Montenegro

Executive summary

Montenegro is a multi-ethnic country seeking accession to the European Union (EU); membership would have important implications for the overall situation of women and children in the country.

In 2017, the country achieved its target of completely eliminating the placement of children under three years of age in large-scale institutions. UNICEF Montenegro worked with partners in support of efforts to provide alternative services for families at risk of abandoning children and to strengthen the overall social welfare and child protection systems. The health sector and civil society were also strengthened as part of UNICEF Montenegro’s efforts to prevent child abandonment and adverse childhood experiences.

The #End Violence campaign was launched in February 2017, jointly with the Government, to promote positive parenting practices. A nationally representative survey of knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) conducted in December 2017 showed that ten months after the launch of the campaign, people's awareness and knowledge had increased, and the social taboo on discussing violence had been successfully broken. One in four citizens learned new things from this campaign, which actively promoted the first national SOS support line to help parents raise children without violence. That SOS line was launched in February, and as a result of successful promotion, ten months later, 41 per cent of Montenegrins were aware of it. The campaign accompanied systemic reforms (such as the launch of the first national Strategy on Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence 2017-2021). It led to strengthened social work services and civil society organizations (CSOs) dedicated to issues such as raising awareness about positive parenting and the impact of childhood adversity and violence, and innovative, child-friendly computer applications to prevent online violence to, by and among children.

UNICEF Montenegro also supported an analysis and recommendations for strengthening the national patronage nurse system, with a focus on expanding services to reach more children in high-risk families. The assessment sought to help Government and health sector partners to make informed decisions about the future of patronage nurse services. As a result, the development of more systematic and prevention-oriented home visits was under discussion as of the end of 2017.

Following advocacy by UNICEF Montenegro and partners, in July 2017 Montenegro’s Parliament legislated important changes to the education system, defining the acquisition of socio-emotional skills (e.g. tolerance, empathy, self-control) and 21st century skills (e.g. digital literacy) as goals of primary education, and integrating socio-emotional skill development into the primary school curriculum. These actions represent important steps toward sustaining reforms advocated by UNICEF Montenegro. In addition, with UNICEF Montenegro support, the programme for developing 21st century skills was expanded through both formal and informal education. Some 6,200 adolescent girls and boys (including children presenting challenging behaviour or in residential care) acquired social and emotional skills considered to be a
precondition for success in education, careers and adult life.

UNICEF Montenegro also supported the development of recommendations to improve student achievement, as measured by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), reflecting the country’s commitment to quality compulsory education.

Successful results in early childhood education (ECE) in recent years were assessed through an independent evaluation that was finalized in 2017. The evaluation received the highest possible ranking for UNICEF evaluations worldwide, exceeding both UNICEF’s and the United Nations (UN) Evaluation Group’s standards for evaluation reports. Expansion of a three-hour preschool programme led to an average increase of 18 per cent in enrolment in six of the least-covered municipalities in 2017, and an overall average increase of 40 per cent since 2015.

With UNICEF Montenegro expertise and support, the Government and its national statistics office began preparations to carry out the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), the country’s second largest survey (after the population census). The MICS should yield internationally comparable data on issues ranging from early childhood development (ECD) and child functioning to attitudes on domestic violence, child discipline and life satisfaction. The results will inform implementation of the National Strategy on Sustainable Development 2030 and future evidence-based policy-making, including on ECD.

Institutional capacity, particularly for effective policy implementation, remains low, and improvements are needed in the areas of accountability, oversight and coordination, as well as monitoring of child rights. Continued advocacy will be required to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to promoting and protecting children’s rights at both the national and local levels.

**Humanitarian assistance**

Although Montenegro was not directly affected by the recent refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, in 2015 the Government approached this global problem by adopting an action plan in case of a possible influx of refugees and migrants. In 2017, the Government moved forward with additional efforts to increase preparedness levels among professionals and frontline workers. With technical assistance from UNICEF Montenegro, it developed standard operating procedures (SoPs) for dealing with unaccompanied and/or separated children, with a special focus on proactive identification of potential victims of violence or human trafficking. The process was consultative, involving 18 state institutions (including judiciary, police, social welfare, health and education) under the leadership of the Ministry of Interior. Draft SoPs were presented to the public in December. National experts, with UNICEF Montenegro support, strengthened the capacity of 200 professionals and frontline workers from 15 municipalities to apply the SoPs. In this way, an efficient response, segregation of duties and adequate territorial coverage was ensured in case of a potential influx of refugee and migrant children and their families into Montenegro. Montenegro is primarily a transit country; although arrivals began to increase in 2017, most refugees and migrants stayed only a short time.

**Equity in practice**

Montenegro has a long-standing tradition of multi-ethnicity. Poverty is a major determinant of inequality and geographic location is one of the main determinants of poverty. Other major determinants include ethnicity, disability and adverse childhood experiences (i.e. violence, dysfunctional parenting, growing up in institutional care). The poverty rate stood at 8.6 per cent
in 2013, but inequality gaps have been widening. Today, every tenth child lives in poverty, and three quarters of these children live in rural areas.

UNICEF employed a mix of strategies to promote equity:

1. Generating data on the situation of women and children;
2. Harnessing the latest developments from psychology, neuroscience and related disciplines to understand what drives child development and advocating for targeted reforms; and
3. Supporting capacity building and the development of family and community-based outreach and quality services for children and vulnerable families, while leading social change campaigns.

The 2014 MICS indicated that Roma and Egyptians were the most disadvantaged and socially excluded groups in the country. All basic health, education and social indicators for Roma and Egyptian children were well behind those of the general population. With UNICEF Montenegro assistance, Government and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners worked towards inclusion of Roma children in preschool education. In collaboration with the Red Cross of Montenegro, UNICEF Montenegro raised awareness among Roma families about their rights to social protection and health care and the right to be protected from violence and exploitation, including early marriage. Thus, 70 per cent of women and 80 per cent of men in seven targeted municipalities gained greater awareness of the negative consequences of violence, exploitation and early marriage. In addition, 70 per cent of women successfully completed empowerment programmes and nearly all (over 98 per cent) of Roma in targeted municipalities reported a better understanding of their right to social services and benefits.

Greater equality was also achieved by diversifying early childhood education (ECE) services. In 2014, a UNICEF-commissioned study revealed immense gaps across regions (from 10 per cent preschool coverage of children three-to-six years of age in the rural north to 94 per cent coverage in the urban south) and shed light on barriers to accessing these services. Parents in the north reported distance and financial burdens as major impediments, but many also failed to recognize preschool’s contribution to their child’s education. Through a coordinated effort by central and local educational institutions, evidence-informed advocacy, comprehensive programmatic interventions and a social change campaign – all supported by UNICEF Montenegro – preschool education services were diversified (alternative three-hour programmes and outreach services), contributing to increased preschool enrolment.

Child care system reform, undertaken by the Government with UNICEF Montenegro technical assistance, resulted in the complete eradication of the placement of children under three years of age in large-scale residential institutions in 2017, and a 45 per cent decrease in the overall number of children placed in institutions during 2010-2016. These results were achieved in large part due to the development of family and community-based services. Montenegro has experienced a 15 per cent increase in the number of children in kinship care, and a threefold increase in the number of children in non-kin foster care.

Notable 2017 milestones related to improving equity in service delivery included: (a) expansion of family support services (family outreach worker services provided to more than 170 children in over 70 families in 2016-2017, with no recorded incidents of family breakdown); (b) strengthening the capacity of an intersectoral group of professionals to facilitate the ‘Parenting for Lifelong Health’ programme; (c) establishment of a helpline for parents; and (d) further development of alternative family and community-based services.
Important results were achieved in inclusion of children with disabilities as a result of intensive work on changing public attitudes with UNICEF Montenegro support. Efforts to build the capacity of health, social, child protection and education system professionals to work with children with disabilities using the latest knowledge, skills and best model practices was further expanded in 2017. Due to UNICEF Montenegro’s work, the number of children with disabilities in mainstream schools has risen steadily, from 1,185 in 2013 to 4,121 in 2017. Family and community-based services for children with disabilities also increased.

Children living in poverty, children in residential care, children who present challenging behaviour and Roma children benefited in 2017 from non-formal education to enhance their social and emotional skills.

Significant results in reducing inequities can be attributed to a combination of: advocacy efforts based on high-quality data, a compelling narrative informed by the science of human development, building demand among children and families and strengthening systems’ capacity to respond to children’s needs.

**Strategic Plan 2018-2021**

UNICEF Montenegro was developing its Country Programme (CP) 2017-2021, in collaboration with national partners, during the period of consultations and drafting of the global Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (SP), while Agenda 2030 had already been adopted. These two processes – along with the midterm review, MICS data, national priorities and analysis of bottlenecks and barriers – informed country programme planning. UNICEF Montenegro organized a round of consultations on the draft SP with adolescents and youth in 2016, which revealed that the overall structure and content of the Draft SP was relevant for children and adolescents in Montenegro, particularly regarding:

1. poverty reduction;
2. closing equity gaps and creating equal opportunities for all children and adolescents;
3. gender equality;
4. education quality, with a focus on social and emotional skills;
5. health, including mental health; and
6. adolescent engagement and empowerment.

