In 2017, the last year of the 2013-2017 Country Programme between UNICEF Moldova and the Government of Moldova, the two entities continued to cooperate closely to promote child rights in the country, and several key policy and regulatory frameworks were adopted. The Action Plan 2017-2019 on aligning the criteria of disability determination to international standards was approved by the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family (MLSPF). The General Comment 4 to Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on inclusive education was introduced, and clear commitments were taken by the Government. With UNICEF Moldova support, a new funding formula for preschool education will be developed, with related piloting financed by the World Bank. Regulations on home visiting for young children were reviewed. They outline key areas of cross-sectoral collaboration between the Ministry of Health (MoH), the MLSPF and the Ministry of Education (MoE). Legal amendments seeking to align Moldova’s adoption and guardianship legislation to international standards were prepared by the MLSPF based on evidence generated with UNICEF support. Horizontal cooperation with Romania resulted in adoption of the National Programme on Strengthening Youth Resource Centres, which seeks to facilitate youth social entrepreneurship and innovations.

In 2017, UNICEF Moldova supported the presentation of The Republic of Moldova’s fourth and fifth periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Support was also provided for periodic reporting to the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and for discussion of child rights implementation at the annual European Union (EU)-Moldova Human Rights Dialogue.

The year 2017 also saw the completion of the Situation Analysis of Children in Moldova and the UNICEF-Moldova 2013-2017 Country Programme evaluation, which was rated as highly satisfactory. In partnership with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) a thematic statistical publication “The Children of Moldova” was developed and summary data were presented through infographics. Evidence gathered by UNICEF Moldova and a related experience exchange helped the MLSPF to conduct a costing and simulation of different child-sensitive programme designs aimed at achieving greater impact of social protection programmes on child poverty reduction. Key results achieved for children during the year included a decrease in the number of children with disabilities being placed in special schools, with a nationwide 17 per cent decrease compared to the previous school year, and a further strengthening of perinatal care services in the Transnistrian region involving collaborative efforts by the MoH, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF Moldova.

Continuing socio-economic and political challenges in 2017, coupled with major administrative reforms and mergers of ministries, slowed down the implementation of the Country Programme. In the meantime, enrolment in primary and lower secondary education showed decreasing trends and widening rural-urban gaps. The overall enrolment of children with disabilities in mainstream schooling is still low, standing at 35 per cent. Furthermore, an estimated 80 per cent of young Roma children, 90 per cent of children with disabilities, and 26 per cent of children...
in rural areas are not in preschool. These figures are notable compared to the national average of non-enrolled children three-to-six years of age, which stands at 14 per cent. Only 12 per cent of children under the age of three with developmental delays benefit from early intervention services. Data availability and disaggregation need further improvement with a focus on vulnerable groups. The Country Programme goal aiming to ensure at least 40 per cent coverage of the two main social protection programmes (social aid and child benefits) was not fully met. As of 2016, 32 per cent of the poorest households with children received social aid or child benefits.

UNICEF Moldova and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) supported the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) nationalization process, including participation in the mid-term assessment of the national development strategy “Moldova 2020” and the development of the new “Moldova 2030” strategy. The partnership with the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia was strengthened, and key areas of collaboration in education, child protection and maternal and child health were agreed. In partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) a child protection donor technical coordination group was established. Further support to the USAID “MEASURE” project assessing child care reform in Moldova was provided as well.

UNICEF’s Global Innovation Centre supported the establishment of the U-Report in Moldova. It will also support the piloting of the “UPSHIFT” social entrepreneurship programme in 2018, with a focus on developing solutions “for children by children”.

### Humanitarian assistance

During 2017, UNICEF Moldova responded to one specific humanitarian situation in relation to the very unusual weather experienced for a short period in the month of April. This involved a heavy snowfall that fell within 24 hours in the southern and central regions of the country after two weeks of temperatures reaching 21°C. The snowfall caused major damage to trees and power lines leading to widespread power outages, with 3,000 trees being felled in Chisinau municipality. More than 500 broken power lines blocked the entire city transport and all public services. A state of emergency was declared by the Government.

The National Commission for Emergency Situations, the regional emergency commissions and the Crisis Response Unit under the Emergency Service were activated under the leadership of the Prime Minister on 19 April 2017 and put on 24-hour availability mode. The Prime Minister requested the involvement of the National Armed Forces to address the situation and support emergency services in restoring the power supply and road connectivity.

On 21 April 2017, the National Civil Protection and Emergency Situations Service (NCPESS) reported that 549 localities in 18 districts, including Chisinau and the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, were largely disconnected from electrical services. In addition, 38 national roads and many side roads were blocked. In several towns, vaccine stocks were compromised. On the same day, the United Nations (UN) received an urgent request from the NCPESS for support with essential supplies, some of which were identified as urgently needed, to enable the restoration of electricity, ensure safety from damaged trees, and clear access to blocked localities, including electricity generators, fuel and chainsaws. The Government provided a list of some 70 locations, including Chisinau, requiring urgent assistance.

The UNICEF Moldova Representative, acting also as Resident Coordinator ad interim (a.i.) and as Designated Official a.i., coordinated the joint UN response, mobilizing a total of US$46,338
from six UN Agencies: UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). UNICEF Moldova contributed US$15,338 to the joint UN system response. The UN support provided supplies, as requested by the NCPESS, procured through existing long-term agreements (LTAs). The supplies requested by the Government were delivered within 24 hours and helped ensure access to electricity, including for vaccine storage. At least ten school and preschool institutions and two medical institutions were made safe from fallen trees, and access to blocked localities was secured. In discussion with UNICEF Moldova, the local health authorities transferred the local vaccine stocks to the localities not affected by electricity disruption to ensure safe storage. The rapid UN response was highly appreciated by the Prime Minister and was featured on his Facebook page and in government communiques.

**Equity in practice**

UNICEF’s cooperation with the Government of Moldova in 2013-2017 delivered tangible results for children, while ensuring social inclusion of the most disadvantaged children from rural areas, ethnic minorities and those affected by poverty, disability, gender disparities and inadequate parental care. In 2015, subsequent to UNICEF Moldova advocacy, the chairmanship of the National Council for Protection of Child Rights had been shifted to the Prime Minister's Office. An Ombudsperson for Child Rights was elected in 2016. UNICEF’s advocacy contributed to the inclusion of a separate chapter on child rights in the Moldova-EU Association Agreement (2014), a unique feature among such agreements.

The adoption of the Law on Special Protection of Children at Risk in 2013 and the development of the National Strategy on Child and Family Protection 2014-2020 contributed to a five-fold decrease in the number of children in residential institutions and a two-fold increase in the number of children placed in family care. An inter-sectoral mechanism identifying and providing support to children at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking was established in 2014. A shelter for children victims of violence, abuse and exploitation opened in Chisinau in 2016 with support from UNICEF Moldova and IOM.

Amendments to the Penal Procedure Code in 2014 introduced child-friendly interviewing procedures and granted access to free legal aid for children victims of crime. The solitary confinement of children in detention was banned, the pre-trial detention of children was set to a maximum of eight months in 2016 and the duration of apprehension was reduced from 72 to 24 hours. Alternatives to detention started to be applied, resulting in only 63 children being placed in detention in 2016. Quality standards for legal aid provided to children were approved and a set of national juvenile justice indicators was introduced in 2015.

A project supported by UNICEF Moldova, the World Bank, and the Global Partnership for Education boosted the enrolment of children three to six years of age in preschool education to 85 per cent in 2015, with an additional 10,000 children from rural areas, children with disabilities and Roma children enrolled between 2006 and 2014. Some 150 kindergartens were established in rural areas. Professionals across sectors (79 per cent of preschool educators, health workers and social assistants) were trained and mentored to support positive parenting skills, thus boosting the preschool enrolment of young children with disabilities and special educational needs to 40 per cent. With UNICEF Moldova support, the cross-sectoral Strategy for the Development of Parenting Skills and Competencies 2015-2021 was adopted in 2016.
Thanks to advocacy efforts of UNICEF Moldova, inclusion became a flagship goal of the new National Education Strategy 2014-2020. A Child Friendly School Standards and School Readiness Tool was adopted by all schools and preschools in Moldova. A 2014 revision of the Education Code contributed to a fourfold increase in the number of children with special educational needs and children with disabilities in mainstream schools. Psycho-pedagogical assistance services were set up across the country. Effective advocacy and the recruitment of Roma community mediators in 2013 ensured the integration of Roma children in mainstream schools.

In 2012, the Government of Moldova signed the “A Promised Renewed” pledge. Health sector reforms contributed to the reduction of the under-five mortality rate to 11.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016. The proportion of maternities given “baby-friendly” status increased to 66 per cent in 2016. UNICEF Moldova supported the introduction of the rotavirus vaccine in 2012. Since then, the number of cases dropped to less than a third in just three years. The Child Growth Monitoring Standards were revised in 2013 to include developmental screening and optimize the number of home visits. In 2016, the Antenatal Care Standards were revised to include expanded maternal and foetal screening and improved prenatal childbirth education. In 2016, Moldova eliminated the mother-to-child transmission of syphilis.

