95,000 received in April 2014.

### Evaluation

UNICEF Croatia developed a bi-annual Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP_ to strategically plan research, monitoring and evaluation activities in 2013 and 2014. The IMEP was regularly overseen and adjusted in accordance to the Country Programme needs.

In addition to the Situation Analysis and several pieces of research finalised in 2014, UNICEF Croatia conducted an independent Country Programme Analytical Assessment to contribute to the comprehensive MTR Process. The Assessment was undertaken by a group of independent experts to ensure an impartial and objective view of the progress.

In 2014, there were no scheduled country-led evaluation processes, but UNICEF Croatia participated in the Multi-Country evaluation related to the Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda (RKLA) 1: A child’s right to a family environment.

UNICEF Croatia continued to address specific recommendations of the 2012 evaluation of the project “For a Safe and Enabling School Environment”. In that context, the recommendation on possible ways to ensure the sustainability of the project was addressed through advocacy efforts, which resulted in the new or renewed interest of several important stakeholders in that project. The sub-regional conference on peer violence, which will be organized by UNICEF Croatia in 2015, will be used as an opportunity to transform this renewed interest into more concrete actions.

Although the recently adopted National Strategy for Child Rights Protection endorsed development of its comprehensive monitoring framework, establishing systematic reviewing, monitoring and evaluating processes might be challenging due to the limitation in available national capacities.

To increase availability of disaggregated data and ensure reliable tracking of trends in equity
gaps, UNICEF Croatia intensified communication with relevant ministries. As a result, all declared their commitment and accountability for further cooperation in improving child-related statistics. In the process of developing Country Analytical Report, the MSPY invested significant efforts to provide information and clarify child protection related indicators to support and further improve TransMonEE database.

**Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings**

In order to improve staff efficiency, UNICEF Croatia introduced various efficiency and effectiveness initiatives at the end of 2013 with full implementation in 2014. These included monthly payment schedule, monthly printing plan, monthly purchasing plan, combining of invoices/reducing of number of payments) w; all of which resulted in a reduction in the volume of transactions of 25 per cent compared to 2013. This means that 25 per cent less invoices were posted, processed for bank, signed, and other processes.

In partnership with media outlets, free advertising space and time was secured in the approximate value of US$150,000. This included: airtime on National Television for Guardians of Childhood DRTV; Children’s Rights Festival public service announcement (PSA); airtime on MTV for the Stop Ebola campaign; screening of the Children’s Rights Festival PSA in 10 towns in cinemas for one month; 1,500 advertising outdoor positions; radio airtime on local radio stations, and print advertisements in two monthly magazines and four daily newspapers.

Efficiency gains and savings were achieved in 2014 also with the implementation of Office 365 and use of Lync as well as Polycom VC for free of charge international calls, video calls, meetings, web-ex sessions for recruitment purposes instead of traveling or using expensive land lines or office mobile phones. The office conducted detailed market research for printing equipment and concluded that it is more efficient to rent a copy/multifunctional machines. With the increased number of staff in 2014 and increased office space spread on two floors, the office rented an additional multifunctional copy machine, and continued with a phasing out process for single printer per room scenario in order to save funds on expensive cartridges.

**Supply Management**

The supply component of procured goods amounted to US$ 267,547: 77 per cent of procured goods relate to programme, fundraising and advocacy print material; 14 per cent for emergency supply and nine per cent to miscellaneous operating items (fuel, furniture and IT equipment).

The total value of service contracts in 2014 amounted to US$ 868,682: 59 per cent for consultancy services; 35 per cent for institutional services (venues for educational events; surveys; video production of advocacy material; telemarketing service) for programme, fundraising and sales activities, translation); and six per cent for operational services (distribution centre/warehouse management, maintenance and improvement of premises, vehicles and equipment, press clipping, secretarial service, security service, internet connectivity and other services).

In compliance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards-based UNICEF policies, the necessary mandatory activities were performed in order to control and secure the office’s assets, including physical counts (twice a year), random checks and monitoring. The asset focal point was responsible for appropriate recording, monitoring and reporting of all activities related to assets. Programme supplies were regularly processed through the VISION warehouse module and physical count was conducted twice in 2014.

