Executive summary

In May 2017, after nearly two years of political stalemate, a coalition government was formed and immediately made a strong commitment to the broad human rights agenda through actions such as ratifying the Istanbul Convention and making early commitments related to inclusion, preschool expansion and de-institutionalization.

Nevertheless, the challenges ahead are formidable. Within the sub-region, Macedonia is the only country where infant mortality is rising. Almost 30 per cent of children are at risk of poverty – material poverty as well as deprivation of basic services and social support. Preschool enrolment, preschool investment, comparative student assessment outcomes and levels of family violence are major challenges recognized by the Government. An estimated half of children with a disability are not in school, and there is a high level of secondary school dropout among the Roma population. During the reporting period air pollution rates were also alarming, particularly in the capital, Skopje, where rates at times exceeded global pollution standards.

Policy dialogue and advocacy have, however, resulted in key actions, including commitments to achieve universal preschool coverage over a five-year period, and by 2020 to end the placement of children under three in large-scale institutions.

UNICEF Macedonia launched a high-profile public campaign on disability and inclusion in March, including a series of ground-breaking videos, and revitalized in September with strong engagement by the incoming Prime Minister. A local-language version of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) was released at the same time. The ICF is an instrument designed to detect, assess, refer and support children with disabilities, in order to build positively on all children’s abilities.

The Prime Minister also supported a major international education conference, which sought to build momentum for a new education strategy to improve quality, outcomes, inclusion and innovation in the sector.

There is substantial national commitment to achieve universal de-institutionalization, including people with disabilities and children, led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MoLSP), with funding from the European Union (EU), and broad support from multiple United Nations and non-governmental agencies. A new de-institutionalization policy is being drafted, which should be completed in early 2018. At a national conference promoting "A family for every child" in November 2017, the Government committed to de-institutionalize all children under three by 2020.

In response to the rising infant mortality rate, an ‘every new-born action plan’ was established setting out key strategies, including strengthening perinatal services and promoting public awareness. However, progress was affected by the absence of a minister of health during the final quarter of the reporting period. A knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) survey on violence against children was completed in 2017, the results of which will inform a campaign on
violence against children and integrated reforms during 2018.

Continued follow-up in support of the reduced caseload of migrant children resulting from the large-scale 2015/2016 migrant crisis was undertaken by the emergency team during the reporting period. Lessons learned from this significant crisis response led directly to longer-term measures for disaster risk reduction (DRR).

**Equity In practice**

n/a

**Humanitarian assistance**

Throughout 2015 and 2016, some 473,405 refugees and migrants passed through the country. Borders were closed in early 2016, as they were in neighbouring countries, stranding a diminishing number of migrants and refugees, largely in two transit centres (TCs).

Despite restrictions on “official” entry, movement of refugees and migrants continued throughout 2017, albeit with a significant decrease in numbers. While many of these newcomers were turned away or pushed back across borders if detected, vulnerable categories of refugees and migrants who entered the country “unofficially”, independently or with traffickers, were allowed to enter transit centres and receive basic services and assistance. Not all chose to, however, preferring to remain outside of official centres. In November 2017, UNHCR reported that 14,200 illegal border crossings had been registered in the country since the beginning of the year. By December only 140 people had applied for asylum, among whom were 21 children (19 boys and 2 girls).

UNICEF Macedonia worked with six implementing partners to address child protection, education, health and nutrition and provisioned basic supplies. By the end of November 280 children (199 boys and 81 girls), of whom 85 were unaccompanied and separated from their parents, had been reached at the child-friendly spaces (CFS) established at the two transit centres. In addition to working at transit centres beginning in March 2017 UNICEF supported the Red Cross to reach children on the move at Macedonia’s northern border with Serbia. Between March and the end of December, 365 children were reached with basic assistance (food, clothing, first aid) while on the move towards Greece or Serbia.

Close monitoring of maternal health and consultations on infant and young child feeding at transit centres continued in 2017; services were provided by qualified patronage nurses who were part of teams operating at the child-friendly spaces. Significant work was also done in the area of mental health of refugee and migrant children. UNICEF supported early interventions with the most vulnerable children by experienced psychologists from the Macedonian Chamber of Psychologists. On a national level this process led to development of the first manual for promoting children’s mental health, both in and out of emergency settings. This work resulted in a formal partnership between the Ministry and the Macedonian Chamber of Psychologists for action in future emergencies.

Of the 280 children reached at transit centres in 2017, 207 children aged six and older participated in structured educational and recreational activities. With decreasing numbers of younger children in the transit centres through 2017, the educational programme shifted direction towards adolescents.
UNICEF also began working to identify the legal and practical aspects of the obstacles to realizing the right of refugee children to access regular education.

Lessons were learned in relation to systems developed during the crisis. Despite the infrastructure support provided to transit centres since the onset of the crisis (including water and sanitation facilities, sewage systems, power generators, child-friendly spaces, playgrounds), UNICEF is convinced that these facilities are not suitable for long-term accommodation of refugee and migrants, especially the most vulnerable. Alternative solutions should be considered, and priority should be placed on ceasing to keep refugee and migrant children in detention.

The crisis also demonstrated the need for preparedness action and planning across sectors, and highlighted gaps in the wider social protection system, where children – whether refugees and migrants or Macedonian children affected by adversity, violence and poverty – routinely fall through the cracks. The challenge for UNICEF and its government partners will be to ensure that this broader system is strengthened for the long term well-being of all children in or passing through the country.

In February 2017 a lessons learned workshop was organized allowing the MoLSP and other organizations present in the field to reflect on best practices during the response and identify areas for improvement for future crises. A key need identified was capacity development for partners on various topics related to working with children in emergency settings. As a result, 164 emergency field workers and practitioners participated in training events throughout the year, to enhance current and future capacities for disaster preparedness and response.

**Emerging areas of importance**

**Early childhood development and early childhood education.** Consensus has emerged in Macedonia that early childhood development (ECD) and early childhood education (ECE) are vitally important for country’s long-term socio-economic development. Expanding ECD coverage and improving the quality of services is an MoLSP priority, demonstrated by commitments to ECE in the latter half of 2017. Enrolment of 3-6-year-olds reached 39 per cent, but attendance is much lower; very few children from the two lowest wealth quintiles attend preschool. While large numbers of children remain excluded from ECD opportunities, many “kindergartens” do not provide adequate educational opportunities for optimal child development.

Ongoing investment in kindergarten facilities continues, but maintenance and staffing is often not maintained at the municipal level. In 2017, UNICEF signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with five municipalities to open new ECD centres in rural and marginalized communities. An important 2017 achievement was the official registration of most ECD centres in the national preschool education system.

Enrolment in preschool education shows significant differences between urban and rural areas, as well as between the richest and poorest populations, especially for Roma children. Children from families with fewer resources remain out of the programmes. In addition, sustainable funding is required to ensure quality preschool programmes for all children aged 3 to 6 years. To achieve this, recurrent costs should be borne and secured by the Government, municipalities and parents in a more equitable way. The current system for financing ECD is one of the key obstacles to ensuring universal access. The proposed new model for financing ECE would focus on per-child financing to ensure equal opportunities for all children and suggest re-allocation to increase access.
Efforts are also underway to ensure that ECE is better incorporated in education policy— the obstacle being that ECE is still principally under the jurisdiction of the MLSP rather than the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). Further collaboration between these two ministries around ECE is a UNICEF priority, with an emphasis on education, not just care (or day-care), to ensure increased access to quality and inclusive ECE services.

**Second decade of life.** Adolescents make up approximately 12 per cent of the country’s population of roughly 2 million; about 247,000 young people are aged 10 to 19. Most of these boys and girls do not participate in democratic processes, and are often not recognized as a resource to be invested in or prioritized by the public policy agenda. They are poorly served by the education system, as evidenced by their results in 2015 international student assessment programme (PISA), in which just over half of the country’s 15-year olds scored below basic proficiency levels. This means that they do not have the skills and competencies necessary for their future education, employment or future success. Worse, many young people get no education; 2011 survey data showed that 16 per cent of secondary school-age children were not in school. Youth unemployment in 2015 was 48.2 per cent among young people between the ages of 15 and 24, and rose to 50.2 per cent in 2016.

Yet adolescents are the population group with the greatest potential – for innovation, change and peacebuilding in their own country – if they acquire the skills and confidence to be leaders in their communities. UNICEF thus began in 2017 to discuss with partners how to harness the positive potential of young people and empower vulnerable adolescent boys and girls to proactively engage in innovation, critical thinking and social entrepreneurship through proven innovations, such as Upshift and Ponder. This will support their own development and opportunities, but more importantly will give them skills to overcome ethnic and economic divisions and contribute to a more cohesive society.

At a recent, national education conference in Skopje, youth’s powerful potential to make a difference was demonstrated during a parallel “Hackathon” supporting innovation for educational quality and inclusion. The dynamic and creative results from this will fuel new action for adolescents in 2018.

### Summary notes and acronyms

- **BDE** - Bureau for Development of Education
- **CFS** – child-friendly spaces
- **CMT** – country management team
- **CRPD** – Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- **CSO(s)** - civil society organization(s)
- **CSW** – Centres for Social Work
- **DCT** – direct cash transfers
- **DI** – De-institutionalisation
- **DPO** – disabled persons’ organization
- **DRR** - disaster risk reduction
- **ECD** – early childhood development
- **ECE** – early childhood education
- **ELN** – early literacy and numeracy
- **EU** – European Union
- **HACT** – harmonized approach to cash transfers
Early childhood education is a key topic put forward by UNICEF Macedonia in dialogue with relevant state actors in 2017, bringing attention to the particularly low attendance of 3-to-6-year-old children in educational programmes. This implies missed opportunities for learning during the most significant period for children’s brain development and poorer performance in primary school. Early literacy and numeracy has also re-emerged as a priority due to low scores achieved on international tests. These discussions coincide with major shifts and planned reforms in the education system.

Completion of the early literacy and numeracy (ELN) programme evaluation provided several recommendations for tackling new ELN teaching methods and improving the language and math curricula that the MoES and Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) can use as inputs for policy change.

Key findings and conclusions from the evaluation of the training programme for social protection staff provided insights on the results and shortcomings of the programme, which focused on improving the quality and performance of social services. The recommendations fed into efforts to redesign the training programme to align it with key strategic priorities such as deinstitutionalization (DI) and case management.

Lessons learned and recommendations from an evaluation of the Roma health mediators (RHM) programme were incorporated in discussions among key stakeholders on solutions for institutionalizing the role of these mediators and ensuring sustainability for the programme,
given the unique nature of the services it provides to highly disadvantaged people.

The KAP study on child discipline practices generated valuable information about how violent discipline methods are perceived, what the most common practices are and which factors influence such practices. This new knowledge provided much-needed input for development of a consolidated communication strategy to address social norms that allow violence against children to persist in Macedonia.

**Partnerships**

Development and strengthening of partnerships remains a key strategy for UNICEF Macedonia.

The Office worked with a network of civil society organizations (CSOs) to address key bottlenecks on disability inclusion and prevention and response to violence against children. In 2017, this coalition led a major public campaign, in collaboration with the Prime Minister, to reduce stigma and increase inclusion for children with a disability. In 2018, a similar coalition-based effort on violence against children is planned.

