Executive Summary

UNICEF-supported teacher training resulted in a concrete improvement in student test scores in literacy and numeracy. The preliminary results of a longitudinal study conducted in 2012, showed that the knowledge and application methods of teachers who received training in early numeracy teaching methodology had improved from 34 per cent in 2009 to 49 per cent in 2012. Student scores improved from 38 per cent in 2009 to 58 per cent in 2012. To date, 60 per cent of all early grade teachers have been trained in improved teaching methods in numeracy, and 40 per cent received similar training in teaching skills to improve literacy.

The CO established its first private sector partnership in 2012 with the signing a multi-year agreement with the T-Mobile Foundation to support the expansion of early childhood development (ECD) services. The partnership is a considerable milestone for the CO's fundraising strategy. The agreement includes a one-off cash donation and leverages other mechanisms for private individual fundraising using the client base of the foundation’s parent company, T-Mobile. In addition to fundraising, the partnership also builds on a Communication for Development (C4D) initiative to raise awareness on the importance of ECD and the critical role of parents in early childhood development.

UNICEF carried out a detailed assessment of the child benefits system which showed, for the first time, the efficiency and effectiveness of the child-related cash transfers system in reaching and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable children. Advocacy efforts at the highest levels led to commitments made by the Government to initiate administrative and legislative reforms in 2013 based on the specific recommendations made in the assessment.

Extensive delays in the finalization and launch of the fourth round of the country’s Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS4) were disappointing. Ongoing political volatility in the National Assembly led also to significant delays in considering key legislation to reallocate funding for the expansion of ECD services.

Effective coordination with USAID on their inter-ethnic education project continued with USAID now supporting the expansion of extracurricular activities based on a model developed by UNICEF. The two organizations also worked together to support the professional development of teachers in competencies they need to work effectively in inclusive education.

UNICEF also worked closely with both the European Commission and key members of the European Parliament to advocate for both resolution and funding for child-rights-related issues identified by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and/or in the EU Progress Report.

Country Situation as Affecting Children & Women

While Euro-Atlantic integration remains a goal uniting the country’s political parties and ethnic communities, EU Foreign Ministers once again rejected the European Commission’s recommendation that a date be set for opening Macedonia’s long delayed EU accession talks. The recommendation, contained in the Commission’s 2012 progress report, praised reforms to date but highlighted other areas affecting children that needed to be addressed.

Relations between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians, the two largest population groups, remain polarised. Despite continuing tensions, a return to armed conflict remains unlikely. Inter-party politics, however, remain highly volatile with an opposition boycott of the National Assembly in place since late December. The on-going boycott may complicate the passing of key legislation, such as that enabling the expansion of ECD services, benefitting children.

While decreasing slightly, the poverty rate remains high at 30.4 per cent in 2011[1]. Households with children compose 53 per cent of all poor households. The poverty gap index hovers around 11 per cent among families with children, 30 per cent higher than that of families without children. State Statistical Office (SSO) reports put child poverty rates at 37 per cent in 2010. Finally, the economic downturn has negatively affected the subjective poverty rates of households, 50 per cent of whom reported that their family financial situation in
2011 had been “much worse” compared to the previous year, up from 48 percent in 2010, and 42 per cent in 2009 [2].

While the Government’s efforts to meet the needs of the most vulnerable must be acknowledged, reforms to date have been insufficient to fully address the burden. Social measures introduced in 2011 such as soup-kitchens and energy subsidies continued in 2012. The Parliament also committed to increasing social financial assistance and the permanent financial assistance for persons with disabilities by 5 per cent.

Key child health indicators continued to improve. Infant mortality, showing a declining trend in the past 3 years, is now at 10 per 1,000 live births [3]. Stunting among children under five decreased from 8.7 per cent in 2005 to 3 per cent in 2011 [4]. Similarly, anaemia in children showed a mild decrease, from 26 per cent in 1999 down to 22 per cent in 2011. However, disparities continue to persist among different ethnic communities.

Roma and Albanian children have 25 per cent higher infant mortality [5]. UNICEF nutrition survey showed that the prevalence of anemia is 1.5 times higher among the same ethnic groups, while MICS results indicate that Roma children have 4.5 times higher stunting prevalence than the national average. Differences in child indicators are also significant among geographical regions, with some of them being up to 30 per cent higher than the national average [6]. Despite good indicators for coverage and utilization of child health services at the national level, access to adequate and holistic community health care remains a challenge for children with developmental difficulties and for socially vulnerable groups. In this regard, the community nursing system remains largely unutilized as the most powerful “equalizer” in the health system.

ECD coverage for children 36-59 months increased from 11 per cent in 2006 to 22 per cent in 2011 [7]. The MoLSP has also announced the opening of 14 new kindergartens in rural areas in 13 municipalities in 2013.

In Education, discussions on how to effectively reach out to the most marginalized children, inclusion in the classroom and overall quality of education in the country are intensifying. As noted in the 2012 EU progress report, expenditure on basic education remains below the EU average. The report also noted the need to improve teacher training.

The EU report also emphasizes the need to increase efforts for inclusion of children with disabilities, remove barriers that segregate Roma children in special schools, address discrimination and stereotypes against Roma and persons with disabilities, and increase capacities for inclusive education. The launch of TIMSS results and the country’s low score [8] intensified the debate about the need to focus on quality interventions. The MoES has recognized the importance of continuing teacher support for teaching literacy and numeracy, and announced that it would procure new textbooks and introduce new methods of teaching science [9].

While Government expenditure on education increased slightly in 2012, the Bureau of Education and Development, which is in charge of developing and improving the school curricula, has seen its budget reduced by 5 per cent, maintaining the trend from the past three years. In terms of inter-ethnic relations, the trend of separation in schools and in municipalities continues.

Prevention, protection, outreach and care services still lack sufficient financial and human resources especially for children with disabilities, street children and children who are victims of violence. Marginal progress can be reported in the treatment of children with disabilities including a more active involvement of civil society in delivering social care services. Policy implementation, however remains slow, and the classification process of children with disabilities is still outdated, and largely centered around a strictly medical model. UNICEF started supporting the MoLSP in reforming the classification of children with disabilities to make it in line with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health. The reform will be completed in 2013 [10].

The prison system remains seriously underfunded and understaffed with poor management, poor material conditions, limited health care provision, limited educational and rehabilitation activities, in particular for juveniles, and the lack of an independent inspection mechanism to address violations and punish perpetrators remains problematic. The number of specialized staff, including psychologists and social workers, remains insufficient. Juvenile detention conditions in police stations fail to meet legal requirements. Free legal aid,
Beyond court representation is not yet systematically provided to juveniles. The programme to compensate juvenile victims is not operational.

