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# ROAR 2017

Europe and Central Asia Regional Office Annual Report



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## 1. Overview

### 1.1 Executive Summary

Widening inequality is the defining challenge across Europe and Central Asia (ECA) — a region dominated by middle income economies projected to grow at their highest rates in six years<sup>1</sup>. Responding to this paradox in 2017, the Regional Office (RO) strengthened convergence in programme approaches and actions to ensure that no child is left behind. Across 21 countries and areas, the RO's support to policy advocacy and technical expertise aimed at unifying sectoral priorities around children who are disproportionately disadvantaged: those from the poorest families, those with disabilities, those from certain ethnic communities and those affected by conflict and migration.

In the final year of ECA's Regional Office Management Plan (ROMP) 2014-17, the RO support to programmes was informed by commitments and indicators set out by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The RO also focused on aligning ECA Region's programmes with UNICEF's new Strategic Plan 2018-21. Among the first strategy papers reflecting the transition towards a more cross-sectoral approach to reach the furthest child first, were new Country Programme Documents (CPDs) that will guide UNICEF's support to governments in Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine.

A common theme across regional initiatives and support to country offices (COs) was strengthening systems and capacity around data collection, analysis and use. The RO supported baseline assessments of child-relevant Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators in Albania, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and participated in SDG Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) and pre-MAPS missions in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Turkmenistan, and Turkey. The involvement of Issue Based Coalitions, drew increased attention around normative principles that underpin the ECA Region's approach to social protection, gender, and data.

To target the most underserved children and ensure that countries remain on track in fulfilling every child's right to thrive, learn and be protected, region-wide programme design and implementation reflected the strengthened link between evidence and results, and highlighted the critical role of ECA Region's partnerships with government, civil society, donor partners and others in delivering results. For example:

- In preparation for the launch of the Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP), the RO mobilised commitment across eight countries in Central Asia and in the Caucuses to improve maternal and newborn health by analysing data from household surveys that spotlighted why preventable deaths are concentrated among neonates, and why they are most common in poor and socially excluded communities.
- The RO supported secondary analysis by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on policy options for learning outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged and minority children in the region. The analysis reinforced the need for a region-wide shift in the way in which quality education is conceived, measured and monitored.
- In support of a seven-country initiative to address violence against children and the inclusion of children with disabilities across the western Balkans and Turkey, the RO produced situation analyses on children with disabilities that will enhance local-level modelling on multi-disciplinary responses.
- To provide evidence-based policy advice, supported Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro, the RO analysed the provision of social protection, including the barriers faced by families, and reviews of reforms and innovative arrangements to deliver social protection services.

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank, Europe and Central Asia Economic Update, November 2017

The arrival of refugee and migrants continue to be the focus of COs, country teams and RO support responding to emergencies. ECA Region is now home to 3.8 million refugees and asylum-seekers, the majority of whom are in Turkey. In eastern Ukraine, the fifth year of continued conflict has affected 300,000 children.

ECA Region welcomed positive developments signalling greater protections for refugee and migrant children in Europe. For example, Italy, the EU and the UK introduced legislation and policies that address worrying issues such as child detention, guardianship, long waiting times and budget allocations for municipalities helping on the front line. Although the number of new refugee and migrants arriving in Europe from Africa and the subcontinent has declined compared to previous years, children represented a third of all new arrivals.

While UNICEF in Slovenia joined smaller, non-programme countries in scaling down operations in 2017, children arriving in countries with already significant created additional pressures for adequate shelter, education, health and psychosocial services. The fluid movement of people reinforces the need for flexibility and speed.

## 1.2 Trends and Progress in the region as affecting Women and Children

Economic growth in Europe and Central Asia was projected to reach 2.2 per cent in 2017, the strongest growth in six years.<sup>2</sup> Except for Croatia and Georgia,<sup>3</sup> ECA economies are showing higher growth than expected. However, increased national wealth has not yet translated into better outcomes for the most vulnerable children. The most disadvantaged children continue to be those from poor families, or who belong to ethnic communities such as the Roma, or children with disabilities. A tragic feature of their social exclusion has long been the absence of reliable data to identify who they are, where they are and whether social programmes are as effective as they should be in saving and improving their lives.

In the final year of the Regional Office Plan 2014-17, prioritisation that had been given to capacity building around data collection, analysis and use, began providing sharper and more reliable evidence that could be used to better target and stop the injustices that fuel growing inequality across and within countries. This high-level summary analysis groups notable trends around UNICEF's sectoral and cross-sectoral work:

- **Thriving.** While region-wide statistical averages show that under-five child mortality declined since 1990, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan account for up 80 percent of the Region's preventable under-five deaths. Furthermore, 70 per cent of preventable deaths among the under-five age group occur in the first year – and especially the first four weeks – of life. District-level data reveals that these preventable deaths are concentrated among the poor. Immunization coverage, currently at 92 per cent across the Region, continues to undergo a steady decline. In some countries, it is as low as four per cent among Roma children in communities that have limited or no access to quality health services.
- **Learning.** While national averages indicate that 85 per cent of children in the region are enrolled in secondary school, a more detailed analysis reveals that out of school children are concentrated within very specific social groups. For example, half or more who are out of secondary school in the region are Roma children. While there are an estimated 5.1 million children with disabilities, only a very small minority can access to school. In Turkey and Tajikistan, far fewer girls transition into secondary education, compared to boys.

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<sup>2</sup> World Bank, Europe and Central Asia Economic Update, November 2017.

<sup>3</sup> The World Bank re-classified Croatia from high- income to upper-middle-income, while Georgia dropped from upper-middle-income to lower-middle-income.

- **Protecting.** Over the past decade, efforts to help governments close down large institutions for children and shift resources to community or family care have resulted in fewer children deprived of a family environment. However, new estimates published in 2017 found ECA Region to have the highest rate worldwide of children living in residential care – over five times the global average<sup>4</sup>. Data providing insight into these children reveal that half of them of who are in public institutions are children with disabilities – their proportion is as high as 70 per cent in some countries.
- **Gender.** Six ECA countries are among the global top ten with the highest gender biased sex ratio at birth and at age. Some 26 per cent of women in Eastern Europe, 19 per cent in Western Europe and 23 per cent in Central Asia and have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by a non-partner. Gender based violence (GBV) increases in crisis and emergencies. For example, internally displaced women in Ukraine experience GBV at a rate three times higher compared to women in the general population. While most countries in ECA region have legislation protecting women from domestic violence, laws tend to be silent on sexual harassment and conflict-related sexual violence. GBV laws in many countries still lack strong implementation and monitoring mechanisms.
- **Refugees and migrants.** In 2017, over 171,300 people, including some 32,000 children and at least 17,500 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), crossed the Mediterranean into Europe. The number of 2017 arrivals represents a two-thirds decline from the previous year, a direct result of enforced border controls and agreements between Libya and European countries to prevent human smuggling and dangerous sea crossings. Significantly, children make up a third of new arrivals. Recent protection legislation and policies adopted by EU and some European countries are responding to children’s vulnerability especially among children who arrive alone. In Central Asia, the issue of migration is emerging in a more nuanced way, focusing on the protection of children left behind by parents who migrate to work outside the country.
- **Adolescents,** who have been largely invisible in national policies, are an emerging agenda for ECA region. Countries are taking steps in introducing and scaling up multi-sectoral programmes that aim to build resilience among young people, enhance their entrepreneurial and livelihood opportunities and develop their potential in becoming active citizens in their communities. Government-led multi-country discussions are breaking the silence on tough issues such as suicide and adolescent mental health, and welcoming young people as participants in identifying solutions. Approaches, tools, learnings are being shared across countries in the region and beyond.

Socio-economic trends in the region, particularly as they are manifested in increased national wealth and aggregated social indicators, suggest tremendous potential for countries taking forward their commitments to prioritise resources to support the most marginalised children. Kyrgyzstan and other countries in Central Asia are already making investments to improve newborn care and immunization coverage. Over the new Strategic Plan period 2018-21, countries have committed to intensifying action to identify children of migrant workers, out-of-school children, survivors of violence, and children with disabilities. Increased capacity is illustrated in important milestones, for example, in 2017 Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova began self-financing their procurement of routine vaccines. Strengthening of community-level social protection systems is taking into account vulnerable groups, and they are gaining visibility in emerging initiatives such as the integration of child-focused disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation in schools and across child social services.

The European Union (EU) remains the most influential external policy driver in the region. In the last ROMP 2014-17, the EU provided 30 per cent of the Region’s non-emergency “other resources”. The EU’s road map

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213416302873>

for enlargement includes Western Balkan countries with potential accession by the front runners, Montenegro and Serbia by 2025. In preparing to take over the European Union presidency in 2018, Bulgaria is keen to become a centre of excellence around issues such as de-institutionalisation, justice for children, and social inclusion. Other countries in Central and Eastern Europe are following suite. Romania, for example, will continue to achieve results and value for money at subnational level via their “Minimum Package of Services”. Increasingly, these countries are leading horizontal cooperation and supporting others towards sustainable development.

ECA Region has strengthened its engagement with the Russian Federation, and several strategic missions to Moscow covering programme areas such as health, HIV, migrant children and data and monitoring, took place in Moscow over the year.