The regulatory framework on youth-friendly health services (YFHS) was adopted and, in 2015, services reached 16 per cent of adolescents and youth in the age group 10-24 years (compared to six per cent in 2011) and 18 per cent of most-at-risk and especially vulnerable adolescents. The capacities of 90 per cent of the perinatal care system professionals in the Transnistrian region on emergency care, young child nutrition, effective vaccine management and interpersonal communication were strengthened. In 2017, more than 300,000 doses of vaccines were procured through UNICEF Supply Division following the country’s graduation from Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) support.

**Strategic Plan 2018-2021**

The priorities of the new UNICEF Country Programme in Moldova 2018-2022 will contribute to four goals (1, 2, 3 and 5) and an estimated 16 result areas of the new UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (SP). The Country Programme Result Matrix incorporates 17 Global Standard Indicators allowing a direct reporting link to the new SP result framework.

The infant mortality rate in Moldova is three times higher than the EU average. Some 20 per cent of child deaths occur at home, child immunization rates are decreasing, adolescents’ reproductive health is poor, and sexually transmitted infections are highly prevalent among youth. Only a few centres in Moldova offer rehabilitation services for children with disabilities. To support child growth and development, UNICEF will strengthen the role of home-visiting nurses, seek to boost immunization coverage and work on improved nutrition of mothers, children and adolescents. Ongoing support to YFHS will continue to reach out to most-at-risk adolescents and support them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Moldova primary school net enrolment rate of 87 per cent is one of the lowest in the region, and 860 children with disabilities are still assigned to special schools. Roma school attendance rates are much lower at all levels of education, with only half of Roma boys and girls receiving primary education. UNICEF Moldova will continue to promote inclusive education in applying child-friendly school standards, support quality teaching and learning and advocate for inclusive education financing based on the child’s needs. The Country Programme will support timely identification and reintegration of out-of-school and Roma children in education. Communication
for social change will strengthen caregivers' capacities to support child learning. UNICEF Moldova will continue to advocate for incorporation in national curricula of skills-based learning contributing to personal empowerment, active citizenship and employability of youth.

Prevailing social norms tolerate violence against children at home and in schools. The 2012 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) revealed that an estimated 76 per cent of children aged 2-14 years experienced violent disciplining at home. During the 2014/2015 school year, educators reported 13,230 cases of violence against children. From 1,334 cases of child abuse registered by the police, 26 per cent were cases of sexual violence. UNICEF Moldova will further strengthen the work of the inter-sectoral mechanism of health and education systems along with social workers to address violence in communities and in schools and will empower communities to report on cases of violence against children, while working on improved parental skills to prevent violent disciplining. Capacities of media on ethical reporting on children will also be strengthened, and active media engagement will be promoted to raise social awareness on issues of violence against children.

The access to child-sensitive justice remains a challenge. Prevailing social norms and justice system practices continue to favour punishment of child offenders. In 2016, almost every fourth child offender was sentenced, and one in four sentenced children was imprisoned. UNICEF Moldova will continue to support justice system reform by modelling alternative approaches to detention (diversion schemes) and mediation; supporting the establishment of reintegration services and child-friendly interviewing rooms at the local level; and building capacities of judges and prosecutors.

Children in Moldova remain disproportionately poor, with 86 per cent of poor families living in rural areas. The poverty rate of families with three or more children stands at 23 per cent against a national poverty rate of about 10 per cent (Ministry of Economy 2015). The share of families with children in the national social aid programme decreased from 84 per cent in 2009 to 42 per cent in 2014. Both the incidence and the depth of poverty are twice as high among Roma children compared to non-Roma children. The Country Programme will strengthen its action on child poverty reduction in advocating for adjustments to social protection programmes and an expanded coverage of social protection measures, assessing the impact of child-related benefits and allowances and strengthened monitoring of child poverty. UNICEF Moldova will redouble its focus on public financing for children in generating knowledge on child-related budget expenditures, while building capacities of local public authorities (LPAs) in prioritizing, planning and budgeting for services for children.

In Moldova, adolescents’ participation in social life is low, as is their contribution to decision-making processes, both at home and in society. The Country Programme will further intensify efforts to foster adolescent and youth participation in decision-making and social life, and empower adolescents to become agents of social change.

Emerging areas of importance

A focus on the second decade. Two assessments on the “Impact of Fiscal Decentralization on Services for Youth and Children” and a capacity gap analysis of the capacity of local public authorities (LPAs) and youth councils to implement the National Strategy on Youth 2020 were carried out. They identified gaps and provided evidence that was incorporated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports into a capacity-building action plan seeking to strengthen the skills of local public authorities (LPAs) and youth councils in planning and budgeting for comprehensive services for children and adolescents, including provision of financial support for the functioning
of youth centres. UNICEF Moldova took part in a regional Europe and Central Asia research activity focusing on parenting skills for adolescents. The evidence generated by the study will support the guidance on parenting skills for adolescents that will be incorporated in the draft national action plan to the parenting strategy.

In 2017, a horizontal cooperation workshop on youth empowerment was held with Romania and Moldova. Good practices were selected by the Government of Moldova and integrated into its National Programme on Strengthening Youth Resource Centres 2017-2022 with the aims of: providing support to adolescents and youth not engaged in education, employment or training; building their skills to match labour market demand; and improving their employability.

**Integrated early childhood development (ECD).** UNICEF Moldova provided support for the development of the Action Plan to the cross-sectoral Strategy for the Development of Parenting Skills and Competencies 2015-2021 focusing on early childhood development (ECD). The Action Plan will provide guidance for implementation of positive parenting programmes that will enable caregivers to improve the quality of nurturing care for young children with a focus on health, nutrition, responsive caregiving, safety, security, and early learning. The positive parenting practices will also seek to break stereotypes on traditional gender roles by promoting the engagement of fathers in child care.

In building upon the 2016 Lancet Early Childhood Development Series, UNICEF Moldova developed a concept paper outlining a vision on home visiting for Moldova. The concept was discussed and endorsed by the MoH, the MLSPF and the MoE, and home-visiting guidelines were developed and approved by the MoH in 2017.

Also in 2017, the National Council for Curriculum officially endorsed two guides (for educators and parents), developed with UNICEF Moldova support, seeking to strengthen capacities in working with children under three and ensure a continuum of services in ECD.

UNICEF Moldova took part in a regional multi-country evaluation assessing the impact of decentralization on the quality of early childhood education (ECE) services. The findings of the study are being used to improve the functioning of ECE services and support equal access to quality and inclusive ECE services for all young children, including children with disabilities, Roma and children from rural areas. Based on a financing model currently developed by UNICEF Moldova, the MoE is developing a new financing formula for preschool education supported financially by the World Bank.

**Summary notes and acronyms**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMP</th>
<th>annual management plan</th>
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<tr>
<td>BCP</td>
<td>business continuity plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMT</td>
<td>country management team</td>
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<td>CPD</td>
<td>Country Programme Document</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPMP</td>
<td>Country Programme Management Plan</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>civil society organization</td>
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<td>DCT</td>
<td>direct cash transfers</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>early childhood development</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>eZHACT</td>
<td>electronic harmonized approach to cash transfers</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAVI</td>
<td>Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization</td>
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<td>GSS</td>
<td>Global Staff Survey</td>
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In 2017, UNICEF Moldova continued its assistance to the Government to enhance capacity in several key areas. The MoH was supported to develop a comprehensive Communication for Social Change Strategy, Action Plan and budget for 2017-2020 aiming to increase demand for immunization services and bring vaccine coverage back up to the previous level of 95 per cent. The strategy includes packages developed by WHO and UNICEF that seek to address the anti-vaccination movement and track anti-vaccine sentiment in social media. It was developed with the participation of health professionals, media representatives and religious leaders.

As part of a pilot on supporting inclusion of Roma children in education, local community leaders, school administration and civil society learned how to address issues of school absenteeism, drop-out and neglect. Communication for behaviour change was used to promote cohesion, address prejudices and mobilize the community to support enrolment of Roma children in schools. Community leaders consistently monitored school attendance, identified the challenges for Roma children’s participation in education, and sensitized and addressed relevant institutions and authorities to take appropriate actions. The efforts brought back to school 40 Roma children who had previously never been to school or had missed education for long periods of time due to their parents’ labour migration.

UNICEF Moldova continued to support the NBS to monitor the situation of children through the
Transformative Monitoring for Enhanced Equity (TransMonEE) research programme. Capacities of NBS staff were also strengthened to facilitate them generating quality data on key child-related SDG indicators.

UNICEF Moldova supported the MLSPF in identifying and addressing challenges in data collection at the local level with a focus on improved collection of data on children at risk and those separated from their parents. An implementation roadmap aimed at adjusting the annual statistical reports collected from the field was developed with local public authorities and child protection specialists.

**Evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy**

UNICEF Moldova conducted various evidence-generation activities to support child-centred policy discussion and implementation. A study on cash-based social protection and how it is contributing to child poverty reduction suggested policy options to the MLSPF for improving the effectiveness of the social protection system. Additional research findings prompted the MLSPF to initiate legal amendments aligning the adoption and guardianship legislation to international standards. An evaluation of the work of the child-friendly hearing rooms in police, prosecution and court offices provided evidence to the Ministry of Justice for the development of standards for hearing rooms for children victims and witnesses of crime.


In 2017, a National Conference on Inclusive Education was organized by the MoE with UNICEF Moldova support to take stock of achievements and make decisions on the way forward. The General Comment No. 4 to Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities providing guidance to states on how to better incorporate inclusive education was presented and discussed. At the end of the conference, a resolution was adopted reinforcing the Government’s commitment to inclusive education, based on the principles of reasonable accommodation and gradual implementation. It aims to phase out the parallel specialized school system into an inclusive school system fully integrating children with disabilities.

UNICEF Moldova further supported the MoE to strengthen the Education Management Information System (EMIS) in collecting data on children with disabilities.

**Partnerships**

UNICEF Moldova continued to support the Government to deliver on the “A Promised Renewed” pledge, which was signed in 2012. The country reached an under-five mortality rate of 11.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2016. Collaborative efforts on communication for behaviour change between UNICEF Moldova, the MoH and WHO contributed to an increase in vaccination rates. In 2017, more than 300,000 doses of vaccines were procured through UNICEF Supply Division following Moldova’s graduation from GAVI support.

UNICEF Moldova, in partnership with WHO, intensified efforts to strengthen the perinatal care services in the Transnistrian region. WHO standards and protocols on antenatal and perinatal
care were adopted; the capacities of over 90 per cent of obstetrician-gynaecologists and paediatricians were built; and experience sharing between the two banks of the Nistru River was promoted. As a result, pregnant women in the Transnistrian region can now access improved antenatal care services.

As part of a joint collaborative effort between UNICEF Moldova and the Moldovan Audio-visual Coordinating Council, messages were developed and broadcast to promote the benefits of breastfeeding. An agreement was reached with the Business Association of Women Entrepreneurs to promote child-friendly policies among the network’s members and set up breastfeeding-friendly spaces. The Association brokered agreements with several chain cafes to support breastfeeding in their premises as of 2018.

To raise awareness of the impact of business on children, UNICEF Moldova and the American Chamber of Commerce organized a dialogue on corporate social responsibility (CSR) with ten business entities. Among the topics discussed were the difference between corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy, the need for companies to develop a comprehensive CSR strategy, and the overall need to promote CSR among businesses in Moldova.

**External communication and public advocacy**

In 2017, UNICEF Moldova continued to support disseminating key messages on child rights among policy makers and the general public. Evidence-based messaging was pursued for promoting the importance of breastfeeding, early childhood stimulation, inclusive education and the role of fathers in child care and positive parenting. These efforts involved outreach to 300,000 people on social media. Throughout the year, proactive communication was undertaken promoting the rights of children with disabilities and Roma children to education and raising awareness of the negative impact of violent disciplining. Storytelling through social media promoted the right of children to a family environment and foster care services in Moldova, while also raising awareness of child online safety. The general public was also informed about global issues, such as the Syria refugee crisis, the SDGs and the impact of climate change. The main social media channels of engagement were Facebook (13,000 reach) and Twitter (1,500 followers). The UNICEF Moldova website received about 3,500 unique visitors. Furthermore, the capacity of mainstream media to report on child rights was further improved. According to a 2017 media analysis, more than 700 out of 1,500 media stories about children presented the issues from a child rights perspective.

Three forums bringing together local authorities and adolescents, and presided over by the Ombudsperson for Child Rights, discussed the rights of children without parental care, of children in contact with the law, and the rights of children from the Transnistrian regions to name, citizenship, free movement and education.

A sports for development event was organized in partnership with the Special Olympics and the Moldovan Football Federation, involving over 200 children with mental disabilities.

UNICEF Moldova contributed to joint UN communication activities, such as the European Immunization Week, and the launch of the “16 days of activism to fight violence against women”. UNICEF Moldova also continued to contribute to the quarterly UN magazine.

**South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation**

During 2017 Moldova proactively facilitated exchange of knowledge and learning from other countries’ experiences. Among other activities, representatives of the MLSPF attended a sub-
regional conference on child-sensitive social protection held in Sarajevo. Insights from this conference will be used in a pilot seeking to improve the impact of social policies on child well-being through costing and simulating different social protection programme options.

MoE representatives attended a workshop in Romania where results from the review of the Romanian Governments’ Plan of Action on improving the education evaluation and assessment system were presented. Challenges and opportunities linked with student assessment were discussed with counterparts from Albania, Serbia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. As a take away, the MoE identified the main dimensions of Moldova’s education evaluation and assessment system that need further review and strengthening to improve the country’s results in future international assessments. In addition, MoE representatives dealing with psycho-pedagogical services and academia learned from Portugal’s experience on inclusion of children with severe disabilities in mainstream education. Moldova expressed its interest in a further bilateral partnership with Portugal to explore mechanisms, funding practices and required assistive technologies that support inclusion.

UNICEF Moldova also ensured the Government’s participation at the Regional Workshop for National Trainers on Home-visiting, where experiences of Serbia and other countries on “nurturing care” through home-visiting were shared and the new module on “gender issues in early childhood and parenting” was presented. The training materials will be used to strengthen capacities of home-visiting nurses in Moldova and will be incorporated in pre- and in-service curricula.

Integrated services for adolescents were discussed at a workshop that included the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Good practice from Romania was integrated in the National Programme on Strengthening Youth Resource Centres that seeks to build capacity of youth workers and improve service delivery.

**Identification and promotion of innovation**

UNICEF Moldova was instrumental in the launch of the U-Report platform in December 2017. The platform allows real-time identification of the needs of children and adolescents in specific regions of the country and provides opportunities for polling the opinions of children and adolescents on issues affecting their lives. The U-Report platform is accessible through three social media channels: Facebook, Twitter and Viber. The main goal of the platform is to assess the quality of service provision and ease of access of adolescents to YFHS at the local level. The collected information will be used to improve the performance and service delivery of the YFHS. The platform will also be used to promote the Children’s Green Line for reporting cases of violence and connecting them to professionals from the MLSPF. Furthermore, U-Report will engage local public authorities to support the establishment of local youth councils.

UNICEF Moldova further fostered innovation by piloting the UPSHIFT approach used to design programmes by youth for youth. A group of 30 young people participated in a series of social innovation workshops and discussed the revamping of three digital platforms focused on adolescent rights and social inclusion. In a collaborative manner, young people designed and tested three digital prototypes for improving a YFHS website ([www.sspt.md](http://www.sspt.md)) and an online news platform for young people ([www.diez.md](http://www.diez.md)). They also created a new website for the National Pupils’ Council. During the process, young people acquired soft skills that allowed them to further promote the websites and enhance the digital participation of their peers.

**Support to integration and cross-sectoral linkages**
UNICEF Moldova supports the development of a comprehensive National Action Plan involving the Cross-sectoral Strategy on Developing Parental Abilities and Competencies 2016-2022, which will bring coordinated action between the health, social protection and education systems to promote positive parenting skills. At the end of 2017, the plan was being developed by a working group involving representatives of line ministries, civil society, academia, developmental partners and parents’ associations. The Action Plan will provide clear guidance on incorporating specific interventions into existing service delivery platforms. It will also be instrumental in clarifying sector-specific accountabilities and roles and responsibilities contributing to improved awareness of positive parenting practices among caregivers. Key messages on positive parenting will be delivered to parents and persons providing care and involved in the rearing of a child (such as preschool educators and school staff).

A concept paper outlining the UNICEF Moldova vision on home-visiting practices was discussed and endorsed by the MoH, the MLSPF and the MoE, and home-visiting guidelines were developed and approved by the MoH in 2017. The concept outlined the feasibility and the added value for children to have coordinated action among nurses, early childhood educators and social workers who work jointly to support child survival, growth and development, while preventing neglect, abuse and violence and teaching positive parenting practices. The concept incorporates experience from home-visiting pilots implemented by civil society organizations (CSOs) and guidelines developed by the UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office.

UNICEF Moldova stepped up its cross-sector work on adolescents, whereby key interventions addressing issues relevant to the second decade in life, such as adolescent health, education, graduation from school and further employability, were mainstreamed in programmes.

**Service delivery**

During 2017, capacity building on interpersonal communication boosted the skills of 384 family doctors and nurses from districts with the lowest coverage of immunization, which enabled them to promote routine vaccination. Messages on the importance of routine immunization were developed and widely disseminated through social media.

UNICEF Moldova also supported the establishment of a social crèche in Glodeni district (North), offering education and day care services to twelve vulnerable children up to three years of age. The institutionalization of more than 200 children from both banks of the Nistru River was prevented and their families supported to overcome hardships. More than 100 children victims of violence, abuse and trafficking received rehabilitation and reintegration support, including medical check-ups, school supplies and reintegration packages (clothing, footwear and hygiene kits). Another 60 child victims of crimes were supported through psychological counselling, and 50 child offenders were diverted out of the criminal justice system.