[7] Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)
[8] 29 in mathematics 38 in sciences (chemistry, physics, geography and biology) out of 63 participating countries

**Country Programme Analytical Overview**

In preparation for the Midterm Review (MTR) and also as the basis for office Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES) plan, the CO conducted a bottleneck analysis for five IRs: early childhood, education, mother and child health, child protection, and social and economic policy. The bottleneck analysis was discussed with partners as part of the MTR consultations and finalized based on guidance from the regional office.

The analysis confirmed the priorities set by the country programme to address barriers to the enabling environment including legislative frameworks, sector policies, and budgeting in the social sector), effective management and horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms, data collection, management and use particularly with regards to equity issues, quality of services, and the need for professional and institutional capacity building to reach out to the most marginalized.

The bottleneck analysis clearly highlighted the need to more systematically address the social norms and cultural beliefs and practices that discriminate against the most marginalized children, including children with disabilities and Roma children. To this end, KAP surveys, C4D strategies and additional awareness raising campaigns will need to be developed and carried out in upcoming years.

Advocacy will continue to constitute a substantial part of the CO’s work in 2013 to support system reforms and change of the normative framework in different sectors. This includes reforming the child cash benefit system, adoption of ECD by the Parliament, updating of the methodology and procedure for classification of children with disabilities based on ICF-CY, and dissemination of MICS4.

In 2012, the CO formalized its first private sector partnership to improve access to early childhood development services and raise awareness about the importance of ECD.

Engaging both the social policy programme and education section, the CO will provide technical expertise to review funding formulas for equitable ECD services and inclusive education.
In 2012, in consultation with the Regional Office, the CO revised the IR on “Child Focused Governance” to reflect the emerging need to focus the limited financial and staff resources available on increasing public funding to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children. The new focus centers on advocating for fiscal transfers from the central to the local government to fund education and child-related social protection initiatives. The revision was based on recommendations made in a 2011 assessment, and was discussed and officially approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the signatory to the Country Programme Document. The MTR process was initiated in the last quarter of 2012 and will be completed in 2013.

### Effective Advocacy

*Fully met benchmarks*

### Capacity Development

*Mostly met benchmarks*

### Communication for Development

*Mostly met benchmarks*

### Service Delivery

*Mostly met benchmarks*

### Strategic Partnerships

*Fully met benchmarks*

### Knowledge Management

*Mostly met benchmarks*

### Human Rights Based Approach to Cooperation

*Fully met benchmarks*

### Gender Equality

*Partially met benchmarks*

### Environmental Sustainability

*Initiating action to meet benchmarks*

### South-South and Triangular Cooperation

In 2012, the Country office provided support to UNICEF’s health programme in Montenegro. Assistance involved planning and organizing a quality assessment of health care in maternity hospitals. The office shared with its counterparts the methodology, conclusions and lessons learned from a similar study the CO had conducted in 2010. Additionally, the CO’s assessment of the community nursing system strongly influenced similar research in the region. For example, the approach and methodology used in the assessment were adapted and applied successfully to the home visit nursing assessment in Turkmenistan in fall 2012. In 2013, Croatia will also apply the methodology for its own home visit system assessment.
The country’s experience in reforming the ECD system by revising the law on ECD and increased investment to expand the ECD network was presented at a two-day conference on the Role of Parliaments in Monitoring and Promoting Children’s Rights at the National Assembly of Kosovo. (http://intranet.unicef.org/ICON/ICONInTouch.nsf/WebFromTheField/LessonsByDate/EBEEABA46EC9F8CF85257AAE006BB101?OpenDocument)
Narrative Analysis by Programme Component Results and Intermediate Results

Macedonia – 2660

PC 1 - System strengthening for child rights

On-track

**PCR 2660/A0/05/501** By end of 2015, as a result of social sector reforms, the Government addresses targeted disparities in the quality of and access to basic social services for vulnerable children and families.

**Progress:** With UNICEF support, MCH services were revived and disparities in access to these services addressed thanks to generous funding from international donors (USD $ 8 million) and from the Government (USD $15 million). The funding covered over 80% of the cost requirements and helped to implement the key health sector strategies: Immunisation, Safe Motherhood and Nutrition. Despite this, concerns about the implementation capacity of the public health administration, as well as the adequacy of governmental focus on the public health system, remains. A key milestone in addressing planning and management bottlenecks has been the development, with UNICEF support, of a software program to help with the planning, budgeting, managing, monitoring and reporting on MCH programmes and the incorporation of this software into the Government Integrated Information Health System.

The evidence generated by UNICEF (MICS, Fair Play and RECI studies) on disparities in ECD and the current lack of funding, combined with advocacy on the importance of ECD as an effective strategy to improve school readiness, school success and build quality human capital, resulted in reforms in the ECD sector to reduce inequities (based on ethnicity, geographical location and wealth quintile) and improve service delivery. The reforms include a review of relevant legislation and funding, improvement of service quality based on ELDS, and increased municipal investment. These reforms contributed to an increase in national ECD enrolment of children 36-59 months old from 11% in 2006 to 22% in 2011, and in rural areas an increase from 1.5% to 6% (MICS). Remaining challenges include limited investments to expand the ECD network due to austerity measures by the Government, and inconsistent application of ELDS due to limited staff capacity.

In Education, UNICEF advocacy and knowledge management contributed to shifting the focus of education reform towards greater inclusion of the most vulnerable children, including those with disabilities and Roma children). It also contributed to improving early numeracy, literacy and life skills of all children, as evidenced in the most recent longitudinal studies (see IR statement for details). Primary school attendance rate for Roma children increased from 61% in 2006 to 85% in 2011 (MICS), and their completion rate more than doubled from 45% to 97% over the same time period.

Challenges to providing inclusive quality education include lack of funding, a lack of clear funding criteria, lack of commitment to invest in interventions that contribute to quality education, such as teacher training and clear definition of required teacher competencies. Another challenge is the lack of special programmes and services to accommodate the special needs of children with disabilities and Roma children, as well as the continued legacy of discrimination against these children and the weight of low expectations.

With UNICEF’s technical support and advocacy, the child protection framework improved considerably. The law was amended to provide better protection to child victims and witnesses; the family law was amended to simplify the adoption process and make it more transparent and to introduce the assessment of children and parents into the process; and by-laws were introduced to protect children in conflict with the law). A key milestone in improving the delivery of preventive and protective services was the finalization and endorsement of a standardized national curriculum for Centre for Social Work (CSW) staff. This included the revision and validation of CSW service delivery standards and the licensing of CSW staff based on these standards and curricula. The CSW data collection system is now operational at the national level, and the court data collection system has been upgraded to include data on child victims.