While significant gains were made under the previous country programme, equity gaps remain. To that end, UNICEF Montenegro’s current CP focuses on children affected by poverty, adversity and exclusion and is in line with the “leave no child behind” principle.

The programme focuses on child and social protection (SP goal areas 1, 3 and 4), quality education and adolescent empowerment (goal areas 2 and 4), child rights monitoring (CRM) and access to justice (goal area 3).

Given Montenegro’s status as an upper-middle-income country, change strategies will include:

- support for cross-sectoral programming (particularly in relation to ECD, adolescent empowerment and disability);
- continued system-strengthening and service delivery (education, child protection, access to justice and child rights monitoring); commitment to evidence-based policy making; and making the best possible use of existing national information systems covering education, social welfare and the justice sector;
• using the power of innovation and technology, through the Youth Innovation Lab (YIL) and the upcoming addition of U-Report;
• leveraging private sector partnerships (national and international corporations have partnered with UNICEF in the past, a trend expected to continue);
• empowering children as change agents, through the YIL’s UPSHIFT programme;
• child rights advocacy (specifically for increasing public investments in ECE, ECD and adolescence, as a second chance for children to reach their full potential); and
• public engagement, effective external communications and communication for development (including harnessing the power of social media as a non-traditional communication channel), while also setting clear targets and measuring behaviour change through knowledge, attitudes and practices surveys or other suitable mechanisms).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as the long-term framework for the SP. Elements of the SP are grounded in the goals of the 2030 Agenda. Montenegro was among the first countries in the world to nationalize the 2030 Agenda by adopting the National Strategy on Sustainable Development 2030, a complex and ambitious undertaking with an extensive monitoring framework combining:

• SDG indicators set by the UN Statistical Commission;
• national indicators;
• indicators of relevant international organizations; and
• composite (complex) SD indicators.

Major opportunities to contribute to SP implementation include the following:

• The focus on evidence as a driver of change for children will intensify by means of generating, synthesizing and promoting the use of evaluations, research and data on child well-being to catalyse change. This will be a priority throughout the CP cycle. To that end, MICS6 data and a formative evaluation of child rights monitoring systems will be critical sources of information in 2018 and 2019.
• Key partnerships will be forged to understand and address key drivers of child well-being, given recent breakthroughs in ECD. UNICEF Montenegro was approached by national partners to support the development of a national ECD strategy.
• Linkages with the EU accession process will be ensured, as this is one of the central drivers of national-level reforms. To this end, during 2017, UNICEF Montenegro worked to develop a clear understanding of the relationship between Agenda 2030, EU accession benchmarks and UN/UNICEF priorities.

Major challenges going forward could emanate from:

• suboptimal use of data for policy monitoring, review and design;
• insufficient national absorptive capacity (specifically for public administration);
• lack of involvement by civil society, the private sector and the academic community in social and policy development;
• lack of capacity of some NGO partners to assume a more strategic role in implementation and oversight of sectoral policies;
• limited fiscal space for increasing public sector investment in key social sectors; and
• prolonged political crisis and possible policy uncertainty due to upcoming election cycles and pressures tied to fiscal consolidation.

Emerging areas of importance
Greater focus on the second decade of life. Important strides were made in 2017 in adolescent development and empowerment, mainly for skills building, improving system responses to adolescents’ needs and knowledge generation for future programming.

Adolescent skills building took place through the Youth Innovation Lab, involving both formal and non-formal education. The Lab offers space, tools, opportunities and programmes that enable adolescents to develop and implement solutions to the challenges they face, gain support for realizing their aspirations, acquire skills and use participation tools to influence decision-making processes. During 2017, the Lab assisted some 228 adolescents (71.5 per cent girls) to acquire critical skills (problem analysis, problem solving, financial literacy) currently not offered through formal education. Participants performed self-assessments immediately after the workshops and at regular intervals afterwards, to assess both their level of skills acquisition and the (perceived) usefulness of the skills. Responses indicated significant progress, ranging from 98 per cent to 81 per cent across all areas. During 2017, some 9,030 people benefited indirectly from YIL initiatives, mostly (7,712) as a result of UPSHIFT programmes involving young people in social change projects in communities.

Through the programme for developing social and emotional skills carried out in the formal education system in 2017, more than 6,000 adolescents (48 per cent girls) learned skills and attitudes (optimism, gratitude, creativity, teamwork, tolerance, empathy, self-control, integrity) considered to be a precondition for success in school, careers and adult life. A similar programme, with some adaptations, was implemented in other venues to reach highly vulnerable adolescents, such as girls and boys in large-scale residential institutions (52 per cent girls), adolescents aged 13-17 presenting challenging behaviours (eight boys, one girl) and Roma girls and boys at two primary schools (10-to-16 year olds, 48 per cent girls). Through self-assessments, almost all adolescents reported increased levels of most skills. This first-time effort pointed to the need for further training of professional staff at these institutions.

The first-ever national debate on the importance of investing in adolescent development took place in 2017, based on a thorough assessment of capacity within the health, education and social protection systems to support adolescents’ transition from childhood to adulthood. UNICEF Montenegro invited an award-winning educator who stressed that adolescence is a period of opportunities, not just risks. In 2018, UNICEF Montenegro will focus on capacity development of sector professionals to support adolescent development, especially the most vulnerable.

A UNICEF Montenegro-commissioned study on programmes for parents of adolescents revealed gaps. Public policies do not explicitly refer to parenting during adolescence, nor is there quality system support for parents or equity and participation in the delivery of scarce programme resources. In addition, parents/caregivers feel that they lack knowledge, skills and resources to adequately cope with the challenges of adolescence. The study will be used to advocate for integrated, quality support to parents of adolescents.

Accelerate integrated early childhood development (ECD). The Ministry of Health is committed to developing a national, multisectoral strategy on early childhood development. UNICEF Montenegro supported an assessment of the patronage nurse home-visiting service, including recommendations for strengthening the system and enhancing support to families with children. A draft national strategy for early detection, support and early intervention for individuals with autism was developed by an intersectoral working group under the leadership of the Ministry of Health, with technical input by UNICEF Montenegro, pointing to the need for strengthening national capacity for diagnosing autism. As part of the #ENDViolence campaign,
UNICEF Montenegro supported training for a group of professionals working in health, education and social and child protection and representatives of civil society organizations to facilitate the Family for Lifelong Health parenting programme for parents of children two to nine years of age, aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse and neglect. This programme will be piloted in early 2018 throughout the country.

During 2017, UNICEF continued to support capacity development for preschool staff on early intervention services for children with disabilities, reaching ten additional municipalities (for a total of 16 of 23). Some 154 preschool teachers, nurses and paediatricians from local committees seeking to integrate children with disabilities into the education system received training on key autism-related difficulties, as well as concrete recommendations for early intervention. Bureau for Education experts conducted post-training monitoring visits, providing additional support to preschool staff and parents.

Support from the Marimo Berk foundation, the David Drummond Fund and UNICEF Montenegro allowed Montenegro’s preschool children to benefit from the Young Athletes Programme in 2017. Organized with the Special Olympics, the programme supports parents and children (with and without intellectual disabilities) to develop social and cognitive skills.

Summary notes and acronyms

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<td>CMT</td>
<td>country management team</td>
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<td>CP</td>
<td>country programme</td>
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<td>CRM</td>
<td>child rights monitoring</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>civil society organization</td>
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<td>DCT</td>
<td>direct cash transfer</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>early childhood development</td>
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<td>ECE</td>
<td>early childhood education</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>KAP</td>
<td>knowledge, attitudes and practices</td>
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<td>LTA</td>
<td>long-term agreement</td>
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<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>PISA</td>
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<td>SDGs</td>
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<td>SMT</td>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>Strategic Plan (UNICEF)</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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Capacity development

UNICEF Montenegro supported capacity building in several areas as outlined below.

Violence against children: UNICEF provided technical support and guidance to an NGO network to generate high-quality data on perceptions and attitudes about violence and deeper insight into early marriage, and advocate for services for children at risk or victims of violence and children with disabilities. Staff at preschool institutions, primary healthcare centres, relevant civil society organizations and care facilities acquired greater capacity to support parents in violence-free child-rearing.
Quality education: The programme for developing socio-emotional skills through formal education was expanded from 10 to 20 primary and secondary schools, with 6,000 students as direct beneficiaries. Fifty-three new teachers were trained to implement it in classrooms and through extra-curricular activities. Primary education curricula were revised to include socio-emotional skills. The law governing primary education was revised to include this as one of its goals, ensuring sustainability.

Child protection: UNICEF Montenegro contributed to empowering the Institute for Social and Child Protection to generate evidence and assess the implementation success of the National Plan of Action for Children and strategies to foster social and child protection. Important findings on existing gaps, bottlenecks and challenges in child protection were generated as a result.

Access to justice: Eighteen professionals were licensed to assist children during family law proceedings, ensuring that children’s opinions are heard. Thirty-six defence lawyers passed an accredited training programme on child-friendly justice. The Judicial Training Centre offered similar capacity building for judges in civil matters.