As part of optimization and effective use of resources, Long Term Agreements (LTAs) were established for office supply and for postage delivery service. In 2014, establishment of the
interagency LTA’s were discussed with other UN agencies in order to effectively use financial and human resources and to implement Delivering as One initiative.

UNICEF Croatia continued to maintain one warehouse in Zagreb. In 2014, all programme supplies in the amount of US$68,802 were directly delivered to implementing partners. The total value of the inventory at the year-end was US$2,178. UNICEF does not have emergency pre-positioned stocks stored in warehouse.

**Security for Staff and Premises**

In 2014, the UN Security Management Team (SMT) in coordination with Regional Security Advisor reviewed and updated country level Security Risk Assessment and Security Plan.

The UNICEF Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is to be updated in early 2015 in order to reflect results of the MTR, updated risk assessment, staffing changes, critical response team changes as well as information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure changes. The emergency lists, contact points and the Wardens System lists were updated regularly.

UNICEF is a member of the SMT and was an active participant in UN security meetings and trainings. All SMT members, including the UNICEF Head of Office and Operations Officer in 2014 went through Warden training provided by the Regional Security Advisor. All staff members were informed on security and safety issues and on security plan update through staff meeting. Regular fire drill exercises were conducted in 2014 and the evacuation plan tested during a minor earthquake.

The UN House continued to be MOSS compliant, and Croatia continued to be at Security Level One.

**Human Resources**

During 2014 a thorough staffing structure analysis was performed twice: the first in the context of global efficiency and effectiveness review related to the Global Shared Services Centre and second time in the context of the MTR.

The purpose of the first analysis was to determine the optimum staffing capacity and competencies required to support the implementation of the country programme while responding to the existing needs and the establishment of the GSSC. That analysis resulted in no change in staffing structure but more focus was given to the strategic implementation of the efficiency and effectiveness approach, with a re-design of business processes and abolishment of self-imposed procedures and work processes that were not organizationally mandated.

Business processes and workflows in relation to the transactions that are within the scope of the GSSC were further reviewed and all necessary areas of improvements identified. This involved the redistribution of tasks and roles and re-profiling of existing Job Descriptions. The full implementation of the results of analysis is expected in 2015.

The second analysis was conducted towards the end of MTR process, in order to define capacity needs and eventual gaps for the implementation of the remaining part of the country programme. The analysis yielded a proposal for the recruitment of the Education Officer, which has been submitted to the January 2015 Programme and Budget Review committee meeting.

In 2014, the office completed the recruitment of the Head of Office (National Officer NOD level),
Communications Officer, Communications Assistant, Operations Officer, and Fundraising Assistant-New Media. Additionally, in order to respond to the emergency in flood affected area, the office recruited an Emergency and Early Recovery Assistant. Furthermore, the office continued to use consultants to supplement the fixed term staffing capacity especially to bridge the gap in fundraising department to efficiently achieve results defined in Private Sector Income Generation Strategy.

All Performance Appraisal System (PAS) discussions were held regularly. Individual staff members’ responsibilities in PAS were linked to the biennial workplan and biennial management plan’s key results and to the overall achievement of the country programme priorities and goals.

Regarding staff member development and learning, a two day retreat was organized for all staff and in-house consultants in June. The retreat focused on two issues: human and child rights, and on internal relations within team. The team identified a number of ideas for further strengthening and improving internal relations with the aim of better serving the purpose of UNICEF in Croatia. Through group work that followed the retreat, the initial ideas were turned into creative initiatives, and the ones with most buy-in from the staff will be implemented in 2015.

In 2014, the office started with Ethics dialogues, and first session Living UNICEF Values was provided by Ethics Focal Point on all staff meeting.

**Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology**

In accordance with UNICEF’s global objectives, all ICT resources and services were upgraded in 2014 and are in line with UNICEF policies. The major change in ICT was the implementation of Office 365. The cloud-based business software solution boosted organizational efficiency and effectiveness and created a fully mobile workspace. Outlook 2013 offered larger email inbox size of 50GB and enabling users to send and receive messages with 25MB attachments.

