

## Moldova

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### Part 1: Situation update in the country

In 2018 UNICEF Moldova commenced implementation of its country programme of cooperation 2018-2022 (CP) with the Government of the Republic of Moldova (GoM) and in close cooperation with development partners, local public authorities (LPAs), civil society organizations (CSOs), media, communities and children and adolescents. The country programme continued to support national priorities and advance realization of children rights, in line with key recommendations reflected in the concluding observations of the committee on the rights of the child issued late 2017.

The country's operational environment remained challenging in 2018. While integration with Europe anchored the Government's policy reform agenda, implementation of reforms continued to be slow due to challenges such as a weak economy, polarized society and volatile political environment. Business confidence continued to be low, and the macroeconomic framework remained vulnerable, operating with substantial external budget support and high levels of conditionality. Moldova's large-scale out-migration, combined with decreasing fertility rates, has led to an alarming decline in population size. This in turn has increased the proportion of elderly and placed pressure on the pension system, as well as limiting the country's long-term competitiveness. Although Moldova's human capital index increased slightly in recent years (0.58 for 2018), at 0.63 the country still lags behind the average for Europe and Central Asia. (World Bank, October 2018).

Moldova's gross domestic product (GDP) growth has averaged around 4.5 per cent a year since 2010 and is forecast to maintain that rate. Growth is predominantly driven by consumption and fuelled by remittances, with the latter accounting for a quarter of GDP – among the highest share in the world (WB, 2018). While unemployment remained low, at just 3 per cent, the country still experiences a large informal economy (an estimated one third of the work force), negatively impacting fiscal revenue and financing of social services (National Bureau of Statistics/NBS, 2018). Within such an environment poverty among children (11.5 per cent) continued to be higher than the general poverty rate of 9.6 per cent (NBS, 2017).

Moldova continued to experience a drop in its democracy index (from 6.5 in 2009 to 5.9 in 2017, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, 2018). Political instability persisted, and development partners questioned the state of democracy in the country on several occasions. In the summer of 2018, a court decision annulled the results of a snap mayoral election in the capital, Chisinau, won by an opposition leader. This provoked mass protests and was criticized by outside observers, including the European Union (EU) and the United States. The EU suspended its macro-financial assistance to Moldova, and in November 2018 a resolution was passed by the European Parliament expressing EU member states' "grave concerns over the country's backsliding in relation to democratic standards and the rule of law".

During 2018 hopes for political resolution of the situation in the Transnistrian region remained distant, despite some progress toward implementing the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) negotiated 'package of eight' confidence-building measures related to transit, education, agriculture and telecommunications. Five of the agreements were being implemented as of September 2018 (OSCE, 2018). In the near-term, parliamentary elections in early 2019 and local elections later in the year are expected to dominate the political agenda, creating a risk for further slowdown of important reforms.

This challenging socio-economic and political environment reduced development assistance to Moldova to a minimum, and the state of the economy did not allow either central or sub-national governments to allocate sufficient resources to implement key child-related strategies. Nevertheless, in 2018 UNICEF Moldova forged several strategic partnerships with potential for achieving tangible positive outcomes for children. In early 2018, in partnership with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), UNICEF Moldova initiated a comprehensive analysis of the country's education sector. The partnership with the EU was strengthened, and starting in 2019 UNICEF Moldova will implement – with EU funds and in close partnership with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UN Women – a comprehensive programme focused on delivering equitable services for children and youth in two key regions. Initial discussions with the Romanian Agency for International Development were held in relation to possible financing for early childhood education and adolescent skill- building services. Funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) will be granted in 2019 for a One UN joint project addressing human rights issues in the Transnistrian Region, for which UNICEF Moldova will focus on child-friendly justice.

With support from the United Nations (UN) system, the Government adopted a set of nationalized Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and related indicators. Of these, some 34 are related to children's rights to health, protection and ECD, while also seeking to address child poverty, violence and discrimination and strengthen data availability. At end-2018, of the 17 global SDG indicators for which UNICEF is co-/custodian, only five were being collected through Moldova's administrative data systems.

This challenging socio-economic and political environment inevitably leads to a situation in which some vulnerable children are 'left behind'.

**Child poverty:** The national human development report highlighted a significant gap between absolute urban and rural poverty in Moldova; 19 per cent of the rural population lives below the national poverty line and 5 per cent in urban areas. The most vulnerable groups are also exposed to social inequalities in education, health, access to quality services and participation. The urban-rural income gap nearly doubled between 2010 and 2015: from 24 per cent to 42 per cent (UNDP, 2017). Children in Moldova continued to remain disproportionately poor, with pronounced rural-urban inequalities. The poverty rate for households with three or more children was 23 per cent in 2015 compared to the 10 per cent national average and 8 per cent for families with one child (Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure, 2017). Around 18 per cent of children in rural areas live below the poverty line, compared to only 2 per cent in urban areas (NBS, 2017).

During this same period Moldova's social assistance system faced continuing challenges in regard to preventing and eliminating vulnerabilities. The share of families with children receiving the country's main poverty-focused social assistance programme (Ajutor Social) declined from 52 per cent in 2014 to 41 per cent in 2017 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Social

Protection/ MHLSP, 2018). Coverage for the most vulnerable population groups was limited, and low benefit levels –disconnected from minimum national subsistence levels – were fuelling persistent poverty. Although social protection spending in Moldova represented 12.6 per cent of GDP, quite high by regional standards, 7.5 per cent is spent on social insurance (mostly pensions) and only 2 per cent on social assistance programmes (International Labour Organization/ILO, 2017).

**Maternal, child and adolescent health:** In 2017 infant and under-five mortality rates (IMR, U5MR) were 9.7 and 11.4 per 1,000 live births, respectively – more than twice the EU average (IMR 3.4 and U5MR 4.1, WB, 2017). Similarly, Moldova’s maternal mortality rate of 17.6 per 100,000 live births (MHLSP, 2017) was more than twice as high as the EU average of 8 per 100,000 (WB, 2015). An estimated 20 per cent of child deaths – all preventable if timely health care were sought and provided– still occur at home or within 24 hours of hospitalization. Health insurance coverage remained at 86 per cent (National Health Insurance Company/NHIC, 2017), also lower than in the EU (between 93 and 100 per cent) (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/OECD, 2013). Coverage for measles/mumps/rubella vaccination fell from 96 per cent in 2006 to 87 per cent in 2017. A key challenge for provision of quality maternal, child and adolescent health is limited availability and high turnover among medical professionals.