**IR 2660/A0/05/501/001** By end of 2015, national and local authorities resource programmes and action plans that address targeted MCH disparities and in the quality of MCH services.
Progress: Insufficient budget allocation and inefficient use of resources under the MCH programmes, aggravated by the impact of the economic crisis limits larger fiscal space in the health sector.

Alongside fundraising, improving management practices and the efficiency of MCH programmes were also addressed. Given that fiscal decentralization in the health sector has not yet taken place, instead of supporting local health planning as was initially foreseen, the programme provided international expertise to the national health authorities to start modernizing public health programmes, account for local disparities and introduce evidence-based planning. A software program was developed with UNICEF support to help in the planning, budgeting, managing, monitoring and reporting on MCH programmes such as immunization and home visiting and incorporated into the Government Integrated Information Health System. Full application of the software at all levels (national, regional, and local) will take place in 2013.

To help improve the quality of MCH services and the competencies and skills of health professionals in community health care, UNICEF partnered with renowned international academic institutions to upgrade the teaching curriculum on child health care at the state medical university with special emphasis placed on the needs of marginalized children such as those with disabilities. The revised curriculum has a strong focus on practical skills development, introduces innovations in the learning and teaching process such as e-learning modules, and ensures a link between what is learned at university and the professional demands of the sector.

IR 2660/A0/05/501/002 By end of 2015, all municipalities provide an essential set of diversified ECD services

Progress: The ECD law was identified as a key barrier to equal and inclusive access to ECD services. Technical advice and advocacy by UNICEF led to the introduction of the following revisions in the law and by-laws: inclusion of diversified service provision, reference to the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) for work with children, licensing, professional development, inspection, and record keeping based on ELDS.

The evidence from UNICEF supported studies (Fair Play, and RECI) identified the current ECD funding structure as another barrier to equal and inclusive access to ECD services. Current funding mostly benefits families in urban areas, who tend to be better educated and in the highest wealth quintiles. Building on the findings of the cost-benefit analysis (Fair Play), a more in-depth financial study was commissioned by UNICEF to provide the basis for a new funding formula with a focus on the most marginalized. The study will be completed in 2013. There are still barriers to accessing services with kindergartens only available in urban areas. UNICEF’s advocacy with municipalities resulted in the introduction of ECD centres into Roma and rural communities. These serve as cost-effective models for service delivery to the most marginalized children (20 centers covering 1,843 marginalized children). UNICEF advocacy with Government in 2012 also resulted in the planned opening of 14 new KGs in 2013 (currently there are 54), increasing the total number of KGs by 24 per cent.

UNICEF’s support for introducing and implementing the ELDS in KGs and ECD centres resulted in better child outcomes. Yet the consistent application of ELDS remains a challenge due to limited understanding of holistic development and child outcomes by ECD staff.

The lack of support to teachers and educators to ensure, monitor and evaluate quality is another bottleneck that the programme set out to address through capacity development at all levels. High-level international expertise guided and enabled the national stakeholders to develop a comprehensive in-service training programme based on ELDS.

By engaging stakeholders at all levels, a C4D strategy for behavior change was developed that also informed the design of a fundraising campaign in partnership with the private sector. Parent education materials were used to raise awareness on the importance of early learning and stimulation and show ways in which parents could engage in that process. UNICEF used €230,000 in IPA funds to support ECD centers and other ECD activities (ECD CoR and Lifestart) delivered by the local NGO partners. This IPA prioritizes service delivery to the most marginalized children including Roma children, rural children and children with disabilities and
capacity development at all levels to implement the ELDS.

On-track

IR 2660/A0/05/501/003 By end of 2015, the Ministry of Education and municipalities ensure that the national education system is inclusive (regardless of ethnicity, ability, and socio-economic background) and effective, in line with CFS standards.

Progress: The programme contributed to the improvement of numeracy and literacy teaching methodology. Poor teaching methods that focus on passive textbook learning as opposed to skill-building, were identified as the key factor behind low literacy and numeracy scores. Technical advice and capacity development provided by UNICEF helped train 60 per cent of all early grade teachers in effective methods for teaching numeracy, and 40 per for literacy. Preliminary progress results show an improvement in teachers’ knowledge of the new techniques (from 34 per cent in 2009 to 49 per cent in 2012) and in student scores (from 38 per cent to 58 per cent respectively). A longitudinal study showed an improvement in the numeracy scores of grade four students as a result of the teacher training.

The key barriers to inclusive education include the dominant “defectology” model which contributes to exclusion and segregation, and the limited capacity of teachers, resources and specialized services. UNICEF supported the capacity development of a team of national trainers who were introduced to the concept of inclusive education, school inclusion teams and out of school children in three modules. The modules were piloted in selected primary schools, kindergardens and two pedagogical faculties, and will be expanded to more schools and kindergardens in 2013. They trainers were also introduced to the ICF-CY as a framework for assessment. UNICEF also advocated and provided technical assistance for the establishment of the first Parent Resource Center run by parents of children with disabilities in 2012.

Support was also provided to promote international best practices for school integration of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Assessments conducted in 12 schools which are involved in joint extracurricular activities showed significant improvement in students attitudes towards those from other ethnic groups. Three youth centres organizing joint activities for more than 3,200 students from different ethnicities were also supported by municipalities.

The programme developed its strategic partnership and leveraged resources with USAID in several areas. The USAID project on inter-ethnic integration used a model developed by UNICEF to implement joint extracurricular activities. A USAID early numeracy and literacy assessment will complement UNICEF supported teacher training in early numeracy and literacy, and UNICEF will contribute to a USAID-supported project providing teacher training on inclusive education.

With UNICEF support, the Government adopted a National Action Plan and National Protocol on the Reduction of School Violence in October, 2012 and developed a programme to improve inter-ethnic integration in schools. Moreover, all secondary schools received training on how to reduce violence in schools.

On-track

IR 2660/A0/05/501/004 By end of 2015, the Government addresses targeted system gaps in the delivery of preventive and protective services, consistent with the revised normative framework.

Progress: Barriers to the enabling environment included: inadequacy of the JJ law in addressing the rights of child victims and witnesses, lack of relevant by-laws for children in conflict with the law, and absence of a child-oriented policy to assess children for adoption. The legal gap analysis supported by UNICEF provided the basis for MoJ amendments to the JJ law to address the identified gaps. Also, standard rules for the treatment of children in police custody and the standard rules for children in detention were developed. As a result of UNICEF technical advice and partnership with the MoLSP and the Parliament, the Family Law was amended to make the adoption process simpler and more transparent. UNICEF’s partnership and advocacy with the Parliament was instrumental in reviewing and amending the draft Law on Adoption to incorporate specific assessment procedures for children and parents in the adoption process.