The system provides free access to Office Online applications and automatic backup procedures which resulted in improved business continuity and easy setup in case of emergency. Lync is fully integrated with Office and allowing users to organize and participate in online meetings. All of these resulted in a reduction of the ICT footprint, and UNICEF Croatia is currently using only one physical server.

In 2014, the office’s primary Internet connection speed remained the same at 20Mbps/20Mbps and is providing efficient infrastructure, connectivity and uninterrupted access to all cloud-based business systems, VISION with SAP and MS Office 365. To ensure business continuity, additional ADSL backup link (4096/512kbit) continued to be available and was tested in 2014.

Backup procedures were additionally streamlined in 2014 in order to protect and secure data. As per the Business Continuity Plan, all virtual server backups are kept on external hard drives and stored outside of the office for easy restoration of all Office ICT resources in a remote location in the case of an emergency.

The two locally created websites www.unicef.hr and www.shop.unicef.hr were active in 2014. The active profile of UNICEF Croatia on Facebook (the leading social media in the country) recorded a growth by 37 per cent in “page likes”, 53 per cent in “likes”, 44 per cent in “shares” and nine per cent in “comments”. Due to the constant presence and engagement, the number of followers of the UNICEF Croatia Twitter account almost tripled from that of 2013.
ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 Early Childhood Development (ECD) services for vulnerable children ensure that girls and boys from the poorest families, including those with disabilities or developmental risks, and from the Roma minority benefit from: i) inclusive, community-based preschool services for children and families; ii) family-based early childhood intervention programmes and services, and; iii) perinatal care services and better parenting education

Analytical Statement of Progress:

One of the major challenges in the realization of child rights in Croatia is related to the access to affordable, quality, early childhood education and care, particularly in rural areas and for disadvantaged groups of children. Even though preschool education is recognised as one of the most important mechanisms for reducing equity gaps, preschool education and care is governed and funded by municipalities, which has meant that wealthier areas have more facilities and higher enrolment rates.

*The Law on Preschool Education and Care* fosters an inclusive approach to children with disabilities and provides them with priority admission to preschool programmes. However, this obligation is often waived, as preschool principals can refuse admission on the grounds of inadequate conditions available in their institution. UNICEF’s focus is to ensure equitable access for all children to attend quality early childhood education, especially for children with disabilities, those coming from socio-economically disadvantaged families, or from a different ethnic background. UNICEF has supported the local preschools to serve better the children and their families by increasing the quality of the services, through increasing capacities of educators and the local community for an integrated approach in early childhood education, with special focus on inclusion of children with disabilities, Roma, and other children facing poverty.

Whilst in the framework of the *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015* there has been an increase in the awareness and investment in the educational achievement of Roma children, the rates of their preschool attendance are still very low. This further disadvantages them in terms of preparation for enrolment in mainstream primary education. To address this bottleneck, UNICEF engagement is primary oriented towards addressing social norms and modelling of support programme for successful transition and better start in primary school of Roma children in several counties.

Despite the policy provisions for Early Childhood Intervention services for children with disabilities within the Social Welfare Act, the practical provision of successful evidence-based ECI programmes remains inconsistent and limited due to institutional and financial obstacles, and a lack of inter-sector approach. Disaggregated data on ECI services and providers is still not available. According to the data provided by the MSPY there are 4,800 children with disabilities/delay who require that service, while only 9.1 per cent of them have access to early intervention services (2013), with children with autistic spectrum disorders being the most disadvantaged. The UNICEF focus has been oriented towards: advocacy and increasing awareness of what ECI can achieve within central government and among professionals; advocacy for effective co-ordination among ministries for defining joint cross-cutting policies and procedures on ECI; providing support on data collection; providing support in identifying and
addressing service gaps for the needs of children with disabilities/developmental delays and their families; supporting Ministries in developing quality standards for ECI services for children with autism, and; building the capacities of ECI professionals to develop their expertise through best practices, lessons learned and partnership.

