

Georgia

Part 1: Situation update in the country

During 2018, important progress was made in the realization of children's rights in Georgia and in achieving the results of UNICEF's 2016–2020 Georgia Country Programme. This progress was enabled by an overall conducive programme implementation environment based on a strong will for reforms across political forces in the country. The Government of Georgia continued implementation of the Association Agreement with the European Union (EU) and its ambitious reform programme in line with the Association Agenda, including specific child rights priorities. The Government also continued implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan including its Child Rights Chapter developed with UNICEF's support. The Government furthermore finalized the process of nationalization of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets and indicators. In May, UNICEF was elected as Co-Chair of the SDG thematic working group on social inclusion. However, due to the resignation of the Prime Minister and Government in June and the ensuing establishment and restructuring of a new Government, the work of the thematic SDG working groups was suspended during the second half of 2018.

Despite the overall conducive programming environment, the situation of children in Georgia remained difficult in several areas of concern. According to data from the Georgian National Statistics Office (GeoStat), Georgia's economic growth was at 5.6 per cent in the second quarter of 2018 after the slowed down economic growth during between 2015 (2.9 per cent) and 2017 (4.8 per cent). However, achievement of inclusive growth continued to be a serious challenge. The unemployment rate remained at 13.9 per cent in 2017, increasing to 30 per cent for young people between 20-24 years of age. The largest part of the labour force remained self-employed, predominantly in self-subsistence agriculture, which contributed only 8.2 per cent to the gross domestic product (GDP). At the same time, the share of informal employment in total non-agricultural employment stood at 33.9 per cent in 2017.

GeoStat data for 2017 demonstrated that gender equality remained a serious problem. Although unemployment among women at 12.7 per cent was lower than among men (15 per cent), labour force participation was only 57.9 per cent for women and 78.8 per cent for men. Gross national income per capita was US\$12,481 for men, but only US\$6,177 for women. Overall, Georgia ranked 78 out of 160 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (0.350), while Georgia's Gender Development Index was 0.975 in 2017.

UNICEF's Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) 2017, published in 2018, showed an increase in poverty rates for all surveyed groups, especially children. While there was a real increase in income over the last two years, with social transfers being one of the major drivers, there was a real decrease in average monthly household consumption by 10.1 per cent between 2015 and 2017.

As a result, the percentage of population living below the general and extreme poverty lines increased by 3.3 per cent and 2.9 per cent respectively. The number of children living below the general and extreme poverty lines increased even by 5.9 per cent and 4.3 per cent respectively. Households with children, and especially those with three or more children, continued to be significantly more likely to live in poverty than households without children.

Some 27.6 per cent of all children in Georgia lived below the absolute poverty threshold compared to 21.7 per cent of the general population, and every fifth child lived in a household surviving on less than the subsistence minimum. In addition, half of all families living under the general poverty line were chronically poor: living below the absolute poverty line during the last three biannual Welfare Monitoring Surveys.

UNICEF's WMS data further showed that 67.5 per cent of all households received some form of social transfer. The targeted social assistance (TSA) and child benefits both now better target the most vulnerable population. Over two-thirds (69.7 per cent) of all TSA and child benefits paid during 2018 went to households in the poorest decile. If the TSA income was removed from household consumption, extreme poverty among children in Georgia would have risen from 6.8 per cent to 12.9 per cent, meaning around 90,000 more children would have lived in poverty.

During 2018, the overall situation in mother and child healthcare slightly improved but needs considerable further efforts. Maternal, neonatal, infant and under-five mortality, as well as the neglect of primary healthcare in terms of funding, quality of services and government attention remained serious concerns. Data provided by the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDCPH) showed that the infant mortality rate in Georgia was 9.6 per 1,000 live births in 2017, up from 9.0 in 2016, while neonatal mortality was up to 6.8 per 1,000 live births, an increase from 6.3 in 2016. Under-five mortality also went up to 11.1 per 1,000 live births from 10.7 in 2016. On the positive side, the maternal mortality rate reduced significantly from 23 per 100,000 live births in 2016 to 13.1 in 2017. Active surveillance of maternal mortality and the establishment of the Birth Registry significantly improved the registration of maternal deaths in Georgia. However, although these figures indicate significant overall improvements during the past 12 years, all rates are still higher than the European averages.

The strong overall immunization situation in Georgia improved further during 2018. The Georgian Government continued upgrading its vaccine storage capacity and procured and centrally installed two cold rooms with 90 square metre functional capacity. The immunization rates in Georgia were relatively high. In 2017, coverage by antigens within the National Immunization Programme by the age of 12 months was above 90 per cent but had not reached the national target of 95 per cent for all antigens. A total of 89.9 per cent of children received two doses of measles-containing vaccines. At the same time, 9 per cent of districts had a lower than 80 per cent coverage of DTP3 vaccination. Against the background of measles outbreaks between 2004-2013, the Government continued implementation of supplementary immunization activities among the population aged between 6-40 years. As of 30 November 2018, there had been 1,665 measles cases registered in Georgia. The low immunization rates in Abkhazia and the lack of access to South Ossetia to better understand the immunization situation remained serious concerns.

Excessive costs of outpatient pharmaceuticals in Georgia continues to be the biggest barrier to accessing health care, although UNICEF's WMS data showed that the number of people reporting such barriers decreased. The data revealed that although the Universal Health Care Programme (UHCP) covered over 80 per cent of the population, the out-of-pocket expenditures on health had further increased by 16.4 per cent from the average household expenditure in 2015. Medication, which is mostly not covered by the UHCP, constituted 70 per cent of all family spending on health. In 26.4 per cent of households, healthcare expenditures accounted for more than 25 per cent of the non-food consumption. As a consequence, the Government decided to cover the costs of essential medicines for the most vulnerable population for the four

most common types of chronic diseases – cardiovascular (including hypertension), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, type 2 diabetes and thyroid conditions.

During 2018, Georgia continued to have one of the lowest utilization rates for outpatient care in Europe, while use of inpatient care was relatively high. This is indicative of a strong preference in the system for care-seeking and treatment at more specialized levels at the expense of primary health care. Against the background of the fully privatized health care system in Georgia, the inadequate state and continuous neglect of primary healthcare remains one of the biggest obstacles for further public health improvements, especially regarding mother and child health.

