

Macedonia (The former Yugoslav Republic of)

Executive Summary

The end of 2015 was marked by the completion and approval at the September executive board session of a new Country Programme for the period 2016-2020. In close coordination and consultation with national partners, the new Country Programme was designed to address, through a cross-sectoral approach, equity gaps faced by the most marginalised children, including children with disabilities, children from minority groups, such as Roma, and child victims of violence and abuse.

Following the massive influx of refugees and migrants fleeing their war-torn countries (including Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq), with the goal of reaching European Union countries, the Office has been engaged, along with the Government and other partners, in providing humanitarian assistance to meet the most urgent needs of children and women on the move, as detailed in the section on humanitarian assistance. This situation has resulted in partially redeploying programme and operations staff to respond to the immediate needs of children in child protection, nutrition, water and sanitation and winterization. Some social protection programme activities were postponed to 2016 due to the full mobilisation of the staff member who acted as the emergency focal point, until surge capacity was deployed to the country. The Country Office used the emergency response as an opportunity to bridge development and humanitarian work, strengthening national child protection systems and services.

Training of home visiting nurses on improved knowledge and practices for early detection, intervention and support to children with developmental risks and delays continued during 2015, reaching more than 95 per cent of patronage nurses; teachers at nursing schools were also trained. The rapid appraisal conducted in March showed improved knowledge and attitudes about disability, as well as increased awareness by patronage nurses about the important role they have in communities in fostering inter-sectoral and multi-sectoral collaboration. The country's experience in home visiting capacity building was shared with other countries in the region, as well as at the first international developmental paediatrics congress held by the University of Ankara, with support from the UNICEF CEE/CIS Regional Office.

Increases in young children's enrolment in early childhood education, especially from the most marginalised communities, continued, reaching 40 per cent in 2015, against 34 per cent in 2014. However, coverage of young Roma children remained a challenge due to the trend of emigration of Roma to EU countries, resulting in constant changes in coverage and inability to support young Roma children's development and learning in a continuous and consistent manner.

In quality education, the regional learning teams established in 2014 as a platform to learn and share knowledge and evidence on effectiveness and impact on student learning were very successful. The experience was documented in a recent OECD publication: "Schooling Redesigned: Towards Innovative Learning Systems". The network of inclusive schools, initiated in 2012, now numbers 20 primary schools throughout the country. The modules on inclusive education developed and piloted in the country were published for use by UNICEF globally.

Progress was made in further improving cross-sectoral collaboration among relevant partners for increased inclusion of children with disabilities. A new assessment model of children with disabilities, based on the international classification on functioning, disability and health (ICF-CY) was developed and will be piloted in 2016 in selected municipalities, before being formally adopted and rolled out to all municipalities. A five-year communication strategy was developed using the findings from the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Survey in relation to inclusion of children with disabilities and disability persons organisations mapping conducted at the end of 2014.

Partnership with the Office of the Ombudsman was further strengthened in 2015. UNICEF and the Ombudsman's office conducted an in-depth analysis of the key bottlenecks faced by children with disabilities to enrolment in mainstream schools, with the technical support of the Resource Centre for parents of children with disabilities. The findings will be used to advocate for and promote inclusion of children with disabilities in schools, as prescribed by law. In addition, the interactive online game www.detskiprava.mk, launched as part of CRC@25 activities, was upgraded to include new functionalities. In coordination with the Ombudsman's office, child-friendly versions of the CRC were developed in all minority languages spoken and disseminated throughout the country.

Humanitarian Assistance

The second half of 2015 witnessed unprecedented and continuously increasing numbers of refugees and migrants travelling from Greece to northern Europe, through the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The majority of people came from countries experiencing conflict and insecurity: Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Ministry of Interior registration figures show that since June, the number of refugees and migrants rose monthly, reaching 377,257 persons by the end of December. Among women and children, women's migration increased from 21 per cent in June to 57 per cent in December, and children's from 9 per cent in June to 36 per cent in December. The proportion of children traveling without a parent also increased, from one in nine refugees to one in five refugees.

In June the national Asylum Law was amended, allowing people to apply for asylum and travel legally through the country for 72 hours. Prior to this amendment, people were illegally crossing the country and were vulnerable to smugglers and to abuse and exploitation.

Since the onset of the crisis, UNICEF has provided humanitarian assistance to children and families on the move at transit centres near Gevgelija, at the southern border with Greece, and Tabanovce, at the northern border with Serbia.

These spaces are used by trained frontline workers to provide emotional and psychosocial support to children on the move. The spaces also serve as safe havens for children arriving exhausted after long, traumatic journeys – places where they can rest and play, while families complete registration procedures. They are operated by UNICEF's implementing partners – La Strada in Gevgelija and SOS Children's Village in Tabanovce.

Assistance provided by UNICEF includes age-appropriate food for children, as well as items for personal hygiene for children and mothers. UNICEF contributed to the provision of drinking water in the transit centre in Gevgelija. A mother and baby corner was also established in the child-friendly space, as well as a toilet and shower facility for children and adults with disabilities.

As winter approached, UNICEF began to upgrade the child-friendly space at Gevgelia to a hard building that can be heated, supplying heaters in Tabanovce and distributing blankets and winter children's clothes. In the child-friendly spaces and through an outreach service, social workers continued to identify the most vulnerable children, including adolescents travelling without a parent or guardian, to assess and meet their needs. UNICEF also continued working with partners to facilitate family reunification when children became lost or separated, and with the Government, to strengthen national child protection systems.

