Executive Summary

The 2016-2020 UNICEF Macedonia country programme (CP) was developed in a framework of equity, with a cross-cutting focus on the most vulnerable: child victims of violence; children with disabilities; children from the minority, oft-excluded, Roma population; and children on the move.

The European migrant and refugee crisis continued to be a central programme focus for UNICEF and partners. The situation of refugees and migrants transiting the country changed significantly from the beginning of the year to the end, with a decrease in absolute numbers and movement, but an increase in dependence on support services. Closure of borders along the Balkan route in March left formerly ‘on the move’ people stranded in once-temporary transit centres. In response, UNICEF’s focus has been to preserve some semblance of normalcy for children trapped in a very abnormal situation, supporting safe spaces for children to play and learn in the transit centres, and advocating for their eventual inclusion in regular schools. As numbers continue to fluctuate, UNICEF’s child-centred focus will remain through the start of 2017.

Ongoing changes in the political situation have resulted in some delays in the implementation and promotion of child rights. Since February 2015, there was a dissolution of Parliament, electoral postponements and management changes in some of UNICEF’s key partner ministries. Due to this, some UNICEF-supported Government initiatives were delayed. With elections in December 2016 – postponed from their originally planned dates, first in April and then in June – there is hope for forward movement as a new government is established in the first quarter of 2017.

Despite these challenges, good programme headway has been made. Progress has occurred in the advancement of a human rights-based approach to disability – recognising the development opportunities that children with disabilities deserve. This was a focus for advocacy and technical success, with the translation of the WHO international classification of functioning (ICF), disability and health, and preparation of a social change communication initiative to address issues of limited knowledge, support for inclusion and negative attitudes towards children with disabilities, to be rolled out in 2017. Progress was made in the recognition of early childhood as a key stage in learning for all children, and in the development of facilities inclusive of children with disabilities and the most vulnerable.

Good grassroots work was carried out through support to patronage nurses (front-line community care workers) and in the 20 inclusive schools that are leading the way in breaking down barriers to the development and inclusion of children with disabilities. Capacity development was a central strategy in this and other work, building the long-term skills and systems required to make changes for children sustainable.

UNICEF leveraged technical capacity for effective data and monitoring systems as well, including through the development of a comprehensive ECD database, to be rolled out in 2017, and capacity strengthening of both national institutions and civil society organizations to monitor child rights, with a focus on child victims of violence and children with disabilities. Progress was also made in conducting a knowledge, attitude, practices and social norms
study on violence against children (VAC), which aimed to explore the persistent use of violent discipline among children aged two to 14 years, to be completed in early 2017.

UNICEF Macedonia country programme continued to use social and traditional media to reach and engage the public on key priorities for children, with 2,073,309 people reached and 109,805 engaged on the UNICEF Macedonia Facebook page on key topics of child rights and inclusion. Together with partners, the Office used the occasion of UNICEF’s 70th anniversary to reinforce support for protecting the most vulnerable children. Nine renowned local authors engaged in the global ‘Tiny Story’ initiative, sharing stories on ‘what I want for every child’, in an exhibition at a busy shopping mall. The event opened with a flash mob choir of 70 youth paying tribute to the continued hope that UNICEF and partners bring to children around the world.

While the Government remains a key partner, UNICEF continued to foster strong working relationships with the NGO sector as well, through formal partnerships as well as dialogue and coordination to achieve common results.

Nevertheless, challenges remain, including in relation to public and institutional perceptions of the most vulnerable. Acceptance of the inclusion of vulnerable children – from migrants to Roma to children with disabilities – is not always immediate, and capacities to support change remain limited. UNICEF’s role in advocating for all children will continue to be important as work proceeds in 2017.

**Humanitarian Assistance**

The situation of refugees and migrants changed during 2016. Earlier flows of people moving north to European destination countries abruptly stopped with border closures in March 2016, leaving a small but still desperate group of 1,200 would-be migrants in the country. These remaining refugees and migrants were accommodated at two transit centres in Gevgelija and Tabanovce, a Centre for asylum seekers in Vizbegovo, and a safe house in Skopje – facilities that had initially been set up for temporary accommodation and protection. UNICEF adjusted its activities accordingly, moving from addressing the changing needs of people on the move to supporting the ongoing and still dire situation of people remaining effectively trapped in what they had hoped would be a through road for their eventual, hoped-for destination elsewhere.

Throughout the year, numbers have continued to diminish as – officially or unofficially – migrants left the centres, trying to continue their journey. As of December, there remained approximately 200 people accommodated in the four locations. These numbers, however, fluctuate from week to week, as some people manage to move on towards Western Europe, while others – often victims of traffickers who promised and failed to help them get to their journeys’ end – increase the populations of the transit centres. Of these, only a few are seeking asylum in this country, while others are waiting for the borders to open again and proceed further, or attempting to seek reunification with family members who have already reached EU countries.

While the numbers appear small at first glance, these children and their families are often in compelling circumstances – those in the transit centres are unable to leave, and those in the asylum centres and safe house are unable, in current circumstances, to integrate into the local community.

UNICEF’s strategy in the face of this situation has been to focus on the well-being of the children and families involved, regardless of their status or the projected longevity of their stay in the country. This has meant an emphasis on development of safe spaces for children; psycho-social, nutritional and health support; and the provision of transitional
learning opportunities to help children either integrate into formal education at their end
destination, or into the local school system in the country.

Through 2016 UNICEF worked directly with seven implementing partners and other
stakeholders to ensure continuous operation of child and family support hubs (blue dot
centres); enhance protection services by developing standard operating procedures (SOPs)
for unaccompanied and separated children and other vulnerable categories, and provide
infant and young child feeding (IYCF) in emergencies.

Additionally, UNICEF worked to support development of a non-formal education programme
for children accommodated in the transit centres; raise awareness among refugees and
migrants and the local population about the risks of human trafficking; and provide
psychological support to children and parents.

And to support capacity development of national institutions through training on child
protection topics; and support infrastructure improvements at the transit centres, including
playgrounds and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure.

Looking forward to 2017, UNICEF will continue to support the well-being of these children
and families and continue advocacy around the issue of trafficking, which is increasingly
affecting movements both into and out of the country.

In addition to migration, natural disasters also affected the population. In August 2016,
Skopje was hit by a severe storm that caused flash floods in some parts of the city: 22
people lost their lives and more than 20,000 people were affected, with damage to
households and infrastructure. The Government declared a state of crisis, mobilizing all
available resources for damage management. International assistance was also requested.
UNICEF contributed as part of the UN country team response, distributing hygiene items to
the affected population. Very soon after the state of crisis was declared, a joint EU and UN
team was created to conduct a needs assessment. The resulting report will serve to support
future mitigation efforts.

Finally, in September 2016 a series of earthquakes were felt in the country, the largest
registering 5.3 on the Richter scale. Some injuries were reported, largely among people
panicking from the tremors. While UNICEF did not mobilize assistance in the aftermath, it did
renew internal preparedness efforts. More importantly, though, the flood and earthquake
incidents were a reminder of the need for overall, longer-term disaster preparedness
measures in the country.

Emerging Areas of Importance

Refugee and migrant children: The European refugee and migrant crisis has put the
ongoing realities of these vulnerable children firmly at the centre of UNICEF’s programming.
Currently, 68 per cent of the refugees and migrants stranded in the transit centres are
women and children. From the beginning of the crisis to the present, UNICEF Macedonia
has linked immediate, emergency action into longer-term programme strategies. Jointly,
child and social protection programmes focused on policy development and enhancing
institutional capacities and leading work for the adoption of the SOPs for dealing with
unaccompanied and vulnerable children. By developing a system for training and education
of social workers to operate in the emergency environment, as part of the normal functioning
of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), UNICEF Macedonia aimed for
sustainable solutions not only for the current emergency, but for the future as well.

Education of refugee and migrant children is another focus. Specific programming for non-
formal education for all school-age children in the transit centres was developed and is being
implemented. In the meantime, efforts are being made to adjust existing legislation, which prevents these children from being part of regular school programmes.

For UNICEF’s health/nutrition programme, a major achievement was the adoption of the standard operating procedure for infant and young child feeding practices in emergencies. This is the first document of this type in the country; it prescribes procedures and activities for breastfeeding counselling, complementary, age-appropriate food for children six-to-24 months, implementation of Codex Alimentarius in formula labelling and distribution, as well as recognition of danger signs for refugee and migrant children and their proper referral.

Through all of this, UNICEF programmes succeeded in utilizing pre-existing partnerships with civil society organizations, in the emergency context as well. This improves mutual trust and creates an enabling environment for further cooperation.

Although the crisis is unpredictable since its onset in 2015, valuable lessons were identified during the response that can be used to enhance the preparedness level of the national system for future emergencies in all core areas (child protection, education, WASH, health and nutrition).

Early child development (ECD): UNICEF is working both to develop acceptance and coverage for ECD, and develop models of inclusive ECD for the most vulnerable children: children with disabilities and children from excluded groups, such as Roma children.

Expanding the number of children aged three-to-five enrolled in ECD is one of the main priorities that the Government outlined in its new Education Strategy (2016-2020). In 2016, UNICEF supported expansion of the network of early childhood education (ECE) providers in the country by opening two new ECD centres and strengthening the capacity of ECE educators. One of the ECD centres is located in the Roma community Trizla, in Prilep, and is part of the sub-regional Roma inclusion project. In the coming year, UNICEF will continue expanding the network by opening up to 10 new ECD centres in rural communities to enable access to quality early learning of socially disadvantaged children aged three-to-six, including plans for one centre in a rural municipality affected by the refugee and migrant crisis.

UNICEF is also working to develop and pilot teacher manuals and coordinate mentoring and peer support visits in kindergartens and schools. To improve the quality of early learning, UNICEF will expand cooperation with the state education inspectorate to develop instruments and protocols for external evaluation of preschools.

Significant progress was also achieved in strengthening the capacities of the MLSP for data collection and analysis. During 2016, roll-out of the ECD database was completed and analytical reports were designed. This gave the MLSP access to accurate data, necessary for making informed decisions and adopting policies for further strengthening of the ECD sector in the country. It is expected that the MLSP will formally take over the database at the beginning of 2017.

The budget formula for financing ECD remains the key bottleneck for achieving higher enrolment in preschool education. The current political situation is not favourable for initiating negotiations with the ministry responsible for changing the funding formula; however, UNICEF stays committed to pursuing this agenda.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>Austrian Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDE</td>
<td>Bureau for the Development of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMT</td>
<td>Country management team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPMP</td>
<td>Country programme management plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRPD</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO(s)</td>
<td>Civil society organization(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSW</td>
<td>Centres for Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWD</td>
<td>Children with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCT</td>
<td>Direct cash transfers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPO(s)</td>
<td>Disabled persons’ organization(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early childhood development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>Early childhood education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELDS</td>
<td>Early leaning and development standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACE</td>
<td>Funding authorization and certificate of expenditure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender-based violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSSC</td>
<td>Global Shared Services Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HACT</td>
<td>Harmonized approach to cash transfers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERA</td>
<td>Health, Education and Research Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and communication technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICF-CY</td>
<td>International classification of functioning - children and youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMEP</td>
<td>Integrated monitoring and evaluation plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (European Union)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISA</td>
<td>Institute for Social Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IYCF</td>
<td>Infant and young child feeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAP</td>
<td>Knowledge, attitudes and practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple indicator cluster survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoES</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoH</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoJ</td>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLSP</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour and Social Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO(s)</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORR</td>
<td>Other regular resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMT</td>
<td>Operations management team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSS</td>
<td>Psychosocial support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCSA</td>
<td>Risk control self-assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHM</td>
<td>Roma health mediators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>Regular resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOPs</td>
<td>Standard operating procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPS</td>
<td>Social protection system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMS</td>
<td>Talent management system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDSS</td>
<td>United Nations Department for Safety and Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>UN Population Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water, sanitation and hygiene</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Capacity Development**

UNICEF Macedonia programming has a strong continuing emphasis on capacity and systems development, working towards better quality and coverage of services and national leadership in child rights programming.

Capacity development in primary health care services has targeted patronage nurses, general practitioners and Roma health mediators (RHM). Uniquely positioned to provide care and advice to people in their home environments, 100 per cent of the patronage nurses have had the opportunity to hone their skills in child health, nutrition and early detection of developmental difficulties, whereas 25 RMH have been trained on data recording and reporting and early detection of developmental difficulties.

Emphasis continued to be placed on inclusive ECE and education: 10 kindergartens were supported to establish inclusive teams, and inclusive ECE training was extended to additional 10 kindergartens that will continue to receive support, widening the inclusive kindergartens network. To monitor and sustain inclusiveness in schools, 25 state education inspectors attended trainings tailored to their specific role, enabling them to better understand and evaluate inclusive practices and provide sound recommendations.