New inroads were also made in United Nations interagency collaboration in 2017, with commitment to action for children and adults with disabilities and ongoing work with partners such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to achieve long-term change for vulnerable children in and passing through the country.

UNICEF will continue to work across all levels of society in 2018 to pursue key common results, leveraging its increasing profile and credibility to broker intersectoral collaboration for change.

**External communication and public advocacy**

Two integrated campaigns on inclusion of children with disabilities, in March and September, combined social experiment videos, celebrity support, community programmes and events and a partnership with Skopje Marathon, and provoked public engagement on daily barriers and stigma faced by children with disabilities. A high-level event organized with the prime minister’s office led to a commitment to accelerate cross-sectoral support for inclusion.

Public engagement on ECD, through activation of the global #EarlyMomentsMatter campaigns in January and June – including support from five celebrity fathers in a local ‘super dads’ campaign – contributed to continued public dialogue on ECD.

UNICEF’s communication and public advocacy support for two other major high-level events (in November and December) contributed to a Government commitment to end the placement of children under three in institutions and to accelerate reforms addressing quality education and preschool access.

Other strategic points used to engage audiences on ongoing and emerging child rights priorities included: UNICEF’s 70th Anniversary, visit of flying high for children, World Children’s Day, World’s Largest Lesson, global campaigns on #VaccinesWork, #EndViolence, #BreastFeeding, #WorldWater and #EveryBreathCounts.

During 2017 a record increase in public reach and engagement included: 865 mentions of UNICEF in local media, a 55 per cent increase over 2016. From January to December 2017: the number of UNICEF Macedonia Facebook fans increased by 118 per cent: from 15,425 to 33,702, while messages reached 7,103,051 people (282 per cent of annual target), and
engaged 515,679 (386 per cent of annual target). During the same period, Twitter followers increased by 68 per cent, from 1,089 to 1,835, with messages reaching 611,899 people (128 per cent of target) and engaging 13,590 (266 per cent of target); and the number of Instagram followers increased by 493 per cent from 98 to 582. Youtube subscribers rose by 519 per cent from 47 to 291, reaching 170,705 and engaging 2,815 people. Stories published on the Office’s Medium channel reached 3,892 people and engaged 1,880 readers.

Identification and promotion of innovation

As part of a communication for social change initiative, UNICEF Macedonia developed and launched a new mobile phone application (Without Barriers) to inform and engage the public in mapping positive examples of and barriers to accessibility. Available for both iPhone and Android users, the app provides examples of accessibility for buildings, pedestrian paths and crossings, public transport, parking, playgrounds and toilets, as well as accessibility and equal treatment for the hearing impaired.

Through the ‘be fair for a childhood without barriers’ campaign, UNICEF used a hidden video camera to capture individual reactions to being served by an assistant pharmacist with Down syndrome. This social experiment features a fourth-year university student with Down syndrome who, in her spare time, helps at her father’s pharmacy. The video went viral in the country, and led to significant public debate on the issue of inclusion and perceptions about people with a disability. A follow-up video was made and posted later in the year, showing positive signs of change in attitudes towards disability.

In December, a three-day hackathon was organized as part of the conference ‘Quality education for growth, achievements and better future’. The hackathon gathered five teams (including students, teachers, programmers, designers, psychologists and sociologists) working together to design possible solutions to educational challenges and to help improve the overall quality of Macedonia’s education system. All teams were mentored by professionals from the various fields being explored. Among the issues addressed were: types of tools and methods to be used by teachers that could encourage character-building; helping teachers to keep up-to-date on the newest trends in pedagogy by developing networks and forums for knowledge sharing; designing the inclusive classroom of the future and using technology to stimulate ECD through learning/games.

Support to integration and cross-sectoral linkages

UNICEF Macedonia’s 2016–2020 programme was designed to work across themes with a range of actors to achieve results, particularly for child victims of violence, children with a disability and Roma children. This intent was put to the test almost immediately when the 2016-17 refugee and migrant crisis forced sectors and partners to urgently collaborate. Building on lessons from that experience and strong institutional commitment to cross-sectoral results, momentum continued in 2017 to promote action on disability, early childhood education and deinstitutionalization.

• Early childhood education is a shared responsibility between the MoLSP and MoES. Building on a UNICEF-led discussion about young children’s brain development and bolstered by an international education conference held in December 2017, new inroads in cross-ministerial collaboration were made, to increase ECE attendance and quality.
• UNICEF supported the Government to produce a formal translation of the ICF into Macedonian, which was successfully completed in September and will be used in all social sectors to improve inclusion of children with disabilities. UNICEF also works with Government
and civil society to strengthen inclusive education (IE) in kindergartens and primary schools, developing protocols with preschool and primary education professionals.

• Following a conference on deinstitutionalization in November, the Government committed to the closure of all institutional admissions for children under three by 2020. This is complementary to ongoing momentum for wider closure of all institutions for children and for persons with disabilities, supported collaboratively by the Government and key donors.

• In the area of violence prevention, the Government re-committed in 2017 to intersectoral work through national coordination body for the protection of children from violence and abuse.

**Human rights-based approach to cooperation**

UNICEF Macedonia continued its efforts to ensure that all initiatives undertaken throughout the year are rooted in the human rights-based approach, with an emphasis on facilitating the complex process of deinstitutionalizing children and advancing the rights of children with disabilities.

Key state actors agree with UNICEF that placement of children in institutions greatly contributes to violation of their fundamental rights to develop healthily and lead a dignified life. UNICEF—along with other major international organizations—is supporting the deinstitutionalization process by providing technical expertise to the MoLSP and working to enhance the capacity of social protection staff.

This process is of paramount importance to children with disabilities, who are at great risk of being placed in an institution. Hence, UNICEF undertook broad efforts to enhance the capacity of home-visiting services at primary health care facilities in early intervention and to address the issue of disability assessments. The latter included formal translation of the ICF into Macedonian, as a tool for ensuring that the definitions in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are used in the health, social and education sectors, which will be combined with training for local professionals on conducting functional ICF-based assessments.

Aligned with these efforts were initiatives to strengthen the impact of and collaboration within the disability rights movement in the country. Ongoing initiatives aim to: bring together civil society actors and establish a platform for improved communication and collaboration; strengthen understanding of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by disabled persons’ organizations; and enhance these group’s monitoring capacities. The overarching goal is to create a critical mass of CSOs competent to monitor whether, and how well, the Convention is being implemented in Macedonia.

UNICEF joined other United Nations agencies in prompting the Government to ratify the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. In December, the Government adopted a draft-law to ratify the Convention.

**Gender equality**

Gender issues cut across all of UNICEF’s results, with particular focus on issues of children with disabilities, early child marriage, access to services for Roma children and violence prevention in multiple contexts.

Key to much of this work is quality, gender-disaggregated data. To address the lack of data and overall monitoring of violence against children, UNICEF partnered with the Council for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency to develop a set of indicators. The data collected will feed the national coordination body charged with protecting children from abuse and neglect,
enabling it to monitor and report on violence against girls and boys and to develop gender-sensitive policies and services.

In parallel, UNICEF Macedonia has been working with its partner Open Gate-La Strada, a non-governmental organization (NGO), on a monitoring tool for CSOs that provide services to child victims of violence and their families. Draft indicators were developed to enable more structured data collection across organizations, complementing data from Government institutions and generating a clearer picture of the situation of child victims. UNICEF also continued to support maintenance of the national database on early childhood education, ensuring that the system collects gender-disaggregated data and is used to make evidence-based decisions.

UNICEF’s efforts to curb child marriage in Macedonia included four public debates and a public discussion on proposed changes to three relevant laws: the Law on Family, the Law on Secondary Education and the Criminal Code. Proposed changes were discussed among representatives from the United Nations and the Government to establish an unambiguous framework to prevent marriages and unions with and between children.

Master home visitors were trained on gender issues in early childhood and parenting, aimed at strengthening national momentum around the use of home visitor resource modules, and collaboration on the use of gender modules.

In the context of the migrant and refugee crisis, UNICEF continued to support social protection and individual case management. Interagency standard operating procedures for prevention and response to gender-based violence in emergencies were officially adopted by the Government in February 2017.

**Environmental sustainability**

While action for climate change did not figure in the initial planning for the 2016–2020 programme of cooperation, increasingly it has become evident that the impact of climate change and wider environmental issues are affecting children in the country. Disasters from flooding and extreme temperature have been recurrent: 2016 floods impacted children and families around the country, and extremely cold temperatures in early 2017 caused hardship, particularly among the most vulnerable children and their families, who have limited resources for heating and shelter.

Perhaps the greatest impact, however, has been increases in air pollution that recur in winter months in most major urban/semi-urban areas in the country, and most dramatically in the capital city of Skopje. Regular “fogs” through the winter months caused by household burning and industrially induced air pollution – mixed with stagnant air in the mountainous basin of the city – result in plummeting air quality indices. On one day in early December 2017, Skopje’s air quality was registered as the worst in the world, ahead of notorious cities such as Delhi and Beijing. Concurrently, anecdotal evidence has emerged showing an increase in respiratory illness among young children. UNICEF will investigate these linkages with partners in 2018 and move toward actions to mitigate the impact of poor air quality and pollution on young children.

Internally, UNICEF continued its greening efforts, seeking energy efficiency and minimization of paper and other wastage, promoting an eco-friendly environment. Key alterations in 2017 included replacement of lighting with energy-efficient alternatives and ongoing reduction of waste at the office premises.
Effective leadership

Monthly country management team (CMT) meetings and weekly all-staff meetings facilitated discussion of key issues and areas of collaboration. Embedded in the CMT and in monthly programme meetings is tracking of key indicators, including management indicators, status of funding, expenditures and direct cash transfers (DCT), evaluation and management response update, field trips and programmatic trips review and fund-raising. Collaborative management planning was carried out through an all-staff management review meeting in January, with follow-up at a mid-year review in July. At the same time, in direct response to staff requests for learning support, a series of 11 ‘Friday Universities’ were held to address key programme and operational priorities and facilitate discussion and learning.

A key area for the CMT was addressing the staff morale survey and its impact on efficiency and effectiveness in the office. Through collaboration between the CMT and the staff association, a retreat was organized and facilitated by a private sector business coach. It identified key gaps in UNICEF’s work and organizational culture, including an imbalance that focused more on processes than results, the potential for more collaborative work and the lack of a sense of belonging to the team.

As a follow-on, three working groups were established at all staff levels to review: a) drive for results, b) streamlining of processes and c) communication and collaboration. The three groups developed several recommendations for improving office performance, which were adopted by the CMT in December. This has expanded the sense of shared leadership and ownership, improving staff morale at all levels. In each of the three groups, risks, prior audit recommendations and BCP were taken into account. It was agreed that the groups will meet quarterly during 2018 to review progress and suggest additional measures.

Financial resources management

Monthly country management team meetings as well as InSight dashboard reports are regularly used to monitor contribution management and office performance on various indicators, as per the annual management plan. Funds utilization reports by output, outcome, source of funding and expiry date were presented and discussed at all CMT and programme meetings, ensuring compliance with regional targets.

The Office continued the good practice of maintaining no outstanding DCTs over six months throughout the year, and met HQ deadlines for interim and year-end closure of accounts. Bank reconciliations were completed within monthly schedules and transaction processing was completed with no delays.