In December, in coordination with the CEE/CIS Regional Office and support from an international organization, Terre Des Hommes, UNICEF initiated training in child protection for humanitarian workers in direct contact with children, as well as for those delivering more specialised child protection services. Participants included government ministries, local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other UN agencies.

Summary Notes and Acronyms

ADA – Austrian Development Agency
CMT – Country management team
CPMP – Country Programme management plan
CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD – Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSW – Centres for Social Work
CWD - Children with a disability
DCT – Direct cash transfers
ECD – Early childhood development
FACE – Funding authorisation and certificate of expenditure
HACT – Harmonised approach to cash transfers
ICT – Information and communication technology
ICF-CY – International Classification of Functioning –Children and Youth
IMEP – Integrated monitoring and evaluation plan
ISA – Institute for Social Activities
KAP – Knowledge, attitudes, practices
MoES – Ministry of Education and Science
MoH – Ministry of Health
MoJ – Ministry of Justice
MoLSP – Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
NGO – Non-governmental organisation
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ORR – Other regular resources
OMT – Operations management team
RCSA – Risk control self-assessment
RR – Regular resources
UNDSS – United Nations Department for Safety and Security

Capacity Development

In the framework of the emergency response UNICEF, with technical support from Terre des Hommes, initiated a capacity-building process among humanitarian workers and local social services involved in the emergency response. The need for this work arose from observation of misperceptions and mis-judgements in relation to children and families coming from different socio-cultural backgrounds. Understanding how to ensure the best interests of children on the

move, throughout their interventions, was in need of reinforcement.

Following an assessment of training needs of humanitarian workers in contact with children, four one-day child protection trainings were organised in December. Staff who are in direct contact with children, through various interventions, and those delivering specialised child protection services were targeted. Approximately 70 staff from 18 organisations, including Government departments, attended. The sessions included topics such as cultural sensitivity, understanding the impact of being a refugee on children, working together for the benefit of children and child safeguarding. Another one-day workshop, with a specific focus on separated and unaccompanied children, for managers and technical staff was also held. Ten organisations, including the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MSLP) and Centres for Social Work (CSW) based in Skopje, attended.

The trainings enabled a common understanding about child protection in emergency approaches and principles, and strengthened the collaboration between organisations. While engaging the institutional child protection actors in the response to this emergency, the work also contributed to strengthening the national system.

The on-going follow-up phase aimed to identify additional capacity building and training needs, as well as how to replicate this training for a greater number of staff in contact with children in response to the refugee and migrant crisis. Given the regional nature of the emergency and the perspective that was streamlined into this initiative, it provided a window of opportunity to harmonise emergency systems, procedures and tools among organisations carrying out child protection work with children and families transiting through the Balkan countries.

External Communication and Public Advocacy

The last phase of the early child development (ECD) social mobilisation campaign was launched in 2015. Activities focused on social media through the campaign's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/prvite5>). A knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and practices (KABP) survey on early learning was conducted, showing that 19 per cent of the audience recalled the media campaign ("The first five are the most important") one year after it was aired on mainstream media. It showed the continued need to focus interventions on addressing demand for quality pre-school by engaging audiences around the benefits to learning and school readiness.

As a follow up to a 2014 KABP study (2014) on disability, a multi-year communication strategy was developed and endorsed during a participatory workshop with young people with disabilities, disability advocates, teachers, parents and government. The first activity was launched in November as part of the #FightUnfair initiative with local activists calling on the public to take a pledge to change the way society sees and treats children with disabilities. In only two weeks on Facebook the initiative had reached over 130,000 people, engaged over 9,000 users and triggered 690 (7 per cent of total fan base) new page fans. The social media campaign will continue into 2016 as a prelude to a broader multi-media campaign.

Since August, the Country Office has been contributing to global, regional and national communication and advocacy efforts on the refugee and migrant crisis. Its multi-media assets, press releases and engagement with international media contributed to positioning children at the centre of the crisis and increasing public support. Over 40 international media interviews out of Skopje or Gevgelija contributed to 570 articles in international media mentioning UNICEF Macedonia. Since repositioning the Office Twitter account to reach broader audiences, the

average number of impressions increased from 3,900 to 31,000 per month; average mentions from four to 82 per month and average engaged users from 14 per month to 355 per month.

South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation

The country developed and piloted three modules on inclusive education in cooperation with the Education Section of the CEE/CIS Regional Office and Zurich University of Teacher Education. These modules and experience from their implementation were presented at the Regional Workshop on Inclusive Education organised by the CEE/CIS Regional Office and hosted by the Zurich University of Teacher Education from 30 March-2 April 2015. The workshop was attended by 13 countries in the region. The Macedonia delegation presented the national experience and lessons learned. Follow-up support was provided to Albania and Kosovo. Following the workshop, the modules were finalised and have now been shared globally as a resource material.

Identification and Promotion of Innovation

The country introduced the topic of 'child social and financial education' into the national education system. The Life Skills curriculum for primary education was revised to include saving and spending, planning and budgeting and social entrepreneurship. The curriculum was developed based on the global 'Child Social and Financial Education' programme, but adapted to the country context. It defines knowledge and skills that all primary school-age children should acquire in the areas mentioned above. The curriculum was piloted in ten primary schools. Saving clubs were established in the ten primary schools. Trained teachers guided children, especially those in grades 7-9, to identify innovative and creative ways of applying the knowledge and achieving social causes for the benefit of other children, the school or the community. The initiative created a spirit of innovation and excitement around experimenting and mobilising resources for achieving social goals. Most of the communities in which the ten schools are located are socially and economically disadvantaged, so saving financial resources poses a particular challenge, given a culture that acknowledges only passive ways of saving, by collecting money. When faced with the challenge, students experimented with different entrepreneurship initiatives or practiced other ways of saving, such as helping at home, using their creativity and play with friends to raise money. Learning progress was measured with a self-evaluation questionnaire, which showed improvement of entrepreneurial attitudes, financial literacy, saving attitudes, planning attitudes, self-efficacy and pro-social attitudes of all participating children. The pilot brought many other benefits for children that participated: it created opportunities for active learning by engaging in experiments, projects and local research; it provided an opportunity for children to identify resources outside the school and in the community, and at the same time engage the community; it helped them develop a sense of solidarity by contributing to social causes.

Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation

UNICEF provided support to NGOs and institutions responsible for monitoring child rights in generating high-quality data on the situation of the most vulnerable children, to be used for advocacy and policy development. A Roma NGO was supported to conduct a situation analysis of child marriage in one municipality with high-density Roma population. The research was based on the human rights-based approach, through focus group with the Roma population, as the right-holders in this situation, with representatives from local institutions as duty-bearers.

The rights of children with a disability (CWD) to quality and inclusive education were addressed through a partnership with the Ombudsman's office. UNICEF provided technical support for a

situation analysis on inclusion of children with disabilities in regular primary schools. The findings will be used as evidence-based advocacy by the Ombudsman and UNICEF to promote inclusion of CWD in schools, as prescribed by the law.

Rights-holders and duty-bearers were engaged in the development of a five-year communication strategy to increase the number of citizens supporting equal rights and inclusion of CWD, while at the same time building the capacity of rights-holders so that they can be agents of change and self-determination. A participatory workshop with young people with disabilities, disability advocates, teachers, parents and Government representatives provided rights-holders and duty-bearers with an opportunity to shape strategies, activities and messages to be included in the strategy.

As a member of the UN Human Rights and Gender Thematic Group, UNICEF contributed to joint submissions for the following international human rights instruments:

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination – submitted in April 2015;
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment – submitted in April 2015;
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – submitted in May 2015;
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – submitted in August 2015.

Gender Mainstreaming and Equality

A gender assessment of the Country Programme was conducted in 2015, highlighting progress in gender mainstreaming in programming, compared to 2009 results. A more systematic approach to developing and tracking gender-sensitive indicators was adopted and is more specific about male/female target groups. However, limited in-house capacity and among government partners on gender mainstreaming was also observed. To address these gaps, it was recommended that all staff complete the on-line gender training and more advanced training for the office gender focal point. Also recommended was development of a series of key messages related to gender equality and mainstreaming for each sector and a Country Office gender action plan. These recommendations will be addressed as part of the new Country Programme.

The issue of child marriages in the Roma population was highlighted by the 2011 MICS results, with significant differences between the Roma community and the general population. Women 15-19 currently married or in union represented 22 per cent of Roma women, compared to 4 per cent of the general female population.

The juvenile partner in a child marriage is almost by default a female, which further confirms and deepens the gender inequality, poverty and low educational level of women.

With UNICEF support, a Roma NGO conducted a situation analysis of child marriages in the municipality of Prilep, which has one of the highest density populations of Roma. The analysis included collection of administrative data and interviews with key local institutions, as well as focus groups with parents and youth from the Roma community. Current legislation is among the key bottlenecks, as it does not provide appropriate protection of children aged 16 to 18 from entering marriage or living in an unofficial union. The findings of the report will be presented to policy makers and relevant stakeholders in early 2016 to discuss ways forward for changing the legislation. The activity was managed by UNICEF's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) section,

with a budget of \$6.000.

All studies, surveys and evaluations conducted in 2015 by UNICEF and/or jointly with partners respected the gender dimension, both when writing terms of reference (ToR), and in the actual reports.

Environmental Sustainability

The Country Office undertook no activities specifically targeting environmental sustainability. This area has not yet been assessed or prioritised in the Country Programme. However, the 'greening the blue' initiative was one of the priorities of the Office in 2015. During the 2015 staff retreat, staff decided that all staff members will complete the UN tutorial on greening the blue. It was completed by all staff, and several measures to reduce energy consumption in the office and promote an eco-friendly environment were under way in late 2015.

Effective Leadership

Monthly country management team (CMT) meetings served as the forum where management indicators were presented and tracked. The CMT meeting had a standard agenda with a set of indicators to ensure careful monitoring of Office management. These included: resource mobilisation, funding and expenditure levels by programme and by type of funding, direct cash transfer (DCT) as well as the schedule for donor reports. Throughout the year, financial indicators were within the threshold defined by the region as was DCT, which were always zero for more than six months. The CMT monitored audit recommendations. The Representative ensured that audit recommendations closed the previous year, did not open again. Special attention was placed on ensuring that the planning of field visits, their reports and follow-up was adequate and used by all staff members during field missions. The Office developed an insurance quality plan for the harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT), which was also regularly monitored.

At the beginning of the year, the Representative and Deputy Representative reviewed the risks identified during the previous year and assessed whether that could jeopardise the implementation of the Country Programme, and also identified any new risks. Management put in place measures to mitigate the identified risks. The only risk remaining without full mitigation measures was an earthquake and its consequences. This risk control self-assessment was reflected in the annual management plan, which was regularly monitored at CMT meetings.

Review of the IMEP was a standard item of the CMT agenda.

As requested by the Global Staff Association, annual leave was also monitored to ensure that staff members take their leave, in order to have an adequate life/work balance.

The business continuity plan was regularly updated and tested, enabling staff members to work productively from out of the office.