Quality social support and care services are fundamental to an effective social protection system (SPS). To continue the professional development of centres for social work (CSW) staff and improve their performance and overall service quality, UNICEF supported the Institute of Social Activities' (ISA) contribution to capacity development of over 100 professionals by providing on-the-job training at all 30 centres for new staff, and refresher courses for existing staff. Activities to enhance ISA’s monitoring and evaluation skills were initiated in 2016 and will continue next year.

Within the emergency context, centre staff and humanitarian response staff received case management training, while 20 medical and 20 non-medical staff were trained in infant and young child feeding practices in emergencies, to provide improved nutrition services to migrant and refugee children and pregnant and lactating women.

**Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy**

A study examining the Roma population's access to health insurance, combined with a progress review of the Roma health mediators (RHM) programme, identified key obstacles that prevent Roma people and children from realizing their right to health insurance. The obstacles include inability to obtain identification documents and discriminatory behaviour among health professionals, emphasizing the need for continuous health education and promotion. It showed deteriorated working conditions for the mediators, whose number has decreased. Thus, a comprehensive RHM programme evaluation is underway; its recommendations will be incorporated in future activities within the RHM programme and more broadly, Roma health. The documented achievements would contribute to mobilizing additional funding for programme expansion.

A case study on child marriage shed light on the gravity of this issue, particularly among young Roma, and its link to poverty, gender-based and domestic violence and school abandonment. Public discussions followed and specific changes were proposed to three laws directly addressing child marriage.

Findings on the overall mentality toward disability and inclusion, produced by a survey on knowledge, skills and practices (KAP) related to children with disabilities, showed a high level of stigma and low support for inclusive education. This was an important source of information that fed into a broad communication strategy aiming to increase the number of
The study "Towards Inclusive Education" looked at the current legal framework, understanding and practice of inclusion of children with disabilities in primary schools. It provides useful insights for enhancing training and developing tools that nourish inclusiveness in kindergartens and schools.

The recommendations of UNICEF's child protection programme evaluation, coupled with an ongoing study on violence against children will serve to inform efforts aimed at strengthening preventive mechanisms, child protection services and data collection.

**Partnerships**

UNICEF Macedonia continued to invest in partnerships with the Government and CSOs, aimed at achieving common goals in a context with limited resources and a plenitude of actors.

One of the most vital areas of programme convergence for UNICEF is support to children with disabilities. With funding from the regional European Union/ Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, UNICEF established a nationwide partnership with state and CSO representatives to improve the monitoring of child rights realization, promote inclusive and innovative services and increase public support for protection of children from violence and inclusion of children with disabilities. Under overall leadership by the Government, UNICEF supported an inclusive dialogue on advancing the rights of children with disabilities and helped create a consensus on shifting to a human rights-based approach to working with these children.

UNICEF's partnership with the Government, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and local CSOs contributes to securing effective access to quality services for Roma children. The capacities of Roma health monitors were strengthened, and advocacy continues for establishment of inter-sectorial local teams among health, social protection and educational services.

As a result of the refugee/migrant crisis, UNICEF partnered with key child protection actors in the country – Save the Children Fund, SOS Children’s Village, La Strada and others – to provide a coordinated response to the needs of affected children. UNICEF used its convening role to forge a partnership with relevant partners from the state, UN agencies and CSOs to develop the country's SOPs on IYCF in emergencies and train and mobilize existing patronage nurses to act as ICFY counsellors at transit centres.

Most of the jointly agreed interventions were operationalized through more than 15 project cooperation agreements with CSOs. This modality leveraged additional resources for children, in the form of CSOs' local outreach capacity, knowledge of the context, reliance on qualified workforce, links to professional networks and exposure to regional and international best practices.

**External Communication and Public Advocacy**

UNICEF continued to use social and traditional media to reach and engage the public on key communication and advocacy priorities. Engagement around inclusion of children with disabilities was consistent throughout the year, as was engagement around the refugee and migrant crisis, ending violence and advancing equity.

UNICEF’s 70th anniversary served as an occasion to reinforce past, current and future support to protecting the most vulnerable children. Nine renowned local authors engaged in
the global ‘Tiny Story’ initiative, sharing their stories on the theme ‘what I want for every child’. An exhibition of UNICEF support and selected tiny stories was held at a popular shopping mall. The event was opened with a flash mob where a choir of 70 youth performed Lennon’s “Imagine” and ToseProeski’s “This World”.

Overall, these efforts contributed to 493 local media reports that mention UNICEF and an increase in the number of people reached and engaged through social media channels. Fans on the UNICEF Macedonia Facebook page increased by 53 per cent from 10,009 (Jan) to 15,357 (Dec); during the same period the page reached 2,073,309 people and engaged 109,805. Similar results were achieved on other social media channels.

During 2016 UNICEF Macedonia continued to implement its disability communication strategy, developed in 2015. A comprehensive range of assets for a social change communication initiative ‘For a childhood without barriers’ were developed. Two social experiment videos, exploring discrimination and physical barriers, specialized media (i.e. print newspaper in braille and sign language TV news announcement); gif tutorials and a mobile phone app to engage the public in mapping barriers and positive examples of accessibility are under development. The initiative will be launched in Q1 of 2017, complemented by an inclusive event implemented by six CSO partners.

**Identification Promotion of Innovation**

During 2016 UNICEF continued to implement the disability communication strategy developed in 2015. A comprehensive range of assets for a social change communication initiative (‘For a childhood without barriers’) were developed, such as a mobile phone app designed to engage the public in mapping barriers and positive examples of accessibility. Developed for iPhone and Android users, the application was designed to engage and inform the public on addressing barriers to inclusion.

**Support to Integration and Cross-Sectoral Linkages**

During 2016 UNICEF supported integrated programming with partners around three cross-sectoral themes: child victims of violence, children with disabilities and Roma children.

Under the leadership of the National Coordinating Body for Protection of Children from Violence and Abuse, the multi-agency team model was revised, based on findings from a UNICEF-led assessment. Multi-agency teams include representatives from the centres for social work, police, prosecutors, health and education sectors, and aim to care for child victims/witnesses and build cases for prosecution. Tools to guide development of child-centred individual care plans were established and responsibilities for monitoring clarified. Inter-ministerial and civil society dialogue was expanded as part of the EU/UNICEF project to protect children from violence and promote inclusion of children with disabilities. As well, support commenced to the Ombudsman’s office and disabled persons’ organizations (DPOs) to build rights monitoring capacities, promote inclusive services and increase public support for inclusion of children with disabilities. This will continue in 2017.

Following 2015 legislative amendments introducing a functional disability assessment based on the ICF, UNICEF supported the Government to produce a formal translation of ICF into Macedonian, to be used in all social sectors to improve inclusion of children with disabilities.

UNICEF worked with Government and civil society to strengthen inclusive education in kindergartens and primary schools, developing protocols and guidebooks with preschool and primary education professionals. In addition, UNICEF supported Government to strengthen children with disabilities data by developing a comprehensive ECD database.
Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation

Human rights underpin all that UNICEF does and are central to the logic of UNICEF Macedonia’s programme, which focuses on the rights of the most vulnerable and excluded children in the country: children with disabilities, child victims of violence, marginalized Roma children and migrant children.

In 2015, UNICEF supported preparation of a case study on child marriage – a practice often characterized as “tradition” among young Roma. Child marriage was analysed through a legal prism as a practice that violates children’s rights. Finalized in 2016, the study puts forward a set of specific changes to Family Law, the Criminal Code and the Law on Secondary Education. UNICEF provided support to the Roma NGO that authored the study to organize six public discussions attended both by members of the Roma community, as primary right holders, and representatives from local institutions as duty bearers. The discussions served as a platform to exchange opinions and explore actions necessary to address child marriages and the resulting cycle of poverty, gender-based violence (GBV) and abandonment of education.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) articulates a progressive approach to the rights of persons with disabilities, highlighting that

“…interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

Its implementation implies a shift from a charity/medical model to a human rights-based model of disability assessment. UNICEF supported the formal translation of the ICF to Macedonian, as a tool to operationalize the Convention’s definitions and ensure their usability in the health, social and education sectors. The ICF translation will be published in May 2017.

Moreover, UNICEF initiated two partnerships that seek to strengthen the capacities of organizations of disabled persons in data collection and monitoring of CRPD implementation, as well as the Ombudsman’s Office capacity to approach and analyse the situation of children with disabilities in a holistic manner, identifying needs and priorities for improving their inclusion.

Finally, as a part of the UN Human Rights Thematic Group, UNICEF contributed periodically to joint submissions for key international human rights instruments.

Gender Equality

The key gender equality related issues in the 2016-2020 Programme are early child marriage, children with disabilities, access to services for excluded communities and prevention of violence.

According to the most recent data (from the 2011 multiple indicator cluster survey -- MICS) there are significant differences in the rate of early marriage between Roma communities (22 per cent) and the general population (4 per cent) for women aged 15-to-19. To address this,
capacity development activities were launched for 12 RHMs to enable them to educate Roma children on prevention of child marriages. The activity was supported by UNICEF in partnership with UNFPA, the NGO Health Education and Research Association (HERA) and the MoH.

The NGO Roma SOS completed a case study, “The Gray Area between Tradition and Children's Rights”, an analysis of child marriage as a violation of children's rights. This led to recommendations for specific changes to the Family Law, Criminal Code and the Law on Secondary Education, which will be presented to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

Under the Regional EU-UNICEF project on protecting children from violence and promoting social inclusion of children with disabilities (2016-2018), development of a database was initiated to monitor the situation of VAC. Assessment of current practices in data collection by local institutions was conducted as a basis for the developing indicators and improved monitoring of VAC by institutions, CSOs and the Ombudsman and evidence-based, gender-sensitive policy development.

Gender mainstreaming in emergency focused on development of inter-agency SOPs describing procedures, roles and responsibilities for actors involved in prevention of and response to gender-based violence, as well as minimum procedures for prevention and response to the violence from the respective sectors (health, psychosocial, legal/justice and security). Forty-six frontline workers were trained in referral and SOPs, and 12 social workers were engaged at the transit centres to facilitate social protection of the most vulnerable and individual case management.

Environmental Sustainability

As in previous years, UNICEF Macedonia had no activities specifically targeting environmental sustainability in its regular programming. This sector has not yet been assessed nor prioritized in the country programme.

However, environmental resilience has figured modestly in emergency programme response. As populations moved through the country, sanitation and hygiene issues were a concern, but they became even more urgent as pockets of population remained for a longer term in transit and asylum centres. A WASH consultant was contracted in May 2016 to assess the needs for water supply, sanitation and hygiene facilities at Tabanovce transit centre. Since the number of refugees and migrants accommodated in the Transit Centre (709) in May 2016 was considerably greater than its actual capacity (500), a WASH assessment was needed to identify key needs and priorities. The assessment was done in accordance to SPHERE standards and served as a guiding document to all organizations for further WASH activities. Solid waste management was organized for one month (March-April), following the border closure, when approximately 360 people remained blocked between Tabanovce and the Serbian border. The need was identified during rapid needs assessment performed by UNICEF emergency staff on 15 March. As well, UNICEF supported construction of a path to one of the septic tanks at the transit centre that was unreachable, facilitating access to this important sanitation facility.

With DFID support, a toilet and sanitation block was constructed at Vinojug transit centre, to complement WASH activities already launched by other humanitarian agencies. Finally, to provide protection from harsh weather conditions and maintain personal hygiene, 21,212 children and women received essential clothing and other basic supplies.
Internally, UNICEF continued greening efforts, seeking energy efficiency and minimization of paper and other wastage, promoting an eco-friendly environment.

**Effective Leadership**

Office management and leadership continued to be strong, with monthly meetings of the country management team (CMT), weekly "stand up meetings" including all staff, and weekly senior management meetings to address key issues in a timely fashion. Despite major changes of office management through the course of the year – retirement of the Deputy Representative in July with replacement only arriving in late October, and retirement of the Representative in November – office management and governance continued well.

In response to audit recommendations, several risk-tracking mechanisms were embedded in the meeting agendas of both the country management team and the monthly programme management, including: management indicators; status of funding, expenditures and direct cash transfers; staff association issues; evaluation and management response update; and review of field trips, including programmatic trips, filing of reports and follow-up of recommendations. Annual leave balances were monitored with staff encouraged to take leave on a regular basis. The Office regularly tested and updates compliance with security regulations, the warden system and the business continuity plan.

Finally, as a part of annual management planning, overall risk assessment was carried out, with identification of key new risks for the year. The comprehensive assessment identified process vulnerabilities, which were addressed through planning and tracked in regular CMT meetings (as above), as well as several potentially greater risk areas, including: the occurrence of an earthquake, political volatility and changes in the ongoing refugee and migrant crisis. All three high-risk areas were tracked on a continual basis, and mitigation measures implemented as required.

**Financial Resources Management**

Monthly country management team (CMT) meetings and InSight dashboard reports were regularly used to monitor contribution management, as well as office performance on various indicators.