ECA’s future areas of work will continue to focus on effecting change that will improve the lives of the most children who are the least likely to realise their full potential. Programming in ECA region will be increasingly inter-disciplinary, bringing together demand and supply interventions and creating space for meaningful participation of children and youth. The SDGs, and their explicit focus on equity is at the heart of programming in ECA Region, and will guide every aspect in the continuing work ahead.

### **1.3 Humanitarian Assistance**

Below is an overview of humanitarian assistance focused on protracted emergencies in Ukraine, and support to refugees and migrants in Turkey and Europe. Please refer to section 2.8 and 2.9 for a more detailed discussion on results for children.

#### **1.3.1 Ukraine**

In the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, 300,000 children were affected by the continuing armed conflict. Frequent shelling degraded vital civilian infrastructure still further, with assessments revealing damage to 44 schools and two-thirds of health facilities within five kilometres of the line of contact. Hundreds of thousands of people faced the risk of water and power cuts – including during periods of extreme winter cold – as a result of random or deliberately targeted artillery and rockets. Between January and November, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recorded 539 conflict-related civilian casualties, including 40 children. This dangerous situation was exacerbated by large numbers of explosive remnants of war scattered throughout the conflict area. As in previous years, UNICEF provided both in-country and remote technical assistance to the CO. As the conflict in Ukraine enters its fourth year, the CO’s recently launched CPD places development and humanitarian programming side by side, to reach every child.

#### **1.3.2 Turkey**

By the end of 2017, Turkey was hosting the world’s largest refugee population. This number included 3.4 million Syrians, of whom 1.5 million were children. In addition, there were 365,000 refugee and asylum seekers mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. Of these, around 120,000 were children. The RO’s technical support to the Turkey CO complemented coordinated assistance for refugee children under the umbrella of the wider Syrian response.

#### **1.3.3 Europe**

In 2017, the number of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe declined by two-thirds compared to previous years. However, at least a third were under 18 years old. There were some positive developments and political commitments to improve the protection of refugee and migrant children. These include a progressive new [law](#)<sup>5</sup> adopted in Italy<sup>5</sup> that protects children from refoulement, addresses guardianship issues, and provides funding to municipalities that are responding to the needs of refugee children. The EU

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<sup>5</sup> n.47, 7 April 2017

[Communication on the Protection of Children in Migration](#), and the UK’s first national safeguarding strategy for unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children were also released. In Greece and the Balkans, independent child rights monitoring and advocacy by national Ombudspersons helped to scale-up and improve children’s access to formal education.

## 1.4 Strategic Plan 2018-21

The ECA ROMP 2018-2021 provides guidance towards achieving results across the region that support UNICEF’s strategic goal areas that, in turn, support of the SDGs. The goal areas identified in the Strategic Plan (SP) 2018-2021 are broadly stated, and aim at ensuring that every child 1) survives and thrives, 2) learns, 3) is protected, 4) lives in a safe and clean environment, and 5) has an equitable chance at life. The fifth goal area covers cross-cutting themes such as gender, adolescents, child poverty, social protection and disability.

The ROMP 2018-21 identified and, using a critical analysis of the region’s most pressing challenges and current and future capacities, adapted and fine-tuned the goal areas to reflect outcomes where UNICEF’s work could make measurable and sustainable progress for children in ECA region over the next four years.

To ensure consistency and alignment in how all RO functions understood the connections between the SP vision and the priorities of the Region, the preparation of the ECA ROMP 2018-21 followed a fully participatory process: the RO established a ROMP Task Force (TF), headed by the Deputy Regional Director and with membership of nine staff representing different RO functions, including a Staff Association representative. The RO team was clustered into groups to review the previous ROMP and put forward proposals for changes, which were subsequently analyzed by the TF. ROMP drafts were discussed with the staff in three all-staff meetings, with the draft ROMP being on a commonly accessible RO TeamSite,

The table below illustrates how ECA Region priorities are linked to SP 2018-2021 goal areas. Top-line results that are expected by 2021 have been summarized. Using RO’s education programme as an example, please see Annex 1 for more detail on how the RO plans to monitor the SP 2018-2021, identifying indicators and tools that will be used to track and report results in a transparent manner.

SP 2018-2021 Goal Areas	Thriving	Learning	Protecting	Participating
Priorities for ECA Region	Remove critical bottlenecks for affordable health care, child survival and young child wellbeing.	Support every child, in accessing, completing and participating in inclusive quality education and early learning.	Support partners in providing a supportive and caring environment for every child, especially the most vulnerable.	Strengthen resilience of adolescents, including the most marginalized, enabling them to participate in all affairs and build peaceful societies.
Summary of Key Results in ECA Region by 2021	-Families, particularly the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, are supported in accessing quality health services and providing a nurturing care to their infants and young children.	-The inclusion of all children in quality education is supported.	- Child poverty is measured and translated into effective social protection policies.  -There are more children receiving regular and predictable social transfers,	-Government and community systems have capacity to engage with adolescents through participatory and people centered processes that focus on building resilience and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HIV testing and prevention among adolescents is available.</li> <li>-Support and care for the elimination of mother to child transmission is available.</li> <li>-Procurement of supply management of antiretrovirals (ARVs) is in place.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>especially among children who are among the poorest or belong to vulnerable groups (i.e., migrants, minorities, children with disabilities).</li> <li>-The quality and quantity of social workers increase to prevent and respond to violence against children and exclusion, especially among the most vulnerable.</li> <li>-Equitable access to justice is promoted and evidence on the realisation of child rights beyond child protection is enhanced.</li> <li>-Preparedness and capacity to respond to appropriately and quickly to the needs of uprooted children are strengthened.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>equalising opportunities.</li> </ul>
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In addition to the above, a number of “emerging areas” are included in the ECA ROMP. Building on the experience of the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, this ROMP 2018-2021 rationalises UNICEF’s response to refugee and migrant crises and engages in supporting a wider response to children affected by migration in the region more broadly. Another significant emerging area of work is harnessing the power of new technologies and modern processes to foster innovations and improve the capabilities of programmes to reach out to the most disadvantaged children.

These growing and emerging areas call for sharper strategies to be deployed to ensure the sustainability of the gains made since the post-transition era. Specifically, the programmatic lessons from earlier multi-country evaluations pointed to: increasing the focus on negative social norms and attitudes, discrimination and stigma; strengthening integrated/cross-sectoral approaches; making systematic use of data and evidence; working more ‘at scale’ at the decentralized level to better tackle the marginalisation and social exclusion of groups of children in society; and focusing on public expenditure/budgets.

These lessons learned informed the mix of “how” strategies and “enablers” that underpin this ROMP’s results. In order to reach excluded and marginalised groups of children who have been left behind. The ROMP emphasises the imperative for the RO to provide sustained and focused support to COs in Communication for Social Change and Communication for Development. This will address barriers related to negative social norms and contribute to mindset changes. Continued investment in gender equality remains a priority, for many of the remaining barriers to inclusion and child rights’ realisation are related to deeply-rooted gender socialization processes. Given the unstable contexts many COs in the region operate under,

including frozen conflicts and ongoing crises, humanitarian action continues to remain an important strategy throughout the entire planning and operational cycle, from risk-informed programming to responding to humanitarian situations.

UNICEF has expanded its partnership reach, successfully continuing to engage in Upper Middle Income Countries (MICs) and HICs. In the next four years, this improved positioning must be complemented with resource mobilisation results for the region through a strategic regional approach, which catalyses increased funding for UNICEF and leverages greater resources for children.

## **2. Analysis of Programme Strategies and Results: Development Effectiveness**

### **2.1 Health**

Concerns about regional trends on newborn mortality and declining immunization coverage rates, as well as vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks, resulted in a number of deep-dive analyses and coverage profiles in 2017. These included a secondary analysis of MICS data across continuum of care, bottlenecks, and country profiles to highlight immunization coverage gaps and the barriers to vaccination.

The launch of the Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP), in partnership with WHO, Agha Khan Development Network, the Sick Kids Foundation, and delegations from eight countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus, resulted in an agreement to accelerate the agenda to narrow gaps in maternal and newborn health through the development of national ENAPs.

As a result of efforts by the RO and other Gavi Alliance partners, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova became financially self-sufficient and started to fund the procurement of routine vaccines from their domestic resources. The RO supported the development of a comprehensive multi-year strategic plan (cMYP) for Bosnia and Herzegovina and a transition plan for (Uzbekistan). These plans guide policy-makers and programme management staff on ways to achieve their immunization objectives. Priority COs were supported to strengthen vaccine procurement capacity and financing through their participation at the Vaccine Procurement Practitioners Exchange Forum, organized by Supply Division.

With Gavi support, Georgia strengthened its immunization management system with an immunization e-module that is now connected to the Birth Registry, Financing & Billing Systems and the Vital Registration System. UNICEF will chair the Gavi Regional Working Group (RWG) in 2018 – an opportunity to convene fund-eligible countries to maximise the remaining opportunities offered through the alliance. These countries will also benefit from intensified partnership with WHO/EURO, as well as Supply Division, to accelerate capacity strengthening for the procurement of vaccines and related supplies.

Home visiting continued to be a key strategy for supporting families to provide nurturing care to young children care in safe home environments. The RO supported 11 COs<sup>6</sup> engaged in home visiting reforms, focusing on Young Child Health, Development and Wellbeing, by strengthening technical capacity, training and knowledge products. Five technical guidance volumes and eighteen training modules were completed; master trainers from nine countries trained; a stocktaking exercise designed to inform future activities and support to Cos was completed.