Financial Resources Management

Monthly CMT meetings and insight dashboard reports were regularly used to monitor contribution management and other performance management indicators.

Budget utilisation reports of all contributions, per programme component and per intermediate results, as well as by source of funding, were presented and discussed. Budget utilisation

targets were consistently met. All available regular resources (RR) and 2015 other regular resources (ORR) were optimally utilised.

The Office continued with the good practice of no outstanding DCTs for more than six months throughout the year.

The Country Office also closely monitored the accounting instructions related to the interim and year-end closure of accounts, meeting the requirements and deadlines set by UNICEF headquarters (HQ). Bank reconciliations were completed as per the HQ monthly schedule, and processing of all transactions was completed with no delays.

The Country Office continued to implement HACT-related activities independent of other UN agencies, through the use of the FACE form, by visiting partners and conducting spot-checks and monitoring field visits. The Office developed and implemented a 2015 assurance plan, which included conducting internal control audits of two implementing partners as well as programmatic and spot-check visits.

Fund-raising and Donor Relations

UNICEF Macedonia submitted on time two donor reports due in 2015, including a progress report for a regional funding project from the Austrian Aid Development and a final report for the Foreign Commonwealth Office's contribution through the British Embassy in Skopje. Donor reports were written by the staff member in charge of the specific programme, reviewed by the Deputy Representative and finally by the Representative.

The donor reports schedule is a standing item of the CMT agenda, as one of the management performance indicators.

The final contribution of T-Mobile Foundation was used to renovate and equip 2 ECD centres in marginalised communities. There was no other collaboration with the private sector. The T-Mobile Foundation has not yet expressed an interest in pursuing the experience with UNICEF.

With the exception of the UK and Austria there was a lack of donor interest in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In 2015, the Country Office mobilised US\$895,629, bringing the total ORR raised for the 2010-2015 Country Programme to US\$9,133,761, or 76 per cent of the ceiling.

Following the refugee and migrant humanitarian crisis, the Country Office successfully managed to raise about US\$1,600,000, of which US\$877,192 was donated by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office and the rest from Global Thematic Emergency funding. Based on a needs assessment of migrant and refugee children, the funding gap for 2016 was about US\$6 million.

Evaluation

In 2015 PRIME was developed based on the five-year integrated monitoring and evaluation plan (IMEP). It was used to plan, implement and monitor activities related to knowledge generation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes. PRIME was regularly monitored as a stand-alone item on the CMT agenda.

The Country Office conducted one evaluation in 2015, of the child protection programme 2010-

2015. The purpose was to assess the results of support in the area of justice for children and the social sector. It also measured the extent to which UNICEF-supported programme interventions addressed major child rights violations in child protection and reduced equity gaps, and to assess the impact. As stated in the ToR, in addition to UNICEF the main users of the evaluation would be the MOLSP, Institute for Social Activities, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior. The findings and recommendations will be shared with all relevant stakeholders in the area of child protection and social protection.

All rules and regulations related to preparation and executing the evaluation were strictly followed. The ToR were shared with the Regional Office and a private contractor, and assessed as highly satisfactory. An international consultant was selected to conduct the evaluation, with support of two national consultants.

Data collection and analysis was completed in 2015, and the evaluation report was expected to be finalised in early 2016.

Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

The Admin/HR Assistant, also covering the supply component, extended Special Leave Without Pay , for one more year (ending 30 April 2016). UNICEF fYR of Macedonia decided to continue with the previous year's decision not to hire temporary staff as a replacement. Instead, the tasks this position entails were covered by existing staff, thus generating a saving of US\$ 47,000. Also the Office continued the good practice of having only a part-time cleaner, generating an additional savings of US\$ 6,500.

The UN presence in the country is small and UN agencies continued to benefit from long-term arrangements in many areas as part of the OMT annual plan, such as: travel, express mail courier, local Internet service provider, security services, hotel rates, stationery, UN medical facility and unified fees for national consultants as well as interpreters/translators. This was an efficient way to reduce the workload and staff time that would have been spent in market research conducted by each agency separately.

Supply Management

The regular programme had a small supply component with a value of US\$21,257 against a programme budget of US\$1,786,383, while the emergency response to the refugee and migrant crisis used supplies valued at a total of \$344,178, out of an expenditure of US\$1,056,315. There was some construction, totalling US\$55,026. Contractual services amounted to US\$333,343, of which US\$40,000 was for emergency.

Supplies were part of the emergency response, providing winter clothes as well as age-appropriate food for infants and children, and were provided thanks to a long-term agreement with UNICEF's Supply Division. UNICEF supported the construction of two semi-permanent child-friendly spaces at both transit centres. Sanitation blocks for children and people with disabilities were also provided. Two diesel generators, as well as 20 electric heaters, were procured.

Contractual services included the development and implementation of an ECD database and an evaluation of the child protection programme.

The value of operational supplies, purchased from the institutional budget, reached US\$23,619, representing 3 per cent of the supplies for programme and emergency. The Office procured

seven laptops needed for the new emergency staff and stand-by partners, as well as replacing four obsolete laptops with new tablets. A new car was purchased to replace a seven-year-old vehicle, using the trade-in mechanism for the old car.

The Office supported the Local Institute of Public Health with the provision of 300,000 water purification tablets through its global long-term agreements.

UNICEF continued with the existing practice of having vendors deliver supplies directly to implementing partners, eliminating the need for maintaining a warehouse.

Security for Staff and Premises

No significant changes were noted in the external or internal office working environment during the reporting period.