The Office successfully transitioned to eZ-HACT in mid-October. Except for some errors related to migrated DCTs, no major problems were experienced during the transition period.

Harmonization of cash transaction (HACT) assurance activities were regularly monitored by the country management team. In line with the HACT framework, during this reporting period one internal control audit and four spot-check visits were completed, as well as 26 programmatic visits. The office signed a long-term agreement (LTA) with the local Grant Thornton office to conduct financial assurance activities. The company was selected through a competitive process and provided a bid below that of global LTAs. Collaboration with the company during 2017 was very productive and met UNICEF’s expectations for effectiveness and quality.

Fundraising and donor relations
UNICEF Macedonia re-instituted a resource mobilization committee at the beginning of 2017, to coordinate fund-raising efforts and seek new resource opportunities to optimize results. The existing fund-raising strategy was reviewed at the time, and efforts made to consolidate fund-raising efforts. Several proposals were developed during the first part of the year, with modest success. At the same time, a leveraging strategy was pursued, aimed not just at resources for UNICEF, but at resources for results in the country.

With the arrival of a new Representative in the latter part of the year, the resource mobilization strategy was re-visited, with an emphasis on ensuring three levels of discussion with prospective partners: Representative to CEOs/Ambassador, Deputy Representative to deputy-level and programme specialists at the technical level. Engagement at all three levels can now be measured and coordinated by the office. Using this approach, the office began negotiating with the UK Embassy for a grant of US$1.6 million, the Templeman Foundation for US$340,000, a major private sector company (Alkaloid) for funding an innovation lab and with multiple partners on financing for the multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS).

Donor reports are reviewed at the peer level, by management and the UNICEF Regional Office.

### Evaluation and research

The evaluation function aims to ensure that UNICEF-supported evaluations are conducted in accordance with United Nations standards and contribute to learning and better performance. During 2017 implementation of the annual plan for research, impact, monitoring and evaluation—comprising three evaluations and four research studies—was continuously monitored. End-of-year status reflects the completion of four activities, while the other three are underway. Management responses were prepared, entered in the tracking system and regularly updated.

Upon engaging with the Institute for Social Activities (ISA) to support the development and the roll-out of the training programme for social protection staff, UNICEF commissioned an evaluation to provide evidence of the results achieved and role played by the programme. The bottlenecks and barriers to programme implementation identified and recommendations for future activities will feed into reshaping the training programme so that it better fits country priorities, such as the introduction of case management, deinstitutionalization and inclusion of children with a disability.

The formative evaluation of the Roma health mediators programme sought to demonstrate the results of the mediators’ work, identify barriers that impeded the implementation of activities and provide recommendations for shaping future activities. The findings were used for advocacy activities and budgeting future initiatives between UNICEF, the MoES and other international and national partners active in the field.

Conducting the ELN programme evaluation faced a few challenges—such as the lack of a theory of change and insufficient information about programme implementation— which affected its final rating. This served as a lesson on ensuring higher quality in future evaluative initiatives. It should be noted, though, that with significant support from the office team, the evaluation provided new knowledge for UNICEF’s education partners.

### Efficiency gains and cost savings

In September 2017 UNICEF established a local LTA for financial assurance activities, in line with HACT framework (specifically for spot-check services) with the local franchise of Grant Thornton auditors. This generated a saving of approximately US$1,400 per spot-check, a total of
US$5,600 over four months alone, compared to the cheapest global LTA price;

At the same time and as part of the global eco-efficiency initiative, the office received funding of US$2,500 from the Greening and Accessibility Fund, which enabled replacement of fluorescent lighting fixtures with more efficient LED lights, thus generating a cost-saving of approximately US$500 per year (on electricity and a reduction in the carbon footprint of an estimated 1.9 tons annually.

While the United Nations presence in Macedonia is still relatively small, the agencies continued to benefit from establishing joint LTAs in many areas as part of the operations management team annual plan, such as: travel, local Internet service provider, security services, hotel rates and mobile phone services. This helped to significantly reduce the workload and time spent on market research by each agency individually.

**Supply management**

UNICEF Macedonia had a very small supply component this year, mainly related to support for residual emergency activities and some regular activities. The total value of programmatic supplies in 2017 was US$33,799, mainly for: water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) activities for refugees and migrants, clothing and footwear and equipment for children with disabilities at the Demir Kapija Institute. Operational supplies totalled US$28,408 (mostly for replacement of obsolete IT equipment and office furniture), and US$222,746 was for contractual services. The Office continued its good practice of delivering goods to the final beneficiaries, eliminating the need to maintain a warehouse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total value of supplies and services (irrespective of procurement location)</th>
<th>In US$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme supplies</td>
<td>US$33,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations supplies</td>
<td>US$28,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>US$222,746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Freight</td>
<td>US$13,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL 2017 supplies and services</strong></td>
<td><strong>US$298,733</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Security for staff and premises**

Due to the closure of the so-called “Balkans route”, the flow of migrants and refugees through Macedonia ceased in March 2017, allowing UNICEF to reduce its emergency operations in both scope and staffing. As a result, the additional office space that served to support the Office’s response to the crisis is no longer rented.
As part of its regular security activities, the Office upgraded security procedures at the premises by replacing the main entrance key lock as well as the access key cards and established a log book on issuance of keys and access card to each staff member. The parking lot was also upgraded through the installation of new automatic parking ramps, as well as an additional surveillance camera overlooking UNICEF’s designated parking space.

Security-related and safety advisory information from the UN Department of Safety and Security was regularly shared with all staff, and the warden system was updated and complemented by a warden drill exercise conducted in August 2017, to test the activation system and warden response time.

**Human resources**

In 2017 the Office managed six recruitment processes. In line with the new staff selection policy, different modalities for staff appointments were used: four were regular recruitments, one was a lateral move and one a talent pool selection. The four regular recruitments were: operations manager, finance/accounting assistant, executive assistant and programme assistant. The lateral move involved appointing the human resource assistant from the position of the executive assistant, and the administrative assistant was appointed from the local talent pool. All recruitments were run using the talent management system (TMS) and were completed within 90 days.

As part of the global programme budget review (PBR), the part-time post of ICT assistant was converted back to full time, effective 1 July, while as part of the regional PBR the part-time post of one of the two drivers was also changed back to full time, effective 1 January 2018. The office went through one separation process (the operations manager retired in April), while the newly appointed Representative joined the office in July.

UNICEF Macedonia supported two staff members on stretch assignments: the human resource assistant to the UNICEF Supply Division in Copenhagen for three months, and the social protection specialist to Barbados and Dominica, as part of the immediate response team, for two months.

Staff learning was also prioritized, particularly internal learning through ‘Friday Universities’, where key programme and operations priorities were discussed. Eleven of these sessions were held throughout the year, each including the majority of the team in learning and discussion.

Three joint consultative committee meetings took place during 2017, and steps were taken to address all issues raised. In October, the Office organized an all-staff retreat facilitated by an external consultant.

**Effective use of information and communication technology**

Since it was established as a LIGHT ICT infrastructure in 2015, for more than two years O365 cloud-based storage and services have been widely used without any major interruptions. Significant use is made of of SharePoint and OneDrive for remote storage and file-sharing across the UNICEF network. This is also a prerequisite for the planned migration of shared drives to the new enterprise content management platform in near future.

The UNICEF Regional Office introduced the ICT Regional Strategy 2018–2021, promoting operational and programme efficiency and effectiveness and innovative use of ICT. In line with this strategy and its recommendations, UNICEF recognized the likelihood of increased
involvement by ICT staff, and converting one post from half to full-time. An innovation focal point was nominated, and together with ICT staff will work on upgrading personal skills and seeking innovative solutions to the achievement of better results for the children.

The ICT assistant participated in the annual regional ICT meeting and was introduced to ongoing global and regional ICT projects, in preparation for upcoming implementation. At the same time a PRINCE2 training (project management methodology) was organized which support better project environment participation.

Following the global release of Windows10, 12 new laptops were procured to replace outdated models unable to run the new OS. All laptops in use are now in line with hardware, software and lifecycle standards. The retired laptops will be donated to partners.

Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and the media are widely used for active public relations and advocacy. Statistics shows a constant increase in media visitors and followers, demonstrating greater public interest and interaction with UNICEF’s activities.

**Programme components from RAM**

**ANALYSIS BY OUTCOMES 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, to enable the Office to function smoothly. Key activities, as described for each output below, include human and financial resources, administrative/operational tasks to support office functioning, including provision of supplies, services and knowledge required to implement programme activities and achieve results for children.

**OUTPUT 1** Human resources have the capacities, skills, morale and motivation to support country operations

**Analytical statement of progress**
The office continued to discuss key issues and areas of collaboration, key performance indicators and management priorities at monthly meetings of the CMT and weekly all staff meetings. Embedded in CMT and in monthly programme meetings is tracking of key indicators, including management indicators; status of funding, expenditures and DCT; evaluation and management response updates; review of field trips, including programme trips; and fund-raising. Collaborative management planning was addressed through an all-staff management review meeting in January 2017, with follow-up during a mid-year review in July. In direct response to staff requests for learning support, a series of Friday Universities were established - 11 in total through the year - to address key programme and operational priority areas, and facilitate discussion and learning.

Following staff changes during the year, office 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 regularly used to monitor contribution management and office performance on various indicators, as per the annual management plan. Fund utilization reports by output and outcome as well as by source of funding and expiry date were presented and discussed at CMT meetings. The office managed to comply with regional targets throughout the year. It successfully transitioned to eZHACT in mid-October. Except for some errors related to migrated DCTs, no major problems were experienced during the transition.

HACT implementation continued, with effective use of the funding authorization and certificate of expenditures form for all transactions, and the office conducted 26 programme visits, four spot-checks and one internal control audit as part of its HACT assurance activity plan. UNICEF signed an LTA with the local Grant Thornton office for conducting financial assurance activities. The company was selected through a competitive process and provided a lower bid than that of global LTAs.

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

Analytical statement of progress
In 2017 the office managed six recruitment processes. In line with the new staff selection policy, different modalities for staff appointments were used: four were regular recruitments, one was a lateral move and one a talent pool selection. The four regular recruitments were: operations manager, finance/accounting assistant, executive assistant and programme assistant. The lateral move involved appointing the human resource assistant from the position of the executive assistant, and the administrative assistant was appointed from the local talent pool. All recruitments were run using the talent management system (TMS) and were completed within 90 days.

As part of the global programme budget review (PBR), the part-time post of ICT assistant was converted back to full time, effective 1 July, while as part of the regional PBR the part-time post of one of the two Drivers was also changed back to full time, effective 1 January 2018. The office went through one separation process (the operations manager retired in April), while the newly appointed Representative joined the office in July.

UNICEF Macedonia supported two staff members on stretch assignments: the human resource assistant to the UNICEF Supply Division in Copenhagen for three months, and the social protection specialist to Barbados and Dominica, as part of the immediate response team, for two months.

Staff learning was also prioritized, particularly internal learning through ‘Friday Universities’, where key programme and operations priorities were discussed. Eleven of these sessions were held throughout the year, each including the majority of the team in learning and discussion.

Three joint consultative committee meetings took place during 2017, and steps were taken to
address all issues raised. In October, the Office organized an all-staff retreat facilitated by an external consultant.