Adolescent development: Some 130 professionals working in education, health and social protection attended a conference on The Power of Adolescence. UNICEF Montenegro will prioritize further strengthening of their capacity to work with adolescents in 2018.

Evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy

Evidence generation was one of the main strategies employed by UNICEF Montenegro in 2017.

• Key information from analysis supported by UNICEF Montenegro regarding strategies for fostering and social and child protection, as well as the National Plan of Action for Children, will be used to inform the next generation of strategic documents.

• Based on an analysis of social transfers for children commissioned by UNICEF Montenegro and the line ministry, different scenarios for the potential introduction of targeted benefits for children aged 0-3 and 0-6 were developed. Due to limited fiscal space in 2017, the Government increased child allowances by 24 per cent, but did not make more significant changes.

• The 2015 PISA Report for Montenegro was developed by the Ministry of Education, with UNICEF support, to ensure evidence-based planning and develop programmes to improve education quality. Along with an analysis of results and existing policy frameworks, the report provided a set of concrete recommendations for educational institutions at all levels. An action plan for operationalizing the recommendations by 2022 was under development at the end of 2017.

• The joint Government of Montenegro/UNICEF Montenegro campaign to #ENDviolence was based on a nationally representative KAP survey and qualitative research. Findings were used to spark public debate on violence and positive parenting. Findings from the Global Kids Online 2016 research were used to continue advocating for digital literacy of children, parents and teachers, resulting in a three-year partnership with Telenor (mobile phone service provider) and
the Ministry of Education to introduce digital literacy into the primary school curriculum.

• UNICEF Montenegro and the country’s national statistical office initiated planning for MICS6, which will serve as the primary source of data on children and women in the country.

• UNICEF Montenegro also conducted a review of the home-visitation system, providing recommendations for the national policy dialogue on ECD and overall health reform.

**Partnerships**

A wide range of domestic and international partnerships allowed the #Endviolence campaign to place positive parenting high on the public agenda. The launch drew 400 participants and featured Montenegro’s President, other high-ranking officials, the Director of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children and experts on the consequences of growing up in a violent environment. A contribution to the #ENDViolence campaign by the private company Mezon enabled UNICEF to place the campaign’s key messages on 50 billboards.

A three-year partnership between Telenor, UNICEF Montenegro and the Ministry of Education was launched in 2017 to increase digital literacy among children, parents and teachers. Digital literacy will be introduced into the primary school curriculum for children aged 9 to 14 by 2020.

In collaboration with other UN agencies, UNICEF Montenegro analysed the country’s EU accession process, identifying the main elements that the UN system can support for SDG achievement. UNICEF Montenegro and other UN agencies partnered with a hip-hop band to raise awareness about violence against women. The song ‘Moja Mare’ (My Mary) quickly became popular both on social and electronic media.

UNICEF Montenegro’s adolescent empowerment programme received support from ING, a global financial institution. Due to the programme’s success, the partnership will be extended for two more years. UNICEF Montenegro also partnered with Telekom to organize the first conference on the power of adolescence.

The UNICEF Montenegro Representative took part in a regional conference on children and media organized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), in collaboration with the Agency for Electronic Media, the Ombudsman and the Ministry of Justice. A planned 2018 campaign on media literacy by UNICEF Montenegro and the Agency for Electronic Media will promote informed, aware media consumption for parents and children.

**External communication and public advocacy**

UNICEF Montenegro is the most popular international organization in the country according to a nationally representative survey in December 2017. One of every two citizens spontaneously named it as the first UN agency that comes to mind, with 91 per cent of respondents having heard of it, 88 per cent having a positive opinion, and 5 per cent a negative opinion of UNICEF.

The number of UNICEF Montenegro followers increased by 29 per cent on Facebook, 26 per cent on Twitter and 48 per cent on Instagram, while the number of views of UNICEF’s YouTube channel increased by 260 per cent.

UNICEF participated in the ‘16 Days’ campaign against gender-based violence and the Western Balkans conference on children and media organized by the OSCE.

Public advocacy and communication for social change focused on the End Violence campaign, and the End Violence Online campaign, reaching more than 2.5 million people on social media. It is understood that these people are primarily from the Western Balkans, as most UNICEF Montenegro followers are from this region.

A December 2017 survey showed that 50 percent of citizens had heard about the End Violence campaign. Forty-one per cent knew about the first national SOS parents’ line less than a year after its launch. About half said they were motivated to call the hotline.

Through a three-year partnership with Telenor, as part of the #Endviolence Online campaign, digital literacy will be provided to every child through primary schools.

Together with the Institute for Public Health, UNICEF Montenegro worked on public advocacy related to immunization. The vaccination rate against measles for children born in 2015 was 57 per cent; the low vaccination rate is of concern.

**South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation**

Montenegro is part of the multi-country EU-funded programme to protect children from violence and enhance the social inclusion of children with disabilities. The initiative involves countries in the Western Balkans and Turkey, as well as the UNICEF Regional Office in Geneva and the Brussels-based European Disability Forum, a network of organizations for people with disabilities. This collaborative effort resulted in strengthening the capacity of Montenegro’s organizations to monitor and advocate for the rights of people and children with disabilities, as evidenced by their preparation and presentation of the alternative report to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Committee. Through this cooperation, representatives of CSOs and governments of all participating countries exchanged knowledge and lessons learnt on administrative data collection on violence against children and children with disabilities.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, with support from UNICEF Montenegro and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), continued to pilot the Family Outreach Worker service in five Montenegrin municipalities. This programme was the product of South-South cooperation between Serbia and Montenegro in 2014-2015, and Montenegro’s Government has committed to integrating the service into its system by 2021.

In the area of inclusive education, UNICEF Montenegro organized a study visit and training at the Milan Petrovic School and Resource Centre in Novi Sad, Serbia – a regional best practice in the provision of educational, social and health services to children with disabilities – by staff from three Montenegrin resource centres for children with disabilities. The visit served to strengthen the capacity of resource centres to provide quality support to mainstream schools that enrol children with disabilities.

**Identification and promotion of innovation**

The purpose of Montenegro’s Youth Innovation Lab is to create an environment where adolescents can benefit from innovative models for skills building and empowerment through experiential learning.
The Lab targets adolescent boys and girls, including the most vulnerable groups (whether due to socio-economic status, ethnicity, religion or disability), and offers a chance for participation, experiential learning and influencing social change. Through various programmes (such as UPSHIFT, skills workshops and hackathons) adolescent boys and girls gain critical, transferable skills (problem analysis, problem solving, financial literacy) that are rarely offered through formal education. This allows them to launch their own initiatives, with financial and mentorship support from UNICEF Montenegro, to promote new approaches to existing problems in their communities and, more importantly, to acquire skills they feel will be important for them in their future careers, increasing their confidence and self-esteem.

The Lab’s annual Hackathons for Social Change offer a prime example of a ‘by youth for youth’ approach, in which young people devise solutions for common problems during a 48-hour event, including both technical solutions (apps, online modules) and social solutions, such as campaigns. With mentorship and financial support, and a three-month incubation period, this approach allows for crowdsourcing and streamlining solutions for issues identified by the youth themselves.

Global Kids Online research in 2016 showed that 9 per cent of children and 20 per cent of parents in Montenegro (mainly from poor families) do not use the Internet, further marginalizing poor children. This digital divide led UNICEF to launch a three-year partnership with the Ministry of Education and Telenor in 2017 aimed at providing digital literacy to every child by introducing it in the primary school curriculum. This represents an education system innovation not only for Montenegro, but also worldwide.

**Support to integration and cross-sectoral linkages**

During 2017, UNICEF Montenegro was closely involved in interventions and advocacy around the cross-sectoral issue of violence against children. The second phase of the #EndViolence campaign was launched at a high-level conference in February 2017 led by the President of Montenegro and six ministers, and including professionals from all sectors as well as children, who spoke openly about childhood adversity and exposure to violence.

Advocacy by UNICEF Montenegro and partners led the Government to organize the second consecutive high-level inter-ministerial meeting on protecting children from violence and exploitation, which proved instrumental in shaping the national child protection agenda. The Government also adopted its first violence against children prevention and protection strategy, based on a cross-sectoral analysis of the problem. Through a partnership between UNICEF Montenegro, CSOs and state agencies, more than 200 health, social work and justice professionals increased their capacity to work on violence against children, including sexual and domestic violence. Collaboration between UNICEF Montenegro, the CSO Centre for Roma Initiatives and an intersectoral working group led by the Ministry of Interior, led to the development of guidelines for several relevant institutions to address cases of child marriage.

UNICEF Montenegro provided technical assistance for an external assessment of the work of local multidisciplinary teams working to prevent family violence and violence against children, commissioned by the Government. The assessment examined the main results and provided recommendations. The Government nominated this intersectoral practice model to be presented at the 2018 End Violence Against Children Global Summit in Sweden.

In addition, in an effort to enhance parenting skills, UNICEF Montenegro engaged in two cross-sectoral initiatives: implementation of the Parenting for Lifelong Health Programme for parents
of children aged two to nine, and participation in the regional study of support programmes for parents of adolescents, involving health, education and social welfare staff.