All new staff, consultants and contractors attended initial security briefing conducted by UNDSS. In addition, all were required to complete both basic and advanced security in the field e-courses. Existing staff renewed the e-courses as needed, given the three year validity of certificates from previous training completion. The Representative took the senior management team member course.

Security advisories and related information from UNDSS to the Country Office were shared on a timely and regular basis with all staff; the staff list was regularly updated and shared with UNDSS. The agency warden system was in place and regular monthly radio checks were conducted. The office fire alarm system was tested via a building evacuation drill conducted in the presence of a UNDSS colleague, who appreciated the dedication and professionalism of UNICEF personnel during the execution of the drill.

In 2015, UNDSS held one training session on safety and security for UN staff in the country, which will continue to be scheduled in coming years to cover all UN staff. All staff were trained in First Aid, organised by UNDSS and conducted by the Red Cross.

Human Resources

The Office successfully supported two general services staff and three national officers to apply for development opportunities. As the staff were not replaced, during their assignments they worked remotely for the Office, ensuring continuity of processes and programme implementation.

In addition, during the reporting period there was an important movement of staff for a small-size office, involving the: ICT assistant, health and nutrition officer, education specialist and M&E officer. These changes resulted in opening vacancies for recruitment of new staff. The office completed the recruitment process for three of the four positions, as one staff member resigned as of 31 December.

In response to the refugee and migrant crises, the Office received short-term support from other UNICEF offices, as well as long-term support from stand-by partners.

The Country Office recruited an emergency programme assistant for a one-year temporary appointment, and benefited from the stand-by partner arrangement for three emergency coordinators, two communications officers and two child protection officers.

The Office has a culture of continuous discussion between supervisors and supervisees. The discussions are cordial and appreciated by all staff.

The Staff Association and management monitored the status of action points identified in response to issues from Global Staff Survey. On 'culture of respect', staff members expressed their recognition; on 'work fairly distributed', work by the cross-sectoral team contributed to a fair distribution of tasks. In relation to 'feeling comfortable reporting a situation of discrimination or harassment', a discussion on ethics was organised in September for all staff, as part of efforts to create an atmosphere where no one feels harassed or discriminated against. In relation to job satisfaction, career development and advanced skills opportunities were used when available, and the Office ensures that when staff members demonstrate competencies above their level, this is recognised in their PERs and considered when applying to for a higher position.

Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

In terms of ICT infrastructure and operations, the Office continued to follow UNICEF standard procedures and policies. The cloud-based office platform Office 365 with its integrated services Outlook, Skype for Business, OneDrive and Sharepoint was widely used by staff for communication and data exchange within UNICEF and with external partners.

One of the major changes in the ICT infrastructure was introducing the new LIGHT (Lightweight and Agile IT Project), thus becoming the first successful LIGHT Office in the CEE/CIS Region. For this purpose, faster broadband internet connectivity was established, from 20Mbps to 50Mbps. Some of the laptops that did not comply with LIGHT Project requirements were replaced by new ones according to the latest UNICEF standard for hardware and imaged with the latest OS Windows 8.1 v8.200. The others were upgraded with extra RAM memory for better overall performance. In addition, cloud-based Wireless Cisco-Meraki LAN was implemented for full mobility and providing Internet access for visiting partners.

The LIGHT Project also contributed to a significant reduction in the ICT footprint, by eliminating the need for in-house hardware servers. Data from the local file server was migrated to Regional Office service centre in Geneva, and all other physical servers were decommissioned and their functionalities overtaken by global or Regional Office servers. It is estimated that the overall savings amounted to US\$25,000 over four years (lifecycle period for server hardware).

Effectiveness and efficiency was improved through the potential to use SAP and VISION from distant locations by utilising only Internet access.

The Office maintained its website ('www.unicef.org/tfymacedonia') on a regular basis, and Facebook, Twitter and YouTube channels enhance UNICEF's local presence. As a result of programme activities, two local websites were hosted and maintained.

Programme Components from Results Assessment Module

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 As a result of social sector reforms, the Government addresses targeted disparities in the quality of and access to basic social services for vulnerable children and families

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Cross-sectoral collaboration for improved protection and inclusion of children with disabilities was further strengthened in 2015. Following the in-depth cross-sectoral assessment conducted on the capacities of services provided by health, education and social services, a national consultation was held at the end of 2015. At the consultation, representatives from relevant line ministries identified concrete immediate and medium-term cross-sectoral activities to improve the inclusion of children with disabilities in all sectors, using the ICF-CY as a common language to support the required changes in systems, services and social norms.

More than 95 per cent of home visiting nurses and teachers of nursing schools were trained to improve their knowledge and skills for early detection, intervention and support to children with developmental risks and developmental delays. The training was an opportunity to improve links with other health professionals, with social services, with civil society (including organisations of disabled persons, parents' associations and nongovernmental organisations), kindergartens, schools and other services on a local and national level that may support families of children with disabilities.

In 2015 advocacy efforts continued with the Ministry of Health to make the Roma health mediators' programme part of the national public health system, including budget planning.

The trend of increasing early learning enrolment continued in 2015. According to the MoLSP, 40 per cent of children aged three-to-five years were enrolled, compared to 36 per cent in 2014. The ECD centres established in 2014 were formally registered as part of the national ECD system, hence ensuring their sustainability.

Capacity development for improving teacher instruction and student learning in early literacy and numeracy, in line with international standards, continued. The training of teachers under the numeracy component was completed in 2014, while the last phase of training for the literacy component was underway in late 2015.