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 coordination is critical to enabling UNICEF and partners to produce significant, sustainable results. Action was taken regularly to ensure that effective, cross-cutting approaches were being employed across programme sectors.

Programme management is carried out through on-going communication and results monitoring, ensuring optimal utilization of funds for results. These steps are partnered with consistent mainstreaming of programme-wide concerns, such as gender; strategic coordination of partner relationships; and capacity/systems-strengthening initiatives.

The programme was designed using 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 for the most vulnerable children and contribute to long-term reform of social sectors.

Collaboration with partners has been promoted, including government, civil society and UN sister agencies. UNICEF has a key role in several outcome groups, and leads in the discussions and coordination for social inclusion.

OUTPUT 1 Programme coordination

Analytical statement of progress
Programme coordination is critical to enabling UNICEF and partners to produce significant, sustainable results. Action was taken regularly to ensure that effective, cross-cutting approaches were being employed across programme sectors.

Programme management is carried out through on-going communication and results monitoring, ensuring optimal utilization of funds for results. These steps are partnered with consistent mainstreaming of programme-wide concerns, such as gender; strategic coordination of partner relationships; and capacity/systems-strengthening initiatives.

The programme was designed using 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 for the most vulnerable children and contribute to long-term reform of social sectors.

Collaboration with partners has been promoted, including government, civil society and UN sister agencies. UNICEF has a key role in several outcome groups, and leads in the 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
Work in this area is reported under Output 5: communication, advocacy and partnerships for children

OUTPUT 3 Operational support to the emergency response

Analytical statement of progress
Diminishing numbers of refugees and migrants in the country through 2017 have altered UNICEF's emergency response. Action is now focused on ongoing monitoring of the situation, support to unregistered migrants and refugees transiting the country unofficially and residual support to families and children remaining in transit centres, the asylum centre and the safe house that are still operational.

At the same time, lessons learned as a result of the crisis response highlighted the very real need for wider systems-strengthening to support vulnerable children and families across the country, including future refugee and migrant children and other under-served children and families affected by significant gaps in the social welfare system. Addressing these gaps was coupled with wider preparedness and mitigation action against future emergencies.

Ongoing crisis response, DRR and systems-strengthening activities were supported through 2015 by two national consultants - an emergency field coordinator and a child protection in emergency officer, working in conjunction with the remaining emergency assistant.

OUTPUT 4 Communications, Advocacy and Partnerships for children in emergencies

Analytical statement of progress
After almost all refugee and migrants stranded in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were readmitted or voluntarily returned to Greece, communication and advocacy efforts focused on the global #ChildrenUprooted and #AChildIsaChild campaigns. UNICEF adapted global multi-media content and local content including: “A child’s migration status should never be a barrier to accessing basic services” and “Children do not forfeit their rights when they cross borders”, which contributed to ensuring that child protection remains in public dialogue. These activities also contributed to an increase in reach and engagement on local social media channels (see output Communication and Advocacy Regular for details). With the emergency subsiding, communication and advocacy efforts have shifted to support for emergency transition programming as part of the regular programme. In 2018 this output will be discontinued.

OUTPUT 5 Communication, Advocacy and Partnership for children

Analytical statement of progress
Within the global cause framework and in line with Office communication priorities, UNICEF Macedonia used traditional and social media to reach and engage audiences around issues at strategic points in time.
Engagement around inclusion of children with disabilities was prominent throughout the year, following the launch (March) and re-launch (September) of two major integrated campaigns to mobilize support for inclusion. The same was true of engagement on ECD, through activation of the global #Early Moments Matter cause campaigns in January and June (see output: Social Norms on Inclusiveness).

The Office made use of locally developed and global multi-media content during strategic moments, including UNICEF’s 70th Anniversary, the local Skopje marathon, visit of Flying High for Children, World Children’s Day, World’s Largest Lesson and global campaigns on #VaccinesWork, #EndViolence, #WorldWater and #Every Breath Counts to engage audiences on ongoing and emerging child rights priorities.

Communication support to three major high-level events in September, November and December contributed to Government commitment to accelerate reforms to strengthen cross-sectoral support to inclusion; end placement of children under three in institutions and reform the education system.

During the reporting period these efforts contributed to a record increase in public reach and engagement; including 865 local media reports that mention UNICEF, a 55 per cent increase compared to last year. From January to December 2017: the number of UNICEF Macedonia Facebook fans increased by 118 per cent: from 15,425 to 33,702, while messages reached 7,103,051 people (282 per cent of annual target), and engaged 515,679 (386 per cent of annual target). During the same period, Twitter followers increased by 68 per cent, from 1,089 to 1,835, with messages reaching 611,899 people (128 per cent of target) and engaging 13,590 (266 per cent of target); and the number of Instagram followers increased by 493 per cent from 98 to 582. Youtube subscribers rose by 519 per cent, from 47 to 291, reaching 170,705 and engaging 2,815 people. Stories published on the Office’s Medium channel reached 3,892 people and engaged 1,880 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**

UNICEF research in the previous programme cycle showed that from an early age children with a disability 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 IE. The medical model and its protocols, widely used to assess disability, are not in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A 2014 cross-sectoral assessment using a determinant analysis highlighted the major bottlenecks and barriers to the realization of the rights of children with a disability and their full inclusion in society, such as: lack of long-term planning and sustainable cross-sectoral coordination of child-centred services; limited information on disabilities that is not in line with standards of the Convention to guide policy and practice and low awareness of disabilities in Macedonian society.

Based on this, UNICEF’s 2016-2017 rolling workplan for health-system-strengthening defined specific activities to support country efforts to advance realization of all children’s rights.

Insufficient access and utilization of early detection and intervention services and lack of systematic planning and a holistic approach towards children with a disability were the key
identified areas of concern, in addition to existing policies that lack budgets and implementation plans. This led to a focus on existing legislation and proposals for developing standards and indicators for an interdisciplinary model of services for early identification, assessment and intervention, based on the International classification of functioning, disability and health (ICF). In close collaboration with other sectors, advocacy activities were planned to establish a technical working group with a mandate to develop an intersectoral strategy on children with a disability, a national action plan and standards for a multidisciplinary model of services for early identification, assessment and intervention for children with a disability, as well as the definition of a shared set of indicators that can be monitored across services and systems, based on ICF.

Important progress was achieved in capacity-building activities for home visitor service providers, with the key objective of improving knowledge and skills on early detection, intervention and support for children with a disability and their families. Having reached a 100 per cent trained patronage workforce in 2016 on early detection of disabilities, capacity building continued in 2017 on early intervention and support to families, with coverage of 42.5 per cent of patronage nurses (exceeding the 30 per cent planned). All relevant documents for the planned regional assessment of home visiting services, aimed at providing recommendations for further improvement of services as a sustainable model of accessible and adequate community and outreach services, were compiled. Training materials for early detection and intervention for children with a disability were also developed for general practitioners and family medicine specialists, expanding this activity at another level of healthcare, addressing the identified lack of adequate staff for early identification and intervention services, as well as prevention of unnecessary referrals to higher levels of healthcare.

By the end of 2017, ten master trainers had been trained in early detection and intervention of childhood disability, in addition to 100 general practitioners and family medicine specialists (6.7 per cent, more than the 5 per cent planned for 2017). The topic proved to be of extreme interest to health professionals, resulting in the creation of waiting lists to attend the trainings, supported by extremely positive comments on social media.

Assistance to the Ministry of Health continued in the area of mainstreaming planning for Roma into the national health system, through support for the work of Roma health mediators (RHM). The programme faces numerous challenges, mainly a reduction in funding, leading to turnover among trained staff. The formative evaluation of the RHM programme completed in 2017 was acclaimed as highly satisfactory and has provided data on the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and impact of the programme. Based on the evaluation recommendations, numerous advocacy activities were organized throughout 2017 to support country efforts in sustainable financing of the RHM programme, as defined in the management response to the evaluation.

Finally, UNICEF’s ongoing response to the needs of refugee and migrant children at the two transit centres and of children on the move continued in 2017, aimed at addressing their health, nutrition and WASH needs.

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

Analytical statement of progress
A review of legislation on implementation and budget in the health, social and educational sectors was planned in the 2016-2017 rolling workplan, 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 National Coordinating Body (NCB) established by
Government to coordinate activities for people with disabilities, to ensure that UNICEF support complements national priorities. However, the political situation early in the year led to a temporary suspension of NCB activities. In addition, no funds for this activity were available in 2017.

Consultations were launched with the Faculty of Medicine in Skopje, as the highest tertiary education institution in the country, to incorporate ICF into undergraduate studies, paediatrics and social medicine specializations and continuous medical education curricula. The main goal was to raise awareness among current and future health professionals about the multi-sectoral nature of disability. 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 contributes to stigmatization and promotes 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 an enabling environment for children with disabilities and their families.

Planned activities are complementary to other UNICEF efforts, such as translation of ICF (under social protection) and capacity building of professionals that work with children with a disability (under child protection), as well as the ERASMUS-funded project run by the University Paediatric Clinic for development of a software for disability assessment. The overarching goal is to make ICF a common language for all disciplines and sectors for describing health and health-related states, to improve communication between different users, such as health care workers, social workers, researchers, policy-makers and the public, as well as people with disabilities. However, funds were not secured for 2017; activities were rescheduled for 2018.

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 A DISABILITY

Analytical statement of progress
The Association of Nurses and Midwifes continued to be a major partner in promoting home visiting services and improving interdisciplinary networking with nurses, family medicine specialists (FMS), paediatricians and gynaecologists. Following the successful completion of training in early detection of disability in 2016, with 100 per cent coverage of the patronage nurse workforce, the ‘learning together’ programme continued to be used for ongoing training in early intervention for children with a disability. Ten master trainers were trained in April, 2017 and roll-up trainings launched in September, resulting in 132 nurses trained in early intervention (42.5 per cent trained, vs the 2017 target of 30 per cent).

Some 10,000 copies of a parenting booklet in two local languages were printed and provided to each mother during home visits, as a support to the work of PNs and parents in monitoring child development. As of 2018, a re-print of the booklet will be mainstreamed into ongoing Ministry of Health actions, and is included in the budget of the MoH preventive programme for mothers and children.
A draft methodology for regional assessment of home visiting services was developed, with support from the UNICEF’s Regional Office, and available relevant documents were compiled. Further work is expected to take place in the second half of 2018.

Work also got underway with the medical association for capacity building among general practitioners (GPs) and family medical specialists (FMS) in early recognition of children with developmental difficulties. These practitioners are uniquely positioned in the health system hierarchy, being an entry point to higher levels of the health care system, are in direct and permanent contact with families, and were identified as a weak point in 2015 assessment, responsible for large numbers of unnecessary referrals to higher levels of care. Ten master trainers were trained over four weeks in April through June, and training for GPs and FMS was launched in September, resulting in an additional 100 GPs and FMS trained by the end of 2017.

Partnership with the Association of Nurses and Midwives continued throughout 2017 for activities related to health and nutrition of refugee and migrant children in the two transit centres. Given the low number of refugee and migrant children, only two nurses were engaged by the end of September and their contract was placed on stand-by.