Service delivery

UNICEF Montenegro is not involved in direct delivery of services, which are provided and managed by central and local governments. However, in 2017 efforts were undertaken to improve services for parents, families of adolescents, children in conflict with the law and, in particular, institutionalized children.

Specifically, 2017 service delivery milestones included: expanding family support services to prevent family breakdown and violence to more than 170 children in over 70 families, establishing a helpline for parents, and further developing alternative family and community-based services to support children and families and prevent placement in institutional care or provide specialized services. For children remaining in institutions, including children with disabilities, UNICEF Montenegro partnered with the NGOs Juventas and NARDOS to develop policies to ensure their safety by strengthening the capacity of service providers. In addition, services for children during legal proceedings were strengthened by capacity building for lawyers and judges and training for professionals who provide support services for children.

With the CSO Parents, UNICEF Montenegro supported the establishment of the first national parent helpline, including building capacity at the CSO to provide the service. During 11 months of operation in 2017, the line received 320 calls from parents and caregivers requesting counselling, in part due to promotion of the helpline during the #Endviolence campaign and other major public events. UNICEF Montenegro also contributed to the creation of software to track the number of calls and other relevant information to facilitate planning for the service’s future development.

Human rights-based approach to cooperation

All 2017 interventions by UNICEF Montenegro were based on human rights-based approach standards and principles. Important efforts were invested in supporting national and local partners to address equity gaps identified in the Country Programme 2017-2021 and a subsequent analysis conducted in 2017. UNICEF Montenegro worked with other UN organizations to provide consolidated reports to UN committees assessing the implementation of key treaties, and contributed to the development of evidence-based recommendations for improvement.

UNICEF Montenegro played an active role in the Committee on the Rights of the Child pre-session in October. It developed a report on implementation of the Convention and provided financial support to an NGO to develop a shadow report and help prepare children attending the pre-session. The Committee’s concluding observations will be presented in 2018.

UNICEF Montenegro contributed to inputs related to recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review focusing on violence against children, domestic violence, inclusion of children with disabilities and judicial procedures for child victims of and witnesses to crimes. This process was led by the Government through an intersectoral forum that included CSOs.

An independent evaluation of child right monitoring systems commissioned in 2017 is expected to inform UNICEF Montenegro’s programmes and those of its national partners for more effective monitoring of child rights realization, increasing accountability and high-level coordination. This highly participatory evaluation is guided by a steering committee led by the
chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms. Findings will be available in early 2018.

UNICEF Montenegro took an active part in the joint UN Country Team Gender Equality Scorecard exercise, aimed at accelerating UN efforts to mainstream gender in its programming and work.

Finally, in December 2017, Montenegro’s Parliament marked Human Rights Day by organizing a high-level conference on violence against children, in cooperation with the Government, UNICEF Montenegro and CSOs, increasing the awareness of parliamentarians and the public on the negative implications of violence against children.

**Gender equality**

Child marriage: UNICEF Montenegro intensified its work on ending child marriage. In partnership with the Centre for Roma Initiatives, it supported an intersectoral working group to develop guidelines for addressing and managing child marriage cases by relevant institutions. Working with the same institution, UNICEF Montenegro produced a report on the gaps and lessons learnt in the country’s response to child marriage, to be presented in 2018. Community mobilization against early marriage in Roma and Egyptian communities had a special focus on youth. Thirteen young Roma and Egyptian men and women were trained to hold workshops for their peers on the harm of child marriage, reaching almost 140 young people and adolescents. Further, more than 500 members of Roma and Egyptian communities attended seven forum theatres on the topic of child marriage. The budget for this initiative was above US$59,000.

Domestic violence: Partnerships were established (or continued) with women’s CSOs to strengthen protection of child victims of domestic violence. Efforts included capacity building of more than 160 professionals and expert witnesses on assessing the risk to children in domestic violence cases, while approximately 50 professionals developed their capacity on identifying signs of sexual abuse. The 2017 budget for these initiatives exceeded US$94,000.

Gender equality: In 2017, Montenegro’s UN Country Team completed the Gender Equality Scorecard exercise, including an assessment and action planning, to provide recommendations for stronger programming and results for gender equality and women’s empowerment at the country level.

Gender-based violence: In 2017 the UN Human Rights and Gender Group again used an innovative approach to mark the 16 Days of Activism by partnering with a popular hip-hop band to produce a song (‘My Mary’) highlighting different dimensions of gender-based violence. Launched in November, the song had significant outreach in both the country and the region.

Finally, UNICEF Montenegro participated in the UN Country Team’s reporting on Montenegro’s progress on implementing the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

**Environmental sustainability**

Environmental sustainability is not a focus of the current UNICEF Montenegro Country Programme and programmatic involvement in this area was therefore limited in 2017. However, UNICEF Montenegro invested effort in establishing eco-friendly office procedures by being situated in an eco-house, using less paper, installing LED lighting and disposing of old equipment and paper in an eco-friendly way to create a culture of greening in the office, in line with UN-wide efforts to “Green the Blue.”
Effective leadership

The country management team (CMT) continued to provide strategic direction and overall management and performance monitoring of the work of UNICEF Montenegro, with a special focus on priorities established in the annual management plan, key performance indicators and continuous update of the resource mobilization strategy. The team reviewed the management dashboard and scorecard at all meetings.

Two submissions to the programme budget review were among the major management tasks completed in 2017. Both submissions were approved, increasing the office’s capacity to achieve planned programme and management results.

In addition to ten country management team meetings held in 2017 and gatherings of other formal governance structure bodies (contract review, partnership review, research/evaluations and joint consultative committees and the local property survey board), UNICEF Montenegro used other mechanisms to strengthen overall programme performance monitoring and coordination (e.g., weekly all-staff meetings and monthly programme coordination meetings). The table of authority was updated to reflect changes in staffing and responsibilities to ensure proper segregation of duties. The business continuity plan was reviewed periodically, updated to reflect staff changes and successfully tested in April, confirming the office’s business continuity capability.

Enterprise risk management was reviewed in April and July 2017. Three medium risks were identified: governance and accountability, natural disasters and fund-raising environment/relationships with key stakeholders. Steps taken to mitigate and manage risks included: intensified fund-raising activities; maintaining close partnership with the Government, monitoring its activities and providing appropriate technical support; adjusting some job descriptions and terms of reference; and strengthening supervisors’ management capacity.

Emergency preparedness was the subject of monitoring and reporting on the Early Warning/Early Action site as part of UNICEF’s emergency preparedness and response system. During the final quarter of 2017 UNICEF Montenegro undertook preparations for implementing the new procedures for emergency response.

Financial resources management

UNICEF Montenegro has clear mechanisms and accountabilities in place to ensure adequate and timely management of contributions, budget control, financial procedures, bank reconciliations, accounting and liquidation of cash assistance. The country management team met almost monthly to review and identify actions on all key performance indicators. UNICEF Montenegro used all available financial reports from VISION and InSight to monitor and report on progress.

Expenditure rates in 2017 were 100 per cent for Regular Resources and 100 per cent for Other Resources. The implementation rate for Institutional Budget for non-post costs was 100 per cent. All expiring programme budget allotments were fully utilized prior to their expiration. UNICEF Montenegro succeeded in utilizing additional institutional budget non-post funds received in September 2017, as well as Regular Resource funds released due to a change in funding source.

All financial closure activities were successfully completed and in full compliance with
prescribed procedures and deadlines, including ongoing 2017 account closure activities. Bank reconciliation was prepared on time and approved without reconciling items for all accounts. UNICEF Montenegro maintained optimal local bank account balances.

UNICEF Montenegro complies with the latest regulations governing the harmonized approach to cash transfers. Jointly with UNDP, in October 2017 it conducted a macro-assessment of public financial management in Montenegro.

The status of direct cash transfers (DCTs) was closely monitored; the office had none outstanding for more than six months at year-end. All assurance activities were performed as planned.

**Fund-raising and donor relations**

Guided by its 2017-2021 Resource Mobilization Strategy, UNICEF Montenegro continued to mobilize and leverage funds for children. It developed concept notes and proposals for most interventions planned under the new CP, targeting adolescents, children with disabilities, violence prevention, early childhood education, early intervention, social inclusion of Roma children and access to justice.

For 2017, UNICEF Montenegro received US$170,700 in Global Thematic Funds for education, which was used for capacity building in schools and preschool institutions to deliver quality, diversified and inclusive services. An additional US$200,000 was received in December to continue work on ECD and the quality and inclusiveness of the education system; these funds will be used in 2018.

As a result of engagement with Montenegro’s private sector, UNICEF Montenegro and Telenor launched a three-year partnership aimed at increasing digital literacy among parents, children and teachers. Telenor contributed US$120,000 to this initiative.

UNICEF Montenegro management regularly monitored the use of funds and the quality of donor reports through established monitoring mechanisms. In 2017, UNICEF Montenegro contributed to progress reports to the EU and the ING Group and submitted progress reports to Marimo Berk and the David Drummond Fund. A final report on strengthening youth employability in Montenegro was submitted to the UNDP Multi-Donor Trust Fund through the UN Coordination Office.