Fund utilization reports by output and outcome as well as by source of funding and expiry date were presented and discussed at CMT meetings, and the Office was in compliance with regional targets throughout the year. UNICEF Macedonia successfully transitioned its ‘in-scope’ transaction processing to the Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC) in April, while at the same time maintaining an optimal utilization rate on all available funds at year-end.

The Office continued with the good practice of maintaining no outstanding direct cash transfers (DCTs) over six months throughout the year and met the deadlines set by HQ related to interim and year-end closure of accounts. Bank reconciliations were completed within the monthly schedules and processing of transactions was completed with no delays.

As part of the 2016 harmonized approach to cash transactions (HACT) assurance plan, the Office completed as planned: two micro-assessments, one audit, four of five spot-check visits (one in progress), and all programme visits in line with the HACT framework.

**Fundraising and Donor Relations**

UNICEF in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia started a new country programme 2016-2020. The current board-approved ceiling for programme funding is US$13,370,000. As of 31 December, a total of US$3,674,477 was available, leaving a gap of US$9,695,523.
A new fundraising strategy was developed in response to the ongoing decline in bilateral donors in the country and new focus on regional/cross-border funding opportunities – including regional EU IPA, USAID and global UNICEF thematic funds.

UNICEF’s continued openness to engaging with the private sector resulted in a new pledge of US$42,278 from the local Telecom Foundation for Macedonia, plus a subsequent additional US$100,000 from German Telecom and UNICEF’s German national committee.

Four donor reports were submitted in 2016: one to Foundation Telecom for Macedonia, another to the Austrian Development Agency, and two related to emergency – one thematic and one to key donor European Commission for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO). Contributions were also made to regional emergency reporting. All reports underwent a thorough internal review for quality assurance. The report for Foundation Telecom for Macedonia was also included in the regional quality assurance mechanism.

Current proposals in the pipeline include US$580,000 to the WeProtect Global VAC fund – on protection from on-line child sexual abuse, and US$67,500 to USAID’s regional envelope for new studies on iodine deficiency and micronutrients. To support education in emergency activities, UNICEF submitted two concept notes; one to Council of Europe Development Bank (US$158,542) and one to the French National Committee (US$211,390). Additional efforts will be made in 2017 to explore new opportunities to support key issue areas in the country programme.

**Evaluation and Research**

The integrated monitoring and implementation plan for 2016 included six initiatives – four evaluations and two research efforts – which were entered in PRIME and regularly monitored and updated. Due to a prolonged and more complex partner selection process, the commencement of two activities implemented within the regional EU-UNICEF project was somewhat delayed. By year-end implementation was back on track. Both activities focus on child victims of violence, for whom data is scarce and often quite fragmented. The results are expected to inform programme planning for 2017.

The child protection programme evaluation was finalized and a management response was prepared. Key recommendations, such as more emphasis on prevention, strengthening inter-sectoral coordination among child protection authorities and enhancing the capacity of social workers were incorporated into ongoing and planned activities.

Improvement of social services, in particular, was the subject of an assessment related to the delivery of continuous professional development activities for social protection professionals, and will be targeted with upcoming capacity development initiatives for CSW staff.

Finalization of the RHM programme evaluation is expected shortly. Findings and recommendations will be incorporated within broader Roma health initiatives. Given the unique nature of RHM advice and services provided to a highly disadvantaged group of people in their own homes, the evaluation seeks to demonstrate the benefits of the programme and contribute to a mobilization of additional funding for its continuation and expansion.

**Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings**

The administrative human resources assistant, who also covered the supply component, resigned in March after almost two years on special leave without pay that expired 30 April 2016. The Office decided to continue with the previous years’ practice of not hiring a
temporary replacement. Instead, the work was distributed among existing staff, generating savings of US$47,000 against the institutional budget.

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

**Supply Management**

UNICEF Macedonia had a small supply component, mainly for the emergency-related activities during the second year of response to the country’s migrants. Total emergency funds utilized in 2016 were US$1,872,941, of which US$161,117 was spent on supply/services: US$61,216 on summer clothing/shoes, language books, school bags, hygiene items, food supplements (multi-nutrient powder and PlumpyNut); US$2,567 was used for equipping the information desk at the Vinojug transit centre (at the country’s southern border) as well as for purchasing mosquito screens that were mounted on the containers where migrants live at Vinojug and Tabanovce transit centres; and a US$87,334 contribution to construction works for two children’s playgrounds and one soccer field, toilets at Vinojug and draining / sewage system for Tabanovce. Finally, US$10,000 was spent on car rental for daily field visits by the emergency coordinator.

UNICEF continued the good practice of direct delivery of goods by suppliers to implementing partners, hence did not need to maintain a warehouse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FYR Macedonia</th>
<th>Value of all supply input (goods and services, in US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme supplies</td>
<td>63,783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational supplies</td>
<td>10,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>111,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme construction</td>
<td>87,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL SUPPLY VALUE 2016</strong></td>
<td><strong>272,937</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Security for Staff and Premises**

Due to the migrant and refugee crisis that the country faced in 2016, the Office increased its human resources, which resulted in a need for additional office space. UNICEF rented one additional floor in the same building as its existing premises. The additional floor was secured by connecting it to the main alarm system in the building and using security devices for entering the floor.

Newly arrived personnel (stand-by partners and consultants) attended security briefings provided by the UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS), as well as completing the online basic and advanced security trainings.

Security advisories and related information from UNDSS were regularly shared with all staff. The staff list was updated regularly and shared with UNDSS. The agency warden system was in place, and a building evacuation drill was conducted as well as regular monthly radio checks.
Three of the four newly recruited staff attended the first aid training organized by UNDSS and conducted by the Red Cross.

**Human Resources**

In January 2016, the executive assistant was appointed as human resources focal point, supporting all recruitment processes. To ensure updated competencies for these tasks, she completed talent management system (TMS) training in February 2016.

The Office went through several separation processes during 2016: the child protection officer and the hr/admin assistant in the first part of the year, due to the incumbents’ moves to new situations, and the retirement of both the Deputy Representative (July) and the Representative (November). At the same time UNICEF managed several recruitments: a new child rights monitoring specialist, a child protection officer and programme assistant. The 2016 recruitments of the child protection officer and programme assistant were both run in the talent management system. All recruitments were completed in less than 90 days. A new Deputy Representative was also recruited and took up the assignment in October.

UNICEF Macedonia supported two staff members on stretch assignments: the social protection specialist to HQ’s Programme Division for three months (a consultant provided support to the office during this period) and the executive assistant/hr focal point to UNICEF Moldova for three weeks. Reciprocally, as a part of support to the migrant crisis, the UNICEF Kyrgyzstan health and nutrition officer came to Skopje on a development assignment.

During the year three joint consultative committee meetings took place, and appropriate actions were taken to address all issues discussed. The Office organized a retreat with all staff and stand by partners in June 2016. The agenda included: ethics, the new TMS and Achieve, importance of using the social media in everyday work, HACT and funding authorization and certificate of expenditure (FACE) procedures, prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation.

UNICEF continued to support a culture of continuous discussion between supervisors and supervisees, and work-life balance for all staff.

**Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology**

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) tools continued to contribute to office efficiency and effectiveness, with a noticeable increase in the use of Office 365. File sharing, cloud-based document storage and increased online meetings are a part of everyday business, supporting UNICEF’s overall performance.

Access to ICT resources was further improved by providing smartphones to most staff, extending the reach of the Office 365 remotely. The mobile data connectivity was upgraded to 4G. All these improvements gave staff the ability to fully engage in activities that pertain to the CP at any times, whether in the office or the field.

To meet the needs of emergency staff (standby partners and consultants), a team site was created for easy and fast exchange of data, files and schedule of travel plans. As the advantages of having the team site became clear, the Office began preparations for creating a new site to assist with everyday office activities. The ICT assistant went through intensive, self-paced training for SharePoint administration. The staff was also introduced to the new platform and its possibilities and useful features. This was in response to strong recommendations from HQ to use SharePoint instead of local file storages to reduce the local IT hardware and software resource footprint.
New laptops were procured in accordance with the latest UNICEF standard for hardware requirements. Obsolete laptops were donated to programme partners.

As part of the business continuity plan and in line with other UNICEF standards, the ICT assistant attended emergency telecom training in Budapest 2016, and upon successful completion was granted with a basic responder in emergency certificate.

UNICEF Macedonia is present on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. All social media content and collaboration services continued to grow during this year, with significant increases in followers and active interaction with partners and society.

Programme Components from RAM

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 The identity, direction and well-being of UNICEF and staff are managed efficiently and effectively to enable the achievement of results for children in the country.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
This outcome is focused on effective and efficient processing and implementation of activities, enabling smooth functioning of the Office. Key activities, as described for each output below, include human and financial resources and administrative/operational tasks to support office functioning, including provision of supplies, services and knowledge required to implement programme activities. Staff under this outcome include: Representative, operations manager, ICT assistant, finance and accounts assistant, executive secretary, administrative/human resource assistant and a driver. Funds allocated under this outcome are for the non-staff costs category; staff costs are maintained at HQ level.

OUTPUT 1 Governance and Systems exist to support the direction of country operations

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Office governance and management systems continued to function effectively, with coordination and monitoring of key performance indicators and management priorities through monthly CMT meetings and programme and operations meetings. Staff issues, if any, were also discussed and resolved through quarterly JCC meetings.

Following some staffing changes during the year, standing committee terms of reference and membership were revised and adapted. The business continuity plan and table of authority were reviewed and shared regularly.

OUTPUT 2 Stewardship of Financial Resources creates the conditions to pursue country operations

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Monthly CMT meetings and InSight dashboard reports were used to monitor contribution management and office performance indicators. The Office used VISION and InSight tools, such as the Admin/Finance Dashboard, performance management reports and electronically generated reports for regular monitoring of financial and other assets. UNICEF Macedonia’s good practise of no outstanding DCTs over six months was maintained throughout the year, and interim and year-end financial closures were completed on time.

Transition of finance and MDM functions to the Global Shared Services Centre in Budapest
was successfully completed.

HACT implementation continued, with effective use of the FACE form for all transactions. The Office conducted 19 programme visits, four spot-checks, one audit and two micro-assessments as part of the assurance activity plan.

OUTPUT 3 Human resources have the capacities, skills, morale and motivation to support country operations

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF Macedonia continued to apply competency-based criteria for recruitment, and three recruitments were completed and used to fill two vacancies. The Office went through three separations and one retirement. UNICEF used the good practice of supporting staff to apply for development assignments (one national officer and one general staff member used opportunities in 2016).

The Office has a culture of continuous and cordial discussion between supervisors and supervisees, which is both supported and appreciated by all staff. This year the office retreat was focused on: ethics, the new talent management system and Achieve, importance of using social media in everyday work, HACT and FACE, and prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation.

The transition to GSSC Budapest was successfully completed.

OUTCOME 2 Country programmes are efficiently designed, coordinated, managed and supported to meet quality programming standards in achieving results for children

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Programme effectiveness strives to consolidate actions that support programme results, strengthening cohesion, accountability and cross-programme integration, through a results-based foundation.

Work in this broad area is intended to: coordinate strategic vision and impact across programme areas in a more robust and systematic way; link cross-cutting and multi-sectoral programme themes; build more robust cross-programme communication and feed learning into advocacy work; and strengthen consistent mainstreaming of programme-wide concerns, such as gender, strategic coordination of partner relationships and capacity-strengthening initiatives.

OUTPUT 1 External Relations

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Programme effectiveness is a nexus for cross-cutting management and support functions. Management and coordination of the CP progressed as planned in 2016, with work aimed to systematically promote a strategic vision and impact across programme areas.

Focus was maintained on cross cutting collaboration and the commitment to regional priorities. This was combined with consistent mainstreaming of programme-wide concerns such as gender; strategic coordination of partner relationships and capacity strengthening initiatives.

The programme was designed with a cross-sectoral approach, mainstreaming integrated work to support children with disabilities, Roma children and child victims of violence across the different programme components. Work also continued in response to the refugee and
migrant crisis, with all sectors working together to converge action at transit centres and the asylum centre and safe house, with a focus on returning normalcy to children affected by the crisis. Within this work, efforts were made to ensure that emergency interventions are well coordinated with UNICEF’s development programme and contribute to long-term social sector reform.

Collaboration with partners was promoted, including Government, civil society and UN sister agencies. The joint UN programme strategy document was signed with the Government in October. UNICEF played a key role in several outcome groups, and led discussions and coordination for social inclusion.

**OUTPUT 2** UNICEF staff and partners are provided with tools, guidance and resources for effective communication on child rights issues with stakeholders.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
Tasks in this area are reported under Output 5: Communication, Advocacy and Partnerships for Children

**OUTPUT 3** Operational support to the emergency response

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
With the closure of the borders in March, UNICEF’s response effectively moved from action to support for people on the move, providing ongoing support to a fluctuating number of families and children stranded in transit centres, the asylum centre and safe house.