Two surveys, to assess iodine deficiency in pregnant women and children in kindergartens and schools, were launched in partnership with the NGO Studiorum, University Clinic for Pathophysiology, University Clinic for Gynaecology, MoES and MoLSP. Reports are expected to be finalized in the first quarter of 2018 and will be used for advocacy purposes.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**

Data on Roma health show that this population are less healthy than other population groups in the country. Causes include: sub-standard living conditions, making them susceptible to health hazards, and lack of personal documents, which creates difficulties for accessing medical services (9 per cent of the Roma population has no health insurance). According to NGO reports, Roma are frequently victims of prejudice or neglect by healthcare professionals and social workers, and child marriages are common, reaching 22 per cent compared to 4 per cent in the general population.

In partnership with the MoH and the NGO Health Education and Research Association (HERA), UNICEF continued to support county efforts to strengthen the Roma health mediators, in addition to building their capacity and improving the monitoring system. In 2017, these mediators were present in 10 municipalities with the highest aggregation of Roma population, and aided in access to health, social and education sectors, enabling about 10,000 children and their families to benefit from an integrated model of health, social and ECD services.

In addition to training completed for data collection and reporting, early detection of children with disabilities and collaboration with home visiting services, Roma health mediators were also trained in health and social aspects of early child marriage, a common problem among young people in the Roma community, and on recognizing and reporting discrimination. HERA also organized public debates in Roma communities in four municipalities with large Roma populations, to raise awareness on the problem of child marriage and discuss possible solutions.
A needs assessment for establishing local intersectoral teams to improve access to services for Roma children was finalized. The report provides recommendations on the specific composition of these teams, with the aim of facilitating Roma children’s access to mainstream services. The report offers three models, which were shared and discussed with Ministry of Health and RHM Steering Committee. However, the extended political crisis that led to the establishment of a new Government in late June delayed this activity, which is expected to continue once all governing bodies are re-established. Establishment of the teams, as well as institutionalization of RHM, were discussed at a stakeholders meeting on September 11, resulting in additional recommendations for a way forward. A formative evaluation of the RHM programme was finalized; its recommendations were translated into four actions in the management response and discussed at an advocacy meeting in December.

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

Analytical statement of progress
Despite restrictions on “official” entry, movement of refugees and migrants continued throughout 2017, albeit with a significant decrease in numbers. In the reporting period UNICEF continued to provide age-appropriate food for babies and children under five in established CFS spaces at two transit centres, in collaboration with the MoLSP and implementing partners. Due to the reduced number of women and children at the transit centres, nutrition counsellors were pulled out and will be engaged on as-needed basis. As part of the exit strategy, as well as to ensure the sustainability of activities, training on infant and young child feeding in emergencies was provided to the Red Cross staff still present at the transit centres, along with outreach services for unregistered refugees and migrants transiting the country. If the situation requires nutrition counsellors to be activated again, UNICEF has contingency arrangements for rapid mobilization and response.

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

Analytical statement of progress
Given the rapid establishment of appropriate WASH services supported by UNICEF at both transit centres, as per the WASH assessment in early 2016, activities in 2017 included only reconstruction of toilets at the child-friendly spaces in the village of Lojane, to support refugee and migrant children on the move. Due to sub-zero temperatures in January, UNICEF provided the transit centres with spare parts for the water supply system and maintaining the electrical grid.

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
In 2017 a key priority of the new Government was to improve the reach and quality of ECE. UNICEF played a key role in providing evidence to strengthen the argument for investing in ECE. In the coming year UNICEF will help identify areas for improvement, prioritizing interventions and modelling of good ECE practices that can be scaled up on a national level.
To further support reforms in ECE and education, UNICEF hosted a high-level conference jointly with the Government, aimed to improve the quality of education. The conference gathered over 500 participants who had the opportunity to engage with distinguished international education experts, thought leaders and advocates for quality, equity and efficiency in education systems. The latest developments in the future of curricula, character education, early childhood and inclusive education and innovation for learning were some of the core topics of the conference.

Another significant milestone achieved this year was improvement of MoLSP’s capacity for data collection and analysis related to ECD. The ECD database developed with UNICEF support was officially handed over to the Ministry, along with maintenance support for two years, to facilitate informed decision-making on ECD and ECE.

UNICEF remains committed to increased access to ECE for children 3 to 6 years old. Early this year all municipalities in the country were invited to submit applications for opening ECD centres in their communities. Of 20 that applied, 14 municipalities qualified. Although local elections and mayoral changes in most municipalities affected planning, MOUs were signed with six municipalities and negotiations with others are ongoing.

Inclusive ECE is another key priority, to ensure that all children can access quality early education. UNICEF continued support for strengthening capacity among the network of inclusive kindergartens, through the establishment of inclusive teams – essential mechanisms for mainstreaming of inclusive ECE practices in daily kindergarten activities. The transition from preschool to primary school sets the tone and direction for a child’s school career. Thus UNICEF supported a study on transition practices in the country in which over 2,500 educators, primary teachers and parents participated. Based on the results, training was delivered to 20 kindergartens and 20 primary schools, involving 90 primary teachers and educators in training on effective transitioning methods and practices.

The BDE completed training in formative assessment for early grade teachers. During the reporting period, 2,500 teachers were trained by a team of BDE advisors and teacher-trainers. This training equips teachers with new strategies and assessment techniques that influence teaching and learning quality, to improve student outcomes.

The network of inclusive schools was expanded with 11 new primary schools. Over 500 teachers from these schools were trained in three IE modules. In addition, all 31 existing inclusive schools in the country (including the above-mentioned eleven were supported to strengthen capacities for differentiated instruction and individual support to students, through the use of a toolkit with practical resources designed and delivered to schools last year. In response to the lack of clear guidance on the role and functions of the inclusive teams, which are now mandatory for all schools, UNICEF supported the development of a comprehensive guidebook outlining roles and functions of school inclusive teams. The applicability of this comprehensive resource package was piloted in six schools and results were used to finalize the guidebook; plan for national scale-up are forthcoming.

The resources developed were also used to support the United Nations Development Programme’s community works programme, through which 140 educational and personal assistants were employed in 18 municipalities. UNICEF provided financial and technical assistance for training these assistants in inclusive education and building their competence for providing individualized support to children with disabilities and their families.
An evaluation of the UNICEF-supported ELN programme was completed and the results presented to a group of key education stakeholders. Recommendations will be used to inform national policies and further strengthen early literacy and numeracy instruction.

The Parent Resource Centre continues to expand its work, targeting families from rural and remote areas and expanding the range of activities carried out. Based on the successful 2016 experience, the programme on volunteerism is being expanded to three new municipalities as a strategy to provide direct support to families of children with disabilities in their everyday activities.

Finally, the programme launched a major campaign on inclusion of children with disabilities with the theme ‘Be fair- for a childhood without barriers. The campaign reached 5,652,543 people and engaged 217,943, and had 2,165,889 video views on UNICEF Macedonia social media platforms. Developed with disability advocates, using social experiment videos, support form 15 celebrities, six community events and partnership with Skopje Marathon, the campaign sparked public engagement on the barriers and stigma faced daily by children with disabilities. A high-level event organized with the Prime Minister’s office contributed to a commitment to accelerate reforms to strengthen cross-sectoral support for inclusion. With complementary activities implemented through partnerships with CSOs and a mainstream children’s TV programme and film festival, this social change initiative promised to produce results in knowledge, attitudes and support for inclusion, which will be measured before the end of the year.

OUTPUT 1 Mechanisms for support and quality assurance to ensure inclusion of the most marginalized children are strengthened

Analytical statement of progress
Increasing access of children aged 3-5 years to pre-primary education was a UNICEF priority in 2017. Through an open and transparent application process, 14 municipalities qualified to open EDC centres. Twenty-two facilities were assessed as suitable for establishing ECD centres for organizing early learning to approximately 1,000 children. However, due to local elections most of the mayors in the municipalities changed, leading to delays in signing MOUs with the municipalities and preparations for opening ECD centres. By the end of the year six MOUs had been signed, and two municipalities (Negotino and Dolneni) withdrew their applications because they could not cover the costs for the educators. Discussions with other municipalities about opening new ECD centres are ongoing.

The ECD centre in Vaksince village, in the municipality of Lipkovo, which was affected by the refugee and migrant crises was finalized and officially opened. The centre has capacity for 50 children from the village to attend organized early learning programmes. However, due to a problem with staffing, the centre is not operational and UNICEF is working with the MoLSP and the new municipal administration to resolve this issue.

Since the new Government was formed, there has been ongoing discussion between the Minister of Labour and Social Policy and the Director of the State Education Inspectorate (SEI) about strengthening quality assurance systems for pre-primary education. An analysis of the legal mandates of the three inspections (MoLSP, SEI and municipal inspectors) was carried out to clarify their roles and responsibilities and prepare a plan for capacity development. In the upcoming period, UNICEF will support SEI to develop procedures and instruments for assessing the quality of early learning provided by ECD service providers.
The ECD database proved to be a valuable resource that greatly contributed to reducing the amount of time spent by the MoLSP on managing data. All kindergartens and ECD centres are recording information in the database regularly. This enables the Ministry to provide accurate and up-to-date data required for evidence-based policy making. During the reporting period, ownership of the database was officially transferred to MoLSP, and two years of support and maintenance was promised by the software developing company.

OUTPUT 2 Quality, inclusive and multicultural early learning practices are established and inform policy reforms and cross-sectoral cooperation

Analytical statement of progress
Supporting children to achieve their maximum developmental potential during early childhood requires preschool settings with appropriate structures and high-quality educational processes that enable full participation in early learning activities. Preschool institutions that provide high-quality services ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to develop their social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive skills and competencies. With this in mind, UNICEF continued to build the capacity of staff at 20 kindergartens through training, mentoring support and providing educational resources. In 2017, staff from 10 pilot kindergartens received training on establishing inclusive teams, building effective partnerships and preparing individual development plans for children with learning difficulties. Mentoring visits to the pilot kindergartens demonstrated significant improvement in knowledge for implementing various early learning strategies to meet specific functional needs of children. During the visits, educators and other support staff professionals indicated that they feel more empowered to work together as a team, in order to make the kindergartens more inclusive to children with disabilities.

Regional learning teams were established in three regions as mechanisms for sharing good practices and providing teachers with additional opportunities for learning: Skopje, Pelagonija region (Prilep and Bitola) and Vardar region (Veles). Two meetings were held with them to assess capacity development needs and create an action plan for supporting kindergartens to implement inclusive practices. Terms of reference were being developed during late 2017 for guiding members of the regional learning teams to perform their tasks effectively.

Continuing efforts were also invested in increasing the number of Roma children enrolled in quality early learning programmes, by opening ECD centres in communities with a high Roma population and conducting awareness-raising activities. To better utilize existing resources in these communities, 20 RHM were trained in basic ECD, enabling them to provide more effective support to families with young children. They were introduced to topics such as the early learning and development programme, ECD centres as alternative services to advance early learning and development and different strategies for Roma families to better prepare their children for school.

Macedonia lacks effective transition strategies to prepare children in pre-primary for the challenges and demands of primary education. Literature reveals that effective transition programmes establish a link between schools, families and communities in positive and supportive relationships that greatly contribute to enhancing young children’s well-being and education. To identify existing practices and design new and effective ways of working, a KAP study was conducted in which 230 educators, 123 primary teachers and 2,305 parents participated. Based on the results, training was designed and delivered to 20 kindergartens and
20 primary schools, training 90 teachers and educators in effective transitioning methods and practices.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**

For professional development of teachers, regional learning teams were established, representing collaboration among teachers to share experience and improve teaching methodologies. This year, 47 meetings of regional learning teams (for language and math) were organized, with participation from representatives of 160 primary schools. During these meetings teachers had an opportunity to engage in a way that builds their capacity and collegiality, improves the quality of instruction and focuses on student achievement. To further support teachers to implement inclusive activities and sustain good practices, 81 mentoring visits were conducted during which 684 teachers and school support staff received guidance and support.