UNICEF advocacy efforts led to the incorporation of the indicators framework into the electronic courts data collection system to help monitor the implementation of the JJ law. All juvenile judges and the administrative
staff that support those judges were trained on how to use the data collection system. With the introduction of the new indicators, the courts are now able to generate data on child victims, alternative measures and mediation.

Partnership with the National Council to Prevent Juvenile Delinquency led to the Council’s endorsement of the indicators framework. The Council is the highest body in the state with a mandate to report to the Government and the Parliament. With technical support from UNICEF, the Council’s annual report was prepared based on the indicators framework and submitted to Government and Parliament.

Lack of standards and quality of services provided by the Center for Social Work (CSW) remains a challenge. UNICEF supported capacity development at the Institute for Social Activities, the agency responsible for monitoring provision of social services, setting standards and providing training to professionals in the social work sector. This resulted in revised and field tested CSW service delivery standards, and endorsement of a standardized national curriculum with 14 modules for continuous education of CSW staff. The standards together with the new curriculum will form the basis for issuance or extension of CSW staff license.

### PC 2 - Child rights monitoring and social policy

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**PCR 2660/A0/05/502** By end of 2015, all partners (Government, CSOs, Parliament, media, and private sector) are collectively engaged in budgeting, monitoring child rights and child-focused social responsibility programmes.

**Progress:** The economic crisis, among other factors, had an impact on the general budget allocation. Issues persist at the level of planning, allocation as well as utilization of funds, and can be broadly defined as issues of efficiency and effectiveness.

Government budget allocations (as a share of total budget) to areas such as education, health and social protection for children remained largely unchanged for the past three years, but remain below the levels of EU and OECD countries.

The capacity of the National Child Rights Commission (NCRC) remains weak as a result of the continued lack of financial and operational independence. Absence of a dedicated budget and specialized secretariat limits the NCRC’s scope and potential to fulfill its mandate to the fullest. UNICEF technical support and advocacy resulted in i) a greater and more transparent participation of civil society, doubling the number of NGO members of the NCRC; ii) the upgrade of the status of NGO members to voting members; iii) revision of the National Action Plan for Children based on the CRC Committee concluding observations, together with a monitoring framework to monitor and report on its implementation; iv) adoption of the revised Action Plan by the Government.

A study on child benefits produced the first solid evidence on insufficiency and ineffectiveness of the social benefits to address the needs of the most marginalized children; almost 80 per cent of families with children in the poorest decile do not even receive child allowances. Advocacy at the most senior level of the MoLSP led the MoLSP to focus on the findings and express of willingness to implement specific recommendations in 2013.

In an effort to expand the role of civil society in monitoring child rights, two NGO coalitions were supported in publishing their first two annual reports on the situation of child rights and CRC implementation. Capacity building support has started to show some improvement with a shift from a "desk-review’ approach at the national level to field-based data collection at the local level approach, with better definition of indicators and more active involvement of all coalition members in the monitoring and reporting process.

The first private sector partnership was successfully formalized to improve access to early childhood development services. The partnership is a considerable milestone in the implementation of the country office’s fundraising strategy as it taps into the local private sector for the first time, integrating a one-off cash donation and leveraging other mechanisms for fundraising. In addition to fundraising, the partnership also
builds on a C4D initiative to raise awareness on the importance of ECD and the critical role of parents in early childhood development

**On-track**

**IR 2660/A0/05/502/001** By end of 2015, national and sub-national authorities use a reliable disaggregated data system for planning, budgeting, and monitoring to address child poverty and social exclusion.

**Progress:** The SSO agreed to use the data generated through the juvenile justice monitoring framework and the social work database in CSWs, both of which were developed with UNICEF technical support, in their regular reports. The SSO is in the process of testing and verifying the quality of data provided by these two systems. The CSW data system is now in use at the ISA and the MoLSP for their planning and monitoring purposes.

For the first time, the National Council for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, the highest body in the state in this field with a mandate to report to the Government and the Parliament, prepared its annual report on the implementation of the Juvenile Justice law using a model, methodology and indicators developed with UNICEF support. The report was submitted to the National Assembly and received positive feedback on its quality including disaggregation of data and accuracy of content.

Activities on migrating TransMonee data into DevInfo format and making it available for the public are on track. UNICEF provided IT equipment needed for posting the databases, and SSO transferred the data into DevInfo format.

The high level of motivation at SSO to improve and upgrade their capacities, data quality, data collecting and reporting model presents an opportunity for cooperation. In November, the SSO published its first report with data collected through the EU SILC survey, providing important information on poverty, social inclusion, and equity issues available and comparable with EU countries. This new report will replace the regular poverty and child poverty report and UNICEF will work with SSO to ensure that child poverty and social exclusion of children are incorporated in the future reports.

**On-track**

**IR 2660/A0/05/502/002** By 2015, relevant national and sub-national authorities adjust targeted institutional mechanisms that define and govern the implementation and efficiency of public funding for social protection and education programmes for children and determine its effectiveness and reach marginalised and socially excluded children.

**Progress:** As of 2012, UNICEF has revised this IR to reflect the emerging need to focus the limited resources on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children. The new focus centers around fiscal transfers from the central to the local government for education child-related social protection initiatives. The revision was based on the recommendations of an assessment made in 2011, and was officially endorsed by the MFA.

The programme allocated the bulk of its resources to gathering evidence to show that public spending needs to be increased in the areas of education and social protection for children. To do this, UNICEF conducted two comprehensive analyses in partnership with the MoLSP and the MoES. One was on the national child cash benefits system and the other on the adequacy, efficiency and effectiveness of fiscal allocations in the area of education from the central to the local levels.

The first study looked at the adequacy and effectiveness of the cash benefits system, identifying quantitative and qualitative gaps in the system and addressing these with targeted and cost-effective recommendations. Advocacy at the most senior level led the MoLSP to look at the findings and express willingness to implement specific recommendations in 2013 by reforming primary and secondary legislation. Such reform at this stage appears to be out of reach, especially in view of the upcoming local elections and the associated political costs. What will make the reform more realistic is the rising fiscal pressures resulting from maintaining the status quo. UNICEF will enhance its advocacy efforts to promote change in line with the principle of protecting the most vulnerable children.
UNICEF’s work in improving the use and effectiveness of fiscal transfers in the area of education continued in 2012 through the implementation of a Public Expenditure Tracking Survey. This detailed scrutiny of education allocations and management of resources is in the final stages of completion and will feed into the process of optimizing the education funding formula that currently governs the central transfers to municipalities, with the ultimate aim of improving access to education for all children and improving the quality of education services.