Adolescent health continued to be weak. Despite decreasing trends, the rate of sexually transmitted infections among youth was four times higher than in EU countries. The adolescent birth rate was 27 per 1,000 adolescent girls, 2.5 times higher than the EU average of 10.5 (WB, 2016). Roma girls continued to be subjected to child marriage and early childbearing. One of every eight teenagers is overweight, and every fifth teenager faces a body mass deficit (World Health Organization/WHO, 2014). Forty-one youth-friendly health services (YFHS) have been established across the country and the number of adolescents aged 10-24 benefitting from them increased from about 134,000 in 2016 to 163,000 in 2017. However, the centres reach only about 25 per cent of all Moldovan adolescents, of whom only 18 per cent were high risk and especially vulnerable.

**Inclusive, equitable education:** In 2018 there was a 13 per cent decrease in the number of children in special educational institutions compared to 2017. However, young Roma children and children with disabilities have the most limited access to pre-school (UN, 2013; MHLSP and Ministry of Education, Culture and Research/MECR, 2016). The net enrolment rate in primary education (at 87 per cent) is still one of the lowest in the East and Central Asia region (UNESCO, 2017) with an urban-rural gap of 40 percent. In 2018, only 42 per cent of students graduating from lower secondary education continued their study at lyceums or vocational institutions (NBS, 2018). The decentralization process, which shifted the responsibility for financing preschools from central authorities to local public authorities, resulted in severe underfunding of preschool education; 250 localities lack preschools (MECR, 2018). The disparity in school performance by 15-year-old students’ from the top and bottom income groups is currently equivalent to almost three years of schooling, and between urban and rural areas - to almost one and a half years of schooling (WB, 2018).

**Child protection and justice for children:** The number of children in residential care declined by 5 per cent in 2018 from 2017 totals; some 5,044 children were placed in family-based care (up from 4,984 in 2017); and the number of professional foster families increased to 397 (from 379 in 2017). Some 745 children were placed in a protective family environment, up from 691 in 2017 (MHLSP, 2018). The Government approved a set of financial support measures for

families and children in alternative care and a regulatory framework for social crèches.

Only limited progress was made in tackling violence, abuse and exploitation of children. A 2018 knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) study revealed a high incidence of family quarrels. One third of children are subjected to physical violence, and one in 10 caregivers believe that physical punishment is necessary to properly raise or educate a child –although 75 per cent of caregivers acknowledge that beating a child doesn't solve the problem.

Teaching staff, parents and children reported about 4,800 cases of child abuse or violence (MECR, 2018). The number of child victims of crimes was 1,400 (similar to 2017), about one quarter of which were sexual crimes (General Police Inspectorate, 2018), representing a 12 per cent decline compared to 2017. The proportion of children below the minimum age of criminal liability halved as compared to 10 per cent in 2015. The diversion rate, however, stood at 30 per cent, showing no progress since 2017.

**Adolescent and youth development and participation:** Moldova has a high proportion of young people (aged 15–29 years) not in school, employed or in training: 29 per cent in 2017 (more than twice as many as the EU average of 12 per cent), as was also the case for an estimated 9 per cent of adolescents (aged 15-19) and 30 per cent of youth (aged 20-24). Figures are higher for rural youth (35 per cent) and girls (34 per cent) (NBS, 2018). Youth remain unemployed partly due to a mismatch between acquired skills and labour market demand. The quality of secondary education in Moldova remained weak; curricula are not adequately adapted to labour market needs and are taught through outdated teaching methodologies in poor facilities. Career counselling, quality entrepreneurship, volunteer and internship opportunities and vocational training are generally unavailable or severely underfunded and not considered attractive by adolescents. Close to one third of students had insufficient basic skills to fully integrate in professional and social life (OECD, 2018).

These findings were corroborated by about 3,000 young people consulted in 2018 by UNICEF Moldova via the real-time participation platform U-report. The lack of mandatory provisions enforcing participatory mechanisms in schools, communities or at the central level limited adolescents' opportunities for participation and engagement. An estimated 42 per cent of youth aged 15–24 are willing to participate but cannot due to "lack of time" or because they "do not know how to get involved" (Council of Europe, 2013). Local participatory structures (youth councils, pupils' councils, youth CSOs or youth wings of political parties) are not present or accessible in all districts or to most vulnerable adolescents and have limited resources to implement youth-related strategies and programmes. In schools, civic education and participatory practices face continued resistance from school management, sceptical parents and young people with limited awareness of the benefits of civic participation.

**Gender equality:** Perceptions in Moldova about traditional gender roles scarcely improved in recent decades. The OECD 2018 youth well-being policy review revealed that adolescents ascribe more responsibilities to girls in the areas of housework and school performance, and girls are burdened by more social responsibilities, which increase with age, while boys grow up with widespread perceptions that men are superior to women. Several other research data support such findings: Some 64 per cent of respondents agreed that a man's responsibility is to bring money home and a woman's responsibility is to take care of the family and household (UN Women, UNDP 2016). Similar gender stereotypes are shared by adolescent girls and boys (UNICEF, SCORE, 2018). During 2000–2016 the proportion of time spent per day on unpaid domestic and care work was 19 hours for women versus 10 for men (UN Women, 2018). The

OECD study further revealed the prevalence of toxic masculine behaviour characterized by violence, aggression, engaging in high-risk behaviour and pressure to be sexually active from a young age. Violence and bullying are culturally accepted ways for men to show their superior status in the family and society at large (NBS, 2011) and to illustrate they are “true men” (OECD, 2018).

**Preparedness and humanitarian action:** There were no major natural disasters or humanitarian situations affecting realization of children’s rights in Moldova in 2018. Although the pan-European measles outbreak reached Moldova, timely action to curb the outbreak were taken by the Government, in collaboration with concerned partners.

## Part 2: Major results, including in humanitarian action and gender, against the results in the Country Programme Document

The overarching goal of UNICEF Moldova’s Country Programme 2018-2022 is to ensure that by 2022 all children in the country enjoy their rights to education, health and an adequate standard of living; participate in decision-making processes at home, in school and in society; and live within a child-friendly environment that protects them from abandonment, neglect, discrimination, exploitation and violence. These priorities are aligned with more than 18 national strategies and contribute to the implementation of three out of four priority areas of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2018–2022. UNICEF Moldova’s work is reflected in nine outcomes and 18 output indicators of a total 62 UNDAF indicators. UNICEF also co-chairs, with WHO, priority area 4 (inclusive and equitable social development), and with UNFPA the UN adolescents and youth theme group.