### **2.2 HIV and AIDS**

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<sup>6</sup> Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Turkmenistan

As part of the follow-up to the 2016 Regional Inter-ministerial conference in Belarus, the RO continued to support the development of national procurement and supply management systems for antiretrovirals (ARVs) in 2017. This work aimed to ensure sustainable HIV treatment in countries making the transition from procurement supported by the Global Fund<sup>7</sup> to self-procurement using national budgets. The RO, working with Supply Division and WHO/EURO, co-organized two workshops on HIV-related procurement with governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) from nine countries. These workshops introduced international platforms to facilitate procurement and supply management (PSM) of ARVs and diagnostics for children and pregnant women.

UNICEF also continued to support capacity building for providers of HIV pediatric and adolescent care in 2017 through horizontal cooperation seminars that brought state-of-the-art knowledge on HIV care and treatment to the region. Regional technical seminars in Shymkent, Kazakhstan and in Khabarovsk, the Russian Federation, facilitated the exchange of knowledge and experience on treatment, care and support for care providers. In preparing for the Regional AIDS Conference in the Netherlands in 2018, the RO also supported and facilitated the Regional Symposium on Children and HIV in Moscow.

The RO continued to provide additional support and services for adolescents living with HIV. The RO-produced *Adolescents & HIV* manual was translated into Russian, Tajik and Ukrainian, and distributed to care workers providing psychosocial support to adolescents living with HIV in these countries. The RO also supported capacity building activities, including six webinars offered through the Regional Knowledge Hub on HIV, as well as training courses in Dushanbe, Tajikistan for Central Asian countries, and in Irkutsk and Saint Petersburg for the Russian Federation.

The RO supported regional action to enhance the participation and leadership of adolescents living with HIV by supporting the first Regional Strategic Planning Meeting of the Regional Network of Adolescents Living with HIV, the initiative known as 'Teenergizer!.

## 2.3 Nutrition

The RO enhanced the capacity and policy frameworks to scale-up nutrition action in the countries with the highest prevalence of stunting. Tajikistan, for example was supported in updating its national guidelines on the Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition programme as a prerequisite for scaling up.

With support from USAID for Universal Salt Iodisation programmes, the RO reached out to nine<sup>8</sup> COs to assist in their collaboration with governments towards enhanced systems and policy capacity aimed at improving iodine nutrition for over 3.6 million children and mothers. To tackle the unfinished agenda on anaemia and folic acid deficiency, the RO and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) co-organized a multi-country policy advocacy summit on flour fortification in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The region's flour fortification system and policy capacity was reviewed and policy makers from eight Central Asian and Caucasus countries – as well as Afghanistan, Mongolia and Pakistan– were sensitised on the importance of quality control and assurance in flour fortification programmes.

The RO also organized a Regional Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets in collaboration with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Over 250 managers from 15 countries learned about food systems and healthy diets of vulnerable groups. Participants agreed to establish a Regional Nutrition Capacity Building Network and Partnership Platform.

RO supported promotion of breastfeeding under the region's Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) programme, resulted in significantly enhanced systems and legislative capacity in Albania, Croatia, Romania, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

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<sup>7</sup> The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

<sup>8</sup> Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo UNSCR 1244, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

## 2.4 Education

In 2017, the ECA Regional Education Strategy was disseminated at the Regional Network meeting on Education and Early Learning. The strategy was the basis for the RO's collaboration with COs in developing priority regional results in education in line with UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2018-21. The RO also facilitated the use of a pre-school sub-sector analysis and planning tool in two countries to explore the opportunities and challenges for this critical stage of children's education.

RO support to COs included direct help for the work of 15 COs on access: the identification, referral and case management of out-of-school children (OOSC) and those at risk of dropping out. An evaluation of Serbia's programme on dropout prevention found that reduced dropout rates at primary and lower-secondary levels could be achieved through a comprehensive, schools-based approach that empowered teachers to identify risk factors at an early stage, provide individualised support and facilitate peer support. The RO published *Volume 2 on Improving Education Participation*: a menu of best practices in 10 areas related to dropout prevention, response and compensation drawing from the region and beyond. There were also specific studies on monitoring systems in early childhood education (ECE) and the implications of decentralisation for access and equity in pre-primary education.

On quality education, the RO supported secondary analysis by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on policy options for learning outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged and minority children in the region. The analysis found that education systems focused on adequate inputs, rather than learning outcomes, reinforcing the need for a region-wide shift in the way in which quality education is conceived, measured and monitored.

The RO also supported education programming by the Ukraine CO and by COs and country teams responding to the refugees and migrant crisis. Results included a successful pilot on mother tongue education in non-formal education centres in Greece, and the establishment of links with formal education through the support of a Lebanese NGO to deliver education to refugee children with low literacy levels. As the remote learning programme evolves, it may prove to be a useful model for other children on the move or those who have been out of school for some time.

The RO continued to contribute to the regional and global agenda on inclusive education by disseminating the Inclusive Education Toolkit and good practices at the ECA Regional Education Network Meeting, the UNICEF ESARO meeting on inclusive education, and the UNICEF Global Education Team Meeting. RO advocacy at high-level education meetings in Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Romania helped to advance national dialogue on this issue, based on the General Comment on Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In Moldova, a high-level education meeting led by the Deputy Prime Minister led to a resolution to reinforce implementation of the General Comment provisions. The RO supported the testing of the Chapter on inclusive education in Ghana as part of the roll-out of the Global WB/GPE/UNESCO<sup>9</sup> and UNICEF Methodological Guidelines, and to enhance cross-regional collaboration.

On inclusive education, the RO continued to support in-service teacher training in 10 countries, and introduced the Inclusive Education Toolkit to teacher training faculties in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo<sup>10</sup>, Serbia and Tajikistan as the basis for reform of pre-service teacher training.

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<sup>9</sup> World Bank, Global Partnership for Education, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

<sup>10</sup> All references to Kosovo in this report should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)

Other achievements included the RO's development of the first regional disability-inclusive programming strategy, providing guidance for efforts to close equity gaps for children with disabilities in the region during the 2018-2021 timeframe of the Regional Office Management Plan (ROMP). This programming strategy emerged from a coordinated effort by all RO sections to reflect new evidence on the situation of children with disabilities, and is in line with UNICEF's global guidance and normative framework. The RO also developed a regional programme guidance document on early childhood intervention (ECI) and inclusive preschool education, together with a guidance document on national screening and monitoring tools.

RO-supported situation analyses revealed the fragmented disability agenda in countries across the region, which lacks a common disability definition and mechanisms for cross-sectoral cooperation. Analyses in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Turkey and Uzbekistan generated knowledge on children with disabilities, and facilitated national consensus on the need to ensure their full inclusion. The RO engaged directly in these processes in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. The RO also supported capacity building of disabled people's organizations (DPOs) for advocacy and CRPD reporting in Montenegro.

## 2.5 Child Protection

In 2017, the RO supported CO results on childcare reform and access to justice for children, violence against children, and children affected by migration. There has been progress on childcare reform across the region, with UNICEF helping governments to close large institutions for children and shift resources to community and family based care. However, half of all children who remain in public institutional care in the region are children with disabilities – a proportion that rises to 70 percent in some countries. Children with disabilities in ECA Region are almost 17 times more likely to be institutionalised than other children. The next stage of childcare reform will require a two-pronged approach: sustaining and deepening the gains made to date with a stronger focus on prevention of family separation, and focusing on multi-sectoral interventions to ensure that children with disabilities benefit from childcare reforms.

Building on UNICEF's record in this area, the RO focused on resource mobilisation, partnerships, messaging and identification of the guidance needed to overcome bottlenecks. Partnerships with foundations and European CSOs were strengthened and helped to influence the EU's forthcoming multi-annual financial framework, aiming to ensure that support for child protection and childcare reform is extended in ECA region and beyond.

The rate of children in detention has fallen across the region by 60 percent over the past decade – an achievement highlighted in communication efforts and partnership development in 2017. The RO also positioned UNICEF to catalyse multi-sectoral policy advocacy and programming around violence against children and children's broader access to justice through engagement with national human rights institutes. Intensive in-country support was provided to eight countries, including in the context of the region's refugee and migration crises. This work aims to strengthen national mechanisms that enable children who are denied their rights to seek redress.

There was continued RO support for the implementation of the EU-funded, seven-country<sup>11</sup> initiative to address violence against children and the inclusion of children with disabilities across the western Balkans and Turkey. This initiative, now entering its final year, has produced situation analyses on children with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo enhanced local-level modelling on multi-disciplinary responses to violence against children in Montenegro and Serbia; and strengthened partnership with the European Disability Forum at regional level and DPOs at country level on social inclusion.

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<sup>11</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

Region-wide mapping of programming and engagement on violence against children across all COs aimed to further inform and accelerate action at country level. The mapping was important groundwork for 2018 Child Protection programming which will have a strong focus on social work.

The RO secured \$4 million from the EU for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to advance policies and programmes to protect children affected by parents migrating to work outside the country.