Regulations and procedures for identifying, referring and treating child victims of violence, to be used by all professionals, including health staff, were developed and endorsed.

In consultation with relevant partners, UNICEF commissioned an evaluation of the Child Protection Programme, including the two key programme components: justice for children and social protection. The final report will be available in early 2016. The findings of the evaluation, including good practices, lessons learned and recommendations, will be used by the Government and UNICEF to further refine the child protection component of the new Country Programme 2016-2020.

OUTPUT 1 National and local authorities resource programmes and action plans that address targeted MCH disparities and gaps in the quality of MCH services

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Capacity development of home visiting nurses continued in 2015, with the key objective of improving knowledge and skills in early detection, early intervention and support to children with developmental difficulties and their families. Ninety-five per cent of home visiting nurses were trained, based on the in-service training package developed in 2014, with technical assistance from international experts from the University Of Ulster (UK). The rapid appraisal conducted in March showed improved knowledge and attitudes about disability, as well as increased awareness by patronage nurses about their important role in communities in fostering inter-

sectoral and multi-sectoral collaboration. The country's experience in home visiting capacity building was shared with other countries in the region, as well as at the first international developmental paediatrics congress held by the University of Ankara with the CEE-CIS Regional Office support.

In collaboration with NGOs, advocacy continued with the Ministry of Health to mainstream planning for Roma into the national health system. Despite efforts, no progress was made toward integrating the database of the "Roma Health mediators" programme into the national health information system. At the service delivery level, Roma health mediators are present in 14 out of the 16 municipalities with the highest density population of Roma.

OUTPUT 2 All municipalities provide an essential set of diversified ECD services

Analytical Statement of Progress:

In 2015, 16 new kindergartens and ECD centres were opened in the most marginalised Roma and rural communities, two ECD centres received direct UNICEF support, raising the rate of coverage for the three-to-five age group to 40 per cent from 34 per cent in 2014 (MoLSP). Another important step forward was the formal registration into the national ECD system of 17 ECD centres that were opened with UNICEF support in past years, hence ensuring their sustainability.

Three in-service training modules on inclusive early childhood education (ECE) were developed, strengthening linkages between early learning and development standards (ELDS) and ICF-CY. Teachers in 10 pilot kindergartens with the largest number of children with disabilities were trained to implement the modules and establish inclusive ECE practices. Implementation process was monitored and documented to inform future national scale-up. Forty kindergartens were provided with gardening equipment to help them organise early learning activities for children in a natural environment. The process, initiated in 2012 to create a national ECE database, progressed well.

A software programme was developed and piloted in 10 kindergartens. Based on the experience from the piloting phase, the software was finalised and a national scale-up was initiated. By the end of 2015, 25 per cent of ECD service providers were using the software. The database includes disaggregated data on coverage by age, sex, ethnicity, language, socio-economic background and disability, as well as data on quality, based on ELDS.

The two-year project funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office through the British Embassy in Skopje, on mainstreaming respect for diversity and multiculturalism in ECD was successfully completed. Key achievements included revision of the national ECD curricula and inspection framework to put greater focus on respect for diversity and multiculturalism. The project also supported activities and events promoting respect for diversity and multiculturalism among young children, parents and communities in the 10 selected kindergartens and municipalities. Materials (teacher manuals, 19 picture books, 10 posters and leaflets) based on four characters that promote respect for diversity and multiculturalism were developed and widely disseminated in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish languages.

The KAP surveys conducted in the pilot kindergartens at the beginning and end of the project highlighted a significant increase in children's knowledge about differences and respect for diversity, confirming that the project goals were achieved. In view of the encouraging results, the MLSP has committed to support roll-out of the programme to all kindergartens in the country.

OUTPUT 3 The Ministry of Education and municipalities ensure that the national education system is inclusive (regardless of ethnicity, ability, and socio-economic background) and effective, in line with CFS standards

Analytical Statement of Progress:

All early grade teachers (6,600) in all primary schools were trained on early numeracy and literacy programme, and 4,604 are certified to apply these programmes, in line with international standards. The regional learning teams functioned as a platform for teachers to learn and share knowledge and evidence on effectiveness and impact on student learning. The experience was documented in a recent OECD publication: “Schooling Redesigned: Towards Innovative Learning Systems”. The network of inclusive schools, initiated in 2012, now numbers 20 primary schools throughout the country. Inclusive education practices were further enhanced by training teachers from these schools on formative assessment of learning among children with learning difficulties. Two teacher manuals on formative assessment were published, one for all children, and one for children with learning difficulties.

To further strengthen teacher’s capacities to document good practices, a manual on conducting action research and developing case studies was developed and training for pedagogues and psychologists from selected schools conducted. To date, 17 action research projects and 101 good practices papers have been produced as evidence of effective implementation, as well as a key resource for teacher learning. The modules on inclusive education, with an annex on good practices and ICF-CY tools and instruments, were published. The baseline assessment of the first seven schools that were trained based on the inclusive education modules was published, and the monitoring and evaluation framework was used in every new school joining the network of inclusive schools in the country. The country experience in piloting the in-service training modules on inclusive education was presented at a regional workshop on inclusive education, organised by the CEE/CIS Regional Office in collaboration with the Zurich University for Teacher Education earlier this year. The newly established Resource Centre for parents of children with disabilities is steadily expanding to reach more municipalities and to offer more services to parents. As one of four pilot countries globally, Macedonia has introduced ‘Child social and financial education’ as part of the life skills curriculum in all grades of primary education. Experience from the implementation of the programme in 10 primary schools was documented in an evaluation report and the MoES has expressed an interest in expanding this initiative to other schools in the country.