Programme results contribute to the realization of six SDGs (1,2,3,4,10 and 16) seeking to reduce inequalities, address child poverty and contribute to a healthy life and well-being for children, supported by accountable institutions. The results also contribute to the achievement of four goal areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan (SP) 2018–2021 (GAs 1,2,3 and 5), focusing on prevention of violence against children and ensuring that every child has a fair chance to survive, thrive and learn in an equitable society.

Major results achieved in 2018 include UNICEF Moldova’s productive engagement in developing the new national development strategy (NDS) “Moldova 2030” and conducting mid-term reviews of the Education 2020 strategy and 2020 Youth Strategy, both resulting in valuable recommendations for strengthened implementation.

Support for development of the NDS took place through participation in six working groups elaborating the country’s strategic vision. Key recommendations focused on the inclusion of children and adolescents as distinct vulnerable groups requiring special interventions based on a life-cycle approach. Emphasis was placed on prevention, strengthened cross-sectoral cooperation, adequate and transparent financing and delivery of quality child-related services and development of mechanisms to ensure children’s and adolescents’ right to participation. Most of the recommendations provided by UNICEF Moldova in the area of health and all recommendations related to the education, child and social protection and justice sectors were retained, reinforcing the Government’s commitments under the Chapter 27 of the EU Association Agreement. UNICEF’s SP and UNICEF Moldova’s CP are well positioned to contribute significantly to the achievement of national priorities focused around four pillars: sustainable and inclusive economy, strong human and social capital, honest and efficient

institutions and a healthy environment.

In 2018 UNICEF Moldova made concerted efforts to advance the adolescent and youth agenda, including rolling-out the U-report, consulting 3,000 adolescents on various child-related topics and ensuring adolescents' inputs to "Moldova 2030" development. Close engagement took also place with central and local public authorities to ensure adequate financing for child-related strategies at the national and local levels. Furthermore, while seeking to leverage resources for children, UNICEF Moldova, in partnership with the World Bank, supported the Government to develop a first-ever funding formula for pre-school education and piloted performance-based financing of adolescent health services. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed with Chisinau Municipality, the largest in the country, providing services to about 185,600 children and adolescents aged 0-24 years (NBS, 2018) to review the work of the municipal department on child protection. As a result, an action plan focusing on effective and efficient financing of child protection services was developed and will be implemented and financed with municipal budgets in 2019. The MoU will see initiation of a similar review of Chisinau Municipality's education, health, social protection and youth sectors in 2019.

### **Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives**

UNICEF Moldova seeks to strengthen immunization coverage, promote home-visiting and the application of child care growth and development standards and improve the access to child and adolescent friendly health services, especially for children with disabilities. At the same time, the CP seeks to strengthen the capacity of health professionals and caregivers. It also envisions work with adolescents, including those at the greatest risk (such as drug users and HIV-affected) to raise awareness and promote healthy lifestyles.

UNICEF Moldova's key partners include: the ministries of health, labour and social protection; CSOs such as Neovita, TDV Balti and Initiativa Positiva that work collaboratively on adolescent health; CSO partners Nova and Voinicel, the Institute of Mother and Child Health (IMCH) and the National Agency for Public Health (NAPH) for strengthening maternal and child health care in Moldova. Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) remained a key partner, providing financial support for the development of youth-friendly health services in Moldova and supporting further strengthening of the primary health care system in the Transnistrian Region.

**Maternal and child health (MCH):** In 2018 UNICEF Moldova and UNICEF's Supply Division supported MHLSP and NAPH to conduct a forecasting exercise of the national immunization programme, resulting in the procurement of vaccines and consumables totalling US\$1,115,812, financed by the MHLSP. In addition, the Government allocated US\$265,000 for implementation of an immunization communication strategy and action plan (2017-2020), developed with UNICEF support in 2017. The pan-European measles outbreak reached Moldova in 2018 with a total of 326 confirmed cases (239 cases in the month of August alone). Within 48 hours of the outbreak UNICEF Moldova advised the MHLSP and MECR on the situation, underlining the importance of conducting a mass vaccination and information campaign and taking measures to prevent the possible rapid spread of the epidemic with the start of the school year. The Government, led by the prime minister, demonstrated strong political commitment, and the MHLSP and MECR worked in close collaboration to curb the outbreak. Public health emergency committees were organized in 10 districts with the highest incidence of measles cases and at the national level. The MHLSP and NPHA, with support from WHO and UNICEF, implemented a broad crisis communication action plan and media outreach campaign through

both traditional and social media. As a result, 9,360 children received a catch-up MMR immunization in August–October 2018. MECR issued an order to all schools requesting non-admission of non-vaccinated children. Both MHLSP and UNICEF engaged with religious leaders seeking their support for vaccination. With support from UNICEF’s East and Central Asia regional office and in partnership with Sabin Vaccine Institute, 12 Moldovan journalists were informed about the measles epidemiological situation and its consequences and were trained in correct messaging to the population. Further advocacy supported by UNICEF Moldova included a parliamentary hearing to stress the importance of immunization as the most cost-effective public health intervention.

Capacities of 120 doctors and nurses from paediatric wards in the Transnistrian region were further strengthened for implementing outpatient child care and development standards, with a focus on counselling for breastfeeding, immunization, early stimulation and detection of developmental delays. Seven clinical protocols on the most common neonatal pathologies were developed based on the latest WHO recommendations. Capacity of 60 professionals from Transnistrian for implementing the antenatal care protocol for physiologic pregnancy in outpatient care was further strengthened by the CSO Nova and the IMCH Perinatal Centre.

In 2018 UNICEF Moldova further strengthened capacities of health care providers. A total of 500 nurses from 18 districts were trained on the use of child and family wellbeing assessment tools, as per home visiting guidelines, and on providing relevant counselling to parents. Some 2,000 copies of home visiting guidelines and tools were distributed and 293,000 leaflets in Romanian and Russian were printed and distributed to families with young children, focusing on nurturing care, breastfeeding, diversification of food, identification of danger signs, prevention of neglect, violence and injuries, immunization, early stimulation and child safe environments.

**Adolescent health:** In 2018 the Government initiated the piloting of performance-based financing (PBF) for youth-friendly health services, developed with UNICEF Moldova support. Quantitative and qualitative indicators, comprising equity bonuses for underrepresented groups, and monitoring tools for the health services were approved. Gender dimensions focused on attracting boys to youth-friendly health services, as currently 70 per cent of beneficiaries are girls. A pilot of the PBF mechanism is being tested by Neovita at four of the services. The lessons learnt from the pilot will inform decision-makers on further implementation of national level performance-based financing.