## 2.6 Social Policy

The RO's social policy work in 2017 focused on support for COs in monitoring child poverty and developing effective social policy responses, such as increasing the number of children receiving predictable social transfers and support for integrated social protection systems that bring together social assistance and social services.

The RO supported the Bosnia and Herzegovina CO to convene a sub-regional conference on Social Protection for Children in the Western Balkans. The meeting enabled peer-to-peer learning across 100 participants from nine countries on strengthening social protection systems responding to children's vulnerabilities and needs. The conference led to a call for action, articulating key commitments on child-sensitive social protection.

To provide evidence-based policy advice, five countries<sup>12</sup> analysed the provision of social protection, including the barriers faced by families, as well as reviews of reforms and innovative arrangements to deliver social protection services. The RO also supported the strengthening of shock-responsive social protection at country level. A cash-preparedness assessment tool was developed by the RO for Armenia and Tajikistan COs. The RO also supported documentation of the Kyrgyzstan and Turkey COs' experience on delivering cash transfers in response to emergencies through national social protection systems, with the publication of these case studies scheduled for 2018.

On child poverty measurement, the RO reviewed current practices across the region on data collection, measurement and reporting. The review and its recommendations on how to improve the availability, frequency and quality of child poverty data was presented at an Expert Meeting on Measuring Poverty and Inequality organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and Conference of European Statisticians (CES).

The RO provided technical inputs to the UNECE Guide to poverty measurement, specifically on child poverty in three countries: Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. In addition, the RO supported the organization of the TransMonEE<sup>13</sup> meeting of National Statistical Offices, resulting in a session on improving data disaggregation on ethnic minorities.

To support and strengthen CO engagement in Public Finance for Children (PF4C), the RO finalised a stocktaking exercise on public financing and public financial management (PFM) for children in the region. The RO convened a webinar with all COs to disseminate results and to identify opportunities and success factors to influence budgets for children. Twelve staff from eight countries benefited from the Public Finance for Children training held in Florence, Italy.

## 2.7 Adolescent Development and Participation

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<sup>12</sup> Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro

<sup>13</sup> Transformative Monitoring for Enhanced Equity (TransMonEE) is a research programme to monitor the situation of children who face inequities in realization of their rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. TransMonEE is managed by the UNICEF ECA Regional Office with the aim of strengthening research-policy work linkages in this area of work.

In 2017, RO support to COs on adolescent development and participation focused on three areas: gender responsive adolescent health, age-related policies, and parenting of adolescents.

*Gender-responsive adolescent health.* The RO provided technical support to a number of COs to guide ongoing work with governments to ensure that health services serve the needs of the most marginalised boys and girls. The RO commissioned a review of youth-friendly health services in Belarus, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Ukraine, comparing national experiences against global standards of care set by the World Health Organization (WHO). The lessons learnt will guide UNICEF's region-wide work on adolescent health over the next four years, including pushing for health-sector reforms that look beyond adolescent sexual and reproductive health, and working with governments to develop cross-sectoral, community based models to address adolescent mental health, with the model developed in Kazakhstan representing a key contribution from the region to global learning.

*Age-related policies.* Through the *Age Matters!* initiative, the RO continued to lay the groundwork for coordinated regional work on understanding the age-related barriers that hinder the ability of adolescents to access services and realise their rights. The second phase of the *Age Matters!* research in 2017 examined the knowledge, experience and perceptions of adolescents themselves. Across five countries (Armenia, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Romania and Ukraine), 5,725 adolescent boys and girls aged 10 to 17 participated in an online survey. A total of 241 adolescents shared their views in 30 focus group discussions on, for example, marriageable age; minimum age of criminal responsibility; minimum age to independently seek medical advice; voting age; working age and the age for the end of compulsory schooling. The results will guide UNICEF in its advocacy work. Follow-up advocacy with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the Child Rights International Network (CRIN), the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti and COs on age-related issues will be a key area of work for the RO in 2018.

*Parenting of adolescents.* To gather evidence on this issue, the RO coordinated the development of the *Regional Study on Parenting Programmes for Parents and Caregivers of Adolescents* in Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro and Romania. The study provides an evidence-base to develop and strengthen initiatives for the most vulnerable parents and caregivers of adolescents, so that they are better equipped to promote their well-being, care and protection. The study gathered the opinions of 876 parents, adolescents, government and non-government partners in 2017 to explore relevant policies and programmes, and how parental engagement in the lives of adolescents is shaped by individual, interpersonal and wider factors. The results will provide qualitative information to help UNICEF develop policy asks and advocate for the development of initiatives that support parents, as well as a regional multi-sectoral action plan on the parenting of adolescents.

## **2.8 Refugee and Migrant Response**

In line with its Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF continued to respond to the situation in Europe in 2017 through a combination of advocacy, technical assistance to Governments, capacity-building of national and CSOs and service delivery responses in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia. In addition, through its National Committees, UNICEF monitored, advocated and communicated on issues related to refugee and migrant children in several other European countries, including France, the UK, Spain, Sweden and the Netherlands.

As part of the continuous humanitarian response and longer-term support to national child welfare systems, UNICEF continued to mobilise EU Member States, partners and duty-bearers to improve assistance and protection for refugee and migrant children and their families. UNICEF has coordinated its response with Governments, other UN agencies and international partners as well as CSOs within existing coordination mechanisms and working groups at the national level. At regional level, UNICEF is coordinating closely with UNHCR and IOM at multiple levels, including sectoral response activities, contingency planning, information management and response monitoring within the framework of the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response

Plan. These collective efforts resulted in strengthened political commitments in 2017 to improve the protection of refugee and migrant children at European and national level (see section 1.3).

Wherever there was an operational presence, under RO guidance and technical assistance, UNICEF efforts focused on the access of refugee and migrant children to essential services while strengthening the national capacity to cater for the most vulnerable. In 2017, nearly 12,000 children benefitted from basic child protection services, over 18,000 children most at risk, including unaccompanied and separated children, were screened and referred to specialised services and 6,000 front line workers were trained. Over 11,000 children participated in structured education activities.

At regional level, UNICEF played a key role in highlighting issues facing refugee and migrant children in both traditional and social media, advocating for policy and legislative challenges across Europe and identifying good practices and solutions to improve the protection of child refugees and migrants.

In 2017, UNICEF's advocacy across Europe included messages on the need to improve reception conditions, guardianship and access to services, family reunification, protection against trafficking and exploitation, ending child detention, and many other areas. Many of these messages were echoed by European States, other UN agencies and CSOs in the Global Compact discussions.

Two highlights of communication and advocacy work in 2017 were the G7 in Taormina, Sicily and G20 in Hamburg, Germany, where regional communications triggered high-level media engagement and maximised the impact of social media platforms. This work was carried out under the umbrella of the *Children Uprooted* campaign, and engaged a total of 5.4 million people around the two summits.

Advocacy and communication products were developed in conjunction with other regions – such as *Child Alert on Libya*<sup>14</sup> and *Harrowing Journeys*, highlighting the dire situation facing refugee and migrant children on the Central Mediterranean route, and even on arrival in Europe. The *Way Forward* – a Roadmap for refugee and migrant unaccompanied and separated children in Europe (a joint report with UNHCR and IRC) – provided additional analysis, evidence and recommendations from a child-rights perspective and guidance to countries on the rights and needs of refugee and migrant children. To stimulate constructive regional dialogue on ending the detention of child migrants, UNICEF co-hosted a roundtable discussion with other UN Agencies and CSOs in December 2017, promoting solutions, including alternatives to detention that are in line with the UNICEF *Beyond Borders* report.

## 2.9 Humanitarian Response

### 2.9.1 Ukraine

In 2017, the RO supported the Ukraine CO in ongoing programmes of assistance for 300,000 children affected by the continuing armed conflict in the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine, where regular and occasionally intense levels of military activity were reported by monitors for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Now in its fifth year, the conflict continues to put children at risk. They include children living in proximity to the line of contacts, those in non-government controlled areas (NGCAs) where humanitarian access remains very limited, and children impacted by wider political and institutional instability at the national level.

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<sup>14</sup> The Child Alert triggered 8,500 mentions of UNICEF on social media, potentially reaching 355.9 million people and engaging 128,300 people.

The RO provided both in-country and remote technical assistance to the Ukraine CO throughout the year. Notable achievements included the securing and delivery of anti-retrovirals to 12,000 people in NGCAs and planning the coordination of national measles vaccination amid an increase in reported cases.

Ukraine country office also received support from the RO in the roll-out of its new country programme 2018 – 2021, in the areas of planning, staff recruitment and operations. The new programme covers a wide spectrum of humanitarian and development programming approaches, as well as strengthened and streamlined field delivery and monitoring capacities.

### **2.9.2 Turkey**

The RO provided technical support to Turkey CO for ongoing programmes of assistance under a wider multi-country Syria emergency response. Turkey hosted the largest refugee population in the world. By the end of 2017, almost 3.8 million refugees and asylum seekers were registered, including 1.6 million children. Nearly 3.4 million Syrians, including over 1.5 million children, were under temporary protection in Turkey. In addition, there are now 365,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. Among these were 120,000 children. While there were no significant cross-border movements from conflict-affected Syria and Iraq during the year, continued arrivals – particularly from Afghanistan – placed further pressure on government services.

Despite these challenges, regional support generated significant results for children, including the establishment of large-scale cash transfers for the education sector and targeted winter assistance for families on the move, including those intercepted and returned by Turkish authorities after attempting to cross into Greece and Bulgaria.