In May, new legislation came into force in Georgia significantly strengthening tobacco control regulations. This legislation, which is in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) Tobacco Framework Convention, had been passed by the Georgian Parliament in May 2017 and is considered one of the strongest tobacco control laws in the WHO European Region. From 1 May 2018 closed public spaces and workplaces became smoke free, while advertisement, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco was prohibited.

In September, the new Government of Georgia announced education as one of its key priorities. It outlined a comprehensive and ambitious education reform over the next five years, including a drastic increase in budget spending on education, aiming at 10-11 per cent of the GDP. Education reform in Georgia has so far been characterized by fragmented and inconsistent initiatives with frequent changes of directions, a lack of comprehensive long-term vision with appropriate action plans, and consequently limited impact.

School attendance in mandatory grade 1-9 education in Georgia remained high at 97 per cent. However, attendance rates in the higher grades were considerably lower, especially in rural areas. In 2017, enrolment in grade 12 was only 72 per cent in comparison to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries' average of 90 per cent and the EU average of 92 per cent. In addition, the majority of children not completing general education are not taking up vocational education and are therefore left without any formal qualifications reducing their employment potential. Overall, in 2017 the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MoESCS) reported 18,934 out-of-school children in primary grades and 10,156 out-of-school children in lower secondary (basic) education.

During 2018, Georgia's expenditure on education remained lower than that of other countries with similar GDP per capita. Georgian students underperform in international student assessments. The 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study showed that learning outcomes in Georgia had improved, but the scores were among the lowest. The country ranked 61 out of 69 participating countries, with two-thirds of students performing below average level. In addition, large inequalities in learning outcomes persisted between urban and rural areas, boys and girls, rich and poor, as well as ethnic Georgian children and children of national minorities. The quality of education is especially undermined by the low qualification of teachers and the ineffective system of teacher deployment and management.

Regarding pre-school education, during 2018 the Georgian Government continued implementation of the Early and Preschool Education and Care Law and the National School Readiness Programme. A UNICEF study on the quality of early childhood education and care in Georgia finalized in June 2018 showed that at 69.5 per cent, the total enrolment of young

children in preschool was low compared to the European target of 95 per cent of children aged 4-6 years. Across Georgia, 14,000 children of pre-school age were not enrolled. Enrolment rates were lower for ethnic minority children (33 per cent), socially vulnerable (39.7 per cent) and in rural areas (46.8 per cent). When children with special needs are able to enrol in early childhood education and care services, they face significant challenges in terms of their full inclusion and participation. Lack of financial resources in municipalities, the large number of children per classroom, the lack of educational and play resources, as well as the low qualification of educators have significant negative implications on the quality of pre-school education.

In the sphere of child protection, several positive developments took place during 2018, while serious challenges persist. In January, Georgia joined the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children as a “pathfinding country” and committed itself to intensify the work to combat this violation of children’s rights. Violence against children in families, residential care, foster care and educational institutions remained a significant problem due to social norms and beliefs that the use of physical violence against children is acceptable and that physical forms of punishment are more effective than non-violent parenting techniques. According to the Social Service Agency and the General Prosecutor’s Office, the number of child victims of violence reached by social or justice services increased from 1,595 in 2017 to 2,156 in the first nine months of 2018.

During 2018 the de-institutionalization of large state-run residential institutions continued with about 80 children, mostly with multiple and severe disabilities, remaining in the two last institutions. Children in alternative public care continued to be mostly in family-based care. Out of the 2,105 children in public state care, 1,483 are in foster care while 622 children are in different types of residential and institutional care. In September, the licensing regulation for 24-hour care facilities for children was expanded to all types of service providers (state and non-state). It is expected that this change will lead to a reduction of the number of children in the approximate 900 small and medium unregulated institutions, mostly boarding schools, run by municipalities, religious communities and the Ministry of Education and will positively impact the quality of care provided.

In June, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a Law on Social Work. This defines the principles of social work practice, as well as functions, rights and obligations of social workers and areas of their work, including work at the municipal level. The Law regulates the profession and sets the basis for better planning, development and support of social workers as key professionals in reducing vulnerabilities at individual, family and community level. The law and the related action plan adopted in December also foresee to increase the number of social workers over the next five years by 560, including within the Social Service Agency from 245 to 375, to provide continued capacity building, increase salaries and address the general work overload of social workers with too many tasks and responsibilities. The Government also committed to the Regional Call to Action on Strengthening the Social Service Workforce launched in November 2018 at a ministerial conference in Bucharest, Romania.

The Parliament and the Government presented a new national vision of decentralization and local self-governance in March, which increases decision-making power and financial resources of the local authorities. It grants them more responsibilities to develop social workforce and services, as well as social assistance programmes. UNICEF was included by the Government in three thematic multi-stakeholder working groups that provide expertise and guidance in various areas of decentralization.

Juvenile justice remained high on the reform agenda in Georgia during 2018. Capacity building for the specialization of all involved professionals continued. In January 2018, the Ministry of Interior created a Human Rights Department and announced the establishment of a specialized unit in the Tbilisi Police Department for investigation of cases involving children.

Finally, the situation of children in the conflict-affected regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia remained difficult during 2018. While UNICEF, as with other international agencies, has no access to South Ossetia, it remained engaged in Abkhazia to improve the situation of children. Main concerns remained the lack of access of children to quality health, education (including mother-tongue education) and social services.

During 2018, UNICEF Georgia did not have to respond to any humanitarian situation.

Part 2: Major Results including in humanitarian action and gender, against the results in the Country Programme Documents

During 2018, UNICEF continued implementation of its 2016-2020 Country Programme in close cooperation with the Government and Parliament of Georgia, civil society organizations, UN sister agencies, other international organizations and donors. The outcomes of the CPD are an integral part of outcomes 2, 4, 5 and 6 of the 2016-2020 UN Partnership for Sustainable Development (UNPSD) for Georgia and contribute to achievement of SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 16 and 17. The CPD outcomes are also aligned with Georgia's Social-Economic Development Strategy "Georgia 2020", with the National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights and the Child Rights Chapter of the National Human Rights Action Plan, as well as with relevant national sectoral strategies and action plans. The CPD furthermore contributes to all five outcome areas of UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

UNICEF continued to act as credible authority and main expert on children's issues in Georgia. More than 500,000 people were reached by advocacy messages through social media and two million people through traditional media and offline activities. The extensive media engagement resulted in about 2,000 media stories on UNICEF efforts in advocating for children's rights.

Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

During 2018, UNICEF Georgia continued its work to improve national capacities for the provision of quality maternal and child health services during pregnancy, delivery and post-delivery to support infant and maternal survival (CPD output 1.1). A key result in 2018 was the effective performance of the Birth Registry, a real-time electronic management information system tracking every mother and newborn through pregnancy and delivery, established with technical assistance of UNICEF and the Norwegian Health Registry during 2016-2017. Beyond significantly improving information management in Georgia's maternal and child health (MCH) system, during 2018 the Birth Registry enabled evidence-based policy development and decision-making. All meetings of the multi-stakeholder advisory MCH Committee under the Ministry of IDPs, Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoIDPOTLHSA) built upon the Birth Registry's quarterly perinatal reports and adopted several important policy decisions based on evidence derived. This included introduction of selective contracting of maternities based on critical indicators, abolishment of state funding for caesarean-sections on demand, as well as revision of the neonatal intensive care unit referral protocol. The Birth Registry thus

successfully removed one of the main barriers for maternal and child survival in Georgia.

To address another main barrier, the quality of MCH services, UNICEF facilitated during 2018 a series of consensus building workshops (five in neonatology and six in obstetrics) to elaborate a set of 15 perinatal quality indicators for neonatal intensive care units and a set of 16 quality indicators for antenatal and delivery care. After agreement was reached among all relevant stakeholders, UNICEF supported the process of integrating these new quality indicators into the Birth Registry to enable automatic generation of information. Thus, the first stage of quality improvement, enabling the identification of poor performers among service providers, was successfully accomplished. During 2019-2020 UNICEF will support the MoIDPOTLHSA in the Birth Registry data quality audit process and in fully mainstreaming quality improvement into Georgia's perinatal care system.

During 2018, UNICEF Georgia also continued its support to the development of comprehensive home-visiting services for healthy child growth, development and protection to support families with young children (CPD output 1.2). However, the implementation environment for these activities remained challenging. The key result during 2018 was the decision of the MoIDPOTLHSA in December to start the earlier agreed pilot for home visits by primary healthcare professionals to families with children aged from 0-6 years in two districts of the Autonomous Adjara Region. The pilot is in partnership with the EU. UNICEF had strongly advocated for the start of the pilot throughout 2017 and 2018. With UNICEF's support, an electronic data collection module for child growth and development monitoring was developed, which includes an offline version to enable the system to function also in remote places with limited internet access. UNICEF also elaborated a training package and developed the capacity of master trainers to carry out cascade training on support for families with young children. UNICEF also procured electronic gadgets for the pilot sites to introduce data during the home visits.

Against the background of a fully privatized healthcare system, primary healthcare in Georgia remains a widely neglected area without any focus on prevention and developmental aspects of care. As the lack of a home visiting programme remains a serious bottleneck in further improving maternal and child health in Georgia and in reducing neonatal and maternal mortality, UNICEF will continue to advocate for a fully-fledged home visiting programme to monitor and educate parents and caregivers on child growth and development, as well as support to families with young children.

Another key result of UNICEF's work in 2018 was the mainstreaming of the micronutrient supplementation programme for children aged 6-24 months into the 2018 state nutrition pilot programme. During 2019, UNICEF will support the Government by guiding the work to address lessons learned and challenges identified during implementation. In particular, UNICEF will support development of a communication strategy and a more client-friendly service delivery model to promote acceptance of micronutrient supplementation amongst the population.

unicef also continued its support to the immunization Programme and specifically to the existing group of 15 master trainers of the NCDCPH to strengthen the capacities of immunization service providers across the country. In 18 training sessions in Tbilisi and the Imereti and Adjara regions, 312 service providers improved their knowledge and interpersonal communication skills enabling them to better convince caregivers of the importance of immunization. The project was funded by GAVI within the framework of the Graduation Action Plan for Georgia.

In Abkhazia, Georgia, with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and GAVI, UNICEF continued capacity building for medical professionals in the areas of maternal and child health and immunization. Throughout the year, more than 100 nurses, physicians and other health professionals from all districts of Abkhazia strengthened their knowledge and skills in integrated management of childhood illnesses through training provided by UNICEF. UNICEF also provided small equipment to medical institutions to facilitate the institutionalization of modern evidence-based maternal and child health practices. UNICEF furthermore carried out an assessment of the curriculum and education practices of the two medical colleges in the cities of Sukhumi and Gagra, supporting strategy development for the strengthening of medical education.

In addition, UNICEF implemented an expanded programme on immunization review and developed recommendations for the further development of the programme in Abkhazia. UNICEF continued its support to immunization outreach sessions, health communication activities, and training for medical staff on the use of the electronic immunization registry. In addition, UNICEF continued training, consultations and advocacy for the introduction of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which resulted in the introduction of HPV immunization in late 2018 by a decree of the de facto Ministry of Health. Finally, UNICEF facilitated the first-ever WHO assessment of primary healthcare in Abkhazia during December.

Goal area 2: Every child learns

Preschool education

In its efforts to ensure that young children participate in quality and inclusive early childhood education services (CPD Output 1.3), UNICEF Georgia continued to support implementation of the Law on Early and Preschool Education and Care (EPEC) adopted in 2016. Throughout 2018 UNICEF provided technical consultancy to the EPEC Law Implementation Council under the Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee to enable coordination between the Council and relevant government agencies and to facilitate regular communication with, and support to municipalities in the development and adoption of municipal by-laws. As a result, by the end of 2018, 80 per cent of the required by-laws (five per municipality) had been adopted by the municipalities.