To strengthen the demand for adolescent health services among target groups (adolescent boys and girls, caregivers, front line professionals), UNICEF Moldova supported the MHLSP to develop a national communication for behaviour change (C4BC) strategic plan for 2018–2020. Local communication plans promoting healthy behaviour were developed in a participatory way by youth-friendly health services, local public authorities and youth in eight districts and consequently approved by local public authorities and implemented through the health services in partnership with local CSOs, schools and youth. Gender-sensitive approaches addressing safe sexual behaviour, nutrition and mental health issues were built in the communication plans and messaging.

In 2018 UNICEF Moldova and Neovita continued to strengthen the quality and outreach of youth-friendly health services. Capacities of more than 150 YFHS volunteers in eight districts and 22 outreach workers in four localities were strengthened, and volunteers reached out to some additional 3,900 MARA/EVA adolescent boys and girls during 414 outreach activities. A

total of 60 adolescent boys and girls and 60 caregivers from four localities benefited from the supported counselling programme addressing issues of aggressive behaviour in both boys and girls.

## **Goal area 2: Every child learns**

The country programme seeks to advance quality inclusive education and address dropout, absenteeism, discrimination and violence in and around schools, while reinforcing implementation of child-friendly school standards (CFSS), supported by a well-functioning classroom assessment system, including for early grades, and strongly promoting child and adolescents' participation.

Key UNICEF partners in this work were the MECR and CSOs, such as the youth resource centre DACIA, supporting the inclusion of Roma children in education; Copil, Comunitate, Familie (CCF) Moldova, working on inclusion of children with severe disabilities; and the Step by Step Educational Programme supporting teachers' training, CFSS implementation and child and adolescent participation. The World Bank and the EU were also key partners in advancing and jointly advocating for education sector reforms.

A valuable GPE contribution in 2018 enabled UNICEF Moldova, together with the think-tank expert-group, to support MECR in conducting a comprehensive education sector analysis (ESA), focusing on all educational levels, human rights and gender, as well as assessing the macro-socio-economic context, to identify strategic priorities for Moldova's education sector. This effort was geared towards achieving the SDGs, seeking better quality education and greater agility in the sector, allowing for a better match of skills to rapidly changing labour market demands. The education sector analysis also includes an in-depth analysis of the system for assessment and evaluation of students, teachers and schools and how well inclusive education strategies are being implemented. In partnership with UN Women, the analysis reviewed the availability and quality of existing gender data and how the sector currently advances gender equality to advance outcomes for children.

In 2018 UNICEF Moldova supported the MECR to conduct a mid-term review of the 'Education 2020' strategy. Key recommendations focused on better alignment of the strategy with action plans and budgets of implementing institutions, strengthened analysis of education sector expenditures and dedicated budget allocations for efficient implementation of the strategy. The review further recommended a review of the strategy's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework and realignment of the indicators to meet SDG and NDS Moldova 2030 targets, while strengthening synchronization with M&E frameworks of implementing institutions. Lastly, it recommended the development of a new long-term vision Education 2030 strategy aligned with SDG 4 targets.

Furthermore in 2018 UNICEF Moldova, in close partnership with MECR and academia, supported the review and development of a new competencies framework for national curricula to serve as the basis for developing subject-matter curricula for general education. The new competencies framework is aligned with best international practice and with the EU Council's lifelong learning competencies framework, while also considering inclusive education (IE) needs.

**Inclusive education:** In 2018 UNICEF Moldova, together with the Alliance of NGOs active in the field of child and family social protection supported the MECR to convene a national

conference on ensuring the right to education for children with disabilities. More than 200 participants from central and local authorities, CSOs, development partners, parents' associations and academia discussed achievements in inclusive education and provided recommendations for the way forward, focused on continuous deinstitutionalization and closing of special schools, development of good IE practices, provision of assistive technologies and individualized support to children with disabilities and their parents. Best practices on inclusion of children with severe and sensory disabilities and of children with a disability in vocational training were shared. Government and other participants at the conference reaffirmed their commitment to further develop inclusive education in Moldova.

Innovative inclusive education methods for children with severe intellectual disabilities were piloted in three communities of Singerei District, in partnership with CCF Moldova. Local public authorities and 43 professionals were trained to support 40 children with severe disabilities to learn in regular school and pre-school classes.

A training of trainers built capacity among 12 national pre-school professionals in child-centred preschool education, who transferred their knowledge to 36 preschool educators from three preschools in Singerei District. Training for district-level kindergarten methodologists was organized to provide continuous support to kindergarten staff for the creation of reflective learning communities. Three such communities were established and will be scaled up in the entire district in 2019. Some 131 representatives of local public authorities, schools and preschool directors, medical and social assistants from 26 communities of Singerei District were trained to facilitate access by children with severe disabilities to protection and rehabilitation services. Additionally, through horizontal cooperation, 10 professionals from Singerei District learned from their peers' inclusive education experience in Romania, and 18 professionals learned from the experience of colleagues from Moldova's Drochia District.

In Singerei, students, teachers, and community representatives self-assessed school environments based on CFSS and jointly identified priorities for new school development plans comprising all five CFSS dimensions: inclusion, learning outcomes, gender responsiveness, healthy environment and participation. The model plans will be used to inform required actions at central and local levels ensuring that child-friendly standards are used by all schools in Moldova. Children also learned about opportunities for participation in school decision-making processes through pupils' councils.

UNICEF Moldova continued its partnership with CSO DACIA during 2018, piloting inclusive education for Roma children. Local leaders, parents and teacher-parent associations in pilot schools were mobilized and their understanding improved, and 37 teachers were trained to support the inclusion of Roma children in education. By the end of the year an additional 171 Roma children had been enrolled in pre-schools and schools in two predominantly Roma communities.

**Early childhood education:** UNICEF Moldova took part in the regional analytical review of governance, provision and quality of early childhood education services at the local level. The results of the report were used by the Government in finalizing the cross-sectoral action plan on positive parenting and for development of a funding scheme for preschool education.

In 2018 UNICEF Moldova provided technical support to the MECR to develop a funding formula for preschool education. National piloting will be financed by the World Bank in 2019. The design of the funding scheme was based on the principles of universal access and equity.