OUTPUT 4 The Government addresses targeted system gaps in provision of preventive and protective services, consistent with the revised normative framework

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Regulations and procedures governing identification, treatment and referral of child victims of violence developed in 2014 were endorsed this year. These tools were distributed to relevant stakeholders (including judges, prosecutors and police) for implementation to improve case management of child victims of violence.

The mapping of institutions and CSOs providing services to child victims of violence conducted in 2015 highlighted major obstacles to prevention and protection services. The key constraints are lack of integrated policy and multiple coordinating bodies, strategies and protocols, causing confusion and duplication of efforts and hindering institutional cooperation. The findings of the mapping informed the cross-sectoral programme on prevention and protection from violence for the new Country Programme.

The set of tools developed by the National Council on Prevention of Child Delinquency (NCPCD) to monitor implementation of the Law on Justice for Children was revised to improve the data collection process and address amendments made to the Justice for Children Law. UNICEF supported training on data analysis and report writing for all NCPCD members, including representatives from the ministries of labour and social policy, justice, interior, education, independent members and representatives of the Ombudsman's Office and CSOs. The training helped to improve the quality of the 2014 annual report submitted to the Government and the Parliament, indicating the areas of the justice for children law that need strengthening.

The successful mentoring programme, piloted since 2011 with UNICEF support, to facilitate the social and educational reintegration of children in conflict with the law, was acknowledged by the Government as a good practice to be adopted and integrated into social services.

To identify gaps in service provision for children with disabilities, UNICEF commissioned an assessment to map out all available forms of alternative care and family-support services provided to families and children with disabilities by state and non-state actors. The assessment's findings will inform the MoLSP's efforts to improve and/or expand existing services and create new services, if needed, for children with disabilities in line with the ICF-CY approach.

In consultation with relevant partners, UNICEF commissioned an evaluation of the child protection programme, including two key programme components: justice for children and social protection. The purpose is to measure the extent to which UNICEF-supported programme interventions addressed major child rights violations in child protection and reduced equity gaps, and to assess impact, if relevant. The final evaluation report will be available in early 2016. The knowledge generated by the evaluation will be used by the Government and UNICEF to further refine the child protection component of the new Country Programme 2016-2020.

Following the establishment of child-friendly rooms in five municipalities, monitoring and advocacy activities were conducted for increased use of these services by judicial professionals, to avoid secondary victimisation of boys and girls who had been victims of violence, abuse and neglect, and also to foster a child-friendly approach in work with children in conflict with the law.

OUTCOME 2 All partners (Government, CSOs, parliament, media, and private sector) are collectively engaged in budgeting, monitoring child rights and child-focused social responsibility programmes.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

Joint efforts of the MoLSP, World Bank and UNICEF successfully contributed to the review and assessment of all 19 cash benefit schemes to improve their targeting, adequacy and impact, with technical support from the inter-ministerial working group composed of experts and professionals in this field.

As part of UNICEF's cross-sectoral efforts to advance the rights of children with disabilities, technical support was provided to relevant ministries for the development of primary and secondary legislation that introduced a new assessment model of children with disabilities, based on the ICF-CY. As part of the agreed implementation plan for the new assessment model, in 2016 UNICEF will pilot the model in selected municipalities, raise capacities for key practitioners and develop a formal translation of ICF-CY.

The Gender assessment of the 2010-2015 country programme was conducted in May. The report highlighted the strengths and potential for improvement in mainstreaming gender in all programmes and provided useful recommendations for further strengthening gender mainstreaming in the next Country Programme.

Partnership with the Ombudsman Office was strengthened. With UNICEF support, an analysis of the obstacles and bottlenecks faced by children with disabilities to school enrolment was completed jointly between the Ombudsman Office and an NGO with expertise in conducting research and surveys and with the Resource Centre of parents of children with disabilities. Results are expected in early 2016 and findings will be used for evidence-based advocacy by the Ombudsman to promote inclusion of children with disabilities in schools as per the law. In addition, the Partnership with the Office of the Ombudsman continued in 2015 through the interactive online game www.detskiprava.mk, launched as part of CRC@25 activities, which was upgraded to include new functionalities.

The findings from the KAP survey on inclusion of children with disabilities and the mapping of organisations of disabled persons conducted at the end of 2014 informed the development of a five-year communication strategy to mobilise broad support and increase the number of citizens supporting equal rights and inclusion for children with disabilities.

OUTPUT 1 By end of 2015, national and sub-national authorities use a reliable disaggregated data system for planning, budgeting, and monitoring to address child poverty and social exclusion

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF supported a grassroots organisation working with Roma communities in conducting a study on the prevalence of child marriages in the municipality of Prilep, which has a high concentration of Roma. The report was produced through a process of legal analysis, interviews with representatives of relevant institutions and focus group discussions with parents and children from the Roma community. The report stated that the current legislation does not provide appropriate protection of children aged 16-to-18 from entering a marriage or living in an unofficial union, therefore police and the public prosecutor have no authorisation to act when a child involved in an unofficial union is above the age of 16. The findings of the report will be presented to policy makers and relevant stakeholders in early 2016 to discuss ways forward for changing the legislation so it will provide protection of children up to age of 18.

An analysis of the obstacles and bottlenecks faced by children with disabilities to school enrolment was completed in partnership with the Ombudsman Office with technical support of the Resource Centre of parents of children with disabilities. Findings of the analysis will be used for evidence-based advocacy by the Ombudsman and UNICEF to promote inclusion of children with disabilities in schools as prescribed by the law.