Earlier in the crisis, UNICEF rented additional space and purchased furniture to accommodate additional surge personnel deployed to the country. It hired three assistants on temporary appointment. Due to the increased workload, one of the drivers who was on a part-time work schedule was converted to full-time.

After six months of deployment, all standby/surge partners left, and the Office hired two national consultants - an emergency field coordinator and a child protection in emergency officer, to work in conjunction with the remaining emergency assistant. The two consultants are covering both transit centres: Gevgelija (in the south, at the border with Greece) and Tabanovce (in the north, at the border with Serbia). The consultants also cover the open centre for asylum seekers and the safe house for unaccompanied minors.

This work and staffing complement is expected to continue until June of 2017, when the ongoing situation for refugees and migrants remaining in the country will be evaluated.

**OUTPUT 4** Communications, Advocacy and Partnerships for children in emergency

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
The programme continued to consistently contribute to global, regional and national communication and advocacy efforts on the refugee and migrant crisis. UNICEF Macedonia multi-media assets framed within the global #FightUnfair, #ActofHumanity and “There Is Hope” campaigns, press releases and engagement with international media contributed to positioning children at the centre of the crisis and communicating UNICEF’s response, donor support and increasing public support.

Since the closing of the Balkan route in March, the focus of communication and advocacy efforts switched to cover UNICEF’s evolving response, meeting the needs of women and children stranded in the country. During the reporting period eight locally produced videos were published; six photo essays published on global and local channels; 12 global, regional
and local press releases issued to local media; 12 international media interviews out of Skopje or Gevgelija; six National Committee/Media/Content Gathering missions were coordinated. These activities also contributed to an increase in reach and engagement on local social media channels.

OUTPUT 5 Communication, Advocacy and Partnership for children

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Within the frame of the global communication strategy and in line with country office communication priorities, the programme used social and traditional media to reach and engage the public. Engagement around inclusion of children with disabilities, framed around #FightUnfair was consistent throughout the first half of the year; as was engagement around the refugee and migrant crisis. Promotion of a locally developed online interactive game www.detskiprava.mk contributed to an increase in new users from 66 per month to 95 per month. Global communication assets adapted for local audiences were used to engage public around online safety and #ENDViolence; “equity”; air pollution and the impact of toxic air.

UNICEF’s 70th anniversary served as an occasion to reinforce past, current and future support to protecting the most vulnerable children. Nine renowned local authors engaged in the global ‘Tiny Story’ initiative, sharing their stories on the theme ‘what I want for every child’. An exhibition of UNICEF support and selected tiny stories was held at a popular shopping mall. The event was opened with a flash mob where a choir of 70 youth performed Lennon’s “Imagine” and ToseProeski’s “This World”, a song written for UNICEF in 2004. Throughout the day, shoppers also engaged in activities to share their hopes for every child at a photo booth and by unveiling a message of hope for every child. Moviegoers at the mall’s cinema were silenced by the strong messages in videos from the “There is Hope” campaign and #ENDViolence video featuring Goodwill Ambassador David Beckham.

Overall, during the reporting period these efforts contributed to 493 local media reports that mention UNICEF (similar to the same period last year – 498 mentions). Fans on the UNICEF Facebook page increased by 53 per cent during the 12-month period (from 10,009 to 15,357 fans, or 128 per cent of the annual target); and the page reached 2,073,309 people (342 per cent of annual target) and engaged 109,805 (267 per cent of annual target). Similar results were achieved on the UNICEF Macedonia Twitter account. The number of followers increased 123 per cent (from 486 to 1,087 followers, 124 per cent of the annual target) during 2016. During the year, the account reached 389,793 people (109 per cent of annual target) and engaged 4,189 (134 per cent of annual target). While the number of followers on a new UNICEF Medium account is limited (26); the stories published reached 7,373 people and engaged 2,917 readers.

OUTCOME 3 By 2020, an increased number of young girls and boys, including Roma and children with disabilities, access and benefit from quality, integrated and inclusive health care

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Recognizing the need for reform of the health system to achieve evidence-based and equity-focused planning and sustainable financing of programmes and services that target the most marginalized children, the UNICEF CP 2016-2020 includes a broad range of activities to be implemented over the five-year period.

UNICEF research in the previous programme cycle showed that from an early age, children with disabilities face numerous barriers to inclusion; early detection and intervention services
are limited in scope and coverage; and stigma is still widespread, with only 4 per cent of the population in favour of inclusive education.

The medical model continues to be used for assessing children with disabilities, and protocols for working with these children are not in line with the CRPD. A 2014 cross-sectoral assessment using a determinant analysis highlighted the major bottlenecks and barriers to the realization of the rights of children with disabilities and their full inclusion in society: lack of long-term planning and sustainable cross-sectoral coordination of child-centred services; limited information on disabilities that is in line with standards of the CRPS, to guide policy and practice; and low awareness about disability in society.

In line with the defined outputs, the rolling work plan 2016 – 2017 for health systems-strengthening was developed and agreed with Ministry of Health (MoH), with specific activities to support country efforts to advance realization of all children’s rights, through an increased focus on the most marginalized children who are excluded from full access to health services, children with disabilities and Roma children.

Insufficient access to and utilization of early detection and intervention services and lack of systematic planning and a holistic approach towards children with disabilities are key identified areas of concern and focus. Existing policies have not been effectively implemented or budgeted, which has led to new planning for a review of existing legislation and development of standards and indicators for interdisciplinary models of services for early identification, assessment and intervention, based on international classification of functioning for children and youth (ICF-CY). In close collaboration with other sectors, advocacy activities plan to establish a technical working group that will be mandated to develop an inter-sectoral strategy on children with disabilities, a national action plan, standards for multidisciplinary model of services for early identification, assessment and intervention of children with disabilities and a shared set of indicators that can be monitored across services and systems, based on ICF-CY.

The dominant medical approach to child health and development will be addressed through advocacy for the introduction of ICF-CY in undergraduate curricula as well as specialization in paediatrics and social medicine at the Faculty of Medicine.

Important progress was achieved in defining activities for further capacity development of home visiting services, with the key objective of improving knowledge and skills on early detection, intervention and support for children with disabilities and their families. Planned impact assessment will provide recommendations for further improvement of services, providing a sustainable model of accessible and adequate community and outreach services. Development of training materials for general practitioners and family medicine specialists and training of trainers will expand this activity at another level of healthcare, thus addressing the lack of adequate staff for early identification and intervention services, as well as preventing unnecessary referrals to higher levels of healthcare.

Assistance to the MoH continued in the area of mainstreaming planning for Roma into the national health system, through the work of RHM, although the programme faces numerous challenges, mainly reduced funds, causing turnover of trained staff. The formative evaluation of the RHM programme launched in the second half of 2016 provided data on the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and impact of the programme, and will be used for advocacy purposes to support country efforts in sustainable financing of RHMs.

UNICEF’s response to meet the needs of refugee and migrant children on their route to EU countries included broad range of activities to address health, nutrition and WASH needs of people on the move and, since March, 2016, modified to reflect the needs of population stranded at two transit centres. In coordination and collaboration with national and
international partners, age-appropriate food was distributed at both transit centres and nutrition counselling was provided to mothers and pregnant and lactating women. WASH activities were also supported, to provide for proper hygiene and sanitation in transit centres.

**OUTPUT 1** Health policies targeting Roma and children with disabilities are developed, budgeted and implemented

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
Revision of existing legislation (primary and secondary) in terms of implementation and budget in the health, social and educational sectors was planned for 2016, aiming to address identified gaps and ensure a better alignment across sectors for provision of equitable access to high quality community ECD services.

Several meetings were held with the national coordinating body established by the Government to coordinate activities for people with disabilities, to ensure that UNICEF support complements national priorities. However, the unstable political situation affected lower levels of governance, causing a temporary suspension of activities.

Consultations were launched with the Faculty of Medicine in Skopje, the highest tertiary education institution in the country, to incorporate ICF-CY into undergraduate studies, paediatrics and social medicine specializations and the continuing medical education curricula. The main goal of this activity is to sensitize current and future health professionals about the multi-sectoral nature of disability; studying disability as a social disease, not individualizing it, but accounting for social barriers, as well. In the existing curricula, disability is clearly medicalized, causing individuals with disabilities to be categorized as “sick” and placed under the jurisdiction of the medical establishment and medical professionals.

In addition, although the medical professions are uniquely positioned to promote empowerment of people with disabilities as active partners in their own health care, at present the dominant medical perception of disability causes diagnosis, measurement and treatment of disability to contribute to stigmatization and promote social, political and economic inequality. Replacing the biomedical model of disability with a social model that prioritizes disease/health care management, wellness and prevention of further disability is envisaged to facilitate the empowerment process. This activity, complemented by training for healthcare professionals described under Output#2 (patronage nurses, general and family medicine practitioners) is aimed at creating enabling environment for children with disabilities and their families.

Planned activities complement other UNICEF sector efforts, such as translation of ICF-CY under social protection and capacity building of various professionals that work with children with disabilities under child protection, as well a project run by University Paediatric Clinic for development of a software for disability assessment. The overarching goal is to make ICF-CY a common language for all disciplines and sectors to describe health and health-related states, in order to improve communication between different users, such as health care workers, social workers, researchers, policy-makers and the public, including people with disabilities.

**OUTPUT 2** Primary health care providers have increased knowledge and skills related to child health, nutrition and development, including on early detection and intervention for children with disabilities
Analytical Statement of Progress:
The Macedonian Association of Nurses and Midwives continued to be a major partner, promoting home visiting services and improving interdisciplinary networking with nurses, paediatricians and gynaecologists. The ‘Learning Together’ programme consists of nine modules and aims to build capacity among patronage nurses to support children’s potential to learn and develop, increasing nurses’ knowledge of children’s physical, social, cognitive and emotional development, and thus enabling them to identify children with developmental difficulties and make appropriate referrals. At the same time, trained nurses will provide parents with accurate information on developmental difficulties and strategies to promote the child’s development and well-being, offer emotional support to parents and guide them to local health and social services. Additionally, the nurses will liaise with clinicians and local services to encourage them to support families, and maintain records of family needs and outcomes achieved. Activities reached 100 per cent of the current patronage nurse workforce.

A draft methodology was developed in collaboration with Ulster University, UK, to assess the impact of training on patronage nurses, families, and community health policies and practices. The evaluation is scheduled to take place in the second quarter of 2017, and will allow strengthening of good practises as well as identification of gaps in the programme that could be addressed through this partnership.

A parenting education booklet in both Macedonian and Albanian languages was developed and will be piloted through distribution of 10,000 copies in urban, rural and marginalized communities. If successful, the booklet will be rolled out nationwide for distribution by patronage nurses to every mother of a new-born baby, while still in the delivery ward. The booklet is written in a simple, comprehensive manner, enabling progress monitoring of each child.

Work was also started with the Macedonian Association of General Practitioners and Family Medicine Specialists, to expand training in early recognition of children with developmental difficulties for health professionals at the primary health care level, as well as for health professionals at higher level of healthcare that are also in direct and permanent contact with families, creating an enabling environment by combining activities at pre-service and in-service levels. Training materials are under development and the first training of trainers is scheduled for the first quarter of 2017.

Partnership with the Macedonian Association of Nurses and Midwives also included activities related to health and nutrition of refugee and migrant children. In June, 20 patronage nurses and 20 non-medical staff were trained in SOPs for infant and young child feeding in emergencies (IYCF-E), recognition of danger signs in children and appropriate referral to health services. Patronage nurses act as health and nutrition counsellors at child-friendly services established by UNICEF, operated by implementing partners at two transit centres, complementing existing healthcare activities. Being involved in the development of SOPs on IYCF-E, as well as training and actual implementation, provided a sustainable base of front-line health professionals that can be engaged during future emergencies.

OUTPUT 3 Model of integrated outreach services for Roma tested and scaled up

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Data on the health status of Roma in Macedonia show that this population suffers from a lower health status, for several reasons. Their living conditions, often sub-standard, make them susceptible to health hazards and those without personal documents have difficulties accessing medical services (9 per cent have no health insurance, UNICEF, 2015). According to NGO reports, Roma are frequently victims of prejudice or neglect by healthcare professionals and social workers.
A small-scale funding agreement was signed with the NGO HERA, to support country efforts to sustain the RHM programme. At present, RHM are represented in 12 municipalities with the highest aggregation of Roma, providing assistance in access to the health, social and education sectors. This component enables about 10,000 children and their families in municipalities with the highest density of Roma to benefit from an integrated model of health, social and ECD services.

Training materials were developed and training completed for data collection and reporting, as well as early detection of children with disabilities.

In addition to the training, a needs assessment for establishing local inter-sectoral teams to improve access to services for Roma children was carried out. The draft report provides recommendations on the specific composition of these teams, aimed to facilitate Roma children's access to mainstream services.

A formative evaluation of the work of RHM was performed to assess the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and impact of the programme. The results provide an evidence base for advocacy activities aimed at maintaining the sustainability of the programme, in addition to recommended changes and future activities.