UNICEF partnered with UNDP to build upon their work in financing municipalities to deliver services to their citizens. The goals of both organizations are complementary and converge around the issue of providing adequate funding and high quality social services to families and children at the local level. UNICEF has built upon the work of UNDP in the area of bridging the fiscal gaps between municipalities through equalization grants, focusing particularly on the recommended changes to the fiscal transfer formulas to municipalities in the area of education.

In 2013, UNICEF plans to use the findings from the Public Expenditure Tracking Survey in its continued advocacy to reform education funding and to ensure the most vulnerable children from the poorest municipalities have access to quality education.

IR 2660/A0/05/502/003 By end of 2015, child rights monitoring institutions, including CSOs, monitor and produce accurate and timely reports on child rights

Progress: The first two annual reports on the situation of child rights and CRC implementation, prepared by the two CSO coalitions, were published in 2012. Cooperation with the coalitions continued around preparation for the next round of monitoring and the annual reports. Clear improvements have been noted in the capacities of the coalitions and in their approach to child rights monitoring. These include: i) a less centralized approach and higher involvement of coalition members in the monitoring and reporting process; ii) moving away from a “desk review” approach to “field-based” data collection; iii) better defining of indicators; iv) gradual shift from national level data to collecting data at the municipal level.

It was agreed that each coalition should select 14 urban and 14 rural municipalities (i.e. one third of all the municipalities in the country) for data collection and follow a unified approach, methodology and same set of indicators. However, the capacities of one of the coalitions are not developed sufficiently to cover all selected municipalities with data for all indicators.

With UNICEF support, the National Commission on the Rights of the Child revised the National Action Plan for Children based on the concluding observations of the CRC Committee. The revised action plan was adopted by the Government in October 2012. The long adoption process resulted in the postponement of monitoring the implementation of the Plan. The Commission is expected to produce its annual report based on the improved monitoring framework of the action plan.

Preparations are underway for the printing of the MICS 4 Report. The report will provide vital statistics on the situation of children and women in the country, to be used by both government institutions and CSOs.

IR 2660/A0/05/502/004 By end of 2015, alliances with parliamentarians, media, and the private sector establish an enabling environment for the fulfillment of child rights.

Progress: By integrating advocacy, communication for development (C4D), social media, partnerships and private sector alliances, the CO continued to mobilise multiple stakeholders to create an enabling environment for child rights. In 2012, the first long-term private sector alliance with the T-Mobile Foundation was established around early childhood development and school readiness. The partnership includes a one-off cash donation, cause related marketing, employee giving, direct mail to parent company 1.4 million client base, and support for a campaign that will raise funds and awareness on access to quality early childhood development opportunities.
The CO integrated the three main areas of communications (external communication, C4D and private sector partnerships) to maximize limited human and financial resources. A project initiated in 2010 to promote discussion among youth and children about violence in schools was expanded in 2012, bringing the total number of participants to over 8000. A 2012 evaluation of related 2011 C4D activities showed that the project and complementary C4D interventions had successfully steered attitudes on methods of dealing with violence in school away from the punitive approaches which tend to dominate public discourse.

The final set of communication and visibility activities for the UNICEF and EU Justice for Children Project were completed, helping to increase the awareness of the public, government stakeholders, and media on the rights of children in conflict with the law and on the reforms that need to be made to the child justice system.

UNICEF’s partnership with the Parliament yielded concrete positive results in several areas. The UNICEF supported Working Group on the Rights of Children, a subsidiary body within the Parliamentary Committee for Labour and Social Policy, reviewed and amended the draft Law on Adoption to incorporate specific assessment procedures for children and parents in the adoption process. In addition, based on their field visits to a correctional facility for children in conflict with the law, members of the Working Group made specific recommendations for relevant authorities to improve conditions at the facility they visited.

### PC 3 - Cross-sectoral costs

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<th>PCR 2660/A0/05/800 Effective and efficient programme management and operations support.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Progress:</strong> The major achievement under this PCR is the correct and timely processing and implementation of activities enabling a smooth functioning of the Country Office. These activities, as described for each IR here below, include Human Resources to support the office, administrative / operational tasks to support office functioning and provision of supplies, services and knowledge required to perform administrative tasks.</td>
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<td><strong>Progress:</strong> UNICEF provided leadership, communication and coordination support with the funds from this IR mainly to help the CO achieve its other IRs within the programme component, or across programme components (Staff costs – post of Communication Officer, IT Assistant, Executive Secretary). No funds were utilized for hospitality purposes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IR 2660/A0/05/800/002 Effective and efficient Management and Stewardship of Financial Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Progress:</strong> UNICEF provided administrative and financial support through this ‘Intermediate Result’ with the funds utilized to mainly help the organization to contribute to the achievement of other IRs within the programme component, or across Programme components (Staff costs – post of Operations Manager, Finance/Accounts Assistant, Driver). Funds from the travel component were used for regional network meetings, advocacy with EU, trainings, etc. covering all staff costs under this PCR including the Representative and Deputy Representative. Funds from the operating expenses component paid for office facilities to enable the office to function adequately. This included office rental/maintenance, maintenance of IT equipment and vehicles, as well as office supplies and other administrative related costs (mail courier, office security, internet provider, etc.). Funds from the Furniture/Equipment component were used to replace old office equipment (scanner, photocopier, laptop).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effective and efficient management of Human Capacity

Progress: UNICEF provided administration of human resources development including support to staff and various HR functions such as recruitment, learning and staff well-being through this ‘Intermediate Result’ with the funds utilized in this IR to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other IRs within the programme component, or across Programme components in the country programme of cooperation (staff costs – posts of HR/Admin Assistant).

Funds from components of this IR were used for an all-staff retreat and staff wellbeing. The staff retreat, focused on managing results and addressed issues highlighted in the Global Staff Survey. It also contributed to staff welfare and morale.
Effective Governance Structure

Through numerous all-staff discussions, the office worked to ensure that the Regional Leadership Agenda is understood and applied to the local context to improve the impact of UNICEF’s work in this country. Programme monitoring and advocacy efforts were redoubled to ensure that work to strengthen policies and systems leads to concrete changes in the lives of children. The 2012-2013 Rolling Work Plans were signed by UNICEF and all partner ministries in the first quarter.