In June, UNICEF and the National Assessment and Examination Centre presented the report of a study on the quality of preschool education in Georgia carried out between November 2017 and April 2018. Based on the five quality areas and respective dimensions determined by the European framework for quality EPEC, the report identified key challenges and recommendations for further action and will serve as baseline for the implementation of the new national standards, which are in line with the EU quality framework.

UNICEF also conducted a costing study of the new EPEC national standards that had been developed with technical support and were adopted by Government in October 2017. The study identified the necessary budget to meet the requirements of the new standards and was presented to the Council, representatives of the Government administration and relevant line ministries for consideration in future budgeting. In 2019 UNICEF will disseminate the findings of the study widely to advocate with municipalities, primarily responsible for preschool education in Georgia, for increasing public investments in preschool education.

To strengthen the capacities of preschool caregiver-pedagogues to implement the new national

EPEC standards, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MoESCS) in developing an introductory training module that was adopted in June. Additionally, UNICEF continued to support the MoESCS in developing guidebooks, video clips and visual aids on the new EPEC standards, as well as on child-friendly inclusive early childhood education principles and practices. Overall during the year, 450 preschool methodologists (head teachers) from Tbilisi and municipalities strengthened their knowledge and skills through training provided by the National Centre of Teacher Professional Development based on the new training module and resources.

In partnership with the Government of Poland and with the technical expertise of Polish professionals and academic organizations, UNICEF also strengthened municipal capacities in EPEC governance and supported implementation of national standards at local level. Seven municipalities were supported in developing draft strategies on continuous professional development of preschool staff that are planned to be adopted in 2019. Furthermore, 230 preschool educators and 31 directors in these seven municipalities increased their knowledge on child-centred teaching methodologies through training, while the staff of 12 preschools further developed their teaching skills through coaching from the Polish experts.

With support of the Government of Poland, UNICEF also strengthened the capacities of Georgian state universities to educate future EPEC professionals. During 2018, all nine state universities and the MoESCS were supported to develop a qualification framework for EPEC professionals. The framework will be adopted by the MoESCS in early 2019, which will enable universities to develop and accredit new pre-service programmes for future preschool educators.

General education

In September, the Parliament adopted amendments to the Law on General Education introducing new provisions enabling the expansion of inclusive education. The amendments had been developed with UNICEF's technical support during 2017 and allow upgrading the status of special educators to teachers, increase funding for schools and operationalize school guidelines to support inclusion of children with special educational needs into mainstream education.

UNICEF, the Government of Estonia and the MoESCS continued their tripartite partnership with the Estonian INNOVE Foundation. One of the key results of this partnership was the launch of the first-ever integrated Bachelor and Master's level pre-service training programmes for prospective elementary school teachers at eight state universities in Georgia. These programmes were developed with technical support of INNOVE, UNICEF and the MoESCS during 2017 and 2018. In September 2018, 320 students enrolled in these new programmes that aim to educate a new generation of highly professional teachers, thereby addressing one of the main bottlenecks in improving the quality of education in Georgia.

A second key result of the tripartite partnership was the improved in-service capacity of school managers and teachers in 15 pilot schools to effectively implement the new national curriculum. During 2017, subject-based guidelines, training modules and coaching procedures had been developed with technical support from INNOVE and UNICEF for teacher training and capacity development models in the pilot schools. Building on this work, during 2018, 750 directors, deputy directors and teachers underwent the in-service training which increased their knowledge and enhanced their skills in implementing the national curriculum in primary school grades. In September, the MoESCS announced that over the next five years it will scale up a

new model to all schools in Georgia, mainly drawing on the experience of the model developed in the framework of the tripartite partnership.

Further within the tripartite Estonia-UNICEF-MoESCS partnership, UNICEF and INNOVE initiated support to the MoESCS in development of policies and programmes to improve the quality of education and language learning in minority schools. In October, UNICEF organized a workshop with INNOVE in which 18 school directors, teachers, professors and experts of minority schools, universities and the MoESCS exchanged experiences on difficulties faced by minority schools and increased their knowledge on school leadership for effective implementation of the national curriculum in minority schools, as well as on language immersion programmes. Based on the preliminary recommendations developed during the workshop, UNICEF and INNOVE will continue in 2019 to support the MoESCS in developing an immersion concept and methodology for minority schools in Georgia.

In June, UNICEF, the OECD's Directorate for Education and Skills and the MoESCS launched a review on evaluation and assessment in general education in Georgia. The review is funded by UNICEF and is being carried out by a team of OECD experts in close cooperation with the UNICEF Georgia, the UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) and the MoESCS. The review focusses on student assessment, teacher appraisal, school evaluation, and system evaluation. Its aim is to provide the MoESCS with policy recommendations to strengthen the evaluation and assessment systems, help improve students' learning outcomes, and increase employability and resilience of students through mastery of 21st century skills. Two visits of OECD experts were organized in June and October. The report with recommendations and input into the MoESCS' action plan is expected by June 2019.

In Abkhazia, Georgia, in partnership with the EU and USAID, UNICEF continued to support capacity development for future teachers by improving pre-service training in the Abkhaz State University. UNICEF developed a pre-service teaching methodology course for future teachers and successfully piloted it. In cooperation with local partners, UNICEF also provided in-service training on student-centred instruction methodologies for multilingual education for school teachers, education specialists, and district education boards. UNICEF continued capacity building for the earlier-established methodological resource groups and further strengthened the eight Teacher Resource Centres in the seven districts of Abkhazia and Sukhumi city.

Goal area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

Prevention of violence against children

In line with CPD output 2.3 (a family for every child and child-friendly social services and environment to protect children from violence, abuse and neglect), UNICEF continued its support to the implementation of the national Child Protection Referral Procedures for cases of violence against children.

With UNICEF's technical assistance, the MoIDPOTLHSA, the MoESCS, the Ministry of Justice and local municipalities developed their internal guidelines for implementation of the Procedures. Forty-three hotline operators from the MoIDPOTLHSA, 48 employees of the MoESCS and 47 employees of the Crime Prevention Centre of the Ministry of Justice increased their knowledge on the consequences that violence has for children and on legal aspects of violence through training provided by UNICEF between September and December.