### **2.9.3 Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)**

Emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts focused on strengthening region-wide tools and facilities for preparedness through the development of an emergency supply/logistics strategy, support for introducing the use of cash in emergencies (Armenia and Tajikistan), and selected emergency supplies pre-positioning with government and NGO partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia and Uzbekistan.

The RO supported the advancing of the DRR resilience agenda through the promotion of school safety in disaster risk environments, advancing institutionalisation as part of education policies, process and systems in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The conclusion of multi-year, multi-country DIPECHO funding was marked by a major knowledge management workshop in Bishkek to review multi-country Safe Schools and DRR based programming. ECHO and government technical counterparts from nine countries participated.

A new humanitarian partnership was formalised with the Almaty-based Centre for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction (CESDRR), an inter-governmental initiative focused to capacity building and good practice. The RO supported activities to strengthen a child-risk informed information baselines and related knowledge management capacities. A mapping exercise was undertaken of existing and potential cooperation areas with national Red Crescent and Red Cross societies in the five Central Asia countries as the basis for enhanced cooperation. The outcomes and recommendations for strengthened partnership became the basis for regional discussions with the in 2018.

In the face of prevailing general and specific emergency risks, the RO carried out a range of support activities including technical missions to all 21 country offices to introduce the new corporate emergency preparedness policy; the convening of emergency focal points from these same offices for a three-day

workshop in Almaty focusing to lessons learned, new policies and standards on UNICEF humanitarian action; the development and testing of a simulation methodology to validate and inform country office-level preparedness capacities and assumptions (Serbia and Kosovo ); and support to inter-agency preparedness initiatives with OCHA including a three country emergency simulation exercise for the Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia UN Country Teams.

### 3. Global and Regional Programmes

#### 3.1 Influencing global/regional discourse and policy

As co-chair of the regional Issue Based Coalition on Social Protection, the RO jointly organized and contributed to the first face-to-face meeting of UN agencies on social protection at regional level, and to the preparation of a joint UN policy paper on social protection in the region. The RO also finalised a publication on Promising Practices on Child-Sensitive Social Protection, as well as two briefs on the effectiveness of social protection for child outcomes and strengthening social protection for resilience and disaster risk reduction.

The RO made significant contributions to UNICEF’s global cause frameworks on #ChildrenUprooted and #EndViolence in 2017 through targeted policy and public advocacy, strengthened alliances and resource partnerships with the EU, CoE and others. The results included a new EU Communication on Protecting of Children in Migration, draft CoE Standards on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children (looking at Age Assessment and Guardianship) and Guidelines on Children’s Rights in the Digital Environment.

Within the region, the RO’s support for the strengthening of advocacy and alliances for child rights leveraged EU processes and investments around reforms in the Western Balkans and Turkey, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The RO also strengthened coordination to influence EU and CoE policies on the region’s most vulnerable children. As a result, greater attention was paid to refugee and migrant children, minorities, children with disabilities and the poorest children in, for example, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine (where UNICEF contributed to human rights dialogues with the EU) and in the Western Balkans and Turkey (where UNICEF leveraged the EU accession process for children’s rights).

#### 3.2 Data, research and evaluation

The year saw a new quality assurance system launched for UNICEF-supported research and studies in the region thanks to collaboration with other Regional Offices (ROSA and MENARO) and the support of the Office of Research. The region obtained the highest ratings for evaluations commissioned by COs in 2017. In 2018 a Regional Strategy for Evidence Generation (research, studies, data and evaluations) will be designed and endorsed by the Regional Management Team. The following **research/studies** were finalised and uploaded in the Evaluations and Research Data Base in 2017.

Country	Evaluation
Albania	Evaluation of the "Breaking the cycle of exclusion for Roma children through ECD and Education" project in Albania, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Armenia	Evaluation of the EU-funded "Mitigating Social Consequences of Labour Migration and Maximising Migrants' Involvement in Local Development" project
Azerbaijan	Evaluation of the "Promoting access to Justice for Children in Azerbaijan through national Capacity Building for State and non-State Actors" project

Bosnia and Herzegovina	Final Evaluation of the “Justice for Every Child” project
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Evaluation of the UNICEF-supported component of the “Support for durable solutions of the revised strategy for implementation of Annex VII of the Dayton Peace Agreement in B&H” project
Croatia	Evaluation of the country programme’s contribution toward the enhancement of the justice for children system in Croatia
Kazakhstan	Joint evaluation: Early Childhood Development and Early Child Education System in Kazakhstan
FYR of Macedonia	Evaluation of Early Literacy and Numeracy interventions
FYR of Macedonia	Evaluation of the “Delivery of Continuous Professional Development Activities for Social Protection professional” project
FYR of Macedonia	Evaluation of the Roma Health Mediators Programme
Moldova	Evaluation of UNICEF- Government of Moldova 2013-2017 Country Programme of Cooperation
Montenegro	Evaluation of the Programme “Montenegro – Investment case on Early Childhood Development”
Serbia	Country-led evaluation of Efforts to Strengthen Social Welfare System to Advance Child Protection - focus on child care reform
Serbia	Country-led evaluation on efforts to strengthen the justice for children system in Serbia
Turkmenistan	Evaluation of the National Nutrition Programme for 2013-2017 and UNICEF’s contribution to its implementation in Turkmenistan
Ukraine	Evaluation of UNICEF Ukraine Country Programme

### 3.3 Implementation strategies

*Data and evidence:* A major pillar of our evidence approach is capacity strengthening of national statistical offices (NSOs) and systems. In 2017, UNICEF worked with NSOs in more than two dozen countries, helping them to establish SDG baselines, identify data gaps, bringing in new tools and methods that could strengthen the quality and comparability of data on children. Of particular note are the 11 countries that were supported in 2017 to plan and mobilise resources for MICS round 6 and the 25 countries that were exposed to new global guidance and shared experiences related to statistics on ethnicity, nationality and migration through the annual TransMonEE regional NSO network conference attended by over 100 participants and co-hosted by UNICEF ECAR and a new NSO partner, ELSTAT Greece. Additionally, the RO supported three countries – Albania, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan – to complete SDG baseline assessments in partnership with NSOs. Capacity in the region for enhanced work on data strengthening was mobilized from headquarters, with all COs receiving funding for critical positions related to child rights monitoring.

*Research:* During 2017, the RO supported COs in their research projects and rolled out a new quality assurance system involving external peer-review support and strengthened guidance. In particular, the research managed by the Serbia CO on “How can school dropout in Serbia be reduced?” was a finalist in the Best of UNICEF Research 2017 edition. The RO completed four regional studies in 2017m which dealt with Social Protection, Social Norms towards Children with Disabilities, and Violence Against Children and Women.

*Evaluation:* As a result of the RO’s mentoring of COs and the introduction of the quality assurance system in 2017, almost half of the evaluations completed were given the highest rating by the independent GEROS system. In addition, recognising the coverage and growing maturity of several programming areas, the RO

undertook evaluability assessments of UNICEF's work in support of social protection and home-visiting, looking ahead to multi-country evaluations of national results achieved in the region, and UNICEF's contribution to these.

*Communication for Development (C4D):* Harmful social norms were identified in the 2016 multi-country evaluation as key bottlenecks to results for children. In 2017, the Communication for Social Change (C4SC) section was established in the RO to provide technical advice, oversight and guidance to the RO and COs to address the harmful social and cultural norms, attitudes and beliefs that affect children's social inclusion. The section has developed a strategic framework and a position paper to guide the work and engagement with COs for the next four years. A literature review was conducted to identify determinants of vaccine hesitancy and refusal, which was supplemented with field visits in four countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine). While it will not be possible to extrapolate these findings to the wider region, the RO is now better equipped to help countries understand and support demand-side promotion.

*Communication and Public Advocacy:* In 2017, the RO's external communication and public advocacy prioritised the enhancement of its digital communication platforms, closer alignment of the regional communication and advocacy agenda with the Global Cause Framework, and a concerted focus on strengthening on the RO's capabilities in multimedia storytelling.

With substantive resources invested in the planning and production of the new RO website (now live at: [www.unicef.org/eca](http://www.unicef.org/eca)), the first-ever UNICEF regional or national web platform launched under the auspices of the global Digital Transformation Project (DTP), the RO successfully carried out the content-preparation phase in close coordination with the Division of Communication/NYHQ. The new platform aims to serve as a well-designed and user-friendly communication tool, adaptable to the needs of the RO. Using the latest available technology, the new site provides a channel to advocate for the rights of children across the region, engage with a wide range of partners and stakeholders (including donors), and share emotive, powerful content from COs and the RO to reinforce UNICEF's role as the leading children's rights organization in the region and globally.

Aligning regional and country-level communication and advocacy efforts to the Global Cause Framework was a key priority throughout the year, driving the RO's continuous provision of technical support and strategic advice to make sure that COs' external-facing content and campaign assets were amplified at global level, while working to "regionalise" content produced at NYHQ level for maximum resonance and use at country level. Notably, such efforts contributed to key communication and advocacy 'moments' of the #ChildrenUprooted and #EarlyMomentsMatter campaigns, the launch of the *2017 State of the World's Children* and ending violence against children reports, and the inaugural UNICEF World Children's Day.