A national advocacy conference was jointly organized with UNFPA in December, 2016, aimed at presenting the results of the achievements and evaluation of the RHM programme, an overview of the situation in the country concerning access to justice and health care for the Roma, as well as identification of recommendations for improving the health status of the Roma population and the potential for future cooperation between state institutions and civil society. Conclusions from the conference were shared with all stakeholders and will be used for future advocacy activities.

The report from the survey on bottlenecks in access to health care for Roma children and families completed in 2015 was finalized, designed and is available on UNICEF Macedonia website. The report is complemented by 10-page policy brief and will be widely shared with all stakeholders. Recommendations verified and defined through a consultation process with relevant stakeholders will serve as the basis for defining future activities for improved access to health care for Roma children.

**OUTPUT 4** The nutritional and health status of girls, boys and women is protected from the impact of the refugees and migrant crisis

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
The situation of refugees and migrants transiting the country has changed significantly from the beginning of the year to the end, with a decrease in absolute numbers and movement, but an increase in dependence on social services, including health and nutrition services.

UNICEF Macedonia has been involved in providing age-appropriate food for babies and children aged under five years since the beginning of the refugee and migrant crisis in 2015, in collaboration with MoLSP and implementing partners. Since the border closure on 8 March, when transits centres became host to a static, rather than transiting, population, the composition of food rations for children was revised to better meet nutritional needs. Children received semi-solid complementary food, cereals, porridge, fruits and vegetables. UNICEF also procured an additional 5,000 boxes of micronutrient powder and 120 boxes of Plumpy Sup to complement the feeding of refugee and migrant children and pregnant and lactating women at both transit centres.
In March UNICEF, in coordination with the MoH and humanitarian partners, launched activities to better coordinate the provision of health and nutrition services for refugee and migrant children at the two transit centres. This involved collaboration with the National Breastfeeding Council, the Institute of Public Health, the Crisis Management Centre and the Association of Patronage Nurses. The aim of this collaboration was to jointly tackle issues related to IYCF and child survival in emergencies, following the border closure and transformation of transit centres into longer-term accommodation facilities. A technical working group was established by the Minister of Health to develop an SOP on IYCF and child survival in emergencies, considering the current situation and possible scenarios. This is the first document of its type, and can be used in other emergencies. Training was conducted for 20 non-medical staff and 20 patronage nurses in June, resulting in engagement of eight nurses capable of addressing child nutrition and health at transit centres in Gevgelija and Tabanovce.

Starting in July, in cooperation with implementing partners, UNICEF supported mothers to continue breastfeeding, provide age-appropriate food to children six-to-59 months, recognize danger signs and make appropriate referrals to health services. A nutritional status assessment was performed in September, resulting in recommendations for daily calorie intake and preparation of daily menus for children and adults. Contracts with existing partners will be extended through the first half of 2017, with activities adjusted according to the needs of the stranded population at both transit centres (such as provision of culturally appropriate food).

**OUTPUT 5** Girls, boys and women have protected and reliable access to sufficient, safe water and sanitation and hygiene facilities

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
In January 2016 UNICEF launched WASH activities at the transit centres by delivering a submersible pump and pressure vessel to TC Tabanovce to provide a back-up water supply, this equipment is the only water supply to the centre. The walls and doors of the sanitation block were completed and a work on a seepage bed for the septic tank was started. Within the transit centre a second sanitation block near the train departure area was completed, and UNICEF undertook advocacy for improving the sanitation facilities, working with UNHCR’s regional WASH specialist.

One of the toilets in the child-friendly space in Tabanovce is being altered to serve as a shower room for children. Following the border closure, UNICEF and its partners were involved in activities to improve solid waste collection in and outside the transit centre at Tabanovce over a one-month period. These activities facilitated access to the mobile toilets servicing the population stranded at the Serbian border(where muddy water was mixing with toilet water) by creating a safe walkway. In April, a WASH assessment was conducted to provide a basis for all further WASH activities. The assessment was carried out by a local expert and in accordance with SPHERE standards. The assessment served as a guiding document for all organizations working on WASH at the transit centre. In that context, UNICEF and UNHCR supported construction of a drainage system at the transit centre and improvement of the water supply. As of December 2016, all major infrastructure improvements recommended by the assessment had been completed.

**OUTCOME 4** By 2020, an increased number of marginalized boys and girls are included in quality, inclusive and multicultural early learning and education
Analytical Statement of Progress:
With a strong focus on inclusive education, UNICEF worked closely with the MoLSP and MoES in 2016 to ensure that inclusive ECE and education practices are mainstreamed in everyday activities at kindergartens and primary schools. The programme provided capacity building of staff and supported the establishment of inclusive teams to ensure inclusive, quality learning for children with disabilities. The activities in inclusive education were planned for and implemented in a highly participatory manner, firmly based in the local culture and context, using locally available resources. In this regard, teacher manuals were developed by ECD and education experts, with support from staff in the preschool and elementary schools, and were being piloted in late 2016. Furthermore, to increase positive attitudes of ECD and primary education teachers toward inclusivity, mentoring and peer support visits were organized at both kindergartens and primary schools. In 2017 UNICEF plans to expand the network of inclusive schools to include additional primary schools.

To evaluate and sustain inclusive education practices at schools, cooperation was established with the State Education Inspectorate in 2016. This institution is responsible for evaluating the quality of education provided in schools, and thus represents an important part of the country’s overall quality assurance system. For this purpose, capacity in inclusive education of approximately one-third of the state education inspectors was strengthened. In the long run, this activity will ensure effective evaluation of inclusive practices being implemented in schools.

Expanding the number of children aged three-to-five enrolled in ECD is one of the main Government priorities, outlined in the new education strategy (2016-2020). In 2016, UNICEF supported expanding the network of ECE providers in the country by opening two new ECD centres. Capacity was developed among the educators in the new ECD centres to implement early learning and development standards (ELDS) and maintain pedagogical record-keeping. In the coming year, UNICEF will continue expanding the network by opening new ECD centres in the rural and marginalized parts of the country, with funds received from local Telekom and German Telecom, in cooperation with the UNICEF German national committee.

Significant progress was achieved in the area of strengthening the capacities of the MLSP for data collection and analysis. During 2016 roll out of the ECD database was completed and analytical reports were designed. This facilitated MLSP access to the accurate data necessary for making informed decisions and adopting policies to further strengthen the ECD sector in the country. It is expected that the MLSP will formally take over the database at the beginning of 2017.

Involving parents is an important principle of quality inclusive education. Therefore, the programme focused on creating a basis for strengthening the relationship between families of children with disabilities and the schools, as an important precondition for creating environments that are prepared to address diversity and stimulate the development and social inclusion of children with disabilities. In this regard, parents of children with disabilities were provided an opportunity to attend a programme on psychosocial support. In addition, high school and university students from the municipality of Bitola were trained as volunteers to support families of children with disabilities in this municipality. UNICEF plans to continue support to parents of children with disabilities in 2017 by strengthening the capacities of service providers to offer psychosocial support and enabled parents to access these services.

The sub-regional ‘Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion for Roma Children through Early Childhood Development and Education’ project supported by the ADA was completed, and appears to have achieved the planned results. An external evaluation of the project commenced in November; the final report is due in March 2017.
In line with the disability communication strategy developed in 2015, the programme made progress in designing an integrated communication initiative to continue to build momentum for social change to support inclusion and participation of children with disabilities.

Providing non-formal ECD and education to refugee and migrant children was also the focus of programming this year. After closing the Balkan route in March, more than 200 migrant and refugee children were stranded at two transit centres, unable to access education. Through focused non-formal education interventions, these children had the opportunity to attend a pre-integration education programme that focused on preparing children for enrolment in regular schools. In 2017 UNICEF plans to work with Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) and MLSP to integrate the affected refugee and migrant children in early learning activities and in regular schools, restoring their right to education and development.

**OUTPUT 1**

Mechanisms for support and quality assurance to ensure inclusion of the most marginalized children are strengthened

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

UNICEF continued to support the expansion of the ECE providers’ network by opening two new ECD centres, with ongoing work to open one more ECD centre in a rural municipality affected by the refugee and migrant crises. This provided an opportunity for 150 children age three-to-six from rural and disadvantaged areas to access quality early learning and development programmes. One of the centres is located in the Roma community Trizla in Prijepolje and is part of the sub-regional Roma inclusion project supported by the ADA. This was the only ECD centre pending under the ADA project, and its establishment contributed to achieving the project goals. The four educators engaged at the two newly established ECD centres received training and mentoring in ELDS implementation and pedagogical record-keeping, which enabled them to fully implement the national ECD curricula in line with guidelines adopted by the MLSP. In 2017 UNICEF plans to open as many as 10 new ECD centres in rural communities, creating access to quality early learning for socially disadvantaged children aged three-to-six. The new ECD teachers will be provided with appropriate training, while teachers at existing centres will continue to receive peer support and mentoring visits from ECD experts. To improve the quality of early learning, UNICEF will expand cooperation with the State Education Inspectorate on developing instruments and protocols for external evaluation of preschools.

A significant milestone was achieved in strengthening the capacities of the MLSP for data collection and analysis. Roll-out of the ECD database was completed, covering all public and private kindergartens and ECD centres. All ECD service providers are now using the ECD database for recording and storing data, and the MLSP has access to updated and reliable data on ECD. In addition, analytical reports based on the criteria and requirements set out by MLSP were designed, tested and finalized based on feedback, comments and suggestions. An external company was hired to carry out acceptance testing and testing of all key functionalities of the database. The report from the testing indicated areas for improvement, which need to be addressed before formally handing over the database to MLSP at the beginning of next year.

The database is comprehensive and includes disaggregated data on ECD coverage by children’s age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background and disability, as well as data on quality, based on ELDS. It is expected that this will be a crucial instrument for improving the ECD financial model and adopting a fair “per-child” financial formula that, in the long run, will provide universal access to ECE for the three-to-six age group. The database will allow MLSP staff to generate up-to-date reports on different aspects of ECE that can be used for monitoring and trend analysis, and contribute to making informed decisions to further strengthen the ECD sector.
OUTPUT 2 Quality, inclusive and multicultural early learning practices are established and inform policy reforms and cross-sectoral cooperation

Analytical Statement of Progress:
In line with the goals outlined in the two-year rolling work plan agreed with MLSP, support to the network of 10 inclusive kindergartens to strengthen capacities to work with children with disabilities continued in 2016. Complementary to the three training sessions that teachers from these kindergartens received in 2015, in 2016 they were supported to establish inclusive teams composed of a pedagogue, special educator and ECD teachers. The inclusive teams were provided with practical tools and guidance for improving their everyday work with children with disabilities to improve their functioning. Five representatives per kindergarten (director, teachers and support services) attended two two-day training sessions and received on-the-job support and guidance related to establishing inclusive teams and implementing strategies to support child functioning. The inclusive teams are an essential mechanism for ensuring that inclusive ECE practices are adequately implemented, disseminated and mainstreamed in everyday activities at the kindergartens. The experience of implementing inclusive ECE practices in the 10 pilot kindergartens will be documented and used to test some tools and forms, which will then be scaled up to all kindergartens.

Based on the most recent MLSP administrative data, the number of children with disabilities enrolled in the regular kindergartens is gradually increasing. This is the reason for a growing demand from kindergartens to receive support for strengthening their inclusive ECE practices and for establishing mechanisms to support early learning and development of children with disabilities. To address this need, in 2016 UNICEF expanded the network of inclusive kindergartens to 10 new kindergartens that participated in training and mentoring sessions, and will continue support them in 2017. The criteria for selection of the new kindergartens was the number of children with disabilities enrolled. During 2016 staff at the 10 new kindergartens were exposed to the first three training modules on inclusive ECE through an in-service training programme that links ELDS and the international classification of functioning, disability and health.

In addition to ongoing capacity-building activities, UNICEF also focused in 2016 on establishing regional learning teams, as a mechanism for sharing good practices and providing ECE teachers with additional opportunities for learning, based on the positive example and lessons learnt from the early numeracy and literacy programme. The learning teams consist of experienced teachers from the first group of inclusive kindergartens, representatives from the newly included inclusive kindergartens and experts. As a professional networking mechanism, the teams will offer teachers an opportunity to deepen their professional competencies in the area of inclusive ECE and to receive extra support as they change their practice. In 2017, the programme will continue to support regional learning teams and will also focus on establishing the missing link between preschool and primary school.

OUTPUT 3 Capacities and mechanisms for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of inclusion in quality, inclusive and multicultural education are upgraded

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Following the completion of training for the early numeracy and literacy programme to all early grade teachers in 2015, the programme shifted, focusing on sustainability of interventions and results achieved. The Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) continued to conduct in-school visits to support the teacher certification and programme implementation. Regional learning teams continued to function as a platform for teachers to share knowledge and evidence on programme effectiveness and impact on student learning. In 2016, eight learning teams conducted regular meetings allowing 107 teachers from 50
schools to share challenges and best practices. In addition, to strengthen the capacity of school support services, 557 school pedagogues and psychologists were trained in conducting action research, enabling them to identify issues and propose improvement of educational practices.