Another key result was the institutionalization of the Child Assessment Referral Instrument

connecting social agents and social workers and developed by UNICEF in partnership with the EU. The instrument is a questionnaire to be filled out by social agents during their assessment visits to families for TSA eligibility. It is designed to identify and prevent potential cases of violence and neglect in poor families and to enable referral by social agents to social workers for further action. During the spring period, more than 400 social agents and social workers built their knowledge about the Instrument and developed their skills in using it through training supported by UNICEF. As of December 2018, 10,379 children were assessed through the Child Assessment Referral Instrument and 526 cases referred to social workers in the framework of the Child Protection Referral Procedures.

In July, UNICEF launched the results of the qualitative study 'Children living and working in the streets of Georgia' which provided evidence on the nature of street life of children, the push factors behind street life and the coping mechanisms of children. The policy recommendations of the study were agreed in the research steering committee with representatives of all relevant state and non-state stakeholders and will inform future policies and programmes.

During the year around 1,000 parents, teachers, school children and community members increased their knowledge about different forms of violence, their negative impact on children, as well as alternative, non-violent parenting practices through UNICEF's communication for social change initiative 'End Violence against Children'. The campaign resulted in creation of a core group of advocates for social change to assist with further campaigns. The campaign was carried out in partnerships with the EU and used community dialogues and discussions as its main strategies.

In Abkhazia, Georgia, more than 400 parents of children of preschool age strengthened their understanding of positive parenting practices through 50 study circles supported by UNICEF. UNICEF also continued to distribute thematic brochures on positive parenting practices throughout Abkhazia and developed a programme on good parenting that was broadcast by a local radio station.

Access to justice

In October, a breakthrough was achieved in the discussions on the new Child Rights Code when the Human Rights Committee and UNICEF agreed to jointly develop a new draft of the Code. The draft was finalized and shared with the interagency working group under the Parliament for further comments in December 2018. The Code is scheduled for adoption in Spring 2019. It will be a special law providing legally binding guidance for all state agencies, local self-governments, other administrative bodies, common courts, public and private organizations, as well as natural persons in their work and decision-making process with and for children and on all other matters directly or indirectly concerning children's rights. The adoption of a law on the rights of the child incorporating all provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols was one of the main recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its Concluding Observations on the Fourth Periodic Report of Georgia.

Under CPD output 3.1 (children, especially the most vulnerable, have access to a child-friendly justice system which adequately responds to children's violation of rights and ensures fair, timely and effective solutions), UNICEF Georgia continued during 2018 to support implementation of legislation concerning children in the justice system. In particular, support was provided for the multidisciplinary mechanisms of justice agencies from the central to the regional level and facilitated the work of the regional mechanisms during 2018. The

multidisciplinary teams informed the identification of legislative gaps and the drafting of clarifying amendments to the Juvenile Justice Code which were adopted by Parliament in May. Furthermore, the development of a commentary to the Juvenile Justice Code was initiated with the Supreme Court of Georgia in February.

UNICEF also supported the finalization of the comprehensive data collection and analysis system under the Ministry of Justice on children in justice proceedings. The concept, indicators and their definitions were finalized, legislative analysis was conducted in June, required legal amendments elaborated in October/November and a software system developed and tested starting from December. The system will be launched in early 2019 and will enable evidence-based policy and decision-making in the justice system.

UNICEF supported a special working group under the Ministry of Justice in the development of a concept and legislative amendments on children below the minimum age of criminal responsibility. The concept and legislative amendments are based on a gaps analysis prepared by UNICEF in early 2018 which analysed Georgian legislation, practices and the existing system, discussed various models and international practices, and gave recommendations for the creation of an effective mechanism to respond to offending behaviour of children below minimum age of criminal responsibility. The adoption of the legislative amendments is expected in 2019.

A key result of UNICEF's advocacy efforts was the decision of the Government in January to create a specialized unit in the Tbilisi police department and to assign specialized professionals mainly working on children's cases in other justice agencies (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Chief Prosecutor's Office, Legal Aid Service, National Probation Agency). Teams of specialized professionals were identified throughout 2018, and training provided for these professionals during October-December in several regions and big cities of Georgia. With UNICEF's support, 50 prosecutors, 50 lawyers and 25 police officers enhanced their expertise in interviewing/interrogating children, while 50 social workers and 25 lawyers gained strengthened knowledge and skills to work with children in civil law proceedings.

In partnership with the EU, UNICEF also supported the creation of a model child-friendly environment in the police, prosecutor's service, legal aid bureau and court in Rustavi, which opened in September. The specially designed and equipped interview rooms will ensure better protection of children in the justice system by enabling interviewing of children in child-friendly conditions and through specialized staff using child-sensitive interview techniques. Detailed guidelines on the application of a child-friendly approach are under development by relevant agencies.

UNICEF also supported during 2018 the creation of a multi-disciplinary team in the Ministry of Interior for the provision of psychosocial support and early assessment of children in police custody. Relevant specialists were contracted and received initial and on-the-job training in November and December supported by UNICEF. In December, UNICEF and the Ministry of Interior also finalized the methodology, tools and instruments for the work with children and the cooperation with other relevant agencies.

In partnership with the EU, UNICEF continued its public advocacy on justice for children through media engagement, production of 10 information videos and real live stories about children who benefited from improved policies and mechanisms. The public advocacy campaign highlighted the importance of child-friendly practices and prevention strategies in

relation to crime reduction and public security, raised awareness on the justice for children reform and influenced the public perception of children in contact with the law, including child offenders, victims and witnesses of crime. Through the development of special educational packages and the organization of information sessions, children inside and outside the justice system were informed about their rights.

Finally, in November, 12 regional representatives of the Public Defender's Office (PDO) from Kvemo Kartli, Guria, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Adjara, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Imereti and Kakheti, two representatives of the PDO's Regional Department and four representatives of the PDO's Child Rights Centre strengthened their skills to work on cases of violence against children through training sessions held with the support of UNICEF.