To complementing these efforts, and meet an internal need that had been unmet for several years, the production of a series of advocacy briefs began in 2017. Designed as a set of succinct, sharp, newly branded products for use by RO staff with senior-level decision-makers and key influencers, the advocacy briefs (subsequently dubbed the *In Focus* series) articulate the most salient issues for children by priority thematic areas, and promote UNICEF-supported work in those areas.

The RO also renewed its emphasis on developing and disseminating multimedia materials of the highest professional quality in 2017, advocating for country, regional and global UNICEF priorities. This was achieved primarily through two multimedia, multi-country content-generation missions. The first, organized with the Private Fundraising and Partnerships (PFP) division and the Kyrgyzstan CO, showcased UNICEF's contributions to improving neonatal survival rates in both urban and rural parts of the country. Content from the mission was used by the CO, RO and NYHQ to support the Child Survival campaign of the Global Cause Framework and to engage private and public sector donors.

The second mission collected professional quality materials on children affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The materials have been shared extensively on UNICEF country, regional and NYHQ digital platforms, including extensively on social media channels. The materials also supported a cross-platform media moment that resulted in widespread international coverage on the devastating impact of nearly four years of conflict on children in that country. All materials from the mission helped to support UNICEF's global humanitarian public campaign, #ChildrenUnderAttack, which advocates for the better protection of children caught in conflict.

*Partnerships:* The RO established a new Partnership Section in July 2017 in a move towards a more strategic, larger-scale approach to advocacy, alliance-building, leveraging and resource mobilisation in the region. Technical advice and guidance from the RO helped to increase CO capacity to advocate and partner with the EU as the region's largest donor, and with others. This led, for example, to the development of the first UNICEF-EU joint partnership strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina; a training and partnership event on the EU-UNICEF Child Rights Toolkit in Serbia, which is now being used for child rights mainstreaming in EU programmes; and enhanced EU engagement on violence against children and children with disabilities in seven pre-accession countries and territories: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

The RO launched resource-mobilisation donor mapping, guidance and tools for COs through a new Partnership Teamsite. Several strategic, cross-sector, multi-country concept notes were developed and presented to potential donors – one of which led to a multi-regional proposal resulting in a \$4.2 million grant from the EU to protect children affected by migration in Central Asia. The RO completed quality assurance for 22 donor reports, 7 multi-country proposals/concept notes and 11 CO proposals.

*Horizontal cooperation:* To support partnerships and learning across countries, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was established with the Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction (CESDRR) in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and a template was developed to help COs document good practices. Planning commenced for a sub-regional workshop in 2018 to share experiences on leveraging the EU Accession Process. In addition, a mapping and partnerships matrix was developed to leverage partnerships with the World Bank and other international financial instruments and Montenegro's partnership with the CoE's Development Bank was advanced. Two of the new CPDs, for Bulgaria and Romania, included components facilitating horizontal cooperation and sharing of the knowledge and experience of both countries as explicit results of the country programmes.

## **3.4 Normative Principles**

### **3.4.1 Human rights-based approach to programming**

The EU and the CoE remained crucial partners to advance children's rights in 2017 as part of their broader human rights and development agenda. The RO contributed to influencing key EU and CoE policies on protecting children in migration and supported a continued human rights and equity based approach for programming. The RO provided COs with advice on operationalising the *Leave No Child Behind - EU Guidelines on Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Child*, which offer important opportunities to partner with the EU on children's rights to achieve the SDGs.

The Regional Office has succeeded in positioning the rights of refugee and migrant children in the global discourse. Of particular note is the partnership with the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC), a key network of independent child rights institutions whose voice influences both domestic and regional policies. Following a joint UNICEF-ENOC workshop in 2017, ENOC issued a set of strong recommendations on safeguarding and protecting the rights of children on the move, with a focus on their social inclusion. These recommendations target both the EU and national Governments, and have helped ensure that refugee and migrant children remain high priorities.

Further to these efforts, the RO, in cooperation UNICEF Headquarters and ENOC, has initiated the development of a child rights tool kit for Ombudspersons and other National Human Rights Institutions as part of the regional access to justice agenda, which will provide practical guidance and resources for their child-related work. COs across the region will be involved in the development of this child-rights toolkit in 2018.

### **3.4.2 Gender equality**

The RO has prioritized the programming and development effectiveness measures outlined in the Gender Action Plan as well as the regional gender equality strategic framework. This programming experience informed the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan and the revised Gender Action Plan.

Gender responsive programming and increased institutional effectiveness benefitted from Gender Programme Reviews again in 2017. For countries that completed the GPR in 2017, such as Kyrgyzstan, country programme documents (CPD) included a focus on gender target priorities, as well as strengthened CO staff capacity and partnerships. Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, and Ukraine completed Gender Programme Reviews in 2017, informing mid-term reviews, strategic moments of reflection and CPD development.

UNICEF programming in middle and high-income countries to address child marriage focused on the deprivations experienced by some of the most marginalised and socially excluded communities. Programming in Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey supported child marriage prevention and response through child protection, health, C4D and adolescent interventions. This work included support for girls' transition to secondary education as well as empowering their participation through innovative programming that uses technology for development to share sexual and reproductive health information and 21st century skills building. Parents, teachers and community members have been mobilized to address negative social norms and UNICEF initiatives have fostered enabling legal and policy frameworks and their implementation as well as strengthening integrated child protection systems.

As a result of a partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and collaboration with other members of the regional Issue Based Coalition on Gender, an analysis of prevalence rates for violence in the home was carried out in 2017. An evidence-informed advocacy study investigated and synthesized evidence on the intersections between VAW/G and VAC in seven countries across Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Albania, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine. Action-oriented recommendations on programming, legislative reform and a research agenda were developed.

Many countries in the region have prioritised gender-responsive adolescent health. Teenage pregnancy rates in the region have plateaued, from approximately 20 per 1,000 in most countries, to rates as high as 40 per 1,000 in Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia and Romania, and over 50 per 1,000 in Tajikistan. In countries like Belarus, youth-friendly health centres have been established nationwide in 48 locations, with preliminary analyses showing that these centres have reached 1,269,517 adolescent boys and girls (70/30 percent) aged 12 to 24 years over the life of the initiative. In conflict-affected areas of Eastern Ukraine, UNICEF, through a network of adolescent volunteers, has supported peer-to-peer training on gender-responsive adolescent health and the prevention of risky behaviour as part of its most-at-risk adolescents' programme. Several polls on gender issues were conducted within the U-Report, including GBV awareness, gender stereotypes and barriers. However, youth-friendly services still require national investment to address adolescent health, including mental health, and wellbeing.

Programming in the region also provides insights on gender and disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience programming, which has contributed to organizational guidance on programming that is risk informed. In the future, programming will advance the rights of the girl child with disabilities, improvements in access to justice for boys and girls, and initiatives that address the gender dimensions of migration as a contribution to advancing child rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

### 3.4.3 Environmental Sustainability

In 2017, the RO facilitated the Climate Landscape Analysis for Children exercise in Kyrgyzstan (March-April) and Turkmenistan (July) with expert support from the UNICEF HQ DRP Climate team. The resulting reports provided an overview of climate change impact and issues related to environment and energy, ongoing work by governments and development partners and issues pertaining to climate risk to children. This work included a set of recommendations for UNICEF internal processes to introduce climate change adaptation (CCA) as a cross-cutting issue in UNICEF programmes and external engagement with governments and partners. In developing the new Kyrgyzstan five-year CPD in early 2017, the CO included indicators on CCA and DRR, as well as recommendations for the mainstreaming of CCA into programmes. The exercise also informed child-sensitive CCA in support of the country UNDAF process, which was finalised on 19 May 2017.

The Greening efforts in the UNICEF Geneva Office are coordinated by the Common Services Manager, and supported by a Geneva Greening Committee in which the Regional Office greening focal point was a driving force.

The Environmental Footprint Assessment in August 2017 found that the Geneva Office has reduced its energy consumption by 7% and paper use per person by 6%. The percentage of business travel was also reduced from 13% to 11%.

The following greening initiatives took place in 2017:

- The UNICEF Geneva Office continued to replace old lamps with LED lamps and install motion sensors to regulate the lights in bathrooms,
- The recycling efforts were improved by placing at least 1 recycling bin for plastic bottles on every floor as well as a recycle bin for batteries and for glass.
- A procurement process took place to replace the old printers with printers that will only print if you physically swipe your badge at the printer to release the documents you want to print. The printers are being installed in 2018.
- Three awareness raising campaigns were organised on taking the stairs, on commuting by bicycle and on encouraging recycling.

## 4. Management and Operations

### 4.1 Summary of key results against the indicators

*Overview.* The RO continued to strengthen its role in providing oversight, technical assistance and quality assurance to COs in the region, including the Refugee and Migrant Response teams in Europe. In 2017, the RO defined seven programme and management priorities in its Annual Management Plan (AMP).