UNICEF Montenegro and ING agreed to continue their cooperation on youth empowerment until 2020, thus mobilizing an additional US$500,000 that has yet to be disbursed.

**Evaluation and research**

UNICEF Montenegro 2017 evaluation agenda was ambitious, a trend that will continue throughout the new country programme cycle.

The evaluation of the ‘Montenegro: Investment Case on ECE’ programme, which began in 2016 and was completed in early 2017, was rated as highly satisfactory. The evaluation received the highest possible rating, exceeding UNICEF and UN Evaluation Group standards for evaluation reports. It included both summative and programme-informing elements in order to: (1) provide usable recommendations within the framework of the new CP and national strategy on expansion of ECE services and (2) focus on accountability for results achieved to date. The management response was formulated within the prescribed 60 days. Insights and
recommendations from the evaluation informed 2017 planning of joint programmes with central educational institutions – a testament to the quality of the evaluation, as well as its national ownership, responsiveness and timeliness.

The formative evaluation of the child rights monitoring system initiated in 2017 will provide recommendations for improving Montenegro’s child rights systems. Given the strategic nature of this activity, UNICEF Montenegro established a steering committee, chaired by the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms.

Independence of the evaluation function is safeguarded through high standards of professional conduct and the integrity of staff. Given the quality of national-level partnerships, evaluations have proven to be useful and recommendations have informed ongoing programming. However, to date UNICEF Montenegro has not worked on developing national evaluation capacity.

A UNICEF Montenegro research/studies/evaluations steering committee was established in 2016 to guide evidence-generation activities. UNICEF also relied on the independent National Ethical Review Committee to ensure ethical conduct in evidence generation, prevent harm and ensure that human rights, specifically child rights, were protected.

### Efficiency gains and cost savings

UNICEF is part of the UN Delivering as One system in Montenegro. The joint UN approach in operations and wide scope of common services continued to serve as an efficient way to reduce costs, workloads and transaction costs compared to those incurred when each UN organization works separately. The UN has long-term agreements (LTAs) with suppliers of the following common services: travel, fuel, car wash and car maintenance, taxi services, express courier services, renting of simultaneous translation equipment, photocopying, office stationery and supplies. LTAs are also in place for translation services, English and Montenegrin language editing and media clipping services.

In addition, UNICEF Montenegro established LTAs for video production, photography and events management. Estimated cost savings related to common services amounted to US$20,000 in 2017.

To improve the use of time and resources, UNICEF Montenegro incorporated various effectiveness and efficiency initiatives in its daily business, for example, applying some suggestions from the UNICEF NY Headquarters field results group to streamline office management. As a result, the contract review committee threshold was increased from US$20,000 to US$50,000; the number of office committees was reduced; the office undertook the minimum required number of spot checks; and the invoices were combined to reduce the number of payments, leading to fewer transactions.

Efficiency gains and savings were also achieved in 2017 as a result of extensive and advanced use the Office 365 package and of Lync and Polycom VC for international calls, video calls and meetings, replacing both travel and the use of landlines or office mobile phones.

### Supply management

In 2017, the supply component of UNICEF Montenegro’s programme amounted to US$357,881 (15.49 per cent of total CP expenditures). Supply for programmes consisted mainly of procuring equipment for the Youth Innovation Lab and Bureau for Education and printing of brochures and manuals for the Ministry of Education.
Service procurement consisted of: the cost of organizing seminars, conferences and training; printing services; and the production of promotional and communication materials and publications, as well as surveys and studies.

In regard to operational supplies, UNICEF Montenegro procured office supplies and equipment needed for a smooth transition to Windows 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNICEF Montenegro 2017</th>
<th>Value of all supply input (goods &amp; services)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme supplies</td>
<td>US$ 6,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational supplies</td>
<td>US$ 36,526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>US$ 314,785</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As part of optimization and effective use of resources, UNICEF Montenegro established LTAs for video production, photography and events management.

UNICEF Montenegro continued to benefit from LTAs for common UN services and locally procured supplies, in the framework of the UN Delivering as One.

LTAs with suppliers were used for: travel, fuel, car wash and maintenance, taxi services, express courier services, rental of simultaneous translation equipment, photocopying, office stationery and supplies, as well as translation services, language editing in English and Montenegrin and media clipping services. Tenders for these LTAs were jointly conducted with other UN agencies in Montenegro; UNICEF staff actively participated in solicitation processes.

**Security for staff and premises**

Safety and security of staff and office premises was constantly monitored during the year in close coordination with the UN Department of Safety and Security and the UN Security Management Team (SMT). Security advisories were provided to UNICEF staff in a timely manner, and all UNICEF personnel completed mandatory security training.

UNICEF Montenegro actively participated in SMT meetings and continued security arrangements to ensure overall security for its staff and premises. Two SMT meetings were held, in May and October. The UN Security Plan was updated in October 2017, as was the UN Security Management System, which incorporates security risk assessment and residential security measures.

In response to the security risk assessment of UN premises, an emergency exit from the building was constructed.

Warden communication exercises were conducted in September and December 2017. The Fire Safety Plan was tested in October and December. Warden communication exercises were conducted in September and December. The Fire Safety Plan was tested in October and December.

**Human resources**
UNICEF Montenegro’s approved structure is aligned to the needs of the new country programme. Most required competencies already exist, with an adequate mix of profiles. However, there was a need to strengthen capacity in some areas to respond to opportunities and challenges. Thus, UNICEF Montenegro used short and long-term international and national technical expertise related to specific areas, such as youth and adolescent development, education, child protection and communication.

Expertise and support in the areas of communications and programme administration was also sourced from other UNICEF offices in the region through short-term stretch assignments.

To strengthen operational support for country programme implementation and better manage the risks associated with an understaffed operations unit, four new administrative posts were established; recruitment was underway in late 2017.

UNICEF Montenegro continued to support participation by relevant staff members at sectoral meetings and workshops and in training exercises to increase internal knowledge and capacities on subjects such as emergency preparedness and response, supply, logistics and contracting for services. All staff took part in a workshop related to preparedness procedures for emergency response.

A staff retreat, including team-building exercises, was held in September 2017. Staff members discussed how to follow-up on results of the 2017 Global Staff Survey and developed a corresponding office improvement plan.

Three meetings of the joint consultative committee were held in 2017. Implementation of action points was regularly monitored by the local staff association and management.

Performance appraisals for 2016, as well as 2017 performance planning, were completed within deadlines, and regular feedback discussions between staff and supervisors took place throughout the year.

UNICEF Montenegro observes the minimum standards on the human immunodeficiency virus infection/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) in the workplace. Post-exposure prophylaxis kits and first aid kits are available in the office.

**Effective use of information and communication technology**

Social media campaigns are a strong part of UNICEF Montenegro’s public advocacy and communication for social change work. Significant progress on all social media was registered during 2017. The number of Facebook followers rose by 47 per cent, Twitter followers by 27 per cent and Instagram followers by 48 per cent. The rise in views of the UNICEF Montenegro YouTube channel was even more impressive, increasing by 260 per cent.

In accordance with the objectives of UNICEF’s information technology solutions and services, during 2017 all information and communications technology (ICT) resources were upgraded and are compliant with UNICEF policies. Windows 10 was installed on all office laptops, which increased productivity and enhanced security for UNICEF Montenegro assets and data. Remote solutions advanced organizational efficiency and effectiveness and created a fully mobile workspace. Skype for Business was fully integrated with Office, allowing users to organize and participate in online meetings with colleagues and partners in the country and abroad. All this
helped to streamline IT operations and simplify overall communication and work processes at the office.

## Programme components from RAM

### ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

#### OUTCOME 1

Central educational institutions, as well as primary and secondary schools, have the capacity to provide quality, inclusive and innovative services

**Analytical statement of progress**

Governmental partners from the health, education, child and social protection sectors increased their awareness about the importance of multisectoral cooperation and application of integrated approaches in dealing with children and families, in particular the most disadvantaged ones. The evidence generated during the year, awareness-raising initiatives, technical assistance for delivery of capacity-building programmes and development of preventive and alternative-based community-based services strengthened the understanding among decision makers, professionals, parents and caregivers about root causes of problems and about the importance of applying holistic approaches in dealing with children. A multisectoral system response was particularly strengthened in the areas of prevention of family separation, protection of children from violence, abuse and neglect, protection of the rights of children with disabilities and the rights of children belonging to minority groups. Tangible results were achieved in each of these areas.

In addition, the trend of expansion of preventive and alternative family and community-based services continued in 2017. The country achieved its target of completely eliminating placement of children under three years of age in large-scale institutions. As part of multisectoral efforts to reduce equity gaps and support children and families at risk of, and those already exposed to, poverty, an analysis of the existing social transfers for children was conducted. This will ensure that the ongoing childcare, health and education system reforms are informed by evidence about social rights available to children, so that social protection reform can accompany the reforms of other sectors in the future. The analysis resulted in a 24 per cent increase in the value of the child allowance benefit.