To build the capacities of early grade teachers in numeracy instruction, in 2016 the BDE received UNICEF support to develop a manual and teacher training programme for enriching the ‘thinking mathematics’ programme, with practical examples of diverse approaches to solving math problems. This will further embed the thinking mathematics concepts and techniques in the new Cambridge curriculum. In 2016, training was provided to 30 per cent of all early grade teachers in the country, who assessed them as very useful. In 2017 UNICEF will continue to support capacity building of early grade teachers in numeracy instruction, in cooperation with the BDE.

An external evaluation of the UNICEF-supported early literacy and numeracy programme commenced in November. The consulting team built on stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions and in-class observations. In the first quarter of 2017 the results of the field work will be analysed and the final evaluation report presented. Evaluation results will inform national policies and further strengthen early literacy and numeracy instruction.

The Parent Resource Centre continued to provide support to families of children with disabilities. This organization, led and managed by parents, targets parents and families of children with disabilities and aims to function as an umbrella organization for all children with disabilities, expanding its geographical reach and scope of its activities. In 2016, it organized 25 awareness events for parents of children with disabilities, including a campaign ‘With respect’, promoting respect for persons with disabilities, rolled out in six cities. The group also conducted three mediation activities to support inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools and mobilized a group of 10 experienced teachers to mentor their peers. Handbooks for inclusive education for teachers and volunteers were also developed.

Psychological support to parents of children with disabilities, initiated last year, also continued. Over 70 parents attended a three-day programme on psychosocial support, which included a wealth of practical exercises that participants can apply to manage trauma and stress and maintain a functional and supportive family. Furthermore, 35 high school and university students from the municipality of Bitola were trained as volunteers to support more than 100 families of children with disabilities in this municipality. UNICEF plans to build on this work in 2017.

**OUTPUT 4** Quality, inclusive, multicultural educational practices and models of protective environment inform policy reforms and cross-sectoral cooperation

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
Student assessment as a tool for informing teaching practices and improving learning was identified as a weakness by most teachers. Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction, providing explicit feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students’ achievement. The method is especially effective for students with disabilities or learning difficulties that require differentiated instructional approaches. In 2015 UNICEF supported the BDE to develop a training programme, training-of-trainers and teacher’s manual on formative assessment, including for students with learning difficulties. In the first half of 2016 this training was provided to approximately 30 per cent of all early grade teachers in the country. In line with the two-year rolling work plan, the training will be rolled out to all early grade teachers by the end of 2017.

The BDE also published an addition to the 2015 ‘Inclusive Education’ manual, capturing ongoing experiences in the 20 UNICEF-supported inclusive primary schools. Training in
assessment of students with learning difficulties was provided to 567 lower primary teachers from these 20 inclusive schools. A networking meeting gathering representatives from the 20 inclusive schools was organized in April, including most of the directors from the 20 schools, demonstrating school management support for inclusive education.

The sub-regional ADA-supported “Breaking the cycle of exclusion for Roma children through Early Childhood Development and Education” project was completed in 2016. During the project’s last year, BDE conducted in-school support visits for 63 teachers from the seven project schools. In November, teachers from these schools and from other UNICEF-supported inclusive schools attended training on differentiated learning and individualized instruction in inclusive classrooms. Later, in December, sixty school support staff were exposed to strategies to address difficulties that students face with attention, concentration, perception, emotions and cognitive functions. To support sustainable monitoring of inclusive education practices, 25 state education inspectors attended a series of two-day inclusive education trainings tailored to their specific responsibilities, helping them to understand and evaluate inclusive practices in schools. A progress assessment of inclusive education practices in the seven schools attended by Roma children was conducted in May 2016, feeding into a broader evaluation of the ADA-supported sub-regional project, to be presented in March 2017.

Finally, in 2016 the MoES developed a new education strategy, with support from the EU Delegation. UNICEF actively contributed to drafting the strategy and action plan, and to the thematic events organized by the Ministry, which provided an entry point to advocate for inclusion of children with disabilities in the education system. One of the strategies’ key priorities is to improve the inclusiveness of the education system, and UNICEF is considered a main partner in achieving this outcome. UNICEF will continue its inclusive education advocacy, with establishment in 2017 of an inclusive education stakeholder group – including Government, civil society and schools – to review existing policies and practices and provide direction for the future of inclusive education in the country.

**OUTPUT 5** Parents and communities demand for quality, inclusive early learning and education practices

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
In line with the disability communication strategy developed in 2015, the programme produced the first social change communication initiatives planned for the programme cycle. The 2016-17 initiative specifically focuses on increasing awareness among the public that impairments alone do not make a child disabled; rather disability is a consequence of environmental, social and attitudinal barriers that prevent children with impairments from equal opportunities and participation in society. Campaign assets developed included two videos exploring discrimination and physical barriers, specialized media (i.e. print newspaper in braille and sign language news announcement); gif tutorials and print and outdoor signs. A mobile phone app was developed and was being tested to engage the public around mapping various barriers and positive examples of accessibility.

Launch of the campaign was constrained due to the difficulty in executing some of the more creative ideas and the need for thorough consultation. The campaign will be launched in early 2017, following completion of the final assets – including an experimental video exploring assistive technology. During implementation, the campaign will be supported by guerrilla events and workshops with well-known people with disabilities. The materials and strategies were developed using a thorough consultative process with members of a disability communication advisory board – an informal body established in 2015, comprised of representatives of DPOs, disability advocates and disability focal points from three line ministries.
While the communication campaign aimed to address issues of limited knowledge, support for inclusion and negative attitudes; the overall communication strategy recognised that a low level of contact between children with and without disabilities fuels discrimination and negative attitudes towards children with disabilities. Thus, to complement the campaign the programme established six new partnerships with CSOs/DPOs to establish and promote inclusive events and initiatives that facilitate interaction and engagement between children with and without disabilities. These included: mainstreaming inclusion in a popular children’s TV programme and producing a song for children’s concerts, mainstreaming inclusion in an established film festival, piloting inclusion with private providers of ballet classes, mainstreaming Boccia as an accessible sport for children with severe physical impairments, inclusive sport with Special Olympics and incorporating inclusion and disability issues into youth activism programmes. All activities will be implemented during 2017.

Parallel to the communications work on disability, the programme made progress toward renewing a partnership with Foundation Telekom for Macedonia to continue work on increasing access to ECD. The local foundation pledged to invest US$43,070 to renew its partnership with UNICEF. The same proposal was shared with German Telecom, which donated an additional US$100,000, in conjunction with the UNICEF German National Committee. The funds are earmarked for opening additional ECD centres and supporting a second campaign focusing on the importance of early learning and school readiness.

**OUTPUT 6** Children including preschool age children, girls and other excluded children, access quality education opportunities

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
Following closure of the Balkan route, more than 200 children were stranded at the two transit centres. This required modification of the support provided by UNICEF implementing partners and organization of non-formal ECE and educational activities for the children, appropriate to their age and educational background. To facilitate this process, UNICEF supported non-formal education in the two transit centres, based on a curricula consisting of core subjects such as math, science, civic education, ICT and foreign languages. Due to the uncertainties related to their future, classes in English and German were offered, along with the Macedonian language, which is important if they remain in the country. Educational materials (teacher manuals, student books, picture books comic books, didactic materials) were purchased and distributed at the transit centres.

To strengthen staff capacity to implement ECE activities, training sessions were held on working with migrant and refugee children of two age groups (zero-to-three and four-to-six). Educators responsible for teaching school-age children received training focused on: identifying the individual learning needs of refugee and migrant children, applying strategies and approaches for teaching children who speak different languages and effectively planning the teaching and learning process at the transit centres. Furthermore, to maintain the quality of the education process at the transit centres, UNICEF ensured peer support from experienced teachers working at the two inclusive primary schools, one in Gevgelija and one in Kumanovo.

In cooperation with the MLSP and MoES, UNICEF is looking into the possibility of integrating children into Macedonia’s regular education system.

**OUTCOME 5** By 2020, an increased number of boys and girls benefit from child protection interventions aimed at preventing, adequately detecting, referring and responding to violence and abuse
Analytical Statement of Progress:
There is still limited coordination for preventing and responding to violence against children. No unified data collection and monitoring system are in existence, and capacity to provide support, protection and care to children is limited. To address this, the prevention and protection from violence and abuse programme was designed to strengthen national systems and the quality of services for detection, referral and response.

UNICEF fosters a cross-sectoral approach for interventions to protect child victims of violence and improved services for children with disabilities, embedded in work-plans with the MLSP, Ministry of Interior and MoJ for 2016 and 2017. Strengths and weaknesses of the child protection system were incorporated into the programme design for development of legislation, monitoring systems, protection, awareness-raising and support services, in close coordination with the social, justice, health and education sectors and civil society.

UNICEF worked closely with the MLSP to disseminate the findings of the assessment of available forms of alternative care and family-support services provided to families and children with disabilities. An inter-sectoral working group was established, tasked to develop an action plan addressing the cross-sectoral interventions needed to improve alternative care and family-support services for children with disabilities.

Implementation of a three-year regional EU-UNICEF project, aimed at protecting children from violence and promoting social inclusion of children with disabilities, was initiated in January. A strong element of this project is empowerment of civil society to advocate for children’s rights. UNICEF promoted coordination and collaboration between Government, civil society and the international community to build a strong system to protect children exposed to violence and include children with disabilities. Regional dialogue and exchange of lessons learned on VAC and social inclusion of children with disabilities was also fostered.

Another component of the regional project is development of a national child protection policy and a legal framework, involving the health, education, social and justice sectors in strengthening violence prevention and response. UNICEF partnered with the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association to initiate policy development, based on comparative analysis of primary and secondary legislation. A study to assess state response mechanisms for prevention, identification, reporting, referral and protection of cases of violence against children was also initiated.

The findings, available in 2017, will be used to understand the scope of response to violence against children, identify policy and institutional gaps, support Government and NGO long-term planning on violence prevention and response, and design an advocacy tool to put such violence high on the Government agenda.

The Regional project also seeks to establish multi-agency response services to address the legal, medical, psychological, educational and social needs of child victims. Revision of the multi-agency team model developed in 2014 was completed and tools and protocols were developed to provide clear guidance to the agencies working together to develop child-centred individual care plans. Multi-agency teams are comprised of representatives from CSW, police, prosecutors, health and education sectors, with the dual aim of caring for the child victim or witness and building a strong case to offer prosecutors about alleged crimes.

UNICEF continued to support the Government to improve data collection, monitoring and reporting, and assessment of existing mechanisms. As part of the regional project, capacity strengthening of both national institutions and CSOs to monitor child rights’ realization will be prioritised, with a focus on child victims of violence and children with disabilities.

Progress was also made in conducting a survey of knowledge, attitude, practices and social
norms related to VAC. The survey aims to explore the persistent use of violent discipline of children aged two-to-14 years of age. The study will be completed in early 2017, and used to inform the design of communication interventions on this important issue.

In addition, to address the persistent use of violent discipline, UNICEF began to develop a positive parenting programme, using a positive discipline approach for parents and professionals as a proven method that contributes to preventing abuse, neglect and VAC, while increasing the quality of children’s upbringing and development, creating better conditions for the realization of child rights.

In child justice, an increased use of child-friendly investigation rooms was reported, and evidenced in the annual report of the National Council for Prevention of Child Delinquency. UNICEF continued to actively participate in the work of the Council (as an external, non-voting member), and provided technical support for the reporting process. This will serve as a basis for 2017 results, including a trained and available pool of experts to provide training on multi-agency teamwork; a report on violence, to inform development of services; and positive parenting materials developed and validated in selected communities.

Child protection issues also figured heavily in UNICEF’s response to the migrant and refugee crisis. In close collaboration with partners, UNICEF supported provision of psychosocial support to 33,405 refugee and migrant children and, where needed, to their families. In addition, 179 unaccompanied and separated children received specialized support to protect their best interests while on the road to reach Serbia and EU countries, and to provide appropriate services and protection while in Macedonia.

**OUTPUT 1** Legal framework and capacities to detect, refer and respond to violence are developed and implemented with cross-sectoral coordination

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
Recommendations from the Child Protection Programme (2010 – 2015) evaluation completed in the beginning of 2016 were widely disseminated. The Office developed and initiated implementation of a response plan, prioritizing key interventions that will contribute to child protection reform. These interventions are embedded in 2016 and 2017 programming in the child protection, social protection and communication sectors, and include: strengthening staff capacities at the Institute of Social Activities for monitoring and evaluating the quality of services; improving quality assessment of services provided by the SPS; development of multi-agency teams; development of a new policy on working with child victims of violence; development of data collection and monitoring child protection systems; and development of a comprehensive communication plan to address knowledge, attitudes and beliefs that contribute to the ongoing use of violent forms of child discipline.