A national workshop clarified key public finance management (PFM) principles and the current process of financing early education, and created common understanding of financing for pre-schools, while also addressing misconceptions. As a result, a roadmap for the development of a pre-school funding scheme was approved, including a methodological note (manual) on pre-school education financing for the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and a briefing note proposing relevant capacity-building actions in public finance management for kindergarten staff. UNICEF Moldova also developed a budget brief on early childhood education analysing the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and equity of expenditures for pre-school education in Moldova during 2012–2018, which supported development of a pre-school funding formula and recommended more effective and efficient allocation and use of resources for pre-school education for the period 2019–2021.

In partnership with the National Football Federation, MECR and MHLSP, UNICEF Moldova implemented throughout the year 'tiny healthy player project supporting social and educational inclusion through sports at 11 preschools from nine districts and Chisinau Municipality. Around 1,000 young children, including those with special needs and children from Gagauzia Region, participated in sports events and benefitted from sports equipment donated to selected preschools. A compendium with therapeutic fairy tales was developed by the Football Federation and the Republican Centre for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance and distributed at targeted preschools.

### **Goal Area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation**

The CP supported child protection and justice systems in Moldova, promoting gender-sensitive and child-friendly services and strengthened cross-sectoral coordination.

**Child care reform and violence against children:** Specific focus was placed on strengthening the work of gate keeping commissions to prevent family separation and increasing the availability of alternative care services in communities. UNICEF sought to further enhance the capacity of Government, CSOs, children and caregivers to address all forms of violence against women and children and ensure quality implementation of cross-sectoral mechanisms across the country.

During 2018 UNICEF Moldova's key partners for this work were the MHLSP, the APSCF NGO Alliance and Terre des Hommes Foundation. Partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Moldova was further strengthened through the establishment and joint co-chairing of the technical donor's cooperation working group on child protection. Within this partnership, UNICEF Moldova supported the completion by USAID and MHLSP of the 'MEASURE' evaluation – a self-assessment (by MHLSP) of the national alternative care system and its compliance with UN guidelines on alternative care of children, resulting in the development of an action plan to address the "last mile" of alternative care reform in Moldova.

UNICEF Moldova provided technical support to the MHLSP for finalizing amendments to legislation on guardianship and adoption and for further revising various financial allocations for children, as well as the development of a minimum package of social services providing monetary support to vulnerable families – all of which is now part of the mid-term budgetary framework 2019–2021. A framework regulation on "social crèche" services was also approved in 2018.

UNICEF conducted a feasibility study to assess opportunities for accession by the country to the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, and will advocate for accession.

A partnership with WHO resulted in the Government endorsement of the seven INSPIRE strategies as a response to violence against children. Through multi-stakeholder consultations, a roadmap was developed and will be presented for approval by the National Council for Child Rights Protection (NCCRP) in 2019. In addition, in 2018 the Government approved the establishment of a cross-sectoral cooperation mechanism for primary prevention of risks to child well-being; related implementation will be rolled out in 2019, supported by capacity building for health and education professionals.

In partnership with Terre des Hommes, members of the gatekeeping commissions in Singerei and Glodeni districts were trained to apply the 'best interest of the child' determination, as well as relevant case-management tools, and to collect data in a more robust manner to prevent family separation. Additionally, 100 members of local multi-disciplinary teams (mayors, social workers, medical workers, teachers, police) in Glodeni District were supported to properly identify, evaluate, assist, refer and monitor child victims and potential victims of violence, neglect, exploitation and trafficking.

Children's capacity to address violence were also built through learning about existing reporting mechanisms and how to recognize and report violence, neglect and exploitation through the child helpline, the Ombudsperson, and directly to guardianship authorities and social service workers. Two interactive games (BOOM and Memo's World) were developed to build capacity and raise awareness among children for the prevention of gender-based violence, reducing gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes. Fifty teachers were equipped with game sets and are now able to apply innovative methods for preventing violent incidents. Furthermore, as part of horizontal cooperation UNICEF facilitated a study visit by a large delegation from Belarus to exchange valuable learning regarding child care reform.

**Justice for children:** Support provided to the justice system sought to further strengthen child-friendly justice approaches: from robust compliance of justice sector professionals with child-friendly interviewing processes for child victims and witnesses of crimes, to application of diversion and alternatives to detention (such as mediation), and quality implementation nationwide of the cross-sectoral cooperation mechanism for cases involving child/youth offenders.

In 2018 the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) proposed a draft law suggesting restrictive measures for child offenders, children committing misdemeanours and those manifesting anti-social behaviours, which was questioned by CSOs and the donor community. UNICEF Moldova used its convening role and supported initiation of a dialogue with the MoJ to align the draft law with international standards on child-friendly justice. A revised version of the law was approved by Parliament in November 2018.

In partnership with the MoJ and the National Centre for Child Abuse Prevention (CNPAC), UNICEF Moldova established the first Barnahus-type child-friendly hearing room in Chisinau, which provided support to 70 child victims of crimes during hearings as well as qualified legal assistance during court proceedings. In addition, 183 child victims and their families received psychological assistance, and 93 children gained access to rehabilitation services (psychotherapy sessions, medical care). Some 385 parents separated from their children due

to neglect received counselling and specialized training on positive parenting skills to facilitate re-integration of their children into the family. An information brochure 'How to recognize an abuse', focusing on physical, sexual and psychological abuse was developed by CNPAC and distributed to 10,000 children and adolescents. In addition, 262 professionals (social and medical workers, police officers, teachers) from nine districts were trained and are now able to properly document, refer, investigate and provide quality services for child victims/ witnesses of crimes.

During 2018, in partnership with the Institute for Penal Reform, UNICEF Moldova expanded the reach of the cross-sectoral cooperation mechanism protecting child offenders to four new districts (in addition to the initial five) where 12 cases of children were identified and diverted from the justice system, and 40 specialists (prosecutors, police, probation, social work, education) were trained and are now able to better address children's cases. In partnership with the General Police Inspectorate and the Institute, UNICEF Moldova developed and piloted a programme to prevent juvenile delinquency in five districts and trained 34 police officers on investigating cases involving child offenders.

Perceptions of judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers and society members towards successful social re-integration of children in conflict with law and children victims/witnesses of crimes were measured for the first time in 2018. The survey revealed that only 17 per cent of judges, 12 per cent of prosecutors, 21 per cent of lawyers and 20 per cent of the general population believe in the potential for successful social reintegration of child offenders who committed severe crimes, indicating a need for further work on changing perceptions.

Through UNICEF's partnership with the Association for Documentary Photography, 20 boys serving a sentence in Goian Prison acquired skills in photography. A selection of 60 photos and individual stories behind them will be exhibited to more than 200 representatives of the judiciary, law enforcement, development partners and the community at large as a step toward changing negative perceptions regarding children in contact with the law.