Training in formative assessment for all early grade teachers was delivered in the central and western parts of the country. All 2,500 teachers in these regions received training by a team comprised of a BDE advisor and experienced teacher-trainers. The training in formative assessment equips teachers with new strategies and techniques that contribute to improving the classroom teaching and learning process, improving outcomes for students.

UNICEF Macedonia worked to strengthen capacities of teachers in 20 inclusive schools in differentiated instruction. The initial training was delivered to 60 teachers, who disseminated this knowledge to their peers at 20 inclusive schools. The main goal of the training was to ensure that students are offered different avenues for learning in terms of: acquiring content, processing and constructing ideas and learning effectively, regardless of their abilities. In addition, a manual was prepared with practical examples of how to further support teachers to strengthen their competency in differentiated instruction.

Macedonia’s results from the Programme for International Student Assessment in 2015 were one of the two lowest in the region. One factor that contributes to such results is weak preparation for the testing. This year, UNICEF supported the MoES to organize working sessions during which over 1,800 representatives from school management and teachers in secondary education were given guidance and materials on how to better prepare students for the next assessment in 2018.

Empowering parents to support their children with disabilities to access and participate in mainstream schools is an important principle for quality IE. With UNICEF support, over 120 parents participated in two psychosocial trainings focused on overcoming stress, maintaining functional families and creating support networks. In addition, to expand opportunities for individual psychosocial support to families of children with a disability, sessions were organized with 13 psychologists to further strengthen their capacities to work with families of children with a disability.

**OUTPUT 4** Quality, inclusive, multicultural educational practices and models of protective environment inform policy reforms and cross-sectoral cooperation
Analytical statement of progress
The network of inclusive schools expanded with the addition of 11 new primary schools. Criteria for selection included the number of children with a disability, regional distribution, past experience in inclusive education and demonstrated commitment. During the reporting period representatives from these schools were trained in the first two modules on inclusive education. Trained staff members were then supported to disseminate the knowledge gained to colleagues in their respective schools. Training on a third module will be organized in 2018.

All 31 schools supported by UNICEF have established inclusive teams, as a result of a recently introduced requirement of laws on primary and secondary education, and thus lacks guidance documents. Schools are facing difficulties in make the inclusive teams operational. For this reason UNICEF, with support from inclusive school staff, developed a comprehensive guidebook outlining the roles, responsibilities and functioning of school inclusive teams, backed by 127 protocols and examples of responsibilities that such teams must carry out. To assess the applicability of this comprehensive resource package, schools with and without experience in IE were selected to test the guidebook over six months. Results were used to finalize the guidebook and prepare for its national scale-up. To ensure appropriate support to the work of the school inclusive teams, a one-day orientation was provided to SEI inspectors and BDE advisors – the key educational bodies responsible for quality assurance – during which the manual on inclusive teams was presented.

Providing individual support to children with disabilities is another important element of IE. Based on good practices in existing inclusive schools, a draft manual for individual support to students was prepared and tested in the pilot schools, and tools were collected to enrich it with new approaches. Support staff from inclusive schools were trained in providing individual support to students and use of the toolkit. In addition, UNICEF provided financial and technical support for the training of 140 educational and personal assistants employed in 18 municipalities through the UNDP community works programme. Training included topics on IE and strategies for individual support to children with disabilities and their families.

At year end, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, UNICEF hosted a high-level conference on education aimed to spark public debate on the best ways to accelerate education system reform and quality. The conference brought together over 500 participants, who had a unique opportunity to engage with international education experts, thought leaders and advocates for quality, equity and efficiency in education systems. Over 20 international education experts shared the latest developments in curricula, character development in education, early childhood, IE and innovation for learning. The conference also included a hackathon, through which teams of experts and young people were engaged to locate new areas for innovation to improve education quality and inclusiveness.

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

Analytical statement of progress
Remarkable results were achieved as a result of two campaigns on inclusion of children with a disability. Under the theme ‘Be fair - For a childhood without barriers’ the campaigns reached 5,652,543 people, engaged 217,943 people and had 2,165,889 video views on UNICEF’s social media platforms. Both campaigns used a bold approach to encourage the public to identify with the barriers faced daily by children with a disability. The first phase included a daily national newspaper printed in Braille and four national TV primetime news reports delivered in silence,
provoking audiences with a video capturing people’s reactions to being served by a pharmacy assistant with Down syndrome. Another video featured a popular talk-show host testing wheelchair accessibility in the capital, underlining how physical barriers exclude wheelchair users from everyday activities. A third video showed children with and without disabilities playing “goalball” – a Paralympics game for visually impaired athletes. The videos were aired on primetime national television and supported with billboard and print advertising. A mobile phone application (Without Barriers) was launched to engage the public in mapping accessibility.

A high-level event organized with the prime minister’s office launched the second campaign in September. Called ‘see the ability’, the campaign included a retake of the social experiment video, demonstrating a positive change in response. A national billboard campaign featured children demonstrating their abilities, 15 celebrities supported the campaign through video messages, and six community events were organized during which over 2,500 children and community leaders engaged in discussions with children with a disability.

UNICEF Macedonia supported six CSOs to create inclusive events. The Special Olympics brought fifty young athletes with and without disabilities together to increase independence and motor skills, and trained 30 teachers to introduce inclusive sports at their schools. One hundred children with and without disabilities produced material presented during the Skopje Film Festival, which screened in three cities with international films highlighting disability, followed by panel discussions on challenges faced by children with a disability. Two hundred children with and without disabilities participated in a three-month youth activism programme; 140 children attended three inclusive summer camps; and 200 children with disabilities from 10 cities trained in the Paralympic sport Boccia for six months. Boccia clubs were established at all day care centres and a national competition was organized to demonstrate the game’s potential for children with a disability.

The popular TV show ‘5+ Family’ mainstreamed inclusion through a new character – a girl using a wheelchair – in three episodes challenging misconceptions about children with a disability. Partnership with the Down Syndrome Centre was established to promote ballet classes for children with Down syndrome.

In relation to ECD, a local adaption of the global #EatPlayLove campaign was rolled out in January and February 2017. Focusing on the importance of early learning through play, the campaign reached 276,000 people with a local video. Similarly, a local adaptation of the #SuperDads campaign, featuring five local celebrity fathers, was rolled out in July and August. Promoting the role of fathers in early childhood, the campaign reached 147,000 people with the local video contributing to 87,000 people reached.

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

Analytical statement of progress
During 2017 a total of 207 children and adolescents participated in structured educational and recreational activities within the child-friendly spaces established at the two transit centres. Throughout the year the numbers of families with children fluctuated, especially in the Tabanovce transit centre on the northern border with Serbia. In this context, UNICEF offered support to the Government to improve the exiting legislative framework and ensure smooth integration of refugee children in case of new arrivals. A stakeholder working group with representatives from responsible institutions was established and the legislation was analysed,
identifying articles in the laws on primary and secondary education that need to be amended to improve access to education by refugee and migrant children. Although the main focus of the analysis was on children with a regulated stay in the country (asylum seekers, recognized refugees, foreigners) UNICEF is trying to include all other children, some of whom have fallen through the cracks in the education system. These findings will be presented to the Government committee working on legal reviews to make sure that the recommendations are taken into consideration and embedded in the legislation for primary and secondary education.

To place refugee children at the appropriate education level, an assessment mechanism had to be developed. For this purpose, the BDE prepared placement tests for students aged 8-15, in accordance with the primary education curricula and Bloom taxonomy, covering knowledge, understanding and application of knowledge. Students’ knowledge of mathematics and natural sciences as essential for teaching subjects in the elementary education curriculum will be assessed, as well as basic knowledge of geography, information technology and world history.

As part of UNICEF’s emergency programme, the BDE conducted a comprehensive analysis of the country’s inclusion of natural disaster issues in education. The analysis focused on curricula as well as policy documents such as laws and regulations referring to education and disasters. The research offers recommendations for including DRR topics into classroom teaching, teachers’ professional training program and educational materials. Following these recommendations, UNICEF selected 11 kindergartens and primary schools to pilot models for including DRR in the education process.

To improve the knowledge and skills of children in primary school (ages 6-15) about the right of refugee children, including children with disabilities, and the importance of DRR, the primary education life-skills curriculum was strengthened with additional lessons and practical activities on these topics. Furthermore, to raise the awareness about refugee rights and the need for solidarity among the youngest population, a picture book was developed as part of MELA, a series of picture books for introducing respect for diversity and multiculturalism in early childhood programmes. Workshop materials were created for kindergarten teachers on how to work on this topic with preschool children aged five and six.

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
During the second year of implementation of a three-year regional EU-UNICEF project aimed at protecting children from violence and promoting social inclusion of children with disabilities, UNICEF Macedonia promoted coordination among Government, civil society and the international community in the country.

One component of the regional project is a study to assess state response mechanisms in prevention, identification, reporting, referral and protection related to cases of violence against children, which was conducted with UNICEF support by the NGO Voice against Violence. The findings will be used to: understand the scope of response to violence against children, identify policy and institutional gaps, support government and NGOs long-term planning on violence prevention and response and design an advocacy tool to put violence against children high on the Government agenda. A brief analysis of the situation regarding on-line violence against children was also produced by the partner NGO. A comparative analysis of primary and
secondary legislation was conducted in partnership with the Young Lawyers Association. Based on the findings and recommendations, a review of pertinent legislation was initiated.

Another component of the regional project is establishment of multi-agency response services addressing legal, medical, psychological, educational and social needs of child victims. A training programme was developed, and 13 professionals from the social work, health, education, law enforcement, judicial and CSO sectors were trained to serve as a resource to support capacity building at the local level. The training was rolled out in four municipalities where multi-agency team work will be piloted, with support by the project team and professional trainers. Around 190 professionals in the social work, law enforcement and judiciary sectors attended a specialized capacity building programme on implementation of procedures on how to process cases in which children are victims, in line with the child’s best interest and well-being.

UNICEF continued to support the Government to improve data collection, monitoring and reporting, and to assess existing mechanisms, as part of the regional project. A set of indicators was developed for the education, social work, health, law enforcement and judicial sectors, to enable reporting on the situation regarding the violence against children. The data will be used by the National Coordination Body for Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect for developing evidence-based policies to protect children from violence.

Development of the positive parenting programme aimed at improving the quality of children’s upbringing and development and creating better conditions for realizing child rights was completed. The programme will be used by parents, legal guardians and professionals to address the persistent use of violent discipline, by using positive discipline as a proven method that contributes to the prevention of abuse, neglect and violence against children.

New knowledge generated through KAP and social norms surveys on violence against children provided much-needed quantitative data to measure underlying factors that allow violence against children to persist in the country. The surveys explore empirical and normative expectations, providing insight into the extent to which social norms influence attitudes and practices related to violence. The findings will inform the design and implementation of a broader communication for social change strategy that tackles the topic of violence through better parenting programs and strengthening intersectoral collaboration to prevent and respond to violence.