All the office governance committees including the Country Management Team (CMT), the Contract Review Committee, the Project Cooperation Review Committee and the Local Joint Consultative Committee met regularly in 2012. The CMT met five times. Standing agenda items included updates on the status of action points approved in prior CMTs, the status of country office management indicators and key issues raised by the staff association. While CMT minutes reflect that the targets of the thirteen country programme management indicators were generally consistently met, they also indicate that greater effort is required across the office to meet agreed-upon targets during in-country field visits. Programmes and operations team meetings were held monthly. During the final two months of the year, bi-monthly meetings were held to prepare for the on-going situation analysis and mid-term review. Throughout the year, the Representative chaired bi-weekly informal all-staff meetings to discuss any outstanding office priorities and concerns.

Using the 2011 RCSA baseline, the office conducted a full enterprise risk management review. No changes significant enough to alter current risk levels were noted in either the external or internal office environment.

While the office was fully prepared for the launch of VISION in January of 2012, use of the software system remains problematic. The office reported bugs and solicited VISION assistance when necessary through designated focal points in both the operations and programme sections.

The CO continued to send bank reconciliations on a quarterly basis to DFAM and set month-end closing balances within set benchmarks.

Under the leadership of the Representative and the office’s security focal point, the office reviewed evacuation plans, the designation of wardens and, with the support of DSS, conducted an evacuation drill. Lessons from the drill have been incorporated into an updated evacuation plan.

Strategic Risk Management

Emergency preparedness activities involved regular updates of the “Early Warning – Early Action” data base, as well as continued chairmanship of the UN Disaster Management Team Group. In partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council, UNICEF worked through the UN DMT to support the development of standard operating procedures with the leading national crisis management authority – the Crisis Management Center. A simulation exercise to test the procedures is planned for 2013.

Evaluation

The 2012 annual IMEP was developed at the beginning of the year and was based on the 5-year IMEP. The IMEP was used to plan, implement and monitor activities related to the knowledge generation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes.

Two final evaluations of the UN Joint Programmes were conducted in the course of 2012: the Final Evaluation of the UN Joint Programme on “Strengthening National Capacities to Prevent Domestic Violence” and the Final Evaluation of the UN Joint Programme on “Enhancing Inter-Ethnic Community Dialogue and Collaboration”. The CO actively participated in developing the terms of reference for these evaluations, selecting the consultants, developing tools for data collecting, and providing comments on the draft report. Terms of reference for both evaluations were shared with the Regional office for comments, and the suggestions were incorporated in the final ToRs.
Selection of the evaluators for both evaluations was done jointly by the implementing agencies in a transparent manner, ensuring that the evaluation process is objective. The evaluation of the programme on enhancing inter-ethnic community dialogue and collaboration was conducted mainly by an international consultant. The evaluation team for the strengthening capacities to prevent domestic violence programme was composed of both international and national evaluators. This collaboration served as a good example of increasing the quality of the evaluation team and using the process for in-country capacity building.

Findings, recommendations and lessons learned from the evaluation reports were used by the CO as well as partner UN agencies in planning future activities in the relevant fields, as well as in improving inter-agency cooperation, preparation and management of joint projects in the future. Since both evaluations were final, the country office did not develop a formal management response.

**Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology**

Throughout 2012, the ICT systems were effectively managed to increase the productivity and effectiveness of the office by implementing the corporate ICT policy, strategy, technology, and systems in accordance with the organisation’s global objectives and standards.

The office continued with the Global virtualization project through several migrations. These included:
- Migration of office File Server to virtual environment and to a new operating system (Windows Server 2008 R2)
- Migration of the current Lotus Domino Mail Server to a virtual environment in the first phase, and to a new operating system in the second phase as well to the latest, more advanced version 8.5.3.
- Migration of the ADDC Server to a virtual environment and new operating system.

Microsoft Windows Server Updated Services (WSUS) and Eminentware Third-party Extension Pack (EP) was successfully implemented, replacing the in-house built Automated Patch Downloader System and providing a centrally managed and simplified mechanism for efficient distribution and installation of security patches and software updates to all servers and workstations.

All users in the office are using laptops with docking stations as an alternative to desktop computers, which makes the office more energy efficient, improves business continuity and staff working mobility.

Back up of the ADSL internet connectivity link was provided in addition to the fiber-optic 3Mbps/3Mbps. After one year of using the VISION and SAP as the centralized UNICEF business system, it is clear that the office requires additional bandwidth.

The security gateway to internal/external resources was migrated to the new mission control firewall. The new security gateway provides more secure and stable connection to Vision (SAP), Intranet and e-mail services.

The office uses the services of a local IT company that promotes the EU directives for reducing and recycling ICT equipment identified for destruction by the LPSB. Obsolete but usable ICT equipment was donated to implementing partners.

The Technical Architecture Team from HQ selected the office ICT Assistant to support the organization’s MS Office 365 Cloud Testing Project. In support of the project, the ICT Assistant developed a special software tool that was run in five offices in the region. The outcomes of the project will be used for defining the resources to implement future IT technologies globally in the Organization.

The Representative approved the Global Help Desk request for the office ICT Assistant to provide support to the User Access Management Team; the ICT Assistant also acted as a Help Desk Analyst.
Fund-raising and Donor Relations

The CO submitted all the donor reports on time (4 out of 4 reports). The reports were prepared in line with the specific donor reporting requirements.

To date, the CO mobilized 108 per cent of the planned OR ceiling as per the CPD. However, it should be noted that the bulk of the funds were for the education programme, thus giving a distorted image of OR funding for the rest of country programme. In reality, the child protection programme is severely under-funded. Several cross-sectoral funding proposals were submitted to different donors in 2012, and 2-years of funding in the amount of €150,000 were secured from the Dutch Government in support of the Child-Friendly Justice System. The health programme is also underfunded.

Financial implementation and budget utilization of different projects, including expiring PBAs, are regularly reviewed in monthly programme meetings, as well as in CMT meetings. The programme had eight PBAs that expired in 2012. Seven out of eight of these PBAs had a 100 per cent utilization rate, and one had a 75 per cent utilization rate. The lower utilization rate of this PBA was largely due to the very late response by the donor to a request for reallocation of budget lines. The request was submitted in July 2011, and the donor response was received in April 2012, five days before the expiry of the PBA. No request was submitted in 2012 for extension of PBAs.