Social service workforce strengthening and alternative care

UNICEF continued its support to the strengthening of alternative care by modelling specialized foster care for children with disabilities and through training for foster parents and small group homes for seven children with severe disabilities. UNICEF, in partnership with USAID, supported the establishment of a second specialized small group home, continued training for an existing facility and helped to improve the service monitoring system. Seven children with disabilities deprived of parental care were placed in quality family-type care in a small-scale family type service in October and 24 children in specialized foster care. To achieve this result, around 150 caregivers, social workers, health workers and other professionals were trained throughout the year with UNICEF support in Tbilisi and Kutaisi. UNICEF also supported improvement of the monitoring process of social services through strengthening the monitoring unit of the MoDPOTLHSA and helped to increase the training capacity for foster carers at the Ministry.

Throughout the year, UNICEF carried out a pilot project in six municipalities of the Autonomous Adjara Region on the identification of vulnerable families and children and the mobilization of local capacities. Through UNICEF-supported training, the relevant staff of the six municipalities increased their skills to identify family vulnerabilities and to involve local stakeholders in supporting identified families. UNICEF also supported establishment of local child councils comprising all relevant local institutions and community leaders. The project results will inform the delegation of social work functions to municipal level envisaged by the Government under its new decentralization plans.

In Abkhazia, Georgia, in partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), UNICEF continued the development of professional social work for vulnerable children and their families in three pilot districts (Gali, Gudauta and Sukhumi city). UNICEF's support focused on capacity building of the pilot group of 13 social workers and the development of cross-sectoral collaboration on child protection cases. Throughout 2018, the district-based social workers supported by UNICEF worked with individual protection cases of boys and girls in close cooperation with all available service providers. The social workers also supported identification of needs for the further development of social services and child protection mechanisms in Abkhazia.

In partnership with SIDA and World Vision, UNICEF also continued to strengthen the capacities of community-based stakeholders in 25 target communities of Abkhazia. As a result, community-based steering committees and para-social workers actively identified vulnerable boys and girls and addressed their most acute needs. In addition, UNICEF and World Vision continued to support the earlier established three child development centres in Gali,

Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli, as well as the Rehabilitation Centre for Children with Disabilities in Sukhumi with capacity building, which led to the increased sustainability of the Centres' services. To ensure the sustainability of social work as a profession in Abkhazia, UNICEF also collaborated with the Abkhaz State University and developed a social work course, which was successfully piloted during 2018.

Inclusion of children with disabilities

In partnership with the EU, UNICEF Georgia continued its support to the Government in transforming the system of disability status determination based on the WHO's International Classification of Functioning (ICF) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. UNICEF provided technical assistance to the MoDPOTLHSA to develop and adapt disability assessment instruments for children and adults based on the ICF. The Autonomous Adjara Region was selected as pilot region, relevant professionals were recruited and trained, the standardization of a child assessment instrument was initiated, and awareness-raising and consultations started among people with disabilities, including children. The piloting of the new assessment system will start in early 2019.

In partnership with USAID and the EU, UNICEF also continued its communication for social change campaign #SeeEveryColour. The campaign aims to change attitudes toward children with disability and strengthen community and local government mechanisms to support their inclusion. The campaign informed the population about disabilities to deconstruct prevailing myths and prejudices, illustrated appropriate attitudes, promoted interaction between young people with and without disabilities, empowered children with disabilities and their parents by giving them a platform for advocacy, initiated policy and community discussions and strengthened local government mechanisms and community networks. The campaign reached more than 1.4 million people and, together with activities of other stakeholders over recent years, contributed to a reduction of stigma against people with disabilities in Georgia from 41.5 per cent in 2015 to 28.3 per cent in 2017.

Goal area 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

In January, the MoDPOTLHSA approved the WASH monitoring guidelines and instruments for preschool institutions developed with UNICEF's technical support during 2017. The guidelines and instruments will assist municipal public health centres to conduct WASH monitoring against national technical regulations developed with UNICEF's support and approved by Government in October 2017. While the technical regulations introduce national norms and monitoring rules in line with UNICEF and European standards, the guidelines provide the technical basis for monitoring indicators, as well as the recommended method for collecting, analysing and reporting on indicators. The guidelines were developed for national and local authorities responsible for the safety of water and sanitation systems and services in preschools, as well as the development, implementation and monitoring of WASH standards and regulations.

The development of WASH monitoring guidelines is part of UNICEFs' work under CPD output 1.3 (young children participate in quality and inclusive early childhood education services) to address infrastructure gaps identified by two nationwide surveys in preschools and schools in Georgia during 2012-2013, and to improve the regulatory environment for preschools.

Goal area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life

The key result during 2018 under Goal Area 5 and UNICEF Georgia's CPD output 2.1 (national

legislation and policies support the realization of child rights) was the successful implementation of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 6 fieldwork by the GeoStat with technical support by UNICEF Georgia and ECARO.

Throughout 2018, UNICEF forged a multi-stakeholder partnership with a group of 10 donor organizations and sister agencies that contributed to the MICS budget of over US\$1.4 million. The 10 agencies were the French Development Agency (AFD), Italian National Institute of Health, NCDCPH, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), SIDA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), USAID, the World Bank, and WHO. The field work was carried out from 23 September to 20 December 2018 by 13 field workers teams that surveyed 14,120 households throughout the country (except the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions). The collected data is representative at national and regional levels and enables disaggregation by gender, main ethnic minorities, internally displaced persons and wealth quintiles. As part of the MICS, new gender disaggregated data will be generated to identify key areas of gender inequality. The MICS will also reveal the current scale and scope of child marriages addressing the existing data gap.

The MICS also included a water quality test in every fourth household supported by WHO and NCDCPH and anthropometric measurements in households with children under the age of five years. In addition, for the first time globally, a test was conducted on the levels of lead in the blood of children aged 2-7 years. The lead module was included on the request of the Government based on increasing concerns about the exposure of children to high levels of lead contamination, amongst others expressed in the 2017 Annual Report of the Public Defender on Human Rights to the Parliament of Georgia.

The blood lead level survey module was developed by UNICEF and was implemented with the support of NCDCPH and the Italian National Institute of Health. In total, 1,578 blood samples were collected during the MICS field work. The testing of blood samples will be carried out by the Italian Institute of Health as an in-kind contribution to the MICS. Individual results will be shared with all blood lead level survey participants with specific recommendations and, if needed, referral to the Iashvili Children's Clinic in Tbilisi for further follow up.