UNICEF also supports cross-sectoral efforts for inclusion of children with disabilities. Findings of the assessment on available forms of alternative care and family-support services provided to families of children with disabilities were widely disseminated. As a result, an inter-sectoral working group was established under the lead of the MLSP. The objective is to develop an action plan addressing the cross-sectoral aspects and areas of interventions needed to improve alternative care and family-support services for children with disabilities. Furthermore, a re-design of day care centres for children with disabilities was agreed with the Government for 2017, which will enable the provision of a wide range of services based on children’s actual needs, developmental stage, abilities and age.

The implementation plan for a study to identify and assess state response mechanisms in prevention, identification, reporting, referral and protection of cases of VAC was completed by national NGO Voice against Violence and an international consultant. The research
phase will be conducted in 2017.

A comparative analysis of primary and secondary legislation related to prevention and response to VAC was conducted in partnership with the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association. The analysis will inform development of an operational national child protection policy and legal framework for health, education, social, police and justice sectors, planned for 2017.

In partnership with the NGO Council for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, UNICEF supported the building of institutional capacity to monitor of the situation of VAC, which will enable evidence-informed policy making. Development of a comprehensive system to monitor the situation of VAC was initiated through an assessment of the existing monitoring system. Based on the results, in 2017 development of set of indicators will be carried out.

UNICEF partnered with the Council for prevention of juvenile delinquency to develop instructions for implementation of the Justice for Children Law. Through series of consultations with practitioners, a team of experts assessed the main areas of concerns and key bottlenecks in implementation of the Law, based on which development of the instructions of the Law was commenced and will continue in 2017.

OUTPUT 2 A model of multiagency services is piloted and scaled-up

Analytical Statement of Progress: UNICEF continued to support development of multi-agency response teams for child protection, introduced during the previous programme cycle. In 2016 further development of the multi-agency response was informed by the findings of the assessment of the multi-agency teams established and trained in 2014-15. Next steps were agreed and decided with the key Government partners, primarily aimed to address the challenges in coordination mechanisms among relevant institutions when cases of VAC are reported. In addition, the following recommendations were prioritised: merging multi-agency teams dealing with domestic violence cases with multi-agency teams for child abuse and violence; reducing staff turnover of members of the multi-agency teams; building the capacity of relevant institutions by training a pool of national trainers on multi-agency work; further capacity building of professionals working with children on the multi-agency teams; and early detection/identification of symptoms of violence or abuse.

UNICEF supported operationalisation of the assessment recommendations through partnership with international organisation Terre des Hommes (TdH), and national NGO HERA, and in close collaboration with the ministries and institutions from the social, education, health, judicial and law enforcement sectors. Revision of the multi-agency team model developed in 2014 and development of additional tools and protocols were completed. The revised model was built on the principles that to effectively meet the needs of children who have been abused, neglected or have been subjected to violence, none of the agencies works in isolation. The revised model concentrates on the need for agencies to work together to develop child-centred individual care plans that will help improve outcomes for children. In addition, common commitment was fostered for early intervention when a child is at risk or has been abused, neglected or subjected to violence. All relevant institutions and organizations participated in validation of the model, based on the country context.

UNICEF, in partnership with HERA and with technical assistance of Terre des Hommes, initiated a programme to support capacity building of professionals working in multi-agency teams based on the revised multi-agency model. Preparatory work was conducted, and in 2017 development of materials for training a pool of experts is planned, to increase national training capacities and resources to strengthen the multi-agency teams. The trainers will
then support capacity building at the local level by training the professionals and piloting the multi-agency team in four municipalities, during 2017 and 2018.

**OUTPUT 3** Increased use of nonviolent discipline methods by parents

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
UNICEF began to develop a positive parenting programme and materials in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), aimed at supporting parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities. The programme uses a positive discipline approach for parents and professionals, as a proven method that contributes to prevention and decrease of abuse, neglect and VAC, while increasing the quality of children’s upbringing and development and creating better conditions for the realization of their rights. The draft positive parenting programme incorporates guidance and practical examples in set of activities aimed at improving parents’ approach and execution of their role, and increasing parents’ competencies and access to resources and social support. The materials are intended for parents and legal guardians, but also for professionals in direct contact with children and their families, from the social and education sectors. The programme will be finalised in 2017, following validation in several targeted communities, in collaboration with CSW and primary schools.

In addition, progress was made in conducting a survey of knowledge, attitude, practices and social norms related to VAC. The survey aims to explore in more depth the persistent use of violent discipline among children aged two-to-14 years, and includes two components. The first is a survey of a representative sample of households with children aged two-to-14, exploring knowledge, attitudes and practices towards child discipline, positive parenting and reporting of violence. The survey also explores the extent to which practices are influenced by social norms. The second component seeks to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices of professionals in education, social protection, health and the police. It further explores their knowledge on identifying, reporting, referral, response and prevention in relation to VAC. Following a comprehensive consultation process, both questionnaires were finalised. The data collection phase for the first component was completed; the findings (expected in early 2017), will be used to inform the design of communication interventions to address the persistent use of violent discipline against children aged two-to-14 years.

**OUTPUT 4** Refugee and migrant girls & boys rights to protection from violence, abuse & exploitation are promoted

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
As part of the response to the on-going refugee and migrant crisis and in close collaboration with national and international partners, UNICEF Macedonia supported the provision of psychosocial support to 33,405 refugees and migrant children and their families. Additional support was provided to 179 unaccompanied and separated children, aimed at protecting their best interests as they attempted to reach Serbia and then EU countries, and at providing appropriate services and protection while they were in Macedonia.

In the framework of the 'Child and Family Protection Support Hub', UNICEF provided psycho-social support (PSS), child-friendly spaces (CFS), mother and baby corners, focused specialized PSS interventions and referral of cases to relevant service providers. Information and referral to available services to refugees was provided by information desks established in the transit centres in Tabanovce and Gevgelija. Feedback received from refugees at the information desks was used to inform improvement and further development of services at the transit centres. Age- and gender-appropriate semi-structured recreational activities delivered at the CFS offered a safe environment to enhance children's psycho-social well-
being and development. In addition, activities such as parenting programs and activating social networks were conducted, creating a sense of normalcy at the transit centres. The CFS served as an entry point for identifying children in need of additional support (including GBV cases); referral to appropriate services was provided. Serious protection concerns were monitored and reported by frontline workers at the CFS.

With the borders closed early March, UNICEF and partners adapted their response to satisfy the needs of a static population. Some 244 refugee and migrants (126 children), remained at the two transit centres, the asylum centre in Vizbegovo and the safe house. While CFS continued to provide recreational activities and PSS, UNICEF increased support for providing other activities, including early learning for young children and a pre-integrational educational programme for children. Foreign languages, science, math, mother language and ICT classes were provided to school-age children at the transit centres.

More than 200 (215) frontline workers and partners acquired knowledge and skills on such vital topics as cultural sensitivity, communication, teamwork, dealing with stress, SGBV, PSS for women and children in crisis, psychosocial interventions and case management through the capacity building provided by UNICEF. The training programme was tailor-made to the needs of the frontline workers and professionals, and included on-the-job training and mentoring. Frontline professionals also acquired knowledge enabling them to implement psychosocial interventions to equip vulnerable refugee and migrant children and families with coping mechanisms in the crisis, under the guidance of the Macedonian Chamber of Psychologists.

OUTCOME 6 By end of 2020, an increased number of girls, boys and their families benefit from integrated and child-sensitive social protection services and transfers that address poverty, deprivation and social exclusion

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF’s work on social protection seeks to strengthen the country’s capacity to improve inclusive access to integrated social protection services that tackle poverty, discrimination and social exclusion. In a context where one-third of the country’s children live in poverty and income inequalities continue to thrive – especially among some of the country’s most marginalized communities – UNICEF aims to work with Government partners to reform a fragmented and outdated SPS to be more effective at tackling poverty, deprivation and social exclusion. The approach is to focus on both the ‘social transfers’ and ‘social services’ sides of the system, to eventually provide an integrated response to families with children in need.

Regarding work on social transfers, UNICEF continued its engagement with the MLSP and MoF to assess bottlenecks in the design and administration of the country’s cash benefit system and make improvements based on evidence-based reform options. However, a political crisis carried over from 2015 significantly impacted the implementation of this process. Progress was made on the demand side, to improve access to quality social protection services. UNICEF worked with CSOs and the MLSP to raise awareness among the country’s Roma population on the application procedures for child benefits. This will increase the participation of Roma children – some of the most excluded and underprivileged children – in the SPS to eliminate social and economic vulnerabilities. With UNICEF support, an alliance of six local Roma NGOs is working to develop awareness-raising material and reach out to Roma communities in six municipalities in the country.

In terms of UNICEF’s engagement on social support services, UNICEF conducted an evaluation of the training programme for continuous professional development of social protection staff, which was developed and designed during 2010-11, with UNICEF support. The outcomes of this evaluation will help the ISA to measure the efficiency, effectiveness,
relevance and impact of the training program, and adapt it to new needs and trends. In addition, UNICEF continued to support capacity strengthening of the country’s social protection staff by designing and delivering customized training and on-the-job mentoring for professionals working at all levels of the SPS: policy, programme, and administration.

UNICEF worked with CSOs and the Government to provide an evidence base for the introduction of social contracting in the delivery of social support and care services in the country. Social contracting is a policy model for the delivery of social support and care services in social protection. In accordance with this model, the government acts as the agent that sets the standards for quality care and monitors their implementation, while the actual delivery of services is out-sourced to other service providers (i.e. CSOs or private entities). To support the process with appropriate data, UNICEF worked with CSO partners to develop a cost-benefit analysis and a regulatory impact assessment that will provide deeper understanding for policy-makers.

Important progress is being made in further fostering the inclusion of children with disabilities. Following the 2015 legislative amendments introducing a functional disability assessment based on the ICF, UNICEF is now supporting the Government to produce a formal translation of ICF in Macedonian. ICF will be used by professionals in all social sectors (social protection, health, education, child protection) as the basis and common language for improving the inclusion of children with disabilities.

As part of the response to the on-going European refugee and migrant crisis, UNICEF Macedonia worked closely with partners from the Government and CSOs to develop an efficient case management system for refugee and migrant children in the country. In that regard, UNICEF supported the MLSP to outpost and equip qualified social workers to the country’s two transit centres, the open centre for asylum seekers and the safe house for unaccompanied or separated children. In partnership with Save the Children, UNICEF developed training modules on emergency response and delivered training to social workers from all the country’s 30 CSW.

OUTPUT 1 Social services and transfers are adequately planned, delivered, financed and monitored to reach the most marginalized children.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
During 2015 UNICEF, in co-operation with the World Bank and the MLSP, established and facilitated the work of the inter-ministerial workgroup on social protection. Its main task was to review and assess the country’s fragmented cash benefit system, in terms of design and administration. As a result, in 2016, two assessment reports were produced (on benefits for children and adults) and appropriate policy options were submitted to Government.

However, the country was faced with an unprecedented political crisis throughout 2016, which included frequent changes in government, postponement of elections and dissolution of Parliament. In such an environment, UNICEF, in consultation with the two partners involved, agreed to postpone policy work on reforming the cash benefit system until a stable government was formed. Early Parliamentary elections were held in December 2016, which should resolve the crisis and help the country proceed on its reform path. Once a new government is formed in early 2017, UNICEF will continue with the implementation of this output: revising primary and secondary legislation to implement the reform.

UNICEF continued to engage civil society and social protection service providers to raise awareness about the criteria and application procedures for social transfers for children, particularly focusing on some of the most marginalized children, such as the Roma. The number of families with children receiving social transfers for children is in continuing
The total number of children receiving a child allowance, for example, decreased by some 16 per cent between 2014 and 2015. A UNICEF assessment of the country’s cash benefits system revealed that one of the main obstacles was that people are misinformed about eligibility criteria and application processes. As a result, UNICEF partnered with the CSO Roma SOS to develop and deliver a public awareness campaign on accessing child benefits for Roma families – the group most excluded from receiving these benefits. The campaign was being developed based on a baseline survey of CSWs and focus group discussions among potential beneficiaries of child-related benefits. The campaign aims to address bottlenecks from both the demand and supply side. It is foreseen that all activities will be implemented by April 2017.

**OUTPUT 2** Improved cross sectoral coordination and capacities to design, implement and budget for social protection policies and programs

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
UNICEF continues to work with the MLSP and ISA to support the country’s social protection system and improve the quality of services delivered to beneficiaries.