### **Goal area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life**

UNICEF Moldova's country programme seeks to strengthen the capacity of the MHLSP to address child poverty through effective social assistance to households with children, especially those from the poorest quintile, and to include excluded groups (such as uninsured children) as recipients of social aid. In 2018 the CP supported the measuring of child poverty and the impact of social aid on alleviation of child poverty, through disaggregated data and from a multidimensional perspective. The programme further focused on building capacity within line ministries and local public authorities in effective PFM and prioritization of financing for child-related services. Key partners of UNICEF Moldova in this work are the MHLSP, local public authorities, the World Bank, EU delegation and other development partners which jointly advocated for strengthened and transparent public finance management.

Building on recommendations from a 2017 study on cash-based social protection for children in the Republic of Moldova, UNICEF partnered with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) to provide technical support to the MHLSP to conduct an analysis of costing models of cash-based social protection measures for vulnerable children. The results of this exercise will support fine-tuning of Moldova's main cash-based social assistance programme "Ajutor Social", with the aim of achieving improved coverage for three priority sub-groups: households with

three or more children, households with a disabled child and single-parent households.

In alignment with the 2016 general comment no. 19 by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, UNICEF Moldova engaged with both the MoF and local public authorities to support the best use of public budgets for children. A budget brief on financing for pre-schools was produced to support advocacy work with MECR, to develop a funding formula for pre-schools and improve access to quality services, especially in rural areas. UNICEF Moldova also developed training modules to enhance Local public authorities' budget planning and monitoring skills, with focus on: public finance management, budget cycle, public expenditure, value for money analysis and linking budget formulation and implementation to strategies and policies.

The methodology for calculating a multi-dimensional poverty index was developed and approved by the National Bureau of Statistics, in partnership with UNDP. Based on UNICEF Moldova recommendations, the questionnaires used for the national representative household budget survey will be further adjusted to better capture the situation of families with children through new data collection starting in 2019.

### **Cross-sectoral interventions**

**Early childhood development:** UNICEF Moldova provided technical support for finalizing the national action plan for implementing the strategy on developing parental abilities and competencies 2016–2022. The plan was developed in a participatory way by the Government, development partners, CSOs and youth and through horizontal cooperation with Romania. Gender dimensions emphasizing fathers' engagement in child care were addressed, in partnership with UN Women. Youth opinions were gathered through U-report.

In 2018, in partnership with the CSO CNETIF, UNICEF Moldova piloted the in-service curriculum and training modules on positive parenting approved by the National Council for Curriculum in five districts. More than 20 national trainers/mentors and 220 local preschool professionals were trained on the application of parental education programmes, and 140 community educators and medical assistants benefitted from on-the-job mentoring. The final project evaluation confirmed that the 1,500 caregivers who benefitted from the project displayed better knowledge and competencies on nurturing care and demonstrated better parenting skills, while 2,500 boys and girls under seven years of age enjoyed more nurturing care at home.

In partnership with the CSO CBS-AXA, UNICEF Moldova conducted a KAP study on early childhood development and care. Key findings indicated a six per cent increase in the ECD Index, to 90 per cent –including a doubling of the literacy-numeracy indicator (68 per cent versus 30 per cent in 2012). Some 89 per cent of caregivers were able to recognize danger signs for child health, and a five-fold increase occurred in parental acceptance of inclusion of children with disability in regular schools. However, only one third of caregivers read to their children every day and an estimated 57 per cent of children experience violent disciplinary methods. Key recommendations from the study were incorporated in the draft action plan on positive parenting.

As part of the global 'early moments matter' campaign, UNICEF Moldova, in partnership with the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, organized a photo exhibition of fathers interacting in maternity wards with their children during the first moments of their child's life. The exhibition

was showcased in the Parliament and at Chisinau Airport, raising the awareness of politicians and the public not only on the importance of the first 1,000 days of a child's life, but also on the importance of fathers' engagement in nurturing care, thereby also contributing to greater gender equality.

**Adolescent development and participation:** In 2018 UNICEF Moldova continued to ensure that adolescents and youth have increased capacity and skills to participate in democratic governance and claim their rights, with a focus on promoting active participation by adolescents and youth in local decision-making processes via local youth structures and mechanisms in selected districts.

Based on the recommendations of a study on 'barriers and bottlenecks for efficient participation of youth in decision-making processes', the MECR and UNICEF Moldova conducted in 2018 a mid-term review of the national youth strategy; a detailed action plan for its implementation through 2020 was proposed to MECR.

UNICEF Moldova took part in the study on adolescent parenting conducted by UNICEF's East and Central Asia Regional Office, involving the development and pilot testing of a national curriculum on parenting of adolescents, focused on stimulating their participation in decision-making processes, career orientation, non-violent communication and healthy-lifestyles. The training curricula will be rolled out nationally through networks of youth centres and schools in 2019.

Working in partnership with the National Youth Councils of Moldova (CNTM), during 2018 UNICEF Moldova, developed youth-friendly guidelines for meaningful participation in school and community life. Some 60 young members of district council and three pupils' councils were trained on strategic planning and implementation, efficient participation in school committees and in LPA decision-making processes. Local action plans to improve child participation in education and local decision making were developed.

UNICEF Moldova strongly promoted the U-report mechanism as a means of social participation. In 2018 U-report engaged 3,000 young people and conducted 32 polls on various themes, including consulting youth on the development of the new national development strategy "Moldova 2030". In addition, CNTM supported 12 local debates and workshops with young people and local decision-makers to boost implementation of strategic priorities on youth at the local level.

In 2018 UNICEF Moldova, in partnership with the National Association for Technology Development, piloted a social entrepreneurship programme based on the UPSHIFT approach and trained a group of 20 young people on ICT and digital skills.

## **Other cross-sectoral approaches and programme effectiveness**

### **Support to national human rights institutions**

During 2018 UNICEF Moldova proposed, and the Prime Minister approved, an action-oriented work plan for the NCCRP for the period 2018–2019 with the aim of advancing the implementation of key recommendations by the Committee on the Rights of the Child related to violence against children, early intervention services, inclusive education, justice for children and adolescent empowerment. A technical working group was established as a subsidiary body to the NCCRP. One specific achievement was the establishment of a mechanism for reaching

out to street children that resulted in more than 20 children in street situations to receive psychological, social protection and health care services offered jointly by Chisinau Municipality and CSOs. New regulations for the NCCRP were developed and capacities of local NCCRP structures were further strengthened.