In 2012, the CO succeeded in mobilizing its first private sector partnership with the T-Mobile Foundation. The partnership includes a one-off cash donation and leverages other mechanisms for raising funds from private individuals through the foundation’s parent companies including cause-related marketing, employee giving, direct mail to the parent company 1.4 million client base, an SMS donation hotline and support for a campaign that will raise funds and awareness on access to quality early childhood development opportunities. Two Joint Programmes (one on “Enhancing Inter-Ethnic Community Dialogue and Collaboration” and another on “Strengthening National Capacities to Prevent Domestic Violence”) reached the end of the project implementation cycle in 2012.

Management of Financial and Other Assets

Management of financial and other assets is a standing item on the CMT agenda thereby ensuring that budget utilization, liquidation of direct cash transfers, as well as oversight of the status of donor reporting are monitored regularly. As a result, the office had no outstanding DCT of more than six months at year-end. All operational targets and indicators defined in AMP for 2012 were fully met. The total RR spent was 92 per cent. The office had eight expiring PBAs this year; seven out of the eight PBAs were fully utilised and one had a 75 per cent utilization rate (see section on fundraising for more details). No OR for emergencies was received during the reporting period.

The office closely followed up on all the accounting instructions related to the interim and year-end closure of accounts in order to ensure IPSAS compliance and that all deadlines were met.

The office prepared and submitted bank reconciliations on time following the new rules and regulation, as well as HQ submission schedules. As a result, the office has no unreconciled items in its bank accounts.

In 2012, the financial and business services were migrated to VISION (Virtual Integrated System of Information), the new centralized operational system based on SAP and provided by NYHQ. The office successfully implemented the migration from ProMS to SAP/VISION without major disruptions. The VISION super-users team worked closely together in order to process all transactions smoothly and on time.

Earlier in the year, the office developed a manual Table of Authority for Segregation of Duties to reflect the new system (VISION) requirements and to increase office efficiency. Following the guidelines, the office prepared letters on Designation and acceptance of delegation of financial signing authority for all VISION users. Once available in the system, the office extracted a Table of Authority from VISION by year end.
Supply Management

The supply component focused mainly on printed materials, such as, but not limited to, training manuals and research reports to help build the capacity of national partners and raise awareness on child rights.

UNICEF printed 14 training modules for the training curriculum of Centers for Social Work (CSW) staff. 120 CSW staff, including managers, were trained using the modules.

As part of the “Justice for Children” (J4C) project, implemented with the assistance of the European Union, UNICEF printed a J4C Manual and Handbook. These were used to provide advanced training to a wide range of professionals involved in the justice system, (Academy for Judges and Prosecutors, the Institute for Social Activities, the Police Training Centre, the mediators, lawyers, staff of the correctional institutions and other juvenile justice professionals) as well as to provide a solid foundation for further regular training programmes in the same area. Additionally, UNICEF printed and disseminated brochures and posters aimed at raising awareness on the rights of children in conflict with the law, child victims and witnesses of crime to relevant Government institutions, schools, and NGOs.

Several rounds of comments coming from different actors, some belatedly, caused delays in the sign-off and printing of the "Strengthening Social Protection for Children" study report and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4 (MICS). Both reports have now been signed-off on and preparation for their printing is underway.

In anticipation of the agreement with the T-Mobile Foundation which foresees the expansion of the community based ECD center network, UNICEF completed the tendering procedure for procurement of furniture and equipment for 20 new ECD centers. This was done to research the local market in order to be prepared to act immediately upon the confirmation by the donor of their interest in financing the new centers.

The office continues the practice of having contractors deliver supplies directly to the end users.

The University Clinic for Infectious diseases used UNICEF procurement services again this year to obtain ARV medication.

Some procurement related activities were affected by the migration to the new financial system VISION at the beginning of the year. Concerned staff attended a number of supply webex sessions, organized by the the Supply Division and Headquarters. Team work, as well as communication and an exchange of lessons learned with colleagues from other country offices, contributed to finding solutions to overcome the anomalies in the system and implementing programme activities with minimum delay.

Human Resources

In 2012, the office maintained a similar office structure to the one in the previous year with only one recruitment process conducted during the year. This was for a Programme Assistant for the Child Protection section for a period of six months. The other human resource needs were covered through individual or institutional consultancies.

At the beginning of the year, ten staff members, who fulfilled the criteria of the One Time Review process of the global contractual reform, saw their contracts converted from fixed terms to permanent.

Two staff members were selected to participate in the First Line Responders Training Workshop held at the end of May in Norway. This training was part of the regional Rapid Response Mechanism initiative to help UNICEF provide a rapid and efficient response to any future emergencies in the region in line with the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs). The travel costs for the training were covered by the UNICEF Regional Office in Geneva.

The office ensured that 100 per cent of the 2011 Performance Evaluation reports (PERs) were completed by the deadline. The Regional HR Specialist facilitated a workshop entitled “Managing Performance for Results”
at the June staff retreat. As a result, staff members gained a better understanding of the importance of the performance appraisal process, both from a supervisor's and supervisee's perspective, in achieving the organisational goals and in shaping the professional development path of each staff member.

With support from management, two staff members successfully applied for the Dynamic Leadership Certificate Programme, a self-paced interactive learning programme focused on management and leadership development. UNICEF partnered with Harvard Business Publishing to deliver the certificate course.

The skills of staff members were recognized by other UNICEF offices on several occasions. The ICT Assistant was asked by NYHQ to remotely assist the Global Help Desk (GHD) User Admin Group in creating a solution-tool for speeding up the process of resolving user problems. He also provided solutions to ITSS NY for the Microsoft 365 Cloud Testing Project implemented in 5 offices from the CEE/CiS region. The Finance Assistant supported the newly appointed assistant in Montenegro country office by providing orientation training in finance transactions in VISION.

After a thorough analysis of the Global Staff Survey results, the Executive Committee of the Local Staff Association, in consultation with the management team, organized all staff meetings to address areas of concern. The problems were addressed with active participation and contribution of all staff members in two steps: first, staff identified the main causes of the problem, and second, action points were developed to remedy the problem. Issues and suggestions for further action were also agreed on at all staff retreats organized with support from the Regional Office.

### Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

The Representative sent an official request to the Government for free office space, as is the case in numerous other countries in the region, and met with the Minister for foreign affairs on several occasions to discuss this request. In the interim, the office conducted a survey of rental rates in comparable office buildings and used the survey to renegotiate the rent paid for the current commercial lease. This led to a ten percent reduction in the monthly rent and a savings of over USD $7,000 per year.

Installation of Skype on all office computers, concerted use of VOIP and re-negotiation of the office mobile telecommunications contract led to a 30 per cent reduction in costs resulting in a savings of USD$5,600 in 2012.