The MICS field work was preceded and accompanied by an intensive communication and social mobilization campaign that reached about two million people through graphic animations, public service announcements and media engagement. More than 1,000 people were reached directly through town-hall and community discussions on MICS and face-to-face meetings in 66 villages.

During 2018, after several years of UNICEF advocacy, GeoStat for the first time published absolute poverty rates for children and provided the data disaggregated by urban and rural areas, gender and age groups. Geostat also finalized the absolute national poverty measurement methodology, recalculated the absolute national poverty rates starting from 2004, and published fully disaggregated data.

In June, UNICEF launched the results of its 5th Welfare Monitoring Survey. The WMS is a panel survey covering about 4,500 households and conducted since 2009 by UNICEF Georgia every two years to provide the Government with up-to-date data on household incomes and expenses, monetary and multidimensional poverty, social services and social security, healthcare, education, and welfare. The WMS data published in 2018 revealed increasing child poverty and general poverty rates, as well as other structural challenges the country faces. The

findings sparked a renewed public debate on poverty in Georgia including more than 600 media articles in June. The findings were intensively discussed within and with the Government. One of the outcomes of these discussions was the announcement by the Government in December of a five-fold increase of child benefits to start from January 2019, which will affect over 130,000 children.

UNICEF continued to provide the Government with support to ensure that existing social protection programmes are sensitive to children and their families. Under CPD output 2.2 (access to cash transfers is improved to reduce vulnerability and promote social inclusion). UNICEF continued support to the reform of the Targeted Social Assistance programme through WMS data analysis and preparations for a TSA impact evaluation. As of November 2018, the number of children aged under 16 years receiving TSA and child benefits rose to 130,200. The 2017 WMS data showed that 29.8 per cent of all children in Georgia were benefiting from at least one of the social cash transfer programmes and 43 per cent of children below the absolute poverty line were covered by TSA and child benefits. Through the reform, in 2018 a total of 2,913 individuals received higher benefits than under the previous programme, including 176 single mothers, 447 breastfeeding mothers and 47 pregnant women. Moreover, due to the increased focus of the TSA on children, 143 breastfeeding mothers, 62 single mothers and 18 pregnant women received the full amount of TSA. Without UNICEF's support to the TSA reform, a total of 1,628 children, 225 breastfeeding mothers, 99 single mothers and 36 pregnant women would not have qualified for child benefits.

Finally, in November and December, UNICEF organized two conferences for municipalities from Eastern and Western Georgia to raise awareness and exchange experiences on the Child Protection Referral Procedures and local social assistance programmes. During training integrated into the conferences, around 100 municipal representatives increased their knowledge and skills in the planning of local social protection programmes, public finance and programme budgeting.

Youth/adolescents

In order to advocate for increasing attention and support for youth and adolescents in Georgia, UNICEF, together with UNDP and UNFPA, provided financial and technical support to an initiative group of youth organizations in organizing the 9th National Youth Forum held on 21 December 2018. The purpose of the Forum was to facilitate dialogue between youth and the Government on achievements and challenges in implementing the National Youth Policy, to mobilize more attention of the Government to the problems of youth and adolescents, and to advocate for increased public spending on youth development priorities. During the Forum, a Concept of Structured Dialogue with Youth as well as a Youth Index were presented and discussed to generate ideas and feedback from young people. An advocacy paper entitled 'Youth Voice - Georgia 2018' was developed to support youth development in the country.

In December the findings of the adolescent parenting study conducted by UNICEF in late 2017 were launched. The launch was co-hosted by the Parliament Committee on Youth and Sport and the MoDPOTLHSA and was attended by representatives of various state and non-state agencies, field experts, psychologists, parents and adolescents. The evidence on adolescent parenting in Georgia provided by the study sparked an active policy dialogue with Parliament and relevant line ministries and is expected to inform the development of relevant Government policies and programmes.

Throughout 2018, UNICEF developed a media literacy manual for young people and held a

pilot workshop in November. During the workshop, 25 young people developed their knowledge about media reporting and increased their skills to critically analyse information. The media literacy workshops will be continued during 2019.

In Abkhazia, Georgia, and the neighbouring Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti regions, UNICEF, in partnership with USAID, continued to engage adolescents in extracurricular youth participation and skills development activities carried out through youth clubs in 28 local schools. A total of 1,120 students from grades 7-11 regularly participated in the youth club which is supported by two local partner NGOs. It offered a broad variety of lessons, events and other activities in the mathematics, science, technology, healthy lifestyles, environmental education, civil education, as well as in foreign language (English) learning. Through peer education and outreach activities, the youth club members reached students beyond the youth clubs and their own school and engaged with other community members to address issues in their local communities. UNICEF's engagement with youth and adolescents also promoted confidence building through people-to-people contacts across the dividing line by enabling 12 students and four teachers from youth clubs on both sides to strengthen their English language skills through joint language summer courses in the United Kingdom in July and August 2018.

Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

Lessons learned

During 2018, evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue continued to be the most effective change strategy for UNICEF Georgia and strongly influenced public debates and policy changes. Most significantly, the data from UNICEF's WMS on the increase of child poverty led to a renewed public debate on poverty and intensive internal Government discussions that eventually resulted in the five-fold increase of child benefits. Also, during 2018, the new Minister of Education announced an incremental expansion of the new school model developed in 15 pilot schools within the Estonia-UNICEF-MoESCS partnership to all schools in Georgia over the next five years.

Furthermore, UNICEF mobilized Government commitment to scale up the new functional disability assessment instrument that is in the process of development and testing. In addition, data published in 2018 showed that UNICEF's public advocacy and communication for social change campaign #SeeEveryColour contributed, together with the efforts of other stakeholders, to a significant decrease of stigma against persons with disability from 41.5 per cent in 2015 to 28.3 per cent in 2017.

UNICEF's advocacy efforts during 2018 also showed that social norms are best addressed through integrating communication for social change into government programmes and strategies. In this vein, UNICEF Georgia included a communication for social change component into its work directed at changes in the child protection system. The aim is to enable professionals to become active promoters of social change in their communication with institutions, clients and the broader public. During 2018, UNICEF's capacity building of over 100 professionals of the social workforce in the Adjara pilot region included sessions enabling participants to rethink and address existing social norms. The outcomes of these efforts was the more active role played by social workforce professionals in a broader communication campaign involving all layers of society, aiming to create a more enabling environment for policy, institutional and social changes.