UNICEF has a long-term arrangement with ISA for development and delivery of a comprehensive training programme for continuous professional development of social protection professionals. In 2016, with the new CP, this activity was switched from a child protection outcome to a social protection outcome, with the aim of providing new impetus that will have an impact on the overall SPS. As a first step, UNICEF commissioned a summary evaluation of ISA’s training programme, to provide evidence of the impact and results achieved by ISA and the programme, as well as to identify bottlenecks and barriers in implementation and provide recommendations for future activities. The evaluation will also measure the extent to which the training programme addressed major bottlenecks to improving access to social protection for vulnerable children and reduced equity gaps. UNICEF also supported the implementation of recently adopted standards and procedures for social work by providing on-the-job training and guidance for staff in all 30 CSW.

UNICEF also provided support to the SPS by improving its electronic database of social services and beneficiaries and helping to interconnect it with other information management systems. UNICEF supported the ISA to identify bottlenecks and bugs in the electronic database, and prepare and agree upon a roadmap of actions to improve, update and interconnect the system with other relevant systems.

UNICEF is strengthening capacities within the SPS to collect, analyse and monitor data on the delivery of services, and will continue to work with the ISA to monitor and evaluate the work of other social protection institutions. This will contribute to more systematic monitoring and evaluation, and to ensure both direct feedback (at the level of observed institutions and their staff) and reflection at the level of policies, legislation, planning and implementation. In reviewing ISA’s current monitoring system, staff participation was observed, to ensure continuity and upgrading of current achievements, as well as to strengthen local ownership.

During 2017 UNICEF will continue working with ISA to reformulate and upgrade their training programme for continuous professional development of social protection staff by implementing the recommendations from the 2016 evaluation. More specifically, UNICEF will seek to introduce better linkages between the training programme and the processes of licencing social protection professionals and standardizing social work services. Additionally, UNICEF will use social inclusion thematic funding to work with counterparts from the MLSP, ISA, World Bank and EU to improve the performance of the LIRIKUS electronic database for social services.
OUTPUT 3 Strengthened resilience of marginalized children and families, including Roma and children with disabilities

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF worked with partners in local ministries and CSOs to revise and adopt primary and secondary legislation related to the introduction of a new social model for disability assessment. A 2015 UNICEF-commissioned review of the current system found it to be over-medicalized and burdensome for families with children with disabilities. Currently, the assessment process focuses on what children with disabilities can’t do, instead of focusing how, with inclusion, children can improve. As a result, the current assessment system is not standardized throughout the country, and parents often avoid going through the process. Initial amendments to the Law on Social Protection were adopted by Parliament in the second half of 2015, introducing a functional disability assessment model based on the ICF. UNICEF supported relevant ministries in developing and drafting secondary legislation to support the new model. However, due to the ongoing political crisis and frequent political changes at key ministries, the process is currently on hold and expected to resume in early 2017.

To further accelerate the shift from a charity/medical model to a social and human rights-based model of disability assessment, UNICEF supported a formal translation of ICF into Macedonian, securing the copyrights for the Macedonian version of ICF from the World Health Organization. A national consultant and a team of experienced translators worked on a coherent, streamlined and formal translation of ICF into Macedonian, and a technical expert reviewed the translation. UNICEF ensured an inclusive and transparent process that provided opportunities for all relevant stakeholders (ministries, CSOs, professionals and academics) to provide their input in the translation and verification process. It is expected that the Macedonian version of ICF will be published by May 2017.

UNICEF continues to support the inter-ministerial working group on disability assessment, which provides critical input to the development of all aspects of the new disability assessment model. The working group is comprised of policymakers, experts and professionals representing all key sectors – social protection, health, education and child protection.

In 2017 UNICEF will work to converge its efforts on disability assessment by: introducing the ICF in Macedonian, raising the capacity of disability assessment professionals and piloting the new assessment model in at least one municipality.

OUTPUT 4 Refugees and migrant boys and girls are protected from the winter harsh conditions

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Pursuant to social welfare and protection measures envisaged by the Law on Family, CSW play a key role in confirming or eliminating the suspicion of human trafficking and taking necessary measures to protect and support victims of human trafficking, as well as suspicion of abuse, violence, exploitation or neglect of minors and assure the safety of children and family members with other types of vulnerabilities.

Two refugee reception centres, an open centre for asylum seekers and a safe house for unaccompanied and separated children are currently functional in the country. Neither in-country nor across countries, was there a common, shared case management system for in-transit refugee children. Information-sharing was ad-hoc between different organizations with no inter-agency protocols defining the modalities and responsibilities of each organization. This approach has not proven to be efficient; many children have fallen between the cracks.
To address these gaps, UNICEF worked with the MLSP to provide appropriate representation of CSW with social protection staff (social workers and interpreters) at all transit sites used by refugee and migrant children. This allowed the provision of needed support to all identified unaccompanied or separated children and other vulnerable children and family members, as well as children at high risk until reaching their final destination. More specifically, in accordance with international conventions and principles and national legislation, and based on public authorizations, part of the mandate of the CSW is to serve as the legal guardian that plays the key role in caring for unaccompanied children and other vulnerable groups of beneficiaries. CSW are responsible for appointing a guardian and ensuring accommodation; that is, protecting the rights and interests of the child in appropriate conditions for enabling proper and undisturbed future development.

UNICEF also worked with Save the Children to increase capacity building in case management and referral for social workers posted in refugee transit centres, as well as in child-centred approaches based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), including child-sensitive tools and techniques for interpreters. In addition, to ensure on-the-job training, a coaching and mentoring programme was carried out by skilled senior social workers. Operating procedures and protocols, including referrals to relevant stakeholders, were also developed. In cooperation with Save the Children and the ISA, UNICEF developed training modules for work in emergencies and trained more than 100 social workers from throughout the country. This emergency training module is now part of the country’s training programme for continuous professional development of all social protection professionals.

OUTCOME 7 By end-2020, relevant State institutions and CSOs are empowered to monitor child rights focusing on most marginalized

Analytical Statement of Progress:
During early 2016 monitoring the situation of migrant and child refugees was a clear priority, and emphasis was placed on emergency monitoring and evaluation activities, while regular programme activities in the area of child rights monitoring experienced a slowdown. As the situation stabilized, the inflow of refugees decreased and their numbers at the transit centres remained steady, allowing programme activities to resume as planned.

Ensuring that the rights of children are voiced, protected and fulfilled requires a solid, coherent support system comprising various actors – line ministries, the Ombudsman, active CSOs and other associations dedicated to promoting children’s rights. In addition to incorporating the provisions of the CRC and other relevant international documents in the existing legislation, it is imperative to monitor their implementation and signal any impediments to the realization of these rights.

CSOs are active advocates for children’s rights and closely observe how legal provisions are implemented in practice and whether children are indeed able to exercise their rights. The Department for Protection of Children’s Rights, under the Ombudsman’s Office, also plays an important role in protecting children’s rights in several areas. Therefore, UNICEF encouraged continuous dialogue with – and among - these entities to identify the most appropriate avenues for collaboration and supported the development of their overall capacities.

Guided by the principle of well-informed, evidence-based initiatives, UNICEF nourished a strong relationship with the State Statistical Office (SSO) as a central body responsible for data collection and data analysis, which is key to any research, study, evaluation or assessment.
Inclusion of children with disabilities in regular education was the thematic focus of collaboration with the Office of the Ombudsman. To strengthen the Ombudsman’s capacity to conduct research, UNICEF continued to support work initiated in 2015 on inclusiveness in regular primary education. The research produced the study “Towards Inclusive Education”, which provides a summary of the current legal framework, understanding, perception and practice of inclusion of children with disabilities into regular primary schools.

The SSO remains a trusted partner in the annual update of the TransMonEE database. In addition, an SSO representative had the opportunity to attend the annual TransMonEE meeting in Geneva, where colleagues from national statistical organizations across the region discussed the challenges of data generation and data collection on children in alternative care – challenges shared by Macedonian SSO colleagues.

UNICEF continued to engage with CSOs as entities that play an important role in child rights monitoring. To present findings and recommendations of its case study on child marriages, partner NGO Roma SOS received support to organize six public debates in municipalities with a large percentage of Roma population. The discussions were attended by both members of the Roma community and representatives from relevant institutions, and served as a platform to exchange opinions on ways to address the practice of child marriages in the larger society, and particularly among young Roma.

During the reporting period, initial steps were taken toward establishing partnerships – as part of a broader initiative addressing protection of children from violence and inclusion of children with disabilities – with the aim of designing and developing tools for data collection and analysis and defining indicators for monitoring and reporting VAC and inclusion of children with disabilities. Planned activities also incorporate efforts to improve communication and coordination among various CSOs, and incentivize stronger interaction between civil society actors and the Ombudsman. More specifically one implementing partner, in collaboration with selected CSOs active in the field of domestic violence, GBV and VAC, will work to build and field-test a monitoring tool for use by CSOs in collecting and analysing field data on child victims of violence; two CSOs dedicated to working with people with disabilities, have defined actionable items for creating an informal platform of CSOs working in the field of disability that will develop mechanisms to monitor inclusion of children with disabilities, as well as conduct capacity development on topics such as human rights, data collection and accessibility.

**OUTPUT 1** State institutions and Ombudsman office generate data on the situation of most marginalized children, Roma and children with disabilities, and use it for policy formulation

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
A strategic goal for UNICEF Macedonia is to contribute to the Ombudsman’s overall capacity to monitor implementation of the CRC and realization of children’s rights in different areas. This includes initiatives to deepen staff’s knowledge and hone their skills in research and analysis. One such initiative was research on inclusion of children with disabilities in regular primary education, which started in 2015. The research went beyond looking at current legislation on inclusive education, by exploring how inclusiveness is understood and perceived, and most importantly, what inclusive practices schools apply. Key findings indicated that the country’s legal framework on education of children with disabilities is not entirely in accordance with the international standard defined in the CRC, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Salamanca Statement. In addition, institutional support for inclusion is limited and lacks appropriate institutions and adequate knowledge and skills. The fragmentation of care for children with disabilities is yet another institutional challenge. The Office of the Ombudsman will use the findings and recommendations as an advocacy tool to further promote inclusion of children with
disabilities in regular schools.

Conducting the study was part of the overall strategy to support the Ombudsman to develop its capacities in monitoring, reporting and using data relevant to the situation of children’s rights. Hence, UNICEF has partnered with an NGO specializing in promotion and use of assistive technology to continue support for the Ombudsman’s research initiatives and improve staff capacity in monitoring and data analysis.

Collaboration with the SSO included a timely update of the TransMonEE database and attendance at the annual TransMonEE meeting. The SSO representative joined colleagues from national statistics organizations across the region to discuss key challenges related to data on children in alternative care, such as inability to pool together data from various sources, lack of uniform definitions of disabilities and lack of data on children in private institutions.

Active dialogue with the SSO also paved the way for taking initial steps to prepare for the next round of the MICS. SSO, as the most capable institution to undertake mass surveys, expressed its readiness to conduct the MICS; specific preparations will commence in 2017.

OUTPUT 2 CSOs are empowered in evidence-based advocacy and promotion and monitoring of child rights.

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Based on research conducted between July and December 2015, UNICEF’s implementing partner Roma SOS prepared and published a case study on ‘The Grey Area between Tradition and Children’s Rights,’ in which it applied a legal prism to analyse child marriages as a violation of children’s rights. The study proposed a set of specific changes in the country’s legislation, namely in the Family Law, the Criminal Code and the Law on Secondary Education, as a first step in tackling child marriage by establishing a clear, precise legal framework that protects minors and ensures punishment for those who violate children’s rights.

During the reporting period, six public discussions on child marriage were held in municipalities with a dense Roma population. During the discussions, representatives from relevant institutions, including the police, CSW and the Ombudsman’s office, along with members of the Roma community, voiced their opinions on the proposed legislative changes and exchanged ideas about other ways to address the practice of child marriage.

This initiative led to the establishment of an informal coalition among NGOs that work with the Roma population, which in turn contributed to a stronger voice in advocating for the proposed legislative changes. Last, the National Council for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, encouraged by the response to Roma SOS’ activities, decided to launch an initiative addressed at the MoJ to change the three laws to better protect children’s rights.

In cross-programme collaboration, continuous support is provided to partner CSOs selected to implement activities under the EU-UNICEF regional project on protecting children from violence and promoting social inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure better understanding of the concepts of monitoring, tracking results and reporting. As part of the project, activities were initiated with two partner CSOs to develop tools for monitoring the inclusion of children with disabilities. In addition, actions planned for the upcoming months will seek to develop the overall capacities of CSOs that work with people and children with disabilities as active advocates for their rights and as “watch dogs” that closely observe how legal provisions are implemented in practice, and whether children are able to exercise their rights.
Evaluation and research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Sequence Number</th>
<th>Type of Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of UNICEF Child Protection Programme</td>
<td>2016/001</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Towards Inclusive Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gray Area between Tradition and Children's Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of alternative forms of care and family support services for CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide for Parents: Child Health, Growth and Development (0-3 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Barriers to Health Insurance Access for Roma Families in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lessons learned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Type/Category</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Learned</td>
<td>Transition from Child Friendly Space to Child and Family Support Hub</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Programme documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Type</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>