The #End Violence campaign was launched in February 2017, jointly with the Government, to promote positive parenting practices. A nationally representative KAP survey conducted in December 2017 showed that ten months after the launch of the campaign people’s awareness and knowledge had increased, and the social taboo on discussing violence had been successfully broken. One in four citizens learned new things from this campaign, which actively promoted the first national SOS support line to help parents raise children without violence. The SOS line was also launched in February, and as a result of successful promotion, ten months later, 41 per cent of Montenegrins were aware of it. The work on awareness raising will continue in 2018.

#### OUTPUT 1

Enhanced multisectoral cooperation for effective support to vulnerable children and families and prevention of family breakdown

**Analytical statement of progress**

The assessment of the home-visitation system (including proposed models for enhancing service provision and costing) was completed and presented in autumn 2017, and dialogue will
continue with the Ministry of Health in 2018 concerning the way forward. The Ministry is preparing for the development of the National Strategy on Early Childhood Development. It coordinated the work of an intersectoral working group to develop a draft Strategy for support to persons with autism, which was presented at a Symposium in autumn 2017. The assessment of the system of early detection, intervention and rehabilitation of children with disabilities was in the early stages of development at the end of 2017, and the Ministry of Health agreed to develop an action plan for improvement of the situation alongside the provision of capacity building to relevant professionals.

Training of kindergartens on early detection of disabilities continued in 2017, and 16 municipalities have been covered (70 per cent of municipalities).

The number of inclusive community-based services increased. There were 13 day care centres and 44 non-kin foster families (according to preliminary data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare) in Montenegro at the end of 2017, as well as one small group home. Licensing of service providers has not yet been implemented by the Government. While legal preconditions exist, administrative procedures have not yet been completed. UNICEF Montenegro supported day care centres to improve their work practices, and various internal procedures were developed, including on safeguarding. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare resumed its funding of the piloting of the Family Outreach Service. Between 2016 and 2017, 71 families with 177 children were covered, and so far, no child covered by the service has been separated from their family. There are no children under three years of age in residential care.

An assessment of the work of operational multidisciplinary teams for the protection from family violence and violence against children, with a focus on cases of child victims of violence, was conducted and its results presented to team members at a national event. Key findings were subsequently presented to the Council on Child Rights. Further capacity-building events for the teams were in the preparatory stage at the end of 2017. The Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings was supported by UNICEF Montenegro to develop standard operating procedures on work with unaccompanied and separated migrant and refugee children.

In autumn 2017, the first group of facilitators from the health, education, social welfare and NGO sectors were trained in delivering the group-based parenting programme “Parenting for Lifelong Health” (global UNICEF-WHO collaboration in partnership with some of the world’s leading universities). Recruitment was initiated for families for the implementation of the programme in early 2018 (with at least eight groups of parents in four municipalities).

**OUTCOME 2** Girls and boys, especially those affected by poverty, adversity and exclusion, progressively utilize quality, inclusive and efficient education system reinforced by policies, programmes and services for empowerment and participation, by 2021

**Analytical statement of progress**
In 2017, Montenegro’s Parliament legislated important changes to the education system, defining the acquisition of socio-emotional skills (e.g. tolerance, empathy, self-control) and 21st century skills (e.g., digital literacy) as goals of primary education. Moreover, socio-emotional skills development was incorporated into the primary school curriculum across all subjects. These actions represent important steps toward sustaining reforms advocated by UNICEF Montenegro, since social and emotional skills are considered to be a precondition for success in
education, careers and adult life. With UNICEF Montenegro support, the programme for developing 21st century skills was expanded through both formal and informal education and included some 6,200 adolescent girls and boys, including children presenting challenging behaviour or in residential care.

With UNICEF Montenegro support, recommendations were developed to improve student achievement, as measured by the PISA, reflecting the country’s commitment to quality compulsory education. Steps were undertaken to design an action plan, covering the period up to 2022, to ensure implementation of the recommendations and overall improvement of the quality of education.

Expansion of alternative and free-of-charge preschool programmes contributed to an average increase of 18 per cent in the number of children enrolled in six municipalities with lowest coverage in 2017, and an increase at the national level equalling as much as 22.35 per cent since 2015. Successful results in ECE in recent years were assessed through an independent evaluation finalized in 2017. Working in close partnership, the Ministry of Education and UNICEF Montenegro focused on implementing the evaluation recommendations, particularly those related to the need for an equitable and quality expansion of preschool coverage. It is important to note that the evaluation was ranked as an example of best practice, exceeding both UNICEF’s and the UN Evaluation Group’s standards for evaluation reports.

UNICEF Montenegro and national partners made important strides in relation to adolescent development and empowerment, both in terms of skills building of adolescent girls and boys, systems’ response to their needs, and knowledge generation for future programming. No national policies single out adolescents as a target group in need of tailored support, a situation UNICEF Montenegro advocated to be changed. Adolescents, the challenges of adolescence, and the need to involve them in the design of services, were however mentioned in the 2018 Action Plan to implement the national Youth Strategy. The Action Plan was adopted by the Government of Montenegro in December 2017.

The first national debate on the importance of investing in adolescent development took place in 2017. It was based on a thorough assessment of the health, education and social protection systems’ capacities to support adolescents as they transition from childhood to adulthood. Award-winning educator and author Dr. Daniel Siegel (invited by UNICEF Montenegro) argued that adolescence is a period of opportunities, not just risks, thus initiating a neuroscience-informed discourse on investing in adolescent development.

A study on parenting programmes for parents of adolescents revealed gaps in this area. Public policies do not explicitly refer to parenting during adolescence, nor is there quality systems support to parents, nor equity and participation in the delivery of scarce existing programmes. Parents/caregivers feel that they do not have enough knowledge, skills and resources to adequately deal with the challenges of adolescence, which increases stress, anxiety and fear.

Skills building of adolescents took place through the Youth Innovation Lab, and formal and non-formal education.

OUTPUT 1 Central educational institutions, as well as primary and secondary schools, have the capacity to provide quality, inclusive and innovative services
Analytical statement of progress

The end of 2017 was marked by the successful finalization of initiatives aimed at increasing the capacity of schools and central educational institutions to provide inclusive services to all children, particularly those with disabilities. Three new textbooks in DAISY format were produced, completing a set of nine books accessible to children with disabilities and making it possible for them to learn along with their peers in mainstream classrooms. Teams of teachers from 25 more primary schools were trained to use DAISY textbooks, bringing the total number to 50.

With the aim of improving the quality of educational services for children with disabilities, a study visit and training activity for representatives of Resource Centres were organized to the Milan Petrovic School in Novi Sad/Serbia, which is an example of best practice in the area of inclusive education. Based on an analysis of reading skills of children between six and nine years of age, a set of recommendations were developed aimed at improving their literacy skills and preparing them for further learning.

Sustained efforts were invested in building the capacities of preschool teachers and staff to provide quality care to children with disabilities. Through an initiative with the Resource Centre for Children with Autism, over 150 kindergarten teachers in ten municipalities received training on early intervention for children with disabilities from the spectrum of autism, thus increasing the number of municipalities included to 16 (out of 23).

In addition, the Special Olympics Young Athletes programme was successfully piloted, including 150 children with and without disabilities and contributing to their development and social inclusion.

Two significant milestones in terms of integrating socio-emotional and 21st century skills were achieved in 2017: (1) socio-emotional skills were incorporated in the primary school curriculum across all subjects and (2) teaching of socio-emotional skills was included as one of the goals of the new Law on Primary Education. The programmes for developing the socio-emotional skills of students were expanded to ten more primary and secondary schools, for a total of 20, including directly more than 6,000 students.

The aim of creating an evidence-based and effective system of drop-out prevention, the Montenegrin Education Information System (MEIS) was upgraded to enable the establishment of an early warning system. Along with this, initial steps were taken to upgrade MEIS to produce the school profile card, i.e. feedback to schools in the format of user-friendly and relevant data. Both the early warning system and the school profile card will be piloted in 20 schools in the upcoming school year.

One of the most important achievements in 2017 was the development, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, of the PISA 2015 Report for Montenegro, containing recommendations for the overall improvement of the quality of education. This document will serve as a basis for defining comprehensive reforms up to 2022.

OUTPUT 2 Increasing awareness of children, professionals and general public on children as rights holders

Analytical statement of progress
Through the Youth Innovation Lab, 228 adolescent boys and girls throughout the country acquired critical skills (problem analysis, problem solving, financial literacy) that are currently largely not offered through the formal education. Of this number, 65 were boys (28.5 per cent) and 163 were girls (71.5 per cent).

During 2017 there were 9,030 indirect beneficiaries from Youth Innovation Lab initiatives, with the majority coming as a result of UPSHIFT initiatives (7,712).

The YIL asked its UPSHIFT participants to do self-assessments immediately after the UPSHIFT workshop, and 3, 6 and 12 months after they completed it, in order to assess the level of skills acquisition as well as the (perception of) usefulness of the skills. The results were very promising across the board. Overall, immediately after UPSHIFT, 92 per cent of participants reported they had improved their problem analysis skills, 98 per cent believed they had improved their teamwork and communication skills, 89 per cent felt they had a better grasp of time management, and 81 per cent felt they had improved their financial literacy skills.