Technical support provided to the ombudsperson for child rights helped to raise awareness among local public authorities and children on the committee's 2017 concluding observations. UNICEF Moldova supported the Fourth Children and Youth Forum, bringing together decision-makers, professionals and children to discuss improved monitoring of child rights in the county. Two regional roundtables discussed prevention of school dropout and violence in schools and made specific recommendations to local public authorities. Furthermore, UNICEF supported the participation of the child rights ombudsperson in the annual meeting of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children– focusing on children's mental health, inter-country adoption and children on the move. Key statements were adopted by member states, including Moldova.

### **Partnerships with the media and private sector**

UNICEF Moldova continued to strengthen its partnership with media and private partners for effective advocacy on child rights issues. About 790 articles, news stories and other communication materials were produced. The number of UNICEF Moldova Facebook page followers doubled: from 13,700 in 2017 to 27,500 in 2018. Placing stronger priority on video content, especially live videos, cross-posting with partners and the use of engaging content to start conversations via messenger resulted in a cumulative daily reach of UNICEF Moldova social media posts exceeding 400,000. A brand awareness study was conducted in early 2018. Results indicated UNICEF's spontaneous notoriety standing at 10 per cent (second after the UN) and UNICEF's brand recognition indicator standing at 39 per cent.

UNICEF Moldova partnered in 2018 with the Audio-Visual Coordination Council to raise awareness on the measles outbreak and preventive action, including immunization. A partnership with the Association of Businesswomen in Moldova saw the signing of 11 memoranda of understanding with companies committing to incorporate key child rights and business principles in their internal regulations. New partnerships were initiated with Moldova Football Federation and the Association of Choral Music, leveraging funds and focusing on inclusion of children with disabilities from vulnerable poor families and rural areas. The MECR, UEFA, Kaufland and Union Fenosa also contributed financially to various joint events and initiatives.

### **Addressing needs of vulnerable groups of children**

**Children with a disability:** In 2018 UNICEF Moldova supported the MHLSP to revise its disability determination criteria for children in alignment with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth. Shortfalls in the existing system were highlighted and a roadmap providing solutions and clear guidance on further implementation of the disability reform was developed. An official order of the commission for determination of disability (No.192 of 28.12.2018) was issued to pilot revised criteria in 2019, as recommended by UNICEF.

**Gender mainstreaming:** In preparation of the new UNICEF CP 2018–2022, UNICEF Moldova identified specific gender mainstreaming actions reflected in the strategy note, country programme document and country programme management plan. The UNICEF East and Central Area Regional Office review ranked Moldova's CPD as highly satisfactory for gender

mainstreaming in 2018 and its gender equality marker was rated as “significant”. At the beginning of the year and following the issuance of the global gender action plan, cross-sectoral discussions led to the integration of four measurable gender outcomes aligned to UNICEF’s SP and gender action plan in the CPD results framework.

**Emergency preparedness:** In 2018 UNICEF Moldova completed its four-step preparedness planning process, involving country risk analysis, identification of scenarios for priority risks and key elements of preparedness and response actions. Contingency partnership cooperation agreements were signed with three CSO partners in the areas of child protection, education and maternal and child health, while potential partners were identified with whom standby agreements for supplies and cash transfers could be signed in case of emergency. In addition, inputs were provided to the development of the UN country team’s crisis risk dashboard, aiming to further strengthen risk-informed strategic and programmatic decisions.

Also in 2018, UNICEF Moldova partnered with the civil protection and emergency situations service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to train more than 1,200 adolescents to respond to emergency situations. This valuable partnership is planned to be expanded to cover preparedness actions.

### Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

#### **Optimizing an effective mix of strategies and partnerships for the CP 2018–2020**

The cross-cutting strategies and partnerships deployed by UNICEF Moldova in the first year of its new CP contributed to effective and efficient delivery of programme results and laid a solid foundation for further strengthening government-led action on implementing child rights in Moldova. UNICEF continued to work on institutional strengthening of national systems at both the central and local levels, specifically through engagement in two key sector strategy reviews (education and youth) and by supporting a review of Chisinau’s municipal’s directorate for child protection. Such engagements allowed the country programme to apply international norms and good practices, which inevitably will have a positive impact on outcomes for children.

Intensified advocacy aimed at winning support for the cause of children and mobilizing Government, donors and the public at large to focus on the needs of the most vulnerable children, while also promoting duty-bearers’ full engagement in support for realization of child rights. Policy dialogue and technical expertise supported improved implementation of key child-related reforms, such as early childhood education and child protection.

Communication for behaviour change boosted further positive change in social norms and contributed to a reduction in negative practices, such as violent discipline, discrimination, child abandonment and vaccine hesitancy, while promoting the adoption of positive child care practices by caregivers. Knowledge generation and child rights monitoring ensured evidence and publicly available data supporting both advocacy and policy development.

UNICEF Moldova support complemented joint UN efforts to map SDG indicators and highlight data gaps, in particular data related to child poverty (both monetary and multidimensional). As in previous country programme cycles, capacity development of Government and civil society received special attention in all programme interventions, aiming to bring children to the forefront of stakeholders’ agenda and ensure coordinated delivery of quality services for children and adolescents. UNICEF Moldova also continued to develop new, and strengthen

existing, partnerships in an effort to leverage resources for children and ensure vital financing from the Government, development partners, private sector and CSOs for child-related services. Additional expertise and transfer of best practices were achieved through horizontal cooperation with traditional partners of Moldova, such as Romania, and other neighbouring countries. Innovative approaches for programming, financing and provision of quality child-related services that could be scaled up were tested through modelling at the local level.

### **Local governments: critical points of change**

Political instability, multiple central government reforms and preparations for early-2019 general elections affected the robust advancement of child-related reforms and the introduction of quality programmes and services for children at the local level. Furthermore, the alienation of local governments from decision-making processes, various misconceptions about the decentralization process and limited understanding by local public authorities of public finance mechanisms posed additional constraints. The decentralization reform, which began in 2013, aimed to strengthen the capacity of local public authorities to improve the management and quality of public services provided to citizens. But lack of clarity and ownership over the provision of these services, as well as largely insufficient financing to meet demand affected the successful provision of key services to the population, including early childhood education, social assistance services and youth programmes.