School bags, textbooks and supplies were distributed to 68 Roma children to support their inclusion in education. A multi-stakeholder school plan was adopted, whereby the MoE engaged in monitoring the situation in the school, the district provided support to the teachers, and the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Service analysed 47 individual cases of children that had missed school for a long period of time and provided recommendations for support based on the individual child’s need. A local CSO monitored daily school attendance. In addition, cross-sectoral teams including mayors, social assistants and Roma mediators, police officers, school directors, kindergarten directors and nurses from the community were trained and supported to apply a mechanism for preventing and addressing cases of violence, neglect and trafficking. Roma parents migrating frequently for work were trained on how to prepare required
documentation to support child enrolment in destination countries and ensure continuity of
education.

**Human rights-based approach to cooperation**

In 2017, UNICEF Moldova supported the Government in presenting the 4th and 5th Periodic Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In its concluding observations, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended strengthened actions to address violence against children, prevent family separation, establish a child-friendly justice system, ensure inclusive education and health services, foster adolescent empowerment, and promote better cross-sectoral cooperation. A feasibility study on opportunities to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on a Communications Procedure was completed as well.

To support robust mainstreaming of child rights in the law-making process, UNICEF Moldova raised the awareness of 80 legal advisers from central public authorities, Parliamentary Committees, the People's Advocate Office, academia and CSOs on the Convention on the Rights of the Child guiding principles.

UNICEF Moldova continued to support the Ombudsperson for Child Rights in monitoring and reporting on child rights issues. The Ombudsperson prepared an independent report and attended the Committee on the Rights of the Child Pre-session Working Group in February 2017. During the year, UNICEF Moldova also collaborated with the Ombudsperson on two occasions to address serious child rights violations. One case involved abuse of children in a pre-trial detention institution, while the other case involved sexual abuse in a residential institutional. Relevant national institutions were mobilized to conduct child-sensitive investigations and pursue related follow-up.

UNICEF Moldova’s contribution to the annual Human Rights Dialogue between the EU and the Government of Moldova provided recommendations for further development of child-rights-focused policies and regulatory frameworks with a focus on child-sensitive justice, violence against children and inclusion of children with disabilities and Roma children in education. The General Comment 4 to Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities mobilized the MoE to further promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education focusing on reasonable accommodation based on individual children’s needs and a gradual shift to a mainstream education system without special schools.

**Gender equality**

Gender was specifically mainstreamed in the Action Plan for the cross-sectoral Parenting Strategy. Both policy documents clearly stipulate women’s and men’s equal engagement in child care and promote equal co-parenting and greater engagement of fathers in child care. The parenting site suntparinte.md, established with UNICEF Moldova’s support, posted a series of articles providing examples of the role of men in child care and made a comprehensive gender analysis of school textbooks highlighting gender stereotypes. The site has an outreach to more than one million readers. UNICEF Moldova supported a social media campaign on fathers’ involvement in parenting, reaching nearly 55,000 people; the informational video alone was viewed by 19,000 people. UNICEF Moldova also contributed to regional communication efforts by sharing two animated videos on girls in emergencies and violence against women and girls.

With UNICEF Moldova support, mothers’ and fathers’ clubs were established in one densely populated Roma community teaching parents how to communicate with their children and how to better support learning, especially of girls.
A YFHS guideline and clinic protocol developed with UNICEF Moldova support focused on gender-specific interventions in seven priority adolescent health areas. Within the piloting of performance-based financing, YFHS performance indicators were revised from a gender perspective, and gender-disaggregated data will be collected.

UNICEF Moldova, in partnership with WHO, supported the introduction of the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine. As of November 2017, ten-year-old girls were given access to HPV vaccines to prevent cervical cancer.

In addition, in late 2017 UNICEF Moldova actively participated in the joint UN campaign “16 days of activism” dedicated to fight violence against women and girls. The campaign also contributed to raising further awareness on the specific gender focus of the SGDs.

**Environmental sustainability**

A comprehensive child-centred climate vulnerability assessment was completed in 2017. The study provides a spatial and vulnerabilities analysis and makes conclusions regarding the possible impact of climate change on children’s health and well-being. Findings of the study provide specific recommendations for policy and programme interventions related to adolescents’ engagement in local climate change action and the role of the education system in raising awareness on climate change impacts. These will be mainstreamed in the implementation of the new UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation 2018-2022.

UNICEF Moldova is highly committed to environmental sustainability and is taking systematic measures to reduce its carbon footprint. The annual environmental footprint assessment report was completed on time. The office continued previous good practices, such as keeping all information technology (IT) equipment settings on low consumption and environmentally friendly modes, switching off hot water boilers during summer time, recycling electronic devices and batteries via an electronic waste management company, recycling paper through a recycling company, and procuring only certified recycled printing paper. Additional measures taken in 2017 included: replacing all fluorescent lights with light-emitting diode (LED) lights, thermal insulation of the roof to decrease heat waste in winter and reduce energy and heating expenses, and installation of global positioning system (GPS) trackers on UNICEF vehicles to increase vehicle management efficiency. Funding from the Greening and Accessibility Fund was used to replace all air conditioners with invertor-type units, which use up to 30 per cent less energy. A bicycle was procured to be used by UNICEF Moldova staff for reaching nearby locations in an effort to reduce the vehicle-use carbon footprint.

**Effective leadership**

Key priorities for the country management team (CMT) in 2017 were the development of the new Country Programme Document and the Country Programme Management Plan (CPMP) 2018-2022; addressing results of the 2017 Global Staff Survey (GSS); and boosting fund-raising efforts. UNICEF Moldova’s change management process and CPMP preparation were undertaken in a consultative manner with full participation of the local staff association, while fully taking into account the constrained funding environment and shortage of Other Resources (OR) funding for some posts.

The country management team continued to provide overall leadership and strategic guidance to the country programme and monitored monthly key performance indicators and annual management plan (AMP) priorities. All management priority areas were fully achieved, with only
the fund-raising priority being constrained due to a shrinking donor environment.

The number of statutory committees was reduced to four: contract review committee, partnership review committee, local property survey board and a joint consultative committee (JCC). Ten CMT meetings, three JCC meetings and 11 all-staff meetings were held during the year with many of them dedicated to CPD and CPMP consultations and discussions around the programme budget review (PBR) and 2017 GSS results. An action plan in response to the GSS results was prepared focusing on work life balance, career and professional development, personal empowerment and “speak up” culture, and office efficiency and effectiveness.

Business process meetings reviewed programme and operations assistants' workloads, and some was redistributed. UNICEF Moldova successfully transitioned to the new electronic harmonized approach to cash transfers (eZHACT) module and the relevant adjustments of internal processes were made. The Table of Authority was updated to ensure proper segregation of duties. The risk assessment was updated and included in the AMP. The business continuity plan (BCP) was updated to reflect migration to IT LIGHT Office and to the Global Service Shared Centre (GSSC).

**Financial resources management**

The scorecard key performance indicators were monitored monthly by the CMT, including budget allocation and utilization, grants expiry, donor reports due, outstanding direct cash transfers (DCTs) and open commitments. The effective use of monitoring tools resulted in a sound financial performance of UNICEF Moldova. During the year there were no DCTs over six months, no partners that received cash transfers of more than US$100,000 without an assessment, and no overdue donor reports.

In 2017, UNICEF Moldova registered an overall expenditure rate of 100 per cent for all resources: Institutional Budget, Regular Resources (RR) and Other Resources OR. All expiring grants were utilized prior to their expiration date. Bank reconciliations were submitted before deadlines and without outstanding unreconciled items. Financial closure activities were successfully completed by deadlines. UNICEF Moldova maintained optimal local bank account balances. Monthly cash forecasts, monthly replenishment requests and month-end balances were reviewed and monitored. The value added tax (VAT) was reimbursed in a timely manner, and the VAT account had no overdue uncleared balances at the end of 2017.

UNICEF Moldova complied with harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT) implementation requirements. Four spot checks and two audits of implementing partners were completed as required by the minimum assurance standards. To strengthen HACT financial monitoring and compliance and build additional capacity of the office, two programme assistants received on-the-job training in conducting spot-check activities. A macro-assessment led by UNICEF Moldova on behalf of all UN agencies was completed for the new UN Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development 2018-2022 and the UNICEF CPD 2018-2022.

**Fundraising and donor relations**

The EU institutions, the United States and Romania top the list of donors to Moldova, followed by Germany, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Swedish Embassy and Norway. While an average of US$312 million was received as development aid by Moldova in 2015 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017), this funding was provided predominantly as bilateral support to the Government with limited funding available for channelling through the UN, including for the UNICEF Moldova Country
During the CPD 2013-2017 cycle, the Country Programme was able to mobilize and absorb only 36 per cent of the planned OR ceiling. From a total of US$7 million mobilized, US$3.5 million was from thematic funds for child protection, education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, and policy and partnerships. Major donors to UNICEF Moldova were the SDC, the Government of Netherlands and the OAK Foundation. Additional funds were mobilized through joint UN efforts through the multi-donor trust fund modality.