UNICEF adjusted its workplan to accommodate the evolving Government agenda of accelerated de-institutionalization, which is strongly supported by the EU. UNICEF is positioned as a key Government partner, particularly regarding DI of children, and participates as a member of the steering committee chaired by the MoLSP. The committee oversees and advises assessment processes for implementation and review of the DI strategy, with funding from the EU. In addition, DI for children in the largest institutions for people with disabilities was supported by partnering with the Association of Special Educators and engaging an international consultant. The children and young people from the institution received support, through intensive interaction methods, and had their individual plans developed in preparation for leaving the institution and continuing their lives in a family, or a family-like environment. Due to the outstanding results achieved with the children in a short period of time, the MoLSP plans to conduct a similar process for adults in 2018. Furthermore, UNICEF expanded the programme for the development of alternative care and community-based services, and has agreed on areas of support to be provided to the Government, including further development and strengthening of the foster care model for children.
UNICEF also supported the Government in to organize a high-level conference on the theme ‘For every child, a family’, resulting in a Government commitment to end placement of children younger than three years of age in large-scale institutions by 2020.

UNICEF supported the provision of psychosocial support to 280 refugees and migrant children and, where needed, to their families. Some 85 unaccompanied and separated children received specialized support, aimed at protecting their best interest and provision of 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**

A study to identify and assess state response mechanisms in prevention, identification, reporting and referral in cases of violence against children conducted by the national NGO “Voice against Violence,” was completed. The NGO also conducted a situation analysis on-line violence against children. The results will be promoted in the first quarter of 2018, with the aim of provoking action in this area.

A comparative analysis of primary and secondary legislation related to prevention from and response to violence against children, conducted by the Young Lawyers Association, was completed. Based on the recommendations, development of operational national child protection policy and legal framework for health, education, social, police and justice sectors was initiated.

In partnership with the NGO Council for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, a set of indicators was developed for the education, social work, health, law enforcement and judicial sectors. The indicators were presented to more than 150 practitioners through four consultative workshops, and were revised based on feedback received. The monitoring system was presented to the National Body for Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect, which will use it to report on violence against children and to propose evidence-based policy development aimed at prevention and protection of children. Based on an assessment of the main areas of concern and key bottlenecks affecting implementation of the Justice for Children Law, instructions for unified implementation of the Law were developed. Around 190 of social workers, law enforcement and judiciary professionals attended a specialized capacity building programme on procedures for processing cases in which children are victims, supporting the child’s best interest and well-being.

Assistance was also provided to the Government in for improving protection services for children who are victims of, or at risk of, trafficking, violence and abuse. Gaps in service provision and protection of at-risk children were identified, and recommendations were provided for strengthening services and developing minimum service standards for state and non-state actors in the social protection sector working with at-risk children.

UNICEF adjusted its workplan to intensify action around the evolving Government focus on DI, efforts strongly supported by the EU. UNICEF is a key Government partner on DI, and supports urgent action to ensure that all children have their right to a family fulfilled. During a national conference on children and family held by UNICEF in November, the Minister of Labour and Social Policy committed to the de-institutionalisation of all children under the age of three by
UNICEF supported the MoLSP to re-design its programme of day care centres for children with a disability in 30 municipalities, in order to meet the individual needs of an increased number of children. Following recommendations from international and national experts, this work will continue in 2018.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**
UNICEF, in partnership with the NGO HERA, and with technical assistance from Terre des Hommes, supported the development of multi-agency teamwork. As part of a training of trainers programme, 13 professionals from the social work, health, education, law enforcement, judicial and CSO sectors were prepared and certified in 2017 to serve as a resource for capacity building at local level. The training was rolled out in four municipalities where multi-agency teamwork will be piloted, with support by the project team and professional trainers. The pilot phase will help strengthen the model before it is further rolled out.

To further contribute to strengthening the capacity of judicial professionals in processing the cases involving child victims or witnesses, UNICEF partnered with the Judges and Prosecutors Academy and Young Lawyers Association to develop curricula for training of judges, prosecutors and lawyers. The curricula will cover: multi-agency work and intersectoral cooperation, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, implementation of special measures for procedural protection, respect of “equity of arms” principle, the right to compensation and similar topics. Additionally, training will be delivered to judges and prosecutors on conducting pre-trial interviews and use of that evidence in criminal proceedings. The aim is to avoid the secondary victimization of child victims and witnesses, while also ensuring the legal rights of the accused in such proceedings.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**
UNICEF Macedonia supported development of a positive parenting programme for parents and caregivers in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities. The programme promotes a positive discipline approach, as a proven method that contributes to prevention and/or decrease of abuse, neglect and violence against children, while increasing the quality of children’s upbringing and development and creating better conditions for realization of their rights. The materials developed, in partnership with the NGO “Vigotski”, include a manual and brochure for parents and legal guardians, a handbook for professionals and picture books and cartoons for children and adolescents. All materials were validated by children, parents and professionals in several targeted communities, in collaboration with the centres for social work and primary schools. The programme will be promoted in 2018.

New knowledge generated through two KAP and social norms surveys on violence against children provided much-needed quantitative data to measure underlying factors that allow violence against children to persist in the country. The surveys explore empirical and normative expectations, providing insight into the extent to which social norms influence attitudes and practices related to violence. The findings will inform the design and implementation of a broader communication for social change strategy that tackles the topic of violence through
better parenting programs and strengthening intersectoral collaboration to prevent and respond to violence.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**
UNICEF continued to provide assistance in response to the ongoing refugee and migrant crisis, by providing psychosocial support to 280 children (199 boys and 81 girls), reaching 85 unaccompanied or separated children through CFS established at two transit centres. In addition, UNICEF supported Red Cross outreach to children on the move at Macedonia’s northern border with Serbia. As a result, an additional 365 children were reached with basic assistance (food, clothing, first aid) while on the move towards Serbia or Greece. In November 2017, UNHCR reported that 14,200 illegal border crossings had been registered in Macedonia since the beginning of the year.

Information and referral to available services to refugees was provided by information desks established at transit centres in Tabanovce and Gevgelija. Feedback from refugees using the information desks was used to inform improvement and further development of services at the centres. In addition, activities such as parenting programmes and activation of social networks were conducted, as part of the effort to create a semblance of normalcy for children and families at the transit centres. Serious protection concerns were monitored and reported by frontline workers from the CFSs. Given the evident lack of age-appropriate activities for adolescents, one of the facilities in transit centre Tabanovce was turned into youth-friendly centre where activities specifically for adolescents were organized.

As of the beginning of the year, 238 refugee and migrants (170 children), were placed either in the two transit centres, the Asylum Centre at Vizbegovo or at a safe house. UNICEF increased its support by providing other activities, including early learning for young children and pre-integration programmes for children. Foreign languages, science, math, mother language and ICT classes were provided to school-age children at the transit centres.

Finally, to ensure preparedness for current and future action, 153 frontline workers and UNICEF partners acquired knowledge and skills on: improving mental health services for refugees and migrants, and working with refugee and migrant adolescents, through capacity building provided by UNICEF, in partnership with other organizations. As a follow-up measure to training on working with refugee and migrant adolescents, UNICEF supported the Red Cross to open a youth centre in Lojane village, near the illegal transit route. The purpose was to train adolescents to provide first aid and recruit new volunteers to provide peer-to-peer assistance to adolescent refugees and migrants transiting through the country.

**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:**
The political stalemate that hampered work on improving the country’s cash benefit system was resolved in mid-2017. This provided an opportunity for renewed UNICEF engagement with partners to assess bottlenecks in the design and administration of the social protection system. In July 2017 UNICEF was the only UN agency invited to participate in an interdisciplinary work
group created by the new Minister of Labour and Social Policy, and was tasked with developing a new law on social protection. This provided a window of opportunity for UNICEF to further advance the rights of children to quality social protection and poverty reduction. UNICEF used this opportunity and provided technical assistance and generated knowledge to advance the reform process. As part of the reform process, UNICEF partnered with the MoLSP and the World Bank to begin to reform and improve the country’s management information system and merge the administration of social support and care services with the administration of cash benefits.

Progress was also made on the demand side regarding improved access to quality social protection services. UNICEF continued to engage with CSOs and the MoLSP to raise awareness among the country’s Roma population on the application procedures for child benefits. Global thematic funds for social inclusion were utilized to increase the participation of Roma children –who have some of the worst poverty, health and education outcomes – in the social protection system, in an effort to eliminate social and economic vulnerabilities.

UNICEF advocated for and supported a crucial reform in the field of social support and care services for vulnerable children by introducing case management in the area of social work. Building on achievements made with ISA on improving monitoring and evaluation in the delivery of quality social work, UNICEF began assessments and work aimed at the development of new standards and procedures for case management, which will continue through 2018.

Important progress was made in further fostering the inclusion of children with disabilities. Following the 2015 legislative amendments introducing functional disability assessment based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), UNICEF supported the Government in producing a formal translation of ICF in local language. ICF is now used by professionals in all social sectors (social protection, health, education, child protection) as the basis and common language in improving the inclusion of children with disabilities. UNICEF will continue to advance the use of ICF in the country by providing training for relevant practitioners from the social sectors on disability assessment based on ICF in 2018.

As part of UNICEF’s response to the on-going European refugee and migrant crisis, the Country Office was working 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 MoLSP 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 UASCs.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**

In a context where almost a third of the country’s children live in poverty and income inequalities continue to thrive, UNICEF strengthened the country’s capacity to enhance the quality and access to integrated social protection services that tackle poverty, discrimination and social exclusion. Together with decision makers from the Government and partners from Academia and the World Bank, UNICEF worked to develop a new Law on Social Protection that will reform the country’s fragmented and outdated social protection system. In 2017, the reform process focused on analysing the bottlenecks of the system and identifying key reform priorities, using UNICEF’s previous work and recommendations to improve the country’s social protection system as a base.
UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) and the World Bank to upgrade the country’s Cash Benefit Management Information System (MIS) and merge the administration of social support and care services with the administration of cash benefits. The new and improved MIS will be an electronic information system for processing, approval, record-keeping and monitoring of social benefits and services. It will improve the capacities of Centres for Social Work (CSW) in their current work and business processes and improve access to and quality of services delivered to the vulnerable. At the same time it will serve as an analytical database that disaggregates data by demographic characteristics of social protection beneficiaries and income/employment status, thus generating data for defining national and local social policies, data reporting and programing. The work on the new MIS will continue in 2018.

UNICEF partnered with a local free-legal-aid provider to help remove barriers in accessing social protection benefits faced by some of the most vulnerable groups, particularly the Roma. In many cases, beneficiaries who approach the CSW are faced with difficulties in understanding administrative procedures or eligibility criteria for assistance. UNICEF worked with partners to address issues and challenges related to the legal aspects of the social protection system for children including the access to legal aid. In cooperation with the CSWs, UNICEF helped establish a free-of-charge telephone line where beneficiaries can call and receive advice or free legal aid by qualified legal practitioners. In 2018, UNICEF will continue to support this initiative and utilize Strategic Litigation as a tool to promote wider social impact, initiate legal reform and influence legal practice.