Though there is only a small UN presence in the country, the office benefited from long-term joint arrangements with other UN agencies for transportation, express mail courier, local internet service, security services, UN hotel rates, and unified fees for national consultants and interpreters/translators. Joint procurement also reduced the workload and time spent by agencies on the individual bidding process.

The office worked with the rest of the UN team to negotiate a collective travel agreement with a single travel agency for the procurement of tickets for all official UN travel. The office estimates that this will save a minimum of USD$1,500 in service fees.

The office participates in the Star Alliance programme which awards points to an office account for all travel on Austrian, Lufthansa and other carriers in the alliance. The office estimates that this will lead to savings of at least USD$1,000/year in ticket costs.

### Changes in AMP & CPMP

In late 2012, the office began the Mid-Term Review of the current country programme. The MTR is expected to be complete by the end of the second quarter of 2013. While the MTR will inform future changes in the AMP and CPMP, the only changes currently anticipated in 2013 are changes in the make-up of the office management committees and a change of security wardens.
**Acronyms**

BED - Bureau for Development of Education  
C4D – Communication for Development  
CSW – Centers for Social Work  
ECD – Early Childhood Development  
ELDS – Early Learning and Development Standards  
ICF-CY – International Classification of Functioning –Children and Youth  
IR – Intermediate Result  
ISA – Institute for Social Activities  
JJ – Juvenile Justice  
MCH – Mother and Child Health  
MoES – Ministry of Education and Science  
MoH – Ministry of Health  
MoJ – Ministry of Justice  
MoLSP - Ministry of Labour and Social Policy  
MTR – Mid Term Review  
MoRES – Monitoring Results for Equity System  
NCRC – National Council for  
OFA – Ohrid Framework Agreement  
RECI- Roma Early Childhood Inclusion  
SILC - Survey of Income and Living Conditions  
SSO - State Statistical Office  
TIMSS- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
List of Evaluations

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<th>Sequence Number</th>
<th>Type of Report</th>
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<td>2012/900</td>
<td>IMEP</td>
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<td>Strengthening National Capacities to Prevent Domestic Violence</td>
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<td>Progress assessment of teacher knowledge and numeracy outcomes in grade four of primary education</td>
<td>2012/004</td>
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Lessons Learned / Innovation

**Mother and child health programme management software**

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<th>Document Type/Category</th>
<th>MTSP Focus Area or Cross-Cutting Strategy</th>
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<td>Igor Veljkovik</td>
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**Abstract**

Improving management practices and efficiency of the MCH programmes are among the key challenges the country is facing in the health sector, despite the government’s political commitment. Consequences of inadequate planning, budgeting and implementation of MCH programmes, primarily affect service delivery for the most vulnerable families and children, as essential package of health services is entirely financed through the Government public health programmes. In order to address this bottleneck, the programme provided high level technical support to the national health authorities to start modernising MCH programing, account for local disparities and introduce evidence-based planning and costing. Given the opportunity in the setting up of a National Health Information System, a demonstration software for planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting on MCH programmes, including service delivery in areas of immunization and home visiting, was developed and integrated into the wider e-health system. The demonstration model will be modified to a usable application in 2013.

**Innovation or Lesson Learned**

Reaching consensus on for the key findings of the MCH programme assessment report, together with addressing the recommendations of State Audit Office, ensured wider political leverage and commitment, and ensured further political accountability of the MoH. Also, MCH programme software and its component on immunization was part of the national strategy of immunization, hence, this initiative had its policy framework already developed and ensured its implementation. Integration of software solutions into government e-health system proved to be a good sustainability strategy, however, due to other conflicting priorities in information system development, delivery of the final software may take longer than initially expected.

**Potential Application**

Application is possible at two levels, in-country and regional. The same approach can be adopted for all the
other public health programmes of the government, for which other development partners, such as WHO and UNFPA have expressed interest in providing technical expertise. The guidelines for programme management and in particular, the demonstration immunization programme software were developed in very generic manner, hence application in other countries of the regions is possible as long as there are similarities in composition of the mother and child health system.

**Issue**

Management of MCH programmes, such as immunization and health screenings, face bottlenecks: Planning process is centralized, and not performed in an evidence-based manner; nor does it reflect national and local priorities; Allocation of resources is inadequate, and linked to non-systematic planning. It is difficult to establish a clear link of “value for money” from the current programme content; Effective expenditure is hampered by limited capacity of implementing institutions; Monitoring is not articulated, nor assigned to a particular institution, and there is limited staff capacity for systematic monitoring. Reported indicators capture mainly process related progress and not results produced by set of MCH interventions.

**Strategy and Implementation**

In order to better understand and document the specific bottlenecks in management of national MCH programmes, as well as to reach an agreement with key the stakeholder institutions on the way forward, a detailed assessment of the MCH programmes (content and structure) was conducted. This process was informed by the findings of two consecutive reports of the State Audit Office, as an initial “trigger” for the government to change current management practices and modernise public health programmes. To develop a programme management software, a “two-tiered” approach was pursued. On one side, a general programme management guideline was produced, outlining “step-by-step” processes in planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, with clearly assigned roles to public health institutions. On the other, the demonstration programme software was generated. Understanding the complexity of developing a multi-level integrated health programme information and management system, it was critical to design “user-friendly” business processes, ensure standardization of software language, especially in light of the fact that programme management software was integrated into data and application architecture of the national E-Health system. This approach ensured sustainability of the programme software in terms of obligation for mandatory use and further maintenance by the Government.

**Progress and Results**

As an initial step, MoH buy-in to prioritize issues constraining effective and efficient implementation of MCH programmes was ensured. A participatory approach to MCH programme assessment was essential in reaching common strategies for improving current management practices and defining a methodology for planning, budgeting and monitoring of MCH programmes. It also led to the development of national guidelines for public health programme management based on MCH programme interventions, but it is easily replicable to all the other health areas. Applying the guidelines into a software solution proved to be another challenge, for two reasons: translating complex “business processes” among institutions into a user friendly E-environment and incorporating software language with the requirements of already developed specification of health information system. Since immunization programme presented itself as a more tangible model to policy makers, software development was initiated in this area. Interactive visualization and presentation was made on how longstanding problems in immunization (vaccines management; planning/reporting delivery) will be addressed through the software. Based on this model, specification of integrated MCH management software was delivered.

**Next Steps**

Piloting programme management software, alongside its components on immunization and home visits will take place. Consequent to this, adjustments of software will be made to ensure national scale up. At the same time, a capacity building programme will be designed to allow education of all end users of the MCH programmes on the use of this software.