National Council for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency published its annual report in June, with UNICEF support. The report was reviewed and endorsed by the Parliament and the Government. Based on the inputs from the Council, the Government decided to explore the situation and to take measures to strengthen the justice for children system. More specifically, to advance mentoring, mediation and other alternative measures; to increase the utilisation of child-friendly rooms; to develop capacities of school teams and local councils for prevention.

OUTPUT 2 Relevant national and sub-national authorities adjust targeted institutional mechanisms that define and govern the volume and efficiency of public funding for social

protection and education programmes for children and determine its effectiveness to reach marginalised and socially excluded children

Analytical Statement of Progress:

The inter-ministerial working group composed of experts and professionals from the field of social protection continued its efforts to reform the design and administration of cash benefits in the country. By December 2015, all 19 cash benefit schemes had been assessed and reviewed to improve their targeting, adequacy and impact, with technical support provided by UNICEF and the World Bank. The working group prepared a roadmap for reform focusing on: (1) addressing identified bottlenecks in accessing benefits, (2) enhancing the impact of cash benefits to alleviate poverty and (3) integrating cash benefits with the delivery of social services. A communication campaign to inform potential beneficiaries from the most marginalised communities, especially the Roma, about their rights and entitlements to child benefits, was postponed until the second quarter of 2016, due to political changes within the Government and the ministry in charge of its delivery. Cross-sectoral cooperation with the health sector was also strengthened through the assessment of bottlenecks in accessing health insurance by the Roma community.

As part of UNICEF's cross-sectoral efforts to advance the rights of children with disabilities, technical support was provided to relevant ministries for the development of primary and secondary legislation that introduced a new assessment model for children with disabilities, based on the ICF-CY. As part of the agreed implementation plan for the new assessment model, in 2016 UNICEF will pilot the model in selected municipalities, raise capacities of key practitioners and develop a formal translation of ICF-CY.

In cooperation with the Institute for Social Activities, professional development activities for social workers were ongoing throughout 2015. A total of 80 workshops were organised for 881 social work professionals on topics ranging from assessing the needs of vulnerable children, community engagement and management skills in social work. On-the-job training for implementation of the 2014 service delivery standards continued, and took place in 23 of the country's 30 Centres for Social Work. In addition, 69 social work professionals were trained to use the LIRIKUS electronic database on social services.

OUTPUT 3 Alliances with parliamentarians, media, and the private sector establish an enabling environment for the fulfilment of child rights

Analytical Statement of Progress:

The Country Office implemented the last phase of the ECD social mobilisation campaign on its Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/prvite5>) and through media engagement around the opening of new ECD centres. A KABP survey conducted one year after the campaign showed that 20 per cent of the audience recalled "The first five are the most important" and their children were more likely to participate in activities stimulating development and learning. It showed the need to focus future interventions on addressing demand for quality pre-school. The Foundation T-Mobile for Macedonia made their final financial contribution, concluding the corporate partnership agreement initiated in 2013.

Findings from the KAP survey in relation to inclusion of CWD and the mapping of organisations of disabled persons conducted at the end of 2014 informed the development of a five-year communication strategy. Based on the socio-ecological model, the strategy was developed to mobilise broad support and increase the number of citizens supporting equal rights and inclusion of children with disabilities, and includes building the capacity of rights-holders to

become agents of change. The strategy was endorsed at a workshop held with young people with disabilities, disability advocates, teachers, parents and Government representatives. The first activity was launched in November as part of the #FightUnfair initiative, and engaged local activists calling on the public to take a pledge to change the way society sees and treats CWD. In just two weeks on Facebook, the initiative reached more than 130,000 people, engaged more than 9,000 users and triggered 690 (7 per cent of total fan base) new page fans. The social media campaign will continue into 2016 as a prelude to a broader multi-media campaign.

Partnership with the Office of the Ombudsman continued in 2015, and the interactive online game www.detskiprava.mk, launched as part of CRC@25 activities, was upgraded to include new functionalities. Child-friendly versions of the CRC in Macedonian and Albanian were also developed in minority languages: [Romani](#), [Serbian](#), [Vlach](#), [Bosnian](#) and [Turkish](#).

Since August the Country Office has been contributing to global, regional and national communication and advocacy efforts on the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe. Its multi-media assets, press releases and engagement with international media contributed to positioning children at the centre of the crisis and increased public support. Seven videos produced by UNICEF or with footage captured by the Country Office were released on global channels; four blogs were published on the [Connect platform](#); more than 100 photos captured by the Country Office were used in photo essays on the [global photography and social change platform](#) and used by multiple sectors globally on social and traditional media. More than 40 international media interviews contributed to 570 articles in international media mentioning UNICEF Macedonia. Since repositioning the Office Twitter account to reach audiences beyond the country; the average impressions increased from 3,900 per month to 31,000 per month; average mentions from four per month to 82 per month; and average engaged users from 14 per month to 355 people per month.

Document Centre

Evaluation and Research

Title	Sequence Number	Type of Report
Assessment of alternative forms of care and family support services for children with disabilities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2015/006	Study
Survey to test knowledge and attitudes to early childhood development	2015/005	Survey
KAP survey on parents knowledge, skills and practices in supporting early learning of their children with a focus on diversity	2015/004	Study
Baseline study on inclusive education in selected schools in 7 municipalities	2015/003	Review
Documenting experience and lessons learned from a training programme of patronage nurses on early childhood development and CwD	2015/002	Research
Gender Assessment of the 2010-2015 Country Programme	2015/001	Research

Other Publication

Title

Diversity in ECD - MELA