Provision of parenting support services is a welcomed recent element in the policy provisions in Croatia. However, there are evident regional differences in availability of such services and considerably less services are available in rural areas. Based on the UNICEF research on community services (2013) 70 per cent of parents with low socio-economic status do not use any service for parenting support. UNICEF continues to model and support several initiatives in developing ECD and parenting community services at both national level and in selected counties, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health (MoH), MOSPY, Education and Teacher Training Agency (ETTA), counties’ administration and NGOs, including supporting collection of data on the most vulnerable children.

The healthcare coverage of pregnant women has been decreasing over the years, and currently stands at 60.6 per cent. According to UNICEF research on community services, community nurses’ home visits to mothers after delivery reach out to 95 per cent of the targeted group, with differences across regions. Significant progress was achieved in turning maternity wards into “baby-friendly”, with 30 out of 31 maternity wards in Croatia having gained the baby-friendly status.

Progress for children was noted in 2014 by the Committee on the Rights of Child in its Concluding Observations. While welcoming the progress made, the Committee identified a number of areas which need improvement and expressed concern about, inter alia, the situation of disadvantaged groups of children. In spite of Croatia’s child rights orientation and the invested efforts so far, the Committee noted the discrepancy between the established policy framework and its implementation in practice, which needed to be further addressed. The Committee was concerned with:

a) A lack of quality support services for vulnerable groups of children and their families;
b) Limited availability of affordable and quality early childhood education in particular for families in remote or less developed areas and in situation of poverty;
c) Cross-sector coordination and standardized developmental screening protocols and tools are lacking resulting in missed opportunities for ECI;
d) A lack of awareness of the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and risks of formula feeding;
e) No systematic monitoring of breast-milk substitutes marketing.

The Committee recommended the allocation of sufficient financial resources for the development and expansion of early childhood education, including through ensuring a sufficient number of kindergartens, as well as other community-based services for all families. It urged Croatia to adopt a human rights-based approach to disability, and specifically recommended to improve and strengthen early detection and treatment services in the health and education sectors.

**OUTPUT 1** By the end of 2016, national and local authorities provide quality, inclusive community-based parenting and ECD support services to the most disadvantaged boys and girls and their families.
Analytical Statement of Progress:

Significant regional disparities and insufficiencies in provision of quality, inclusive community-based parenting and young child development support services represent a continuing challenge in Croatia, especially in remote and underdeveloped areas. Support services are even less accessible to families living at risk of poverty and those with children with disabilities.

In order to improve the availability and accessibility of support services to the most vulnerable children and families, UNICEF focused its efforts to provide technical and expert support to the three of the most vulnerable counties (Sisak-Moslavina, Vukovar-Srijem, Sibenik-Knin). Mapping of young child development and parenting support services conducted in these counties showed that there is no systematic and reliable quantitative data collection mechanism in place in any of the relevant local systems (health, social welfare, and education). The information collected through the process clearly indicated the lack of quality and standardised services. UNICEF therefore supported capacity development of local decision makers and professionals (health, education, social welfare) in regard to development and improvements in provision of community-based services to the youngest children and their parents, with special emphasis on Roma, children with disabilities, and children facing poverty.

To improve quality early childhood education that will respond to the needs of children with disability and Roma children, UNICEF supported building professional capacities in 17 preschools for a child-centred approach, interactive pedagogy and cooperation with families and communities.

UNICEF initiated modelling of a new transition to school support programme for Roma children and families. The model aims to empower parents and families to support their child’s development and learning. At school level, the model will increase capacities of teachers to involve parents or caregivers in their children's learning experiences and to collaborate with community resources to meet the needs of all children entering primary school.

Modelling and scaling up of universal and specific support programmes was another key UNICEF role in regard to development and improvement of community based services. In this regard, the parenting support programme for parents of children with disabilities was finalised and promoted in 2014, local professionals educated and the sustainability mechanisms agreed upon with the Education and Teacher Training Agency. The national ECD telephone counselling line was successfully handed over to the City of Zagreb enabling sustainability and further availability to parents all over Croatia.