Although engagement with private sector was sought, there were no opportunities to mobilize funds from businesses. The private sector in Moldova is not yet well developed. In general, business confidence is low, with transparency and accountability being crucial concerns. The private sector remains largely unaware of the principles of corporate social responsibility.

Fundraising efforts were significantly intensified in 2017 in preparation for the new CPD 2018-2022. Visits to several top donors in Moldova, including to the EU, USAID, SDC, Netherlands and Sweden, were made and priorities of the new Country Programme and funding gaps presented. Concepts with a total value of US$16 million were submitted. Unfortunately, these concerted efforts brought limited results, and the funding gap at the start of the new Country Programme stands at 74 per cent against the planned ORR ceiling.

**Evaluation and research**

A key priority for 2017 was the finalization of the evaluation of the UNICEF-Government of Moldova CPD 2013-2017. The evaluation management response was prepared within the required timeline and uploaded in plan for research, impact monitoring and evaluation (PRIME). The evaluation was conducted by an independent consultant and was rated "Highly Satisfactory". It is considered objective and impartial, as the consultant based the recommendations on interviews, feedback and independent opinions expressed by multiple stakeholders, including Government and CSO counterparts, UNICEF Moldova staff and UN partners. Final results of the evaluation were presented, and, although UNICEF Moldova might have had reservations about some of the conclusions, there were no modifications made to the final report.

The evaluation was both timely and useful, and substantially fed into the development of the new CPD 2018-2022. Key lessons learned and recommendations helped UNICEF Moldova be more focused and realistic while setting CPD results and targets that are realistic, measurable and implementable within the CPD timeframe.

A costed evaluation plan was developed for the new CPD 2018-2022 that targets evaluation of results of key national strategies on inclusive education and child protection.

The plan for research, impact monitoring and evaluation (PRIME) was updated at the beginning of 2017 through a consultative process with partners and in line with jointly identified prioritized key research, studies and evaluations as reflected in annual work plans. The status of all PRIME activities was tracked online and progress reported biannually to the CMT at mid-year and annual reviews. Five of eight key evidence-generating PRIME activities were completed in 2017. Three studies and surveys were delayed due to a prolonged selection process and funding constraints; they will be finalized in 2018.

**Efficiency gains and cost savings**
In 2017, the implementation of the joint UN business operations strategy continued to bring efficiency and savings. UNICEF Moldova’s contribution to common services in 2017 was US$94,000. The total estimated savings from common services (procurement, information and communications technology [ICT] and financial services) was US$9,600.

UNICEF Moldova supported the development of – and subsequently benefited from – seven institutional LTAs on fuel supply, stationery, equipment and internet services, and from 29 individual LTAs for translation services. UNICEF Moldova administered four joint institutional LTAs with translation and transportation companies, and initiated a new UN joint LTA on editing and proofreading services.

In an effort to further enhance efficiency in human resource management, the UNCT selected personnel through inter-agency selection panels, thereby contributing to expedient recruitment processes and impartial identification of relevant technical expertise.

In 2017, UNICEF Moldova staff participated in eight joint UN staff learning events, including UN Cares, sustainable procurement and Peace Building.

To improve awareness of the UN procurement rules and ensure a more competitive market, the UN Procurement Working Group developed infographics describing all steps of the UN procurement process in the local language, which were made accessible to local vendors.

In early 2017, UNICEF Moldova migrated to the IT LIGHT environment and reduced its ICT footprint by removing all local servers. Estimated savings amounts to US$25,000 per server lifecycle (four years).

An average of 20 working days were dedicated by 5 UNICEF Moldova staff members each, including the Representative, Deputy Representative, operations manager, and communication and monitoring and evaluation officers as a contribution to the key coordination functions of the Resident Coordinator System in the areas of: strategic analysis and planning, development and management of shared operational support services, oversight of the UN country programming cycle, crisis management preparedness and response, and joint resource mobilization.

**Supply management**

In 2017, the main share of procurement expenditures was allocated towards contracting services (92 per cent of the total contracted amounts). UNICEF Moldova procured operational supplies for its own use (security and telecommunication equipment, laptops, IT and office equipment) accounting for eight per cent of the total value of procurement. All locally procured goods and services were contracted following a competitive procurement process. Global LTAs were used for procurement of financial services and IT equipment. Joint procurement under the Delivering as One business operations strategy was used to improve efficiency and benefit from substantial economies of time and resources. The strong cooperation between programme and operations sections continued, while procurement processes and workflows were jointly reviewed to ensure higher efficiency, accountability and compliance.

UNICEF Moldova does not maintain a physical warehouse or an inventory of programme supplies. In past years programme supplies were purchased and delivered directly to implementing partners.
In 2017, UNICEF Moldova continued to support the MoH and national stakeholders in vaccine forecasting exercises, and ensured liaison with UNICEF Supply Division, vaccine suppliers and other actors involved in vaccine procurement and transportation. A Memorandum of Understanding for Procurement Services was signed between UNICEF and the Government of Moldova. UNICEF Moldova supports the procurement of vaccines for the National Immunization Programme through UNICEF Supply Division, including for GAVI-supported vaccines (pentavalent, rotavirus vaccine, pneumococcal vaccine, and HPV vaccine) and the country’s co-financed portion. In 2017, the Government procurement of vaccines through UNICEF Supply Division amounted to US$1,542,380 with US$381,719 channelled via GAVI.

**Supply and logistics key figures for the Republic of Moldova**

(1) **Total value of procurement performed by the office, including on behalf of the other country offices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Procurement</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procurement for own office</td>
<td>$491,239.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational supplies</td>
<td>$40,957.30</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>$450,282.33</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL procurement performed by the office</strong></td>
<td><strong>$491,239.63</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) **Total value of supplies and services received (i.e. irrespective of procurement location)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Procurement</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic supplies including PS-funded</td>
<td>$1,542,380.46</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channelled via regular Procurement Services</td>
<td>$1,160,660.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channelled via GAVI</td>
<td>$381,719.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational supplies</td>
<td>$41,797.30</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>$450,282.33</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Freight</td>
<td>$63,901.08</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL supplies and services received</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,098,361.17</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Security for staff and premises**

The UNICEF Moldova BCP was updated in 2017 to reflect staff changes, the migration to IT LIGHT and the GSSC. Emergency lists, contact points and warden system lists were updated regularly. The BCP was activated in April 2017 when, due to heavy weather conditions, UNICEF Moldova staff successfully worked from home for one day. In addition, the UNICEF Moldova Representative as Designated Official a.i. led the One UN response and the UN Security Management Team (SMT) during the extreme weather emergency.

UNICEF Moldova is a member of the UN SMT. Regular SMT meetings were held during the year, and included briefings on the security situation in the country and the status of incidents. The Security Risk Management, Security Plan and Minimum Operating Residential Security Standards were updated. The security level 2 for Moldova and level 3 for the Transnistrian region remained unchanged.

To be compliant with ICT Emergency Preparedness and ensure continuity of ICT services from
remote locations, UNICEF Moldova purchased an Emergency Telecom Response Kit 1 (ETR-1 kit) and the Mobile High-Speed Data Satellite Service BGAN Explorer 510.

UNICEF Moldova participated in two evacuation drills, two warden drills and five emergency communication drills (phone tree, satellite phone, VHF radio checks) organized by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) Field Security Associate.

The security of the UN House premises was a standing agenda item of the UN House Management Committee. In 2017, the UN House reception area was renovated to be compliant to security recommendations, which also included purchase and installation of a turnstile. The UN building’s compliance with fire safety and security measures was assessed, and emergency evacuation plans were put in place and fire extinguishers installed in all key locations. The UN House emergency evacuation door was replaced with a new one equipped with an anti-panic modern lock. Two hand-held metal detectors were purchased and are used by the security guards.

Human resources

In 2017, UNICEF Moldova developed its new CPMP 2018-2022. Human resources needs were reviewed and discussed in a transparent and consultative manner, including during staff retreats and all-staff meetings. Required staff profiles, existing capacities and capacity gaps were analysed while taking into consideration the new CPD priorities, expected results and available funding. As a result, four posts were proposed for abolishment and two new positions were created. UNICEF Moldova successfully implemented a lateral move, and one programme assistant in an abolished post was moved to fill a vacant position in operations. Following the Global 2017 PBR, UNICEF Moldova received institutional budget to fund three positions: HR assistant, procurement & administrative assistant and a child rights monitoring post, thus making more RR and OR funds available for programme needs.

The CMT and the JCC carefully analysed the outcomes of the 2017 GSS. Overall results showed improvement in several dimensions in comparison to the 2014 results. Based on 2017 results, the office is consolidating efforts for increased performance in four key areas: work-life balance, career and professional development, personal empowerment, and office efficiency and effectiveness. A follow-up action plan was developed in consultation with all staff and approved for implementation in 2018.