The RO Operations section continued to provide guidance and technical support to COs on finance, administration, audit, the Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT), security, human-resource management and information and communications technology (ICT) through network meetings, country missions and remote support. Joint network meetings and missions were undertaken where relevant (e.g. Operations and HR Network Meeting in Bulgaria; Operations and HR mission in Albania; and HACT and Planning mission in Greece) both as an efficiency measure and as good practice approaches to maximize the value of in-country support

*Summary of main results achieved against the Regional Office Management Plan (ROMP), Annual Workplan (AWP) and Annual Management Plan (AMP).* In 2017, the RO Operations section highlighted three key priority results: support to COs in the preparation process for Country Programme Management Plans (CPMPs); support to COs on internal and external audits; and support to the RO and COs on the roll-out and implementation of eZHACT.

The RO supported COs in their CPMP preparation processes through a mix of face-to-face support and skype meetings. The RO also conducted a two-day CPMP preparation workshop to assist the five COs that will start a new country programme cycle in 2018. In addition, guidelines were prepared and shared with COs in a timely manner, and skype meetings were held with CO Operations Managers to address specific queries. This resulted in CPMPs that were aligned with CPDs and successful programme and budget review (PBR) processes for the COs.

The RO provided audit support to COs through consultations with representatives, country management teams (CMTs) and meetings (via skype) with all staff on audit preparation, audit entrance and exit meetings and on drafting audit responses, as well as required follow-up action to close the recommendations. The RO coordinated closely with UNICEF's Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI) to follow-up on outstanding audit reports (e.g., Ukraine), closing past audit observations for Kyrgyzstan and Turkey and planning for upcoming audits in the region. As a result, the region has no outstanding audits.

Timely advice was also provided to regional advisors and COs on verification missions with excellent results, such as the EU verification mission on the project "Strengthening capacity of non-state actors (NSAs) for HIV testing and counselling of most at risk adolescent & young people".

As part of the eZHACT roll-out, the RO played a key role in ensuring that COs were prepared and equipped with knowledge of the new system, trained to perform transactions using the system and aware of the support structure in place to support the transition and implementation process. The RO, in coordination with UNICEF's Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM), conducted a regional training on eZHACT with the participation of all COs to ensure that staff gained practical hands-on experience in using the system and were prepared to train other staff in their own offices. The RO also created an eZHACT focal points group to foster open communication, knowledge sharing and post go-live support among offices. As a result, the RO and COs were ready for a smooth eZHACT transition and implementation.

*Selected key results against indicators.* The RO continued to monitor the programme and operations performance of the RO and COs through dissemination of a regional report on key performance indicators (KPIs). Overall, 2017 marked a year of excellent results in the region in terms of funds utilisation. At year-end, there was 100 per cent utilization in IB, regular resources (RR) and other resources – emergency (ORE) funds and 98 per cent utilization in other resources regular (ORR) funds. This was accomplished through regular follow-up and support to COs in the region, the RO Geneva-based sections, RO outposts in Almaty and Istanbul, and the Refugee and Migrant Response teams in Europe.

The RO continues to prioritise the monitoring of funds utilisation in the region to ensure maximum value for money to achieve results for children. There were also significant achievements in the HACT status of the region, with the region achieving the HACT KPI targets, completing 131 percent of the minimum required programmatic visits and 104 percent of the minimum required spot checks.

In addition, the RO collaborated with DFAM to complete the *Global Review of IB and Operating Costs Strategy*. As a result, the regional IB envelope for 2018-2021 was approved with an additional \$19 million for posts and \$11 million for non-post costs. As part of this exercise, a total of 40 new posts were established in the region for operations functions (ICT, administration, HR and finance) and seven new posts in front office

management. The region also benefited from the conversion of the Child Rights Monitoring post as a core role funded from IB.

*Supply management.* The RO participated in and led two workshops in Denmark and Moldova on Supply and Procurement Services in 2017. In consultation and coordination with SD on the overall supply and procurement function in the region, an additional six general service (GS) level positions were created to support procurement services. In addition, the post of a Senior Supply and Procurement Specialist (P4), funded by SD, will be established in the RO in 2018.

*Enterprise risk management (ERM).* The RO updated its risk profile in line with the organizational ERM framework to reflect the current risk environment and, specifically, risks related to the achievement of the AMP priorities. These priorities and their respective risks were finalised in consultation with all staff. Across the 12 over-arching risk areas, the RO highlighted 17 medium risks, 16 low risks and 3 very low risks. Mitigation measures to address the residual risks were established for all risks, with relevant actions defined.

*Office management practices, systems and structures.* The RO implemented its work through a number of coordinating mechanisms, including office statutory committees and a Table of Authority (ToA) to ensure the clear definition of office accountabilities. The ToA and office committee membership and respective terms of reference were reviewed and updated in 2017.

*Information and communications technology (ICT).* The regional ICT team continued its work on alignment with two blocks of strategic priorities as part of UNICEF's Global ICT strategy: first, the agile, secured efficient and cost-effective infrastructure/systems and provisions of support services; and second, innovative use of technology for development (T4D) that contributes to equitable outcomes for children.

While establishing systems/provisions for infrastructural management/visibility in the region, a large number of infrastructural enhancements were made during the year. These included connectivity upgrades in seven COs, additional storage capacity in nine COs, enhanced wireless LAN infrastructure in five COs and enhanced network security in six COs. Efforts towards greening, cost efficiency and improved mobility/business-continuity included the migration of 10 COs to LIGHT ICT infrastructure and the introduction of four COs to modern Skype-for-Business Telephony systems while maintaining/administering the LIGHT Service Centre for the entire region.

In addition, ICT for Disaster Recovery Plans (ICT-DRP) was introduced in the region for the first time in 2017 to improve business continuity, in addition to providing emergency response training for four ICT staff across the region.

A large number of SharePoint Collaboration sites were developed, supported and administered in 2017, and there was continued day-to-day end-user support for many COs that lacked local ICT staff, as well as for the Refugee and Migrant Response teams around the region.

The regional ICT team also played a tier-2 SME role for a number of critical ICT systems, including VISION, which also included the RO's backfill support as ViSA and Approva administrator for the entire region. The region benefited from the Geneva-ICT led initiative to align ICT staff skills for the evolving role of ICT. This included revised job-profiles for all ICT staff in the region; a regional ICT Network Meeting combined with Project Management Training/certification for 20 ICT staff, and development assignment for two ICT staff from the region.

*Strategic Human resource management.* As aligned with the expected results of the 2017 AMP and the broader four-year ROMP, as well as UNICEF's strategic plan, the RO made important contributions in the area of Human Resources to the results achieved for the region in 2017. This included equipping RO and CO

management teams with effective HR tools, skills and practices to manage talent and to impact individual and team performance as aligned with global UNICEF HR reform.

- *In the areas of recruitment and performance management:*
  - An ambitious region-wide recruitment plan was completed with the direct involvement of the RO HR team and in close partnership with COs. This included more than 60 recruitment cases between September and December 2017, with an overall number of 100+ cases throughout 2017. Cases were completed within and below the 90-day global KPI.
  - Additional quality assurance of 110 national recruitment cases was completed in a timely manner to ensure that the most suitable talent could be deployed at the right time in the right place.
  - COs reported satisfaction with the high-quality HR service provided by the RO as part of an independent review of the HR function at UNICEF conducted in 2017.
  - HR best practice was designed and successfully applied as recognised by NYHQ on efficient recruitment business practices.
  - CO and RO teams handling performance cases received timely and dedicated support from the RO as aligned with the new Performance Management policy. This surpassed the 2017 target, with notes on the quality of the service provided.
  
- *On the implementation of a transformed HR engagement in the field that provides value to UNICEF's business:*
  - A sequenced HR capacity building plan was launched and completed for 2017 as per AMP indicators to equip the regional HR community with new skills and shift the regional HR business model from one that is transactional-centered, to one that maximises client service and positively influences sound HR decision making. The plan was noted as best practice for expansion to other UNICEF regions. Likewise, supervisors and staff at all levels received dedicated services to support sound HR decision making as related to day to day, real-life business cases.
  - In close collaboration with the RO's planning, operations, regional advisers and management, effective HR business solutions were designed for five CPD countries as well as for the RO to design staffing structures that respond effectively to business demands at country level.
  
- *On learning and development of staff:*
  - Proactive mapping and analysis of the region's 2017 Global Staff Survey (GSS) results supported the business case for targeted interventions to boost office cohesion and team performance:
    - Two COs – Masterclass management training completed
    - Five COs – Piloted PM cultural-shift workshops completed.
  - Regional investment in individual and team-coaching programmes resulted in:
    - 70 staff members receiving coaching support, with feedback from 15 Representatives on positive behavioural change among coaching participants in terms of increased effectiveness in applying UNICEF's core competencies in the workplace.
    - five team-coaching interventions were implemented to boost performance and impact results.

Initial risks related to the achievement of these results were managed through different strategies. To address the timeframe gap between the launch of the new HR policies and related practices, for example, the RO took a proactive approach and partnered with NYHQ to design, test and give feedback on new HR practices. To ensure the sustainable and consistent implementation of these new HR practices and approaches across the 21 COs in the region, the RO piloted the assignment of RO HR business partners to specific groups of countries, so experiences throughout the region could be monitored systematically and customization of HR business solutions could be applied to the unique context of each office.

The RO took a comprehensive approach to debriefing, addressing and acting on its own 2017 results of the GSS. This approach resulted in the definition of concrete actions to fully utilise the skills and talents of the regional team, applying new ways of working together. The resulting action plan is being implemented in full throughout 2018, with the highest commitment to maximise the regional team's performance to accelerate the children's agenda.