OUTPUT 2 By the end of 2016, the social welfare and health system, in cooperation with local authorities, provides comprehensive, quality, accessible and responsive home-based early childhood intervention services to most vulnerable families and children.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Important progress was made by including early intervention as a new service in the Social Welfare Act of 2012. However, the State failed to create conditions for implementing this provision. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, there are 4,800 children with developmental delay who require ECI service, while there was only 437 users in 2013 (9.1 per cent). This indicates that 90.9 per cent of children with disabilities/delay do not have access to ECI services, with children with ASD being among the most disadvantaged. Croatia does not keep adequate records that would indicate trends and
distribution of ECI services in counties, which limits an overall approach to strategic planning.

UNICEF in 2014 continued to address lack of multi-sectorial approach toward ECIS, a lack of clear referral pathways and coordination, as well as quality and monitoring standards in service delivery. In 2014, upon request of an inter-ministerial committee, UNICEF started providing technical assistance to the health, education and social care sectors in setting up integrated national system for early diagnostic and early intervention for children with ASD and quality standards.

Within the health care sector UNICEF continued to build capacities of professionals for early identification of developmental delays. In 2104, UNICEF and MoH agreed on a plan for piloting Guide for Monitoring Child Development, which was implemented by trained health care professional in several facilities across country.

UNICEF will continue to provide technical support in improving co-ordination across and within sectors for delivering ECI services for children with autism, developing quality and equality standards for delivery, and increasing awareness among professional through exchange of best practices, lessons learned and partnerships in developing effective ECI system.

OUTPUT 3 By end of 2016, the application of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), including parental education outreach programmes for the most vulnerable groups, has been incorporated in the practices of maternity wards and primary health care services nationwide.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Significant progress was achieved in turning maternity wards into baby-friendly maternity wards, with 30 out of 31 maternity wards in Croatia having gained that status by end of 2014. All 30 maternity wards developed a network of community-based postnatal support. However, there are significant challenges for preterm and sick infants and their parents related to support they receive after their release from a hospital. The rate of exclusive breastfeeding continues to increase in zero to two months, but stagnates after three months and drops for infants six months and older. Due to the non-existing legislation in the application of the Code of Marketing for breast-milk substitutes and its influence on health professionals, the remaining challenge is in how to increase breastfeeding rates after 3 months. In that respect UNICEF supported the Croatian Association of Breastfeeding Support Groups to increase the number and coverage of breastfeeding support services provided by trained home visiting nurses, particularly in lower socio-economic and marginalised communities.

In 2014, the National Plan for Breastfeeding Promotion was finalised by the MoH and is ready to be submitted for adoption to the Government. This is a significant positive development, since the economic recession continues to have a strong negative impact on resources available to support breastfeeding programmes in the healthcare system.

A new step in the BFHI in Croatia is the improvement of practices and protocols in Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICU’s). Croatia joined the international piloting of the application of “10 steps to successful breastfeeding” for NICUs. The training of healthcare professionals, application of best practices and development of national set of indicators are in process.

A group of Croatian experts adapted the WHO/UNICEF criteria for the Mother Friendly Hospital Initiative to the national context in order to further improve practices in maternity wards. Although traditional attitudes of the medical professionals and their resistance to change
established medical and hospital practices remains a challenge, social circumstances have changed. A synergy between the professionals and the general public was identified through an intensive civil society campaign, which contributed to the enabling environment for the improvement of mother friendly practices. The pilot implementation of mother friendly practices in two maternity wards is in process.

OUTCOME 2 Country infrastructure-child rights structure for the increased realization of child rights, through: i) increased prevention and intervention for the protection of children from violence, abuse and neglect; ii) the planning, budgeting and monitoring of policies and decisions of national and subnational authorities, which will increasingly address social exclusion of children, and; iii) the increased engagement of public and private stakeholders in supporting children’s rights.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Croatia is a high-income and EU member country, with a strong policy framework for protecting and fulfilling children’s rights. In addition to highly developed strategic frameworks and legislation, Croatia has institutionalised, since 2003, an important monitoring and child rights promoting mechanism in the capacity of Ombudsperson for children.