During subsequent assessments, the numbers stayed more or less the same, with an improvement in the financial literacy section – with 90 per cent reporting they had improved financial literacy skills, probably due to the new financial literacy workshop introduced in June 2017 targeting UPSHIFT participants. Additionally, 78 per cent of participants reported they were certain (and 16 per cent more reported they are reasonably certain) that they had acquired skills they felt would be important in their future careers. In addition, 81 per cent were certain (and 12 per cent were reasonably certain) that they had increased confidence and self-esteem when approaching new challenges in life.

Following 2016 activities to empower adolescents from the country’s poorest region with critical socio-emotional skills, these young people took the initiative to promote these skills in their communities. Through short movies, murals, flyers, posters, books and didactical tools, sporting events, installations and badges, 2,275 adolescent boys and girls benefited indirectly from the programme by learning about integrity, teamwork, empathy and other skills from their peers.

They were further empowered to nurture and pursue these skills through two motivational events. Opportunity fairs were organized back-to-back with the motivational events, exposing participating adolescents to opportunities related to scholarships, information and professional counselling towards increasing employment and civic engagement through NGOs dealing with social, cultural, youth and science issues.

A similar programme was implemented in other venues to reach highly vulnerable adolescents, such as girls and boys in large-scale residential institutions (52 per cent girls), adolescents aged 13-17 presenting challenging behaviours (eight boys, one girl) and Roma girls and boys at two primary schools (10-16 year olds, 48 per cent girls). Although almost all the adolescents reported increased levels of most skills, differences emerged between the groups. Roma adolescents had significantly increased levels of eight skills, but not tolerance. For adolescents presenting challenging behaviour, several skills were gained, but not optimism or tolerance. Adolescents in state care reported increased teamwork, creativity and self-control.

**OUTPUT 3** Quality and accessible tools and mechanisms to consult youth on policy making and/or service design are in place

**Analytical statement of progress**
UNICEF Montenegro and national partners made important strides during 2017 in adolescent development and empowerment, mainly toward skills building, improving system responses to adolescents’ needs and knowledge generation for future programming. UNICEF Montenegro’s programme on adolescent empowerment is supported by ING, a global financial institution of Dutch origin.

In 2017, UNICEF Montenegro aimed to strengthen the capacities of the system to better understand and support adolescent development, as a basis for enhanced participation, by putting in place a unique and comprehensive assessment of the current capacities of the social protection, health and education systems to support adolescents as they transition from childhood to adulthood. The assessment was carried out in close cooperation with ministries and service providers from these sectors.

Through a robust literature review (World Health Organization [WHO], UNICEF, etc.), the team selected 67 criteria, including 18 with primary relevance to health, 30 with primary relevance to education, and 19 with primary relevance to social protection. Following a review of the literature, the authors conceived a future or “end” state. An end state represents the goal or ideal scenario in which service providers have the capacity and are and empowered to achieve, and invested in, the full realization of adolescent-friendly service provision. The capacity gap assessment was completed in September 2017 and it will inform the relevant work of UNICEF Montenegro, line ministries and service providers.

The first-ever national debate on the importance of investing in adolescent development took place in 2017, based on the capacity assessment of the health, education and social protection systems to support adolescents’ transition from childhood to adulthood. Some 130 professionals working in education, health and social protection attended the first-ever national high-level conference on adolescence, “The Power of Adolescence.” UNICEF Montenegro will prioritize further strengthening of their capacity to work with adolescents in 2018. The debate was organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Sport, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the private sector.

UNICEF Montenegro also strives to strengthen adolescent participation in policy making and/or service design. To that end, a sub-regional concept for the introduction of U-report was prepared and initial agreements were made on rolling out U-report.

OUTCOME 3 Girls and boys progressively utilize well-governed and accountable child rights coordination and monitoring systems and have equitable access to justice, by 2021

Analytical statement of progress
In 2017, important efforts were invested in strengthening the child rights coordination and monitoring mechanisms in the country. Important research and knowledge-generation bodies in the country were provided with initial assistance, so that their capacities in child rights monitoring are strengthened and understanding increased, in order to effectively feed and shape child rights policy in the country.

With UNICEF Montenegro expertise and support, the Government and MONISTAT (the national statistics office) began preparations for carrying out the MICS, the country’s second largest survey after the population census. The MICS should yield internationally comparable data on children and women, including data required to report against several indicators of the National Strategy on Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030).
In addition, the National Human Rights Institution and UNICEF Montenegro partners were provided with guidance and support for increasing their capacity in monitoring and reporting on child rights. Child rights were widely promoted among children, parents and professionals to encourage the perception that children are holders of rights.

In 2017, UNICEF Montenegro commissioned the first-ever evaluation of the child rights monitoring system and mechanisms in the country. This is intended to inform the work of national institutions and UNICEF Montenegro towards more effective monitoring of child rights realization in the country and increase the accountability and high-level coordination in children rights.

UNICEF Montenegro’s report on the implementation of the Convention on Child Rights and its Optional Protocols was presented to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

CSOs were supported in the establishment of coalitions for the protection of the rights of children with disabilities and children victims of violence, abuse and neglect, which contributed to opening and widening public debate and thinking.

The country has been progressively working on establishing the necessary preconditions for application of child-friendly justice principles and standards in the judiciary. Throughout 2017, the predominant focus was on upgrading the understanding and capacities of justice and other professionals on the application of child-friendly justice principles in accordance with related international instruments and standards.

**OUTPUT 1** Judicial staff and other professionals are qualified to promote and apply child-friendly and gender-responsive justice for all children, including restorative justice principles for girls and boys in conflict with the law.

**Analytical statement of progress**
In 2017 UNICEF Montenegro supported national counterparts in advancing the access to justice agenda and in particular in family law-related matters. With technical support of UNICEF Montenegro to the Ministry of Justice, the country developed and accredited a training programme for the application of the legal institution of a Support Person to the Child, which was introduced through amendments to the Family Law (2016). The role of the Support Person is to assist the child during the family law proceedings and to ensure the child’s opinion is heard and observed. Consequently, the first group of candidates for Support Person were trained and 18 professionals were licensed by the Ministry of Justice to act as a Support Persons in family law-related matters. In cooperation with the Bar Chamber of Montenegro, the training programme was developed for defence lawyers on the main principles of child-friendly justice (including the right of the child to legal aid, the right to participate, best interest determination and special skills for communicating with the child). This programme was accredited by the Bar Chamber and 36 defence lawyers took the training. In cooperation with the Judicial Training Centre, capacity building was also organized for a select group of judges (46) who work in family law-related matters. The focus was on the application of child-friendly justice principles in family law-related proceedings (for example, child participation, the best interest of the child determination, child-friendly techniques for interviewing children). The Judicial Training Centre now has an updated register of justice sector professionals qualified to work in judicial proceedings involving children.
UNICEF Montenegro provided technical assistance for an expanded application of alternative measures for children in conflict with the law. Support was provided to the Centre for Mediation in capacity building and licensing of 20 additional victim/offender mediators for children in conflict with the law in order to ensure full geographical coverage and availability of the mediators for children in conflict with the law in all municipalities in the country.

With UNICEF Montenegro support professional support service within the judiciary (in criminal matters) met to discuss the challenges and obstacles in their work and developed recommendations for improvements.

**OUTCOME 4** Special Purpose

**Analytical statement of progress**
Ensuring safety and security of UNICEF Montenegro staff and office is an ongoing priority that is regularly monitored by management, in close coordination with the UN Department of Safety and Security and the UN SMT. The staff completed mandatory security training and received timely information on the security situation in the country and potential alerts.

**OUTPUT 1** Premises and Security

**Analytical statement of progress**
The safety and security of staff and the office premises were constantly monitored during the year, in close coordination with the UN Department of Safety and Security and the UN SMT. Security advisories were provided to UNICEF Montenegro staff in a timely manner, and all personnel completed mandatory security training.

UNICEF Montenegro actively participated in SMT meetings and continued security arrangements to ensure overall security for its staff and premises. The UN Security Plan was updated in October 2017, as was the UN Security Management System, which incorporates security risk assessment and residential security measures.

In response to the security risk assessment of the UN premises, an emergency exit from the building was constructed. Regular warden communication exercises were conducted, and the Fire Safety Plan was tested in 2017.

The business continuity plan was reviewed and updated to reflect staff changes and successfully tested in April. Following the test, the office purchased three new satellite phones, thereby increasing the office’s business continuity capability.

**OUTCOME 5** The identity, direction and well-being of UNICEF and staff are managed efficiently and effectively to enable the achievement of results for children in the country

**Analytical statement of progress**
Internal governance and management systems of the office were strengthened to make more efficient use of UNICEF Montenegro resources and effective realization of the country programme. The overall expenditure of the office was 100 per cent of planned resources.

The country management team and the office statutory committees continued to serve as
efficient mechanisms for coordination, monitoring and strengthening of overall programme performance and results for children. The annual management plan provided an up-to-date framework for UNICEF operations in the country.