**Annex 1 :**

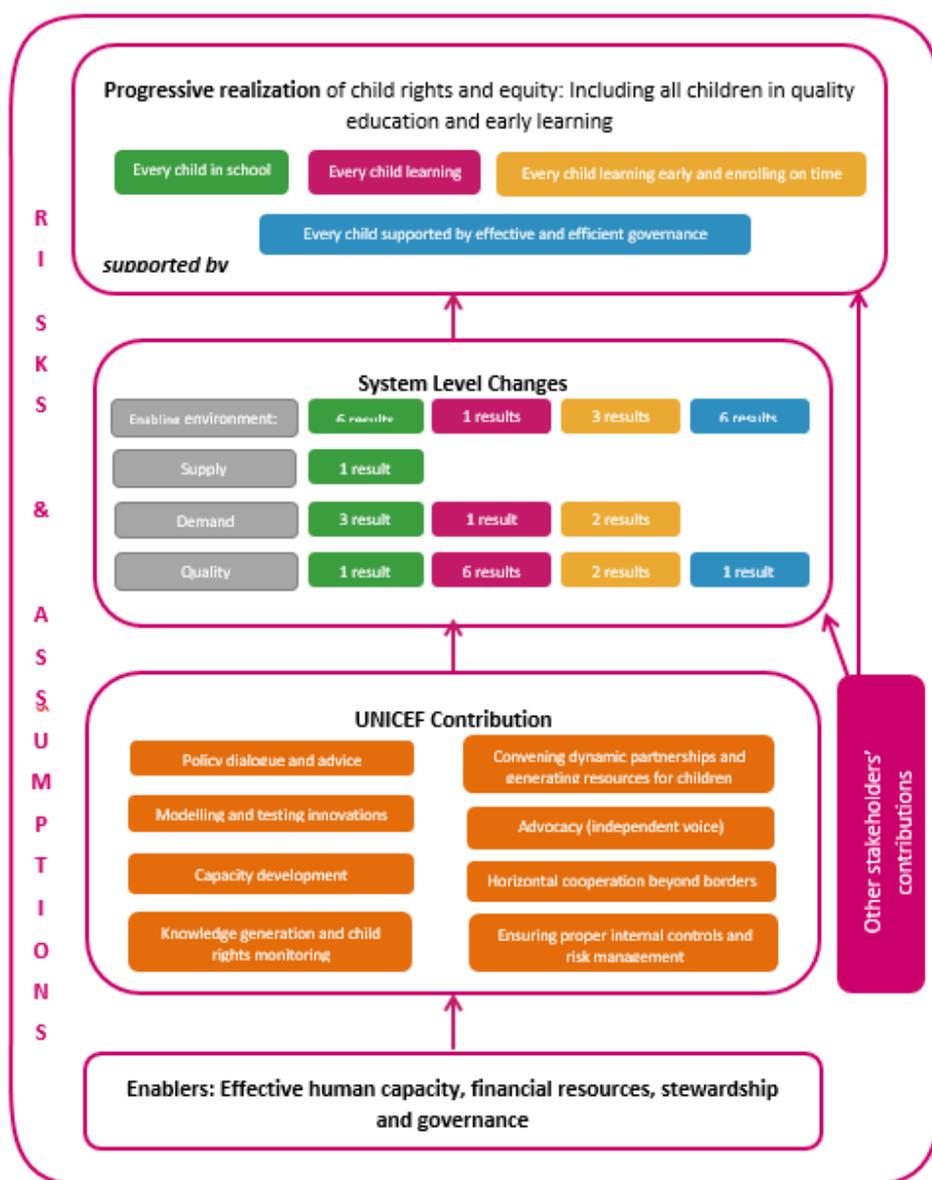
**Implementing and Monitoring the Strategic Plan 2018-2021**

*This annex explains how the ECA regional education programme has aligned its 2018-2021 strategy with the SP. A similar exercise is being undertaken within each of ECA’s programmes areas.*

The **Regional Education Strategy** “Including All Children in Inclusive, Quality Education and Early Learning” was disseminated in February 2016. It is fully aligned with SDG 4 and mirrors the new SP. It outlines 4 key result areas , with a menu of 34 corresponding key system change results which address the barriers and bottlenecks identified. The merging of RCLA 4 (Inclusive and Quality Education) and RCLA 3 (Early Learning and School Readiness) was decided at the 2015 fall RMT meeting and the Regional Education Strategy now covers/supports both RCLAs and the entire scope of the education continuum.

An interactive version of the Regional Education Strategy is accessible on the current education-equity website: [www.education-equity.org](http://www.education-equity.org) , which will soon be transferred on the ECA new regional website.

**Theory of Change for the Regional Education Strategy**



In order to measure progress in terms of change for children for each result area, in particular for the target population and inequities, a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system was developed for this Strategy at both impact, outcome and system (output) level.

The indicators selected to monitor the Regional Education Strategy were guided by the following principles:

(1) Collaborate with COs to develop and prioritize a set of common regional indicators in order to articulate regional results; (2) Limit the reporting burden on country offices; (3) Ensure monitoring tools and data collected are widely available and benefit COs, RO and HQ; and, (4) Reinforce corporate reporting processes by linking the Regional Education strategy to the SP wherever possible, while also highlighting regionally-specific results (ex. Inclusive education).

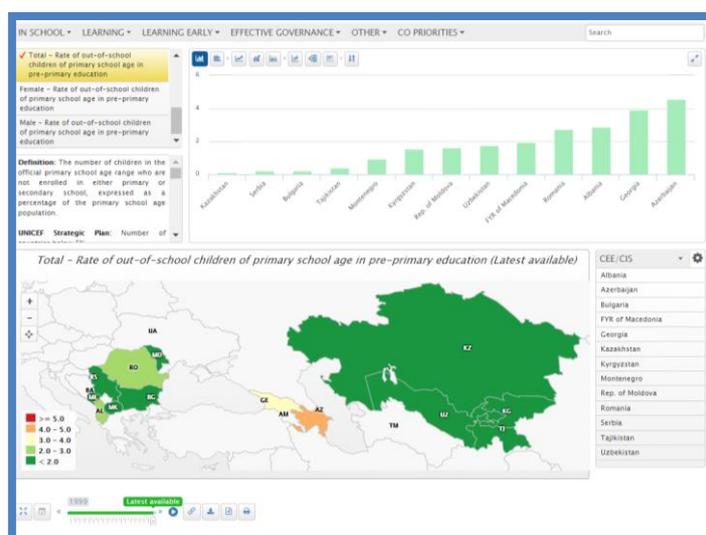
To make the indicator framework comprehensive, consistent and coordinated, RKLA 3&4 indicators were mapped to existing reporting processes, external (SDG, EU) and internal (SP, ROMP, RAM).

For **impact indicators**, internationally-comparable education indicators are drawn from official sources such as UNESCO Institute for Statistics, MICS/DHS, and PISA. Country offices will not report on these data as the Regional Office will use an automated process to extract them from online public databases.

For **output indicators**, a set of 15 shortlisted priority output indicators were selected through a prioritization exercise with CO management (see next page). Eight of these indicators are SMQ/RAM, and therefore will be drawn from existing reporting processes. Seven indicators are regionally-specific and are not part of SMQ. A scoring matrix guidance modelled after the Education SMQs is being created for country offices to report once per year. As with SMQ reporting, COs are asked only to report on regionally-specific indicators which are part of their country programme.

Progress will be visualized through several tools available on the forthcoming ECA regional website: a **Regional Education Database** and **Interactive Visualization Software**; a Child Rights Monitoring Dashboard with key impact, outcome and output indicators. To keep data current and reduce manual labour, impact indicators will be automatically extracted from official websites to the database (Application Programme Interface [API] functionality).

### Interactive Regional Education Database



Regional priority output indicators selected by COs, with linked reporting process			
RKLA 3&4 Result Area	Indicator	SMQ/RAM Standard or Regionally specific	ROMP
1	Policies available ensuring ALL childrens' right to be educated in mainstream schools	Regionally specific	Yes
2	Existence of school-based or district-based Early Warning System for children at risk of dropping out	Regionally specific	No
3	Pre-service and in-service teacher training includes modules on diversity and inclusion issues	Regionally specific	No
4	Existence of regulations on dropout and school absenteeism, including definition of authorized and non-authorized absence	SMQ	Yes
5	Availability of a risk reduction strategy within the Education Sector Plan/Policy	SMQ	No
6	Availability of appropriate human resources to support inclusive education, covering children with disabilities	SMQ	Yes
7	Existence of competency-based curriculum at primary and secondary levels	Regionally specific	Yes
8	Disaster risk reduction is included in curricula at all levels of education	Regionally specific	No
9	Individual Education Plans available for all children with special learning needs	SMQ	No
10	Policies available to operationalize 1 year of pre-primary education for all children	Regionally specific	Yes
11	Assessment and support of children with disabilities done through the use of cross-sector teams, working under the social model of disability	Regionally specific	No
12	Existence of policies on inclusive ECD covering particularly children with disabilities and other marginalized children	RAM	No
13	Existence of quality teaching and learning environment for early learning	SMQ	Yes
14	National education system which promotes community and student participation	SMQ	Yes
15	Existence of national strategies to address inequities in education resource allocation	SMQ	Yes