In September 2014, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued its Concluding Observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Croatia on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. While welcoming the progress made, especially in respect to legislation and policy measures, the Committee also identified a number of areas which need improvement and expressed concern about, inter alia, the situation of disadvantaged groups of children in Croatia. In spite of Croatia’s child rights orientation and the invested efforts so far, the Committee also noted the discrepancy between the established policy framework and its implementation in practice, which needs to be further addressed.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child identified the following concerns:

a) Discrimination continues to be prevalent against children in marginalised and disadvantaged situations;
b) Children’s views are not adequately implemented in practices;
c) A lack of effective and full implementation of all legislation relevant for the Convention;
d) A lack of disaggregated data and missing effective monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms;
e) A lack of quality support services for vulnerable groups of children and their families;
f) Institutional care is the predominant means rather than a measure of last resort for addressing the needs of children deprived of family environment;
g) Limited availability of affordable and quality early child education, in particular for families in remote or less developed areas and in situation of poverty.

In addition, the UNCRC emphasised that despite the fiscal and budgetary constraints, efforts must be made to sustain social investment for, and the social protection of children. The Committee also reiterates its concern about the lack of disaggregated data with regard to resources allocated for children at the national and local levels.

The new National Strategy for Child Rights 2014-2020, adopted in September 2014, has developed an advanced framework for progressing in the realization of the rights of children, particularly the most excluded and vulnerable ones. The Strategy identified following priority areas in addressing child rights issues: 1) provision of child friendly services within justice,
health, social welfare, and education systems, as well as in sports, culture and leisure activities; 2) eliminating all forms of violence against children; 3) protection of rights of the most vulnerable children (children with disabilities, children in alternative care, Roma children and children facing poverty), and; 4) promoting child participation.

For the coordination and monitoring of the Strategy implementation, the Government formed a Council for Children. The establishment of a quality monitoring framework is crucial for more effective and responsive national child protection mechanisms, both at the policy and implementation levels.

The reform of the Croatian social welfare system continued during 2014, building on the reform processes over last several years. The Government initiated development and/or modifications of a number of legislative and strategic documents, but the process has been progressing rather slow, causing considerable delays and obstacles in implementation and operationalization in practice. UNICEF continued to support the social welfare system regarding improvements in public care for the most vulnerable children by advocating, providing data and information and capacity development of social welfare professionals and decision makers.

The Croatian justice system manifested a clear orientation toward establishing justice for children through the intensive work on capacity building of all experts and practitioners involved, improvement of all procedures to become child-sensitive and available to children and their representatives, and investing in child-friendly infrastructure. Furthermore, efforts have been made to make the environment for children involved in justice procedures more child-friendly. However, there is an urgent need for shortening the time of trial and adjudication, the full implementation of alternative measures, and an enhancement of the rights of child victims and witnesses in all judicial procedures. UNICEF contributed in the area of development of diversion measures and the child friendly justice.

In the area of collection, analysis and use of data, UNICEF provided significant contributions to the evidence based public policies, social norms and social beliefs through data collection and knowledge generation on the issues such as child poverty, material well-being of children and socio-economic status of Roma children.

Regarding public and private sector’s involvement in supporting children’s rights, one of the most important 2014 MTR findings showed that UNICEF was exceptionally successful in engaging citizens in child-rights agenda, which is especially evident through the high and growing commitment of citizens and corporate sector in contributing to the realization of the children’s rights in Croatia and abroad. That engagement is growing far beyond the financial support and citizens are contributing also as promoters of social change for children.

OUTPUT 1 By the end of 2016, the child protection system applies a case management approach to its child clients and ensures the availability and functioning of specialized services in accordance with international standards and best interests of children.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
In the area of justice, the revised Law on Criminal Procedure was adopted in 2014, emphasising, even more than the previous one, the child friendly justice approach and enabling development of judicial practice based on the child’s best interests.