The office learning plan was developed taking into consideration office learning needs, corporate requirements and completion of mandatory training. Three staff members were deployed to stretch assignments, and all staff participated in the UN Cares training and UNICEF Emergency Preparedness procedure roll-out training.

Ongoing performance discussions and feedback was provided throughout the year, and all staff performance evaluation reports (PERs) were completed in the Achieve system within deadlines. The individual PER deliverables were linked to the AMP and annual workplans, and aligned with CPD outcomes and outputs.

Effective use of information and communication technology

In 2017 UNICEF Moldova continued to effectively use ICT services to improve programme performance. Systems availability targets were met, and disaster recovery and business continuity requirements were followed. The cloud-based office platform Office 365 with Outlook, Skype for Business and OneDrive were widely used by staff members for communication and
data exchange within the office and with external partners. Extensive use of Skype for Business ensured efficient and cost-effective communication with the UNICEF Regional Office and UNICEF NY Headquarters, participation in various meetings, follow-up of global and regional webinars, and participation in training and learning activities, thus reducing travel costs and the travel-related environmental footprint. It also further facilitated recruitment processes through online interviews.

The UNICEF Moldova migration to ICT LIGHT contributed to a fully mobile workspace, with all resources available through internet connection. The in-house hardware servers use was discontinued, leading to significant reduction of the ICT footprint and an estimated cost saving of US$25,000 over four years (the server’s lifecycle period). The data from the local file server were migrated to the Regional Office Service Centre, and all other physical servers were decommissioned.

The procurement & administrative assistant was trained as alternate ICT focal point on equipment troubleshooting to ensure backup during any absence of the ICT assistant.

All UNICEF Moldova office laptops migrated to Windows 10 and MS Office 2016, aligning the office with the 2017 ICT roll-out implementation plan. As per local property survey board recommendation, ten functional laptops were donated to implementing partners.

UNICEF Moldova continued to expand its digital social media presence. The average engagement through Facebook increased 2.5 times in comparison to 2016, reaching 13,000 followers. The number of followers on Twitter increased two-fold, reaching 1,500 followers. Six animated video spots promoting breastfeeding, early stimulation, inclusive education, and positive parenting reached more than 300,000 people on social media.

Programme components from RAM

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 By 2017, the Government addresses disparities in access to quality education, health, protection and justice services for disadvantaged children and families

Analytical statement of progress
In 2017 UNICEF supported the MoH in assessing the implementation of childcare and development standards. Guidelines on home visiting for young children were developed and approved. The maternal health regulatory framework in the Transnistrian region was further strengthened with the development of an antenatal care standard ensuring provision of quality care to pregnant women. The capacities of 384 health professionals on interpersonal communication were strengthened to support their interaction with parents, address negative perceptions, and boost immunization and breastfeeding trends. Additional efforts to promote immunization saw the development and adoption of a National Communication Strategy and Action Plan 2017-2020, and the Government of Moldova National Immunization Programme was supported to procure vaccines worth US$1,262,400 through UNICEF Supply Division.

UNICEF continued to support the expanded outreach and quality of the YFHS. Recommendations on the draft health code advocated for a decrease in the age limit allowing 14 year olds to access health services without mandatory parental consent. A performance-based financing pilot for YFHS was initiated, and qualitative and quantitative indicators were developed and tested in four pilot centres. Guidelines on provision of YFHS services to most-at-
risk and especially vulnerable adolescents and youth were developed, and 30 YFHS specialists were trained. YFHS communication for behaviour change strategies were adopted by LPAs in five districts to boost health-seeking behaviours among adolescents.

In 2017, UNICEF provided support to the MLSPF in developing guidelines for foster care of children under three, and approximately half a million people in Moldova were reached with messages promoting foster care. The number of children in residential care decreased from 2,200 in 2016 to 1,750 in 2017.

A partnership with the National Legal Aid Council (NLAC) was supported, ensuring access to quality justice for 2,314 children (2,097 boys and 217 girls). Quality standards for provision of legal aid to children involved in non-criminal cases were developed and approved. A prevention programme for diverted children was developed in partnership with the Institute for Penal Reforms and piloted in five districts. More than 100 professionals (police officers, social workers, probation officers and psychologists) in four districts and Balti municipality were trained on how to implement the programme, and 60 professionals, including school psychologists and professionals from psycho-pedagogical assistance services at the district level, were trained in working with diverted children.

Preschool enrolment continued to increase, reaching 87 per cent in 2016/2017, an increase of 3 percentage points (p.p.) in comparison to 2014/2015. However, the urban-rural gap continued to widen, reaching 34 p.p. in 2016/2017 compared to 32 p.p. in 2014/2015. Less positive results were seen regarding the primary enrolment rate, which dropped to 91 per cent in 2016/2017 from 92 per cent in 2014/2015. Rural areas were of particular concern, where the enrolment rate dropped to 78 per cent in 2016/2017 from 83 per cent in 2014/2015, and there was a stark rural-urban gap of 37 p.p. in 2016/2017 compared to 27 p.p. in 2014/2015. The overall lower secondary enrolment rate remained unchanged, however a drop in the rural enrolment was observed (from 80 per cent in 2014/2015 to 78 per cent in 2016/2017). There was also an increased rural-urban gap of 25 p.p. in 2016/2017 from 18 p.p. in 2014/2015.

In 2017, inclusive education efforts brought further integration of children with disabilities and Roma children into mainstream schools, and a clear commitment was taken on General Comment 4 to Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. During the year, the number of children with special educational needs in mainstream classes remained stable, the proportion of children with disabilities integrated in regular schools increased by 7.4 p.p., and the number of children with disabilities in special schools decreased by 17 per cent compared to the previous school year. A partnership with the Youth Resource Centre DACIA mobilized community and local stakeholders’ support and contributed to the inclusion in education of some 40 Roma school-age children who were out of school for a long time.

Despite some positive adjustments, including the expansion of the child-care allowance programme to include uninsured children up to two years of age, and a 24 per cent increase (from 2016 to 2017) in the budget dedicated to support children temporarily left without parental care, the social protection system in Moldova could not bring about a major difference in the child poverty rate in Moldova. The poverty-focused Ajutor Social Programme is estimated to have achieved only a 1.6 p.p. reduction in the child poverty rate in 2014, and child-care allowances, covering only children whose caretaker has ceased working, are estimated to have 1.7 p.p. impact on the child poverty rate for the same year.

The systemic problems of the social protection system remain: programmes for children are not
at levels that ensure an adequate standard of living or help families escape from poverty. To promote the expansion of social protection coverage for children and propose a more efficient design of social protection programmes, in 2017, UNICEF gathered evidence on the financing, coverage and functioning of the current social protection system. In the area of public finance for children, the impact of decentralization reform on the financing of services for children (social support, ECD and youth services) was assessed to inform recommendations on improved financing for child services at the local level.

**OUTPUT 1** By 2017, the Government addresses disparities in access to quality education, health, protection and justice services for disadvantaged children and families

**Analytical statement of progress**
In 2017, UNICEF continued its cooperation with the MLSPF in implementing the National Action Plan to the Child Protection Strategy for 2016-2020 and with the Ministry of Justice in further promoting child-sensitive justice.

The partnership with Child Community Family Moldova further contributed to a decrease in the number of children in residential care on both sides of the Nistru river: from 52 in 2015 to 17 in 2017 on the right bank of the river and from 62 in 2015 to 40 in 2017 in the Transnistrian region. In addition, the institutionalisation of 208 children from both banks of the Nistru river was prevented through provision of support to the biological families. A social crèche for children aged 4 months to 3 years was established in Glodeni. The crèche provides daycare services to 12 children from vulnerable families, thus allowing single mothers and vulnerable parents to look for jobs. A second crèche will be established in Balti municipality.

A national awareness campaign “YOU are born in my soul”, promoting foster care, was broadcast on national, regional and local TV stations reaching more than 90,000 people. An additional 400,000 people were reached through advertisements on LED screens placed in Chisinau and Balti with support from local authorities. Three animated videos promoting child-family attachment were broadcast in October 2017.

UNICEF provided support to the MLSPF in developing guidelines for foster care of children under three (including children with disabilities).

The access to justice for children in Moldova further improved in 2017. UNICEF supported the NLAC for the upgrade of the legal aid data collection system in introducing new modules collecting data on children. As per NLAC statistics, 2,314 children (2,097 boys and 217 girls) benefited from qualified legal assistance in criminal and non-criminal cases in 2017. Quality standards for legal aid to children were developed and approved by NLAC. More than 500 lawyers were trained and sensitized on the new external monitoring mechanism (peer review) of cases involving children.

A prevention programme for diverted children was developed in partnership with the Institute for Penal Reforms, and 100 professionals (police officers, social workers, probation officers and psychologists) in four districts and Balti municipality were trained on how to implement the programme. An additional 60 professionals, including school psychologists and professionals from psycho-pedagogical assistance services at the district level, were trained in working with diverted children. At least 50 diverted children received holistic re-integration support according to the new case-management system. A video lesson for children under 14 years of age was developed to promote positive practices and prevent delinquent behaviour. It will be tested in
ten schools.