The management dashboard and scorecard were regularly used to keep track of implementation of key performance indicators of the office and to introduce immediate corrective measure, as appropriate. Two submissions to the programme budget review mechanism were approved as proposed. Proposals included establishment of four new positions in the office and a change in funding source for two positions (from regular resources to institutional budget) and for one position from other resources to regular resources funds, resulting in increased office capacity to achieve planned programme and management results.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**

The country management team met ten times in 2017, addressing key decisions with regard to programme implementation, performance indicators and priorities from the annual management plan, the communication strategy and media coverage. The following topics were covered: office performance through Scorecard and management reports, implementation status of the CP 2017-2021 and the office's submissions to the programme budget review. UNICEF Montenegro continued the practice of reviewing, improving and streamlining work processes by focusing on major bottlenecks, reviewing applicable rules and regulations, and incorporating the latest changes and updates of internal documents, thereby ensuring full compliance with UNICEF rules, procedures and accountability.

The table of authority was updated in 2017 to reflect staff-related changes within the office and responsibilities in order to ensure proper segregation of duties. Potential conflicts were reviewed regularly through the Division of Financial and Administrative Management Dashboard.

Monthly programme meetings, which included the communications section, were used for monitoring the implementation of the rolling work plan, sharing information and providing updates on emerging programme issues, reviewing the implementation of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2017-2021, reviewing performance indicators and discussing major programme and operations bottlenecks. The monthly programme discussions were also used for sharing information between different sections of the office and agreeing on cross-sectoral work, such as the ECD, advocacy and communication and adolescent empowerment.

UNICEF Montenegro organized weekly all-staff meetings, which helped in the overall management of the office and sharing of information between different sections. This also helped to further consolidate the team and distribute the workload in periods of high intensity and advocacy and communication campaigns, such as the "End Violence" against children campaign in which all sections of the office were involved.

All donor reports were submitted on time. The new requirements for partnerships were applied and assurance activities performed as planned. The various office oversight committees had clear terms of references and strong staff participation, ensuring quality review of documents and adherence to guidelines. Value for money was considered in resource approval decisions. The business continuity plan was periodically reviewed and updated to reflect staff changes. Enterprise Risk Management was reviewed in April and July and three medium risks for the overall operation of the office were identified (governance and accountability, fund-raising
environment, natural disasters) as well as strategies to systematically monitor and manage them.

**OUTPUT 2  Stewardship of financial resources creates the conditions to pursue country operations**

**Analytical statement of progress**

UNICEF Montenegro has clear mechanisms and accountabilities in place to ensure adequate and timely management of contributions, budget control, financial procedures, bank reconciliations, accounting and liquidation of cash assistance. Utilization rates in 2017 for all funding sources were 100 per cent. Financial closure activities were successfully completed and in full compliance with prescribed procedures and deadlines, including ongoing 2017 account closure activities. Bank reconciliation was prepared and approved in a timely manner. The office maintained optimal local bank account balances.

UNICEF Montenegro was fully compliant with the latest harmonized approach to cash transfer regulations. Together with the UNDP office, a macro-assessment of the public financial management system in Montenegro was carried out in October 2017.

The status of DCTs was closely monitored, and there were no outstanding DCTs of more than six months in 2017. All assurance activities were performed as planned.

A joint UN approach in operations and a wide scope of common services implemented in 2017 continued to be efficient way to reduce the overall cost of operations, workload and transaction costs. Joint UN LTAs were used for the following common services and supplies: travel, fuel, car wash and car maintenance, taxi services, express courier services, renting of simultaneous translation equipment, photocopying, office stationery and supplies, as well as translation services, English and Montenegrin language editing, and media clipping services. In addition, the office established LTAs for video production, photography and events management, which helped to ensure high quality of relevant products and speed up business processes.

To improve the use of time and resources, UNICEF Montenegro incorporated various effectiveness and efficiency initiatives in its daily business. For example, three of the eight suggested opportunities to streamline office management provided by the NY Headquarters Field Results Group were applied. In recognition of the relatively low-risk environment in Montenegro, the contract review committee threshold was increased from US$20,000 to US$50,000 and the number of office committees was reduced. In addition, only the minimum required number of spot checks of implementing partners were implemented and invoices were combined, thereby reducing the number of payments leading to an overall reduction in the volume of payment transactions.

Efficiency gains and savings were also achieved in 2017 with extensive and advanced use of the Office 365 package and use of Lync and Polycom VC for international calls, video calls and meetings, replacing both travel and the use of expensive landlines or office mobile phones.

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

**Analytical statement of progress**
Effective management of human resources in the office is in full compliance with UNICEF organizational changes and initiatives, including the ongoing reform of human resources.

In 2017, UNICEF Montenegro completed the planned recruitment of one national UN Volunteer and started the recruitment processes for three general service positions within the operations section.

Performance appraisals for 2016, as well as 2017 performance planning, were completed within deadlines, including regular feedback discussions between staff and supervisors throughout the year.

UNICEF Montenegro continued to support participation of staff members at sectoral meetings, workshops and training exercises, which helped increase internal knowledge and capacities on different subjects.

A staff retreat was organized in September 2017, including team-building exercises. All staff discussed how to follow-up on results of the 2017 Global Staff Survey and developed a corresponding office improvement plan. The office successfully applied human resources policies on learning days, flexible-time arrangements and working from home. Ensuring staff well-being and maintaining high staff morale are constant priorities of the management and of the local Joint Consultative Committee.

OUTCOME 6 Country programmes are efficiently designed, coordinated, managed and supported to meet quality programming standards in achieving results for children

Analytical statement of progress
The country programme was coordinated and monitored in a way to ensure its smooth implementation and high involvement of national partners. New partnerships were created with the private sector, especially within #EndViolence against children campaign and on digital literacy. Resources were mobilized for some of the emerging issues of importance, such as the second decade of life, i.e. adolescent empowerment, as well as ECD and the quality and inclusiveness of the education system.

A nationally representative survey conducted in December 2017 showed that ten months after the launch of the #EndViolence campaign, people’s awareness and knowledge on abuse, neglect and violence against children had increased, and the social taboo on discussing violence had been successfully broken. The campaign accompanied systemic reforms, such as the launch of the first national Strategy on Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence 2017-2021. It led to strengthened social work services and CSOs dedicated to issues such as raising awareness about positive parenting, the impact of childhood adversity and violence, and innovative, child-friendly computer applications to prevent online violence to, by and among children.

OUTPUT 1 New Element

Analytical statement of progress
Guided by its 2017-2021 Resource Mobilization Strategy, UNICEF Montenegro continued to mobilize and leverage funds for children. It developed concept notes and proposals for most interventions planned under the new country programme, targeting adolescents, children with
disabilities, violence prevention, ECE, early intervention, social inclusion of Roma children and access to justice, among others. In 2017, UNICEF Montenegro developed programme proposals that covered the overall planned budget for the other resources for the current CP 2017-2021. Greater attention was paid to the business sector, including a few large private companies, and to emerging donors in the country, such as the UAE and Azerbaijan.

UNICEF Montenegro approached three mobile telecommunications operators in the country to secure funding for the first SOS line for parents and support the organization of a high-level conference on adolescent empowerment.

A wide range of domestic and international partnerships allowed the #Endviolence campaign to place positive parenting high on the public agenda. The launch drew 400 participants and featured Montenegro’s President, other high-ranking officials and the Director of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.


A close relationship was nurtured with the EU Delegation to Montenegro and line ministries in order to ensure that children are more visible and present on the national EU accession-driven agenda. Thus, UNICEF Montenegro continued dialogue and utilized UNICEF knowledge and credibility in defining national priorities pertaining to children. Inputs were provided on the ongoing revision of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-2020) and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance Indicative Strategy Paper.

UNICEF Montenegro is also exploring close cooperation with other UN organizations in different result areas of the UN Development Assistance Framework 2017-2021.

**Document centre**

**Evaluation and research**

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>2017/009</td>
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<td>Analysis of the results and impact of the implementation of the Strategy on Development of Social and Child Protection System in Montenegro for the period 2013-2017</td>
<td>2017/008</td>
<td>Study</td>
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<td>Analysis of the implementation of the Strategy on Development of Foster Care (2012-2016)</td>
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### Analysis of existing social transfers and assessment of new models:

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<td>Analysis of the home visitation (partonage nurse) system in Montenegro</td>
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<td>Quantitative Research on Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices in Relation to Violence Against Children</td>
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<td>KAP Survey on Violence Against Children – Qualitative Survey on Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Regarding Violence Against Children</td>
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<td>Capacity gap analysis of the education, health and social protection systems in relation to supporting adolescent development in Montenegro</td>
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### Other publications

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<td>Instructions on the work of the multidisciplinary operational team for protection against domestic violence and violence against children (in Montenegrin)</td>
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<td>Manual for using DAISY textbooks (in Montenegrin)</td>
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<td>Education for life Key 21st century competencies in curricula in Montenegro – executive summary</td>
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<td>Education for life Key 21st century competencies in curricula in Montenegro (in Montenegrin language)</td>
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<td>Adverse childhood experiences questionnaire – Guideline for health professionals</td>
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### Lessons learned

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<td>Eradication of placement of children from 0-3 in large scale residential institutions</td>
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### Programme documents

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