For instance, the government approved an action plan for the implementation of a home visiting programme and began to apply the guidelines in early 2018. However, due to misconceptions, guidelines met sizeable resistance from primary health care professionals. Plans to build these professionals' skills on the use of new tools were not comprehensively realized. Thus the implementation of guidelines on home visiting had to be postponed and replaced with concerted advocacy and capacity building focusing on nurses, mother and child health specialists and family doctor associations to demonstrate the value-added and benefits of using the new guideline and tools for both nurses/family doctors and parents/caregivers, and to counter misconceptions that their introduction would entail an additional burden, as perceived by the professionals. Considerable delays also occurred in piloting of the PBF for youth friendly health service, due to long-term negotiations and disagreements over the proposed modalities for PBF implementation and related financial mechanisms, underlining the need for strengthened dialogue among institutions.

Another constraint faced by UNICEF Moldova in 2018 was the perception of the local public authorities' role as mere implementers of national policies, along with their own misconceptions about decentralization. The latter is seen not as an opportunity for them to manage their own budgets in a much more flexible way, but rather as a barrier that would negatively impact their ability to finance social services, previously fully centralized and covered at 100 per cent by the central government.

This speaks to an urgent need, to invest in building capacities in PFM at both the central and local levels. A critical challenge jeopardizing the delivery of quality child and adolescent related services is rapidly shrinking availability and high turnover of human resources in all child-related sectors (education, primary health care, youth and social assistance). This challenge needs to be vigorously addressed through the development of robust, sector-specific human resource strategies (including salary adjustments) to offset the current negative return of investment in capacity-building efforts, and will be built into CP advocacy and technical assistance efforts.

The important lesson learned is that the sub-national decision-making arena is a critical point of change, and local governments need enhanced communication on the benefits of decentralization, as well as increased attention to their capacity-building needs.

Several other lessons learned in 2018 are derived from developments driven by the broader context, including changes and processes at the regional and global levels.

### **2018 UN reform in the middle-income country operational context**

As reflected in UNICEF Moldova's CP fundraising strategy, the middle-income country operational context is somewhat constrained by declining overseas development assistance to multilateral organizations such as the UN system. Increased competition for resources also limiting opportunities for the UN system to provide quality technical support to key government reforms. This, coupled with the suspension of bilateral budgetary financial support due to political instability, may further jeopardize the implementation of key child-related policies and programmes, thus limiting opportunities for vulnerable children and their families to escape a situation of marginalization and inequality. Situations such as this may require a rethinking of UNICEF's role and engagement in certain middle-income country contexts, with a view to identifying innovative ways to collaborate and cooperate with development partners, governments, children and their families under a unified UN system.

### **Summer 2018 measles outbreak**

The outbreak provided several important lessons learned regarding the importance of inter-sectoral coordination and the need for high-level engagement to further boost immunization coverage in the country; strengthen capacity of the health workforce for quality service delivery and immunization promotion; and improve the evidence base, while building a strong and responsive immunization information system.

Appropriate and ongoing communication and engagement of local and central authorities with ethnic or religious minority groups is pivotal to address negative social norms, such as anti-vaccination beliefs and immunization hesitancy. Also evident is the need to maintain a continuous dialogue with the public at large and build greater awareness among parents on positive parenting practices. Further development of communication strategies, both through traditional and online channels, is required to reach out to marginalized groups and ensure that individuals understand the value of immunization and boost the demand for vaccination.

### **2018 Facebook algorithm**

Several lessons were learned in the first half of 2018 in relation to social media. A specific constraint faced was related to the new algorithm applied by Facebook, favouring individual posts over page content. The new Facebook algorithm now ranks all available posts that can display on a user's news feed based on how likely that user is to have a positive reaction towards the posts. Thus, from the beginning of 2018, Facebook started favouring posts of individuals who received higher engagement from other users, making it harder for pages, including UNICEF Moldova's page, to reach people. Facebook statistics indicated that UNICEF Moldova content reached only 2-3 per cent of the audience. To enhance UNICEF's visibility on social media and address the new algorithm challenges, several strategies were employed: video content, especially live videos, was prioritized, as Facebook gives more weight to videos; cross-posting was used; and engaging content was produced to initiate conversations with the audience, especially on Messenger, as this content is also prioritized by Facebook. As a result, both reach and engagement considerably increased. The number of followers on UNICEF Moldova's Facebook page doubled in one year: from 13,700 in 2017, to 27,500 in 2018.

### **Enforcement of EU general data protection regulation**

With enforcement in 2018 of the EU general data protection regulation 2016/679, the general public became more aware of their right to protection of their personal data. While privacy and copyright laws in Moldova allow taking photos of people in public, including children, many Moldovan parents and caregivers who either work in EU countries or have close relatives and friends abroad became increasingly concerned about protecting their children's personal data, including images. At the same time, Moldova's Civil Code was amended in 2018, specifically allowing pictures to be taken without restriction in public places. Many grey areas remain, however, leaving room for differing interpretations, even among professionals. Following this changing legal landscape on data protection, several challenges and constraints related to photography were encountered in 2018, requiring new methods of photography at public events when there is no opportunity to obtain explicit consent. A cautious approach was also required to deciding about application of the blue wash mask in accordance with new branding guidelines. Overall, the lesson learned was that unrelenting caution should be used when working with images of children.

### **Looking forward**

In the coming four years of programme implementation, the Country Programme will build on these and further lessons learned to adjust, in a dynamic and flexible way, the CP's approach to the changing country context in order to achieve tangible, equity-focused results for children in Moldova. Immediate, strategically focused action will continue for support to the development of the new education sector strategy aligned with SDGs and Moldova 2030 aspirations and UNICEF Moldova's engagement in a comprehensive review of the youth sector in 2019. Priorities will also include developments at the global and regional levels, including the recent simultaneous launch at the high-level event of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly of the UN Youth Strategy 2030 and Generation Unlimited partnership, which seek increased opportunities and investments for children and young people to ensure that every young person is empowered, participates and is in some form of school, learning, training or employment by 2030.

The expanded partnership with Chisinau Municipality will see stronger UNICEF Moldova engagement in reviewing the work of the departments of education, health, social protection and youth, with clear opportunities for leveraging government funds for the delivery of quality maternal, child and youth services in the country's largest municipality. The CP will further deepen its engagement in building capacities in PFM at both the central and local levels, as well as in identifying opportunities to advocate for strengthened data collection and usage in planning and budgeting services for children, aligned to national strategies.

Furthermore, while operating in a middle-income countries context involving a dwindling aid flow, UNICEF Moldova will further pursue efforts to mobilize resources, to ensure that all children in the country, especially the most vulnerable, enjoy their rights to education, health, an adequate standard of living, and participation within a child-friendly environment, and are protected from abandonment, neglect, discrimination, exploitation and violence.

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