One of UNICEF’s objectives under its Regional Strategy for Social Protection is to foster high level collaboration and knowledge sharing on social protection between and across the countries of the region. To this end, the Country Office worked to bring together high-level decision makers, social protection technical staff and policy influencers from the country and the region of Western Balkans to discuss innovation in social protection, exchange experiences and promote co-operation. The conference stressed the importance of outreach and provision of extended social care services and support to excluded children and families. A Call to Action was also agreed upon and distributed to all relevant stakeholders.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**
In March 2017, UNICEF completed a summative evaluation of the ISA training programme on continuous professional development of social protection professionals. The evaluation provided evidence of the impact and results achieved by ISA and the programme, identified bottlenecks and barriers to its implementation and provided recommendations for future work. The information gathered through the evaluation was used to develop and adopt an evaluation management response plan that will guide UNICEF’s future engagement with ISA – aimed at improving linkages between the training programme and the ongoing process of licensing social protection professionals and standardizing social work services.

Case management is vital to the delivery of quality social services to vulnerable children, especially for full and effective implementation of DI. To that end UNICEF supported, and will continue to support through 2018, both ISA and the MoLSP to develop new standards and procedures for case management. UNICEF also worked with ISA to increase the institute’s
understanding and use of monitoring and evaluation tools and techniques by developing and delivering a specialized, interactive training for ISA staff in monitoring and evaluation of the quality of social services delivered to vulnerable children and families. Following the training, ISA supervision procedures and tools were also revised and improved.

One of the key goals defined in the national strategy for the development of social protection is the pluralization of social services and introduction of ‘social contracting’ as a modality for social service delivery. During the last few decades, social contracting was considered a progressive approach for building long-term public/private partnerships in almost all social sectors. One of the main reasons for UNICEF’s involvement in this field is that social contracting could be an effective approach for tackling some of the bottlenecks currently associated with the delivery of social protection. Social contracting is generally defined as a legally regulated arrangement allowing the state to contract out public services to private providers and compensate them with public funds. To generate knowledge and evidence on the efficiency and benefits of this model, UNICEF partnered with the MoLSP and SOS Children’s Village to conduct a cost-benefit analysis and a regulatory impact assessment on the introduction of this model. A key finding was that a primary reason why the Government should consider social contracting is lower operational and HR costs.

**OUTPUT 3** Strengthened resilience of marginalized children and families, including Roma and children with disabilities

**Analytical statement of progress**

To further accelerate the shift from a charity/medical model to a social and human rights-based model of disability assessment, UNICEF supported the country in the production of a formal translation of the ICF. UNICEF secured the copyright for the local language version of ICF from the World Health Organization. A national consultant and team of experienced translators worked on a coherent, streamlined and formal translation of ICF, and a technical/expert reviewed the translation. UNICEF ensured an inclusive and transparent process providing opportunities for all relevant stakeholders (relevant ministries, CSOs, professionals and academics) to provide their input to the translation and verification process. The local version of the ICF was published and launched at a national event in September 2017. A local language version copy was distributed to all relevant stakeholders and practitioners throughout the country. In 2018 UNICEF will continue to work on raising the capacities of disability assessment professionals and piloting the new assessment model in at least one municipality in the country.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**

As part of the humanitarian response to Europe’s refugee and migrant crisis, UNICEF supported the MoLSP to enhance the capacity of the country’s centres for social work by ensuring the presence of appropriate social protection staff (social workers and interpreters) at all sites where refugee and migrant children were in transit. Particular focus was given to unaccompanied and separated children and other vulnerable children. More specifically, in accordance with international conventions and principles and national legislation and based on public authorizations, part of the mandate of centres for social work is to serve as legal guardian, playing a critical role in relation to unaccompanied and other particularly vulnerable groups of beneficiaries. The centres are responsible for appointing a guardian and ensuring
accommodation; i.e., ensuring the protection of the rights and interests of the child in appropriate conditions, enabling children’s future development.

Although numbers of refugees and migrants have diminished drastically since the closure of borders, in 2017 there was still movement, including unaccompanied adolescents. UNICEF and partners continued to monitor this situation, to ensure that effective and adequate care is given to all vulnerable children in or transiting the country. This system-strengthening effort will continue to benefit not only children on the move, but other vulnerable children in the country.

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

Analytical statement of progress

Ensuring that the rights of children are protected and exercised implies the existence of a support system, which includes several key components:
(a) relevant actors, from both the state and civil society
(b) legislation that clearly incorporates international conventions on human rights
(c) comprehensive data
(d) a strong mechanism to monitor if and how legal provisions on human rights are being implemented in practice.

For UNICEF, this translates to a need for action across all components. Hence, work in 2017 placed an emphasis on enhancing the monitoring capacities of civil society actors as well as on developing tools and defining indicators that would contribute to improved data collection.

Specifically, as part of a broader initiative addressing the protection of children from violence, UNICEF Macedonia supported a partner-led activity to develop a set of indicators that would allow for a more structured data collection on child victims of violence by organizations that provide services to these children and their families. The process was envisioned to be participatory, integrating input and ideas from CSOs that work in this field and provide services to victims of violence. This task is both hugely significant and complex. A specific set of indicators encompassing all of the measures to be taken when identifying and protecting child victims of violence does not exist. Hence, the initiative is all the more important and, at the same time, requires considerable time and effort. The process should not be rushed; well-defined, relevant indicators, must be clearly understood by all those who are supposed to use them.

Inclusion of children with disabilities is another strategic priority for UNICEF. It is also an area that requires multi-layered support, as the disability movement in the country is rather fragmented, with low level of coordination among disabled persons’ organizations (DPOs), resulting in incoherent—and at times, contradictory—actions and weak understanding of the human rights-based approach to disability.

One of the leading DPOs in the country has partnered with UNICEF with the goal of bringing together DPOs and CSOs that work with adults and children with disabilities and create a network that would solidify their efforts to monitor implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Another partner, working in the field of IE and assistive technology, collaborated with the office of the Ombudsman to monitor the inclusion of children in regular schools. The partnership includes two-fold support to the Ombudsman office: small-scale research on inclusion of children with disabilities in the country’s public high schools and creation of a monitoring matrix as a tool allowing the Ombudsman to oversee the realization of
the rights of children with disabilities in a more systematic way.

Initial steps were taken toward conducting the MICS6. The MICS survey is of paramount importance for generating in-depth data in many key areas of children’s wellbeing— including education, health care, ECD and psycho-social protection— and across topics for which data is scarce, such as domestic violence, attitudes on violence and child discipline. In addition to signing an MOU, UNICEF and the State Statistical Office (SSO) have worked on developing the survey plan and detailed budget for this complex activity and advance preparation activities. Collaboration with the State Statistical Office also included an annual update of the TransMonEE database and attendance at the TransMonEE regional meeting that focused on SDG baselines for children and new methodological work, practices in improved data collection on children of refugee and migrant families, as well as data on ethnicity/nationality.

Monitoring the realization of children’s rights requires developing and maintaining an ecosystem involving various parties, each playing a specific role. Hence, 2017 saw efforts to prompt more active communication with other key stakeholders (e.g., academia, the Parliament, international agencies) to explore new avenues for collaboration that would contribute to better monitoring of child rights. Also, given its crosscutting nature, advancing children’s rights was also supported through key areas of other programmes, such as child protection and ECE.

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

Analytical statement of progress
UNICEF places strong emphasis on the importance of data-driven reforms and policy-making based on evidence. While all efforts converge towards the achievement of transformational impact, i.e., irreversible changes that will create a better environment for all children, they must be based on sound data about the current situation, as well as current and emerging trends in children’s wellbeing. The country’s data landscape is characterized by many gaps and numerous challenges – such as demographic statistics based on projections derived from a census conducted in 2002, lack of common definitions, lack of disaggregated data and inability to merge data from multiple sources. This propelled the SSO and UNICEF to commence preparation of the MICS household survey, which will serve as a massive source of in-depth, disaggregated data across numerous areas such as health and nutrition, ECD, violence and poverty.

The process has faced several challenges: a prolonged period of political crisis that continued well into the first half of 2017, which has meant uncertainly about locking in broader political support for the survey; internal changes within the SSO; serious delays in preparatory activities required to conduct the survey; and, last but not least, a rather wide funding gap. Nonetheless, SSO and UNICEF attended the MICS design workshop, organized to familiarize participants with the methodological base and the overall guidance in conducting the survey. An MOU was signed in August 2017, and both partners subsequently worked to develop key documents: a draft survey plan, a draft budget and a timeline of planned activities. Although still facing difficulties, preparations continue as MICS is currently seen as the best option for producing comprehensive, globally comparable data that would feed into policies, address data gaps and contribute to SDG baselines.

The Ombudsman’s office is seen as a unique institution advocating for human rights; UNICEF support aims to contribute to its capacity to monitor the realization of children’s rights in different
areas. In the second half of 2017, a small-scale research study was conducted to look into inclusion of students with disabilities in public high schools; specifically how inclusiveness is understood and perceived, and what inclusive practices schools apply. It complements a similar activity on the same topic in primary education conducted in 2016. The partnership also includes development of a monitoring matrix, envisioned as a simple tool to be used to monitor specific aspects of inclusion of children with a disability.

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

Analytical statement of progress
The role of CSOs in promoting and protecting the rights of the children is significant in Macedonia. They provide multiple services to children as well as monitoring the situation in the country and engaging actively in advocacy.

Throughout the year, UNICEF has worked with organizations active in two areas – services to child victims of violence and for adults and children with a disability. In all activities, however, an underlying priority was to foster stronger networks among CSOs to enable better-coordinated actions and a unified voice in advocating for human rights.

UNICEF partner Open Gate-La Strada has been leading a process of defining indicators to monitor the situation of violence against children. The process was affected by the lack of established indicators that organizations aiding child victims of violence are using, or could use. However, this also implies that the initiative is paving the way for the design of a structured set of indicators dealing with a sensitive topic, which could greatly help in collecting much-needed data on violence against children.

A partnership was established with Polio Plus with the overarching goal of helping to create a critical mass of actors from civil society competent to monitor whether, and how, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is implemented in the country. Bringing different organizations together to build an alliance that would advocate for the rights of adults and children with disabilities has proven to be quite challenging. Aside from fragmentation within the disability movement, DPOs need more knowledge of the Convention, how it is reflected in the country’s legislation and what it implies to monitor its implementation. This was the case even for the largest association of DPOs in the country, the National Council of Disability Organizations.

UNICEF supports a series of capacity development workshops to facilitate the Council’s shift towards an asocial approach to disability and enhance its competence to represent the rights and the needs of the people with a disability.

**Document centre**

**Evaluation and research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Sequence Number</th>
<th>Type of Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge, attitudes and practices towards violence against and among children in various settings</td>
<td>2017/004</td>
<td>Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of UNICEF Roma Health Mediators Programme</td>
<td>2017/003</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Other publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manual for Promoting Mental Health of Affected Children - with accent on refugee and migrant children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost-Benefit Analysis of Introducing Social Contracting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory Impact Assessment of Social Contracting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Guide on Child Health, Growth and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive Education Technical Booklets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual for Individual Support to Students with Difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidebook for School Inclusive Team</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>&quot;Be Fair! For a childhood without barriers&quot; campaign triggers change for inclusion of children with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Learned</td>
<td>Capacity building of healthcare professionals at primary healthcare level for early detection and intervention of children with disability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Programme documents

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