The development and leverage of partnerships for children by UNICEF Georgia also showed high effectiveness as a change strategy during 2018. This was demonstrated by the positive impact of the multi-disciplinary cooperation mechanism that guided the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Code and was expanded from central to regional level throughout the country. By fostering partnerships for children with, as well as between central decision makers and regional practitioners from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the General Prosecutors Office, the Ministry of Justice, the Judiciary, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Social Service Agency, and the Probation and Penitentiary Departments under the Ministry of Justice, this mechanism contributed effectively to improving the administration of juvenile justice.

Another example for the effectiveness of this change strategy was UNICEF's increased engagement with municipalities and their social workforce to ensure increased reporting of child victims of violence and a more effective identification of family vulnerabilities. A similar experience was found in the work to support the transition of the disability status determination system from a purely medical to a functional model. The increased engagement with stakeholders on national, regional and local levels enabled the mobilization of political will in the Government to commit to the scale up of the new disability assessment instrument under development and testing.

The leveraging of resources and partnerships for children change strategy was also successful in mobilizing funds for the implementation of the MICS 6 in Georgia. Against the background of the need for SDG baseline data, the public concern and anecdotal evidence about high lead levels in blood, UNICEF Georgia successfully forged a broad partnership of donors to support the MICS with its integrated blood testing for lead.

UNICEF Georgia's strong focus on mobilizing resources for children during 2018 also helped to further strengthen the partnerships with its three biggest donors; the European Union, SIDA and USAID. New partnerships were established with SDC and AFD, and collaboration expanded with emerging donors, especially the Governments of Estonia, Poland and Bulgaria. Overall, more than US\$5.8 million in Other Resources funding funds were raised locally during 2018.

Against the background of the strong reform commitment of the Government for the implementation of the EU Georgia Association Agreement, resource mobilization from the European Union for technical assistance to the Government in carrying out the child rights related reforms under the Association Agenda and National Human Rights Action Plan, proved to be an especially successful strategy. During 2018, four EU-funded programmes were implemented, of which two were finalized during the year while one new programme agreement was signed and a further programme negotiated with an envisaged start date in spring 2019.

With regard to the mobilization of EU and other funding, joint UN programming has become an effective strategy for the UNICEF in Georgia. Three of the four EU programmes under implementation during 2018 were joint UN programmes: UNDP (Access to Justice); the United Nations High Commission for Refugees/UNHCR and UNDP (Access to Quality Education in Abkhazia); and the International Labour Organization/ILO, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights/OHCHR and UNDP (Human Rights for All). Out of the two new EU-funded programmes negotiated during 2018, one is a joint UN programme with the Food and Agriculture Organization/FAO and on Improving Vocational Education in Abkhazia).

UNICEF Georgia furthermore is implementing jointly with UNDP a USAID-funded programme in Abkhazia that formally is not a joint UN programme (UNDP-USAID agreement), but in practice is managed between UNDP and UNICEF like a joint UN programme.

Using UN joint programming as a resource mobilization and programme implementation strategy in Georgia has proven successful and effective for four reasons. First, this approach enables more effective resource mobilization, cooperation and coordination between involved UN agencies in their efforts to fundraise in a difficult funding environment and to work together to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Second, this approach demonstrates the ability of the UN to deliver as one in areas where several agencies have key contributions to make in line with their comparative advantages and added values to achieve the change envisaged by nationalized SDG targets and development strategies. Third, this approach provides both donors and UN agencies the possibility of cost efficiencies and reduced bureaucratic procedures in comparison to multiple bilateral agreements. And fourth, in the political context of Abkhazia, joint UN programming has enabled agencies to join efforts in safeguarding their operational space, demonstrating impartiality and implementing conflict-sensitive programmes in a politically complex and challenging environment.

Overall, joint UN programming requires the willingness for compromise and the acceptance that other agencies might lead the process with a donor. It also demands a high degree of flexibility in the application of rules, regulations and procedures of involved agencies to enable smooth cooperation. Further efforts of the involved UN agencies will be necessary to adapt their rules, regulations and procedures and to develop successful standard practices that enable a smoother cooperation within joint UN programmes. However, against the background of the limited availability of funding, joint programming has become an approach that is increasingly applied by both UN agencies and major donors in Georgia.

Constraints

Constraints during 2018 emanated mainly from the political context, as well as the funding environment in Georgia. The resignation of the Prime Minister and Government in June and the formation of a new, restructured Government led to structural and personnel changes within UNICEF's key partners, which in turn caused a delay in the implementation of a number of planned activities. The transition in Government also led to the temporary suspension of the meetings of thematic SDG working groups.

A fundamental constraint remained UNICEF's funding situation and the limited public spending for children in a middle-income country like Georgia. This continued to make programming for sustainable at-scale results for children difficult. Due to limitations in available Regular Resources and Other Resources funding, UNICEF continued during 2018 to focus on the provision of technical assistance and policy advice, as well as limited piloting of model services in health, education and child protection. The number of agreed pilots however, is limited, as public spending for children remained insufficient to scale up more than a few. To enable the development and upscaling of more pilot services for children in Georgia, UNICEF will continue to advocate for increased budget spending for children on central, regional and local levels, and, together with the Government, increase efforts to mobilize funding from the private sector.

In the Abkhazia region, the constraints for UNICEF's work emanating from the political context of the protracted conflict remained strong during 2018. UNICEF continued to successfully expand its health, education and child protection programmes in the region and moved from a

humanitarian approach to a more development-oriented approach. However, due to the disputed status of the region, UNICEF is not able to apply key development approaches, including capacity building for governmental agencies and support to the development of legislation, policies and strategies. UNICEF's efforts are therefore limited to advocacy, capacity building for local professionals, support to service provision and work at community level. This makes the achievement of sustainable results for children extremely difficult. At the same time, as with other international development agencies, UNICEF has no access to South Ossetia.

END/