More than 100 children victims of violence, abuse and trafficking were supported with various services (medical treatment, reintegration in school, school supplies, clothing, footwear and hygiene kits), and psychological counselling was provided to 60 children victims of crimes.

**OUTPUT 2** By 2017, integrated quality services that promote young children's well-being and development are delivered by the primary healthcare system, education and protection systems in cooperation with LPAs and civil society.

**Analytical statement of progress**

UNICEF continued to support the MoH in strengthening the maternal and childcare health system of Moldova.

UNICEF conducted an assessment of the level of implementation of the child care and development standards, including home visiting for young children. The results of the assessment informed the required revision of the child care and development standards. Guidelines on home visiting, including child and family well-being assessment tools, were developed with UNICEF support and approved by the MoH.

To strengthen the implementation of the National Immunization Programme, the MoH approved a Communication Strategy and Action Plan 2017-2020 to Promote Immunization. The strategy was developed in a participatory manner with UNICEF support.

Aiming to improve the interaction of families with health providers, UNICEF supported the development of an interpersonal communication skills module for medical doctors and nurses. The modules were included in the training curricula of nurses and will also be included in the training curricula of family doctors and paediatricians. Some 384 health professionals were trained. Two-day capacity-building events were held at the primary healthcare facilities that had registered the lowest immunization rates. Health professionals and medical academia were equipped with knowledge on vaccine composition, safety and quality, as well as how to address misconceptions related to vaccination and better inform parents and community members on the benefits of immunization.

To ensure access of children to safe and high-quality vaccines, UNICEF provided technical support to the MoH and the National Centre of Public Health in procurement of vaccines through UNICEF Supply Division. In accordance with the forecasting exercise conducted by the partners, vaccines and consumables for the National Immunization Programme valued at US$1,262,400 were procured in 2017. Throughout the year, UNICEF supported effective dialogue among the partners and other agencies involved in vaccine procurement and transportation.

UNICEF provided technical support to the Transnistrian region for the revision of standards focusing on routine antenatal care and introducing best practices in monitoring pregnant women.

UNICEF Moldova joined a regional initiative raising awareness on the life-saving role of vaccines and also raised awareness and encouraged vaccination during European Immunization Week. Local photo galleries of families immunizing their children were created.
and shared through the UNICEF Moldova Facebook and Twitter accounts. Furthermore, a number of events raising the awareness of pregnant women and lactating mothers on the importance on breastfeeding were carried out during Breastfeeding Week, while photo galleries and messages on the importance of breastfeeding were disseminated through social media.

OUTPUT 3
By 2017, the government promotes full enrolment and retention of all children (3-15), especially most vulnerable, and applies new education standards for learning environments and outcomes

Analytical statement of progress
In 2017, UNICEF continued to support the MoE in improving the quality of learning and participation in education in Moldova with strong focus on children most at risk of exclusion.

The advancement of the inclusive education agenda continued. During the year, the number of children with special educational needs in regular classes remained stable, the proportion of children with disabilities integrated in regular schools increased by 7.4 p.p. and the number of children with disabilities in special schools decreased by 17 per cent compared to the previous school year. UNICEF contributed to these results in partnership with the Republican Centre for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance. Specific activities included: strengthening the normative framework and the capacity of local education authorities and psycho-pedagogical support services, developing guidelines for inclusion of children with sensorial disabilities and of children with severe disabilities in education, advocating for better data management, and mobilizing communities. The NBS collected and published data on children with disabilities and children with special educational needs in mainstream preschools and schools.

The Government’s high-level commitment to inclusive education was reiterated at a National Conference on Inclusive Education organized with UNICEF support, at which the General Comment 4 to Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was presented and further key steps agreed.

The findings of a report on the social norms and barriers hampering inclusion of Roma children in education and their access to services were incorporated into a pilot project implemented in partnership with the Youth Resource Centre DACIA in one Roma community. The project mobilized support from community and local stakeholders and contributed to the inclusion of 40 Roma school-age children in education who had been out of school for a long time.

Efforts to improve the quality of preschool education advanced as well. The National Council on Child Rights Protection recommended that the MoE and Ministry of Finance use the UNICEF-supported costing of ECD services in defining financial norms for preschool meals. UNICEF supported the development of a per-capita financing formula for preschools, which will be piloted by the World Bank. Despite such gains, however, 80 per cent of Roma children, 90 per cent of children with disabilities and 26 per cent of children in rural areas are not in preschool.

The first-ever standard package of educational services for preschool, primary, lower and upper secondary education was developed in consultation with central and local education authorities, teachers, parents, children and CSOs.

According to the 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment results, about half of children are competent in reading, mathematics and sciences. Enrolment and completion rates
in primary and lower secondary education are decreasing. The gap between rural and urban enrolment continues to widen at all levels, and most Roma children are not enrolled.

**OUTPUT 4** By 2017, social protection system increasingly provides effective support to the poorest children and builds the resilience of vulnerable families

**Analytical statement of progress**
Two important evidence-generation efforts were undertaken in 2017. The first was an assessment of the impact of decentralization on social services for children and youth at the local level. The findings of the study were used by the MLSPF in its initiative to provide LPAs with earmarked funds for a minimum package of social services for children. It also includes recommendations on the type of capacity building and other support LPAs need to raise more funds and to budget more equitably for vulnerable children and their families.

The second was a study on the major cash transfer programmes for children in Moldova. It provides recommendations to the MLSPF on how to make the cash transfer system more integrated, coherent and effective at reducing child poverty, including potential programme design options that would make cash transfers better able to address the needs of vulnerable families. This initiative, combined with the participation of MLSPF staff at a sub-regional conference on child-sensitive social protection, which UNICEF facilitated, led the MLSPF to request UNICEF's support in costing and simulating a number of new programme design options in 2018.

UNICEF, in partnership with the UNCT, continued to support the MLSPF in its efforts to reform the system of disability determination. An Action Plan 2017-2019 for the harmonization of criteria and procedures for disability determination and their alignment with international standards was developed with UNICEF and UNCT support and approved by the MLSPF.

**OUTCOME 2** By 2017, governance structures and social attitudes are more child sensitive and equity oriented

**Analytical statement of progress**
In September 2017, the Republic of Moldova presented the combined IV-V Report to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In preparation for the presentation, UNICEF prepared an independent UN submission and supported alternative submissions of CSOs and adolescents. UNICEF also supported the participation of the Ombudsperson for Child Rights to the Convention on the Rights of the Child Pre-session Working Group in February 2017, the participation of representatives from CSOs and children, and the travel of the government delegation to the September session. UNICEF’s independent report highlighted achievements and shortfalls in realization of children’s rights in Moldova, and provided a review of the implementation of specific Convention (2009) recommendations. In 2017, in line with those recommendations, the National Action Plan to the Child Protection Strategy was developed and its mid-term budgetary framework was approved. An Ombudsman for Child Rights was appointed in 2016, many national child-related policies were costed and budgeted, and CSOs and youth were involved in the development of the alternative report to the IV-V Report to the Child Rights Convention.
A cooperation agreement with the State Chancellery was signed to provide support to the Permanent Secretariat of the National Council of Child Rights Protection, ensuring high-level cross-sectoral coordination and monitoring of the implementation of child-related policies.

UNICEF actively contributed to UN submissions under the Committees on Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as to accelerating the SDG Agenda in Moldova.

**OUTPUT 1** By 2017, central and local authorities have improved capacity to monitor and promote child rights, and to design and implement evidence-based policies and budgetary frameworks

**Analytical Statement of Progress**

In 2017, UNICEF continued to support the Child Rights Ombudsperson in monitoring the rights of the most vulnerable children in Moldova. UNICEF supported the participation of the Ombudsperson at the Convention on the Rights of the Child Pre-session Working Group to present an independent alternative report.

Additional support was provided for the development of the annual report on child rights, which the Ombudsperson presented to Parliament in 2017. The Ombudsperson had the opportunity to participate at the regional European Network of Ombudspersons for Children conference, where key topics discussed included the role of independent children’s rights institutions in monitoring, advocating, investigating and handling individual complaints on violation of child rights.

Additional insights on promoting children’s voices and their direct contact with Ombudspersons for Children’s Rights Offices were also discussed. The Ombudsperson was supported in organizing two discussion forums on “Children’s and adolescents’ participation in the process of reporting and monitoring of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child”, in June and November 2017, providing opportunities for children and adolescents to express their opinion in regard to the realization of their rights in dialogue with Parliament, the Government of Moldova and LPAs.

In 2017, UNICEF in partnership with the NBS officially launched the thematic statistical publication “Children of Moldova”, accompanied by a brief analysis of the progress and challenges in education, justice, social protection and other child rights-related areas. For the first time, data were presented in the form of infographics making use of data readily available to the public. UNICEF provided inputs and an overview of the current situation of implementation of child rights in Moldova to the joint UN submissions to the periodic reviews of the UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the reporting of Moldova to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the EU-Moldova Human Rights Dialogue to provide an update on significant child rights issues.