The Government initiated a joint project with the World Bank in relation to deinstitutionalisation and transformation of residential institutions. In 2014, the grounds for the implementation of the project were set within the Operational Plan for Deinstitutionalisation and Transformation of Residential Institutions. UNICEF provided advisory assistance to the World Bank in the preparation of the project and will provide further technical support and policy advice to the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth in its implementation.

In order to encourage foster care in Roma communities, UNICEF provided technical support to the national umbrella association of foster parents’ NGOs, in providing education, promotion and support to foster families in three Croatian counties.

A positive development regarding the case management approach relates to the legislative improvements of the social welfare intervention *Supervision over parental care*. UNICEF provided technical and expert support in drafting the by-law and in development of the assessment instruments.

During 2014 UNICEF provided policy advice and technical support in provision of the alternative community-based measures for children in conflict with law (Out-of-court settlement and Intensified Care and Supervision).

UNICEF provided technical assistance, policy advice and enabled knowledge exchange in strengthening the juvenile justice system for the implementation of justice friendly system, by capacity development of justice professionals on protection of child victims/witnesses rights during the criminal proceedings, as well as by providing advice and audio-visual equipment for interviewing child victims and witnesses.

**OUTPUT 2** By end 2016 national and local authorities collect, analyse and use disaggregated data in policy making, management and accountability in processes related to addressing the social exclusion of children and their families.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

In 2014, the National Strategy for Child Rights 2014-2020 was adopted, providing a framework for progress in the realization of children rights. To enhance development of the new Strategy and upscale the evidence-based approach, UNICEF provided substantial support.

The development of this document involved over 50 experts, gathering together representatives of government and non-governmental organizations, and other important stakeholders for identifying priority areas and goals. In addition to technical support, UNICEF invested expertise on facilitating policy dialogue based on evidence and directing policy toward the most excluded children.

The updated Situation Analysis of the Rights of Children, as well as other UNICEF-led research and studies, ensured a solid base for strategic planning.

Aiming to provide policy accountability, the Council for Children of the Croatian Government
was tasked with the coordination and monitoring of the Strategy, and its harmonization with other national documents. Currently, when the Operational Plan of the Strategy is being developed, it is of crucial importance to provide the appropriate implementation and monitoring mechanisms which might be challenging due to the still limited national capacities in these areas.

Developing national capacities to collect comparable and disaggregated data in order to identify especially vulnerable children and allow evidence-based planning and monitoring of measures remains an issue. Furthermore, results for children have been mostly process-defined, and are difficult to measure against impact.

However, the Strategy in itself recognises the necessity for: (i) defining child well-being indicators; (ii) operationalising of composite indicators needed in order to identify the most vulnerable children whose rights are not being respected in multiple areas; (iii) improving existing databases in order to integrate data from various sources, and; (iv) conducting relevant research and evaluations.

Improvements regarding a continuous monitoring and synergetic approach across all the sectors were identified as a precondition for development of proactive and responsive child-focused policies.

To increase availability of disaggregated data and ensure reliable tracking of trends in equity gaps, UNICEF intensified communication with relevant ministries, and all declared their commitment and accountability for further cooperation in improving child related statistics. Moreover, in the process of developing the 2014 Country Analytical Report which was coordinated by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, the MSPY invested significant efforts to provide information and clarify child protection related indicators.

OUTPUT 3 By 2016, alliances for children, involving the private sector, CSOs and the media inform policy and practice, advocate for child rights and leverage resources for national and international programmes for the most vulnerable children.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
The strength and importance of alliances for children promoted by UNICEF was recognized by Mid-Term Review and highlighted during the high level MTR conference held in October.

Partnerships with new important actors, such as the State Agency for Electronic media, were established during 2014, while others were strengthened. The partnership with the Croatian Employers' Association was further developed with a focus on family-friendly workplaces as the first area of engagement within wider corporate social responsibility efforts.

The growing commitment of citizens of Croatia in providing financial support and promoting positive change for children, was also stressed by the MTR. By the end of 2014, more than 32,200 regular supporters were contributing monthly to UNICEF programmes in the country and for international activities: which is over 80 per cent of the target set for the 2012-2016 Country Programme. The monetary contribution of pledge supporters for 2014 increased by 44 per cent compared to 2013, and the total net number of supporters increased by 14 per cent compared to 2013 (32,200 compared to 28,200).

The increasing orientation towards beyond border engagement, knowledge brokering and leveraging resources for international programmes was agreed between UNICEF and
Government of Croatia. In 2014, the contribution to UNICEF Regular Resources increased to US$260,000, which represents double the amount on from the previous year, and 68 per cent of the 2016 target. Furthermore, the Government of Croatia contributed US$48,000 for the UNICEF Ebola emergency response in Mali.

The flood emergency in Croatia and the sub-region drove cash donations from the private sector and foundations. UNICEF continued with leveraging resources through the private sector by various methods, including co-mailings that also generated additional funds from individuals. The total amount leveraged through the private sector for the flood emergency in Croatia was US$235,000, which is 78 per cent of the 2012-2016 target.

OUTCOME 4 Programme Support

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Major achievements for this Outcome are: correct and timely processing and implementation of activities that enabled smooth functioning of UNICEF operations and office as a whole.

OUTPUT 1 Development Effectiveness

Analytical Statement of Progress:
The Biannual Management Plan was updated for 2014 in a timely manner, and followed up at CMT meetings. Enterprise Risk Management and the existing Risk Control and Self-Assessment library was updated and reviewed by the CMT members. In 2014, the CMT continued to provide strategic direction, overall leadership and oversight to ensure that the country programme is aligned with the changing requirement of the country and that the planned results are achieved. The CMT regularly reviewed, as per standing agenda items, implementation of BMP as per agreed indicators, budget utilisation and monitored fund-raising strategy plan. Major initiatives taken by CMT during 2014 included: revision of staffing structure in relation to the transition to GSSC, strengthening programme priorities within the MTR process, effective response to emergency, self-assessment and implementation of HACT.

UNICEF Croatia is not eligible for Institutional Budget and therefore no posts were charged here.

OUTPUT 2 Financial Resources and Stewardship

Analytical Statement of Progress:
All operational targets and indicators defined in the BMP for 2014 were on track at the mid-year review. The CMT monitored programme implementation and DCT management through a set of regular management reports. All deadlines for bank reconciliations and reporting were met, as well as deadlines for mid and end year closure reporting. The programme assurance plan was updated and UNICEF conducted three spot-checks, five programme visits and provided training for finance staff on how to manage fund received from UN. The total value of all Direct Cash Transfers in 2014 was US$396,627. The UNICEF did not have any outstanding DCT for more than nine months in 2014.

UNICEF Croatia is not eligible for Institutional Budget and therefore no posts were charged here.

OUTPUT 4 Effective and Efficient Fundraising
Analytical Statement of Progress:
By the end of 2014, UNICEF Croatia managed to surpass the total fundraising goal by six per cent in total gross income, resulting in US$3.092 million: an increase of 26 per cent compared to 2013.

Monetary contributions from regular supporters were in line with the targets and plans, and contributed 66 per cent of the total income. One-off donations from individuals increased in 2014 by 35 per cent compared to the planned, mainly due to appeals for the regional emergency.

Although cash donations from the corporate sector have been affected by the economic recession for the last six years, the emergency situation in the region attracted corporate donations. As in previous years, leveraging, in this case through co-mailings, with corporates has been identified as a sound alternative engagement to replace the financial component.

The total contribution from UNICEF Croatia’s fundraising to UNICEF’s global initiatives was 25 per cent of the total gross income, including Schools for Africa Campaign, contributions to emergency appeals (primarily for Balkan floods) and contribution to global Regular Resources.

OUTPUT 7 Effective and Efficient Sales

Analytical Statement of Progress:
The last annual in-house sales campaign was completed while closure of the in-house business will be finalized by the end of March 2015.

Document Centre

Evaluation

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Other Publication

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<tr>
<td>“Get it Right!” Interactive on-line and 3D board game about child rights</td>
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<td>Parenting in the best interests of the child and support to parents of the youngest children with disabilities (in Croatian and in English)</td>
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Communicating with Children (Croatian language)