**OUTPUT 2** By 2017, civil society, media, private sector and children are actively engaged in advocacy, public dialogue and creating social norms for the promotion of child rights

**Analytical statement of progress**

In 2017, UNICEF Moldova, as an early adopter of the Global Communication and Public Advocacy Strategy, continued to contribute to the global goal of sustaining and expanding UNICEF’s leadership as a credible and trusted voice for children. UNICEF Moldova joined the
Hootsuite, rolled out globally by UNICEF’s Division of Communication, as well as the global credit line for paid Facebook ads. As a result, UNICEF Moldova expanded its social media use for visibility and engagement, reaching over 10,000 followers on Facebook and over 1,000 followers on Twitter. Several global initiatives (e.g. #EarlyMomentsMatter) were actively promoted on UNICEF Moldova’s accounts and adapted to the local context. New digital products, such as digital videos on parenting, foster care, breastfeeding and ECD, were under development at the end of 2017.

In 2016, UNICEF began producing its own newsletter, which continued in 2017. Children and adolescents were engaged through various events. UNICEF Moldova was one of the UNICEF country offices participating in the State of the World’s Children 2017 workshops, to understand young people’s experiences in the digital age. On the 1st of June – International Children's Day – more than 100 children from vulnerable groups participated in an event organized for them.

Jointly with WHO, UNICEF conducted a number of awareness-raising events during European Immunization Week, which resulted in increased media penetration of the messages promoting immunization. The study on Roma perceptions of barriers to access services was launched successfully and enjoyed wide media coverage. Moreover, a sports for development event was organized in partnership with Special Olympics and the Moldovan Football Federation.

In the framework of a partnership with the American Chamber of Commerce, a child-focused corporate social responsibility dialogue was organized. As a result, a breastfeeding welcome partnership with several chain restaurants and cafeterias was developed to support mothers who want to feed their children in public venues. UNICEF will provide the tools and support to businesses and venues that join the initiative.

UNICEF also continued to play a leading role within the UN Country Communication Team and contributed regularly to the UN magazine.

**OUTCOME 3 Effective and efficient programme management and operations support programme delivery**

**Analytical statement of progress**

During 2017, measures were taken to monitor and further strengthen the office’s governance, systems and internal control mechanisms. The Rolling Management Plan and Risk Profiles, and Early Warning Early Action portal were reviewed and updated. The key performance indicators and Country Office Scorecard were discussed during monthly programme meetings, and progress was presented quarterly at CMT meetings to ensure oversight of appropriate financial and budget management along with timely programme implementation. All the schedules for interim and year-end closure of accounts were monitored and uploaded on SharePoint within deadlines. The transition of financial and human resources processes to the GSSC was in compliance with set deadlines, and all the internal workflows were adjusted accordingly. Bottlenecks and potential risks in programme implementation related to procurement and contracting processes were identified, and efforts were made to strengthen and improve cooperation between the programme and operations sections. As a result, the implication of relevant operations colleagues at different stages of the process was included in workflows and logs, leading to improved efficiency and stronger collaboration towards achieving optimum results.
The stronger cooperation between the programmes and operations sections helped overcome bottlenecks in contracting for goods and services, especially to reach a broader pool of applicants/vendors and ensure a more competitive environment.

The Institutional Budget was 100 per cent utilized according to office priorities and operational needs.

OUTPUT 1 Effective and efficient governance structures and systems to adequately manage risks and achieve programme results

Analytical statement of progress
In line with the initiative to streamline office management structures, UNICEF Moldova reduced the number of statutory committees in 2017. The following governance structures were maintained: contract review committee, partnership review committee, local property survey board, and the joint consultative committee. Their terms of reference and membership were updated and reflected in the 2017 AMP Plan.

A total of 10 CMT meetings, three JCC meetings and 11 all-staff meetings were held during the year with many of them dedicated to CPD and CPMP consultations and discussions on PBR and the 2017 GSS results.

UNICEF Moldova continued the practice of reviewing, improving and streamlining work processes by focusing on bottlenecks, updating internal documents and ensuring full compliance and accountability. Several internal business process meetings were organized to thoroughly revise the work of programme and operations assistants. As a result, some tasks were redistributed to improve efficiency and consistency of operational processes.

The table of authority (ToA) was regularly updated to reflect staff-related changes and responsibilities, and to ensure proper segregation of duties. Refresher presentations on these subjects, including clarification of changes related to eZHACT roles, were conducted for CMT and all staff. The ToA was updated in late 2017 to reflect updated roles related to eZHACT migration, with appropriate delegation of authority signed by relevant staff as per Financial and Administrative Policy.

Constant and efficient support for office functionality through effective maintenance and improvement of ICT services were ensured in 2017. Systems availability targets were met, and disaster recovery and business continuity requirements were followed. All UNICEF Moldova office laptops were migrated to Windows 10 and MS Office 2016 to align the office with the 2017 ICT roll-out implementation plan. At the beginning of 2017, the office migrated to the LIGHT ICT office model, as part of global UNICEF Lightweight and Agile IT Project to put in place a fully mobile workspace, with all resources available using only an internet connection. This led to significant reduction of the ICT footprint by eliminating the need for in-house hardware servers.

The risk assessment was updated using the Enterprise Risk Management module and reflecting risks identified and included in the AMP 2017. The BCP and ICT Disaster Recovery Plan were updated to include infrastructural changes related to the migration to IT LIGHT Office and to GSSC. To be compliant with ICT Emergency Preparedness and ensure basic ICT services from remote locations, the office purchased the Emergency Telecom Response Kit 1 (ETR-1 kit), and the Mobile High-Speed Data Satellite Service BGAN Explorer 510. In 2017, UNICEF participated in two evacuation drills, two warden drills and five emergency communication drills.
(phone tree, satellite phone, VHF radio checks) organized by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) Field Security Associate.

OUTPUT 2 Effective and efficient management and stewardship of financial resources and of other assets of the organization

Analytical statement of progress
Effective use of available monitoring tools and regular review of financial indicators resulted in sound financial performance, with no outstanding DCTs over six months, no implementing partners receiving cash transfers of more than US$100,000 without assessment, no overdue donor reports, and no travel authorizations open for more than 15 days.

In 2017, UNICEF Moldova registered an overall expenditure rate of 100 per cent for all resources under the Institutional Budget, RR and OR resources. All expiring grants were utilized prior to their expiration date. Bank reconciliations were submitted prior to deadlines and without outstanding unreconciled items. Financial closure activities were successfully completed by deadlines. UNICEF Moldova maintained optimal local bank account balances. Monthly cash forecasts, monthly replenishment requests and month-end balances were reviewed and monitored. The VAT was reimbursed in a timely manner, and the VAT account had no overdue uncleared balances.

Moldova successfully transitioned to the new eZHACT module, and the relevant adjustment of internal processes were made.

As per year-end closure of accounts instructions, UNICEF Moldova completed the schedules and uploaded them on DFAM SharePoint.

UNICEF Moldova complied with HACT implementation requirements. Four spot checks and two audits of implementing partners were completed as required by the minimum assurance standards. A macro-assessment led by UNICEF on behalf of all UN agencies was completed for the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and CPD 2018-2022.

OUTPUT 3 Effective and efficient management of human capacity, including staff development and learning

Analytical statement of progress
The human resource needs for the new CPMP 2018-2022 were jointly reviewed and discussed, in a transparent and consultative manner, including during staff retreats and all-staff meetings. The required staff profiles, existing capacities and capacity gaps were analysed while taking into consideration the new CPD priorities and expected results as well as available funding. As a result, four posts were proposed for abolishment and two new positions were created. UNICEF Moldova successfully implemented a lateral move, and one programme assistant on abolished post was moved to fill a vacant position in operations. Following the Global 2017 PBR, UNICEF Moldova received institutional budget to fund three positions: HR assistant, procurement & administrative assistant and a child rights monitoring post, thus making more RR and OR funds available for programme needs.

The CMT and the JCC carefully analysed the outcomes of the 2017 GSS. The overall results showed improvements in several dimensions compared to the 2014 results. Based on the 2017
results, the office is consolidating efforts for increased performance in four key areas: work life balance, career and professional development, personal empowerment and office efficiency and effectiveness. A follow-up action plan was developed in consultation with all staff and approved for implementation in 2018.

The office learning plan was developed taking into consideration office learning needs, corporate requirements and completion of mandatory training. Three staff members were deployed to stretch assignments, and all staff participated in the UN Cares training and UNICEF Emergency Preparedness procedure roll-out training.

Ongoing performance discussions and feedback were provided throughout the year, and all staff PERs were completed in the Achieve system within deadlines. The individual PER deliverables were linked to the AMP and annual work plans, and aligned with CPD outcomes and outputs.

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#### Evaluation and research

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#### Other publications

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#### Lessons learned

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### Innovation

Using U-Report to mobilize young people around Moldova’s new National Development Strategy

### Lesson Learned

Strengthening Moldova’s Home Visiting Programme for Young Children

Increased participation of Roma children in education

### Programme documents

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