

Republic of Montenegro

Part 1: Situation update in the country

Montenegro is an upper-middle-income, multi-ethnic society with a growing economy and stable political system on a steady path toward European Union accession, and is well-placed to ensure that all children can realize their rights. Yet stark inequalities remained in 2018, as reflected in poverty, regional disparities, exclusion, violence and discrimination that have significant, life-long negative effects on Montenegro's most vulnerable children.

Status of children in Montenegro

Child poverty remained a serious concern in Montenegro. In 2018 UNICEF supported the country's National Statistical Office to produce a child poverty snapshot based on data collected as part of the European Union 'Survey on Income and Living Conditions', which showed that 31.7 per cent of children lived in poverty (a 3 per cent decline since 2013). From 2013–2017, children were at higher risk of income poverty than adults, for whom rates were approximately 24 per cent. Some 40 per cent of children were found to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2017. (The European Union average was 25 per cent.) Approximately 18 per cent of Montenegrin children were estimated to live in severely deprived households (11 per cent above the EU average). Fulfilling Montenegro's commitment to meet Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 will require prudent, targeted investment of public resources and enhanced inter-sectoral collaboration.

Although Montenegro has a broad and well-funded social protection system (representing 2 per cent of GDP), recent reviews (including the EC Enlargement Report 2018) highlight the need for better targeting and coverage of programmes to meet the needs of groups such as children, the unemployed and the elderly. Further efforts are also required to enhance social inclusion, particularly for vulnerable groups such as Roma and Egyptian populations and people with disabilities.

Violence against children represented another key challenge. The 2018 knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) survey on violence against children demonstrated a high level of tolerance for it. Fifty five per cent of adults believed violent discipline was justified in some situations or that it was effective. The number of cases reported to Centres for Social Work in 2018 remained stable at 2017 levels, which represented a 20 per cent increase over 2016. During 2018 several severe cases of violence against children in families generated strong public debate. The absence of consolidated data and reporting on the issue presents serious challenges. As a pathfinder country in the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, Montenegro is committed to addressing the issue. The new (2017–2021) national strategy on prevention and protection of children from violence represents a concrete step forward. To help achieve SDG 5 and SDG 16 targets, effective, multi-sectoral services are required to prevent and address violence against children and reduce tolerance for violence.

Data was lacking on online child sexual abuse and exploitation. Very few cases were reported due to limited awareness and inadequate institutional capacities. This highlighted the need for improved data collection and increased accountability for reporting. UNICEF supported

strengthening the capacities of the Police Cybercrime Unit to better identify and investigate offenders and build sound prosecution cases, but there is still a need to improve referral and reporting mechanisms and multi-sectoral cooperation.

Advances continued to be made in alternative measures for children in conflict with the law. The number of children diverted from the justice system rose from 55 to 119 from 2011 to 2017, increasing by 116 per cent. UNICEF focused increasingly on children's right to participate in justice proceedings and provided support for implementation of the amended Family Law of 2017.

The number of children in institutional care declined by 10 per cent in 2018, and preventive and alternative family- and community-based services were further expanded. Deinstitutionalization of children with disabilities proceeded slowly. Approximately two-thirds of children residing in state care were children with disabilities (105 out of 157 children). Intensified efforts are urgently needed to develop non-kinship foster care and alternative care, and further increase support services for these children and their families.

The number of children with disabilities attending primary and lower-secondary school increased more than tenfold between 2009 and 2018 (from 247 to 2,323), a result of meaningful government steps toward inclusive education. Remaining challenges include improving the quality of education services and support provided to children with disabilities and boosting their very low enrolment in preschool and upper-secondary education.

Extensive efforts by UNICEF and national partners resulted in greatly increased preschool enrolment, from 52 per cent in the 2013/14 academic year to approximately 70 per cent in 2017/18. In municipalities in the North, where enrolment was lowest due to poverty and social exclusion, preschool coverage increased from 31.9 per cent in 2013/14 to 56.65 per cent in 2017/18. Increased focus is needed on quality and inclusiveness.

The quality of primary education in Montenegro also demands greater attention. According to 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment results, compared to their Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development peers, the academic achievement of Montenegrin 15-year-olds lagged behind by 1.5 school years.

Roma and Egyptian children in Montenegro were affected by multiple deprivations stemming from poverty and discrimination. While their numbers increased (to 1,799) in primary education, approximately 10 times fewer were enrolled in either preschool or secondary education. This poses a serious challenge to both success in lower primary and the acquisition of skills for future success. The low secondary enrolment suggests that a significant number of Roma and Egyptian children are not completing compulsory education.

Child marriage also affected those populations. According to the 2013 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 28.1 per cent of Roma girls and 16.5 per cent of Roma boys aged 15 to 19 were married or in a union (compared to 2.4 per cent of girls and 0.4 per cent of boys in the general population). The survey also reported high levels of acceptance of domestic violence. A 2017 study on preventing child marriage in Montenegro by the nongovernmental organization Centre for Roma Initiatives, conducted with UNICEF and European Union support, pointed to several obstacles to change. These included a lack of a clear definition and limited data on child marriage; insufficient inter-sectoral coordination; limited capacity to apply human rights-based approaches and lack of community-based initiatives to address social norms.

Firm data was lacking on the number of children in street situations. The Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2018 noted that a comprehensive strategy that addresses root causes and involves coordinated action by all duty-bearers is needed to improve the lives of those children.

Low breastfeeding and immunization rates presented serious challenges for early childhood development in Montenegro. The 2013 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey showed that overall, only 16.8 per cent of children aged 0-5 months were exclusively breastfed, compared to the 41 per cent global average. Rates were lower (14.3 per cent) in Roma settlements. Based on UNICEF/World Health Organization data on immunization and communicable diseases, coverage for the first dose of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine was only 55.1 per cent in 2017. Parents, especially those from disadvantaged populations, need information and support on how best to care for and promote the development of their young children. Montenegro's health sector was well placed to improve young child well-being, but the potential role of home visiting services in promoting child health, development and well-being was underutilized. Following an assessment of the home visiting system conducted in 2017 with UNICEF support, the Ministry of Health decided to strengthen the capacity of home visiting nurses on early childhood development. The first training-of-trainers took place in 2018. Training will be intensified in 2019.

Adolescents accounted for approximately 14 per cent of Montenegro's population, but received insufficient attention as a group. During consultations supported by UNICEF in 2018, adolescents highlighted key challenges, including: poor quality education, lack of understanding by adults and peers, anxiety and identity search, disrespect/violation of their rights and lack of civic participation and employment opportunities. Those challenges lead to apathy and lack of civic engagement, school drop-out and difficulties in the school-to-work transition.

More than 16 per cent of adolescents and youth aged 15–24 were not in school, employed or receiving training. With strong advocacy and support from UNICEF, the Government gradually increased support for skills development and empowerment for that age group. In 2018 the Ministry of Sports tripled its 2017 budget for supporting youth activities. It will be renamed the Ministry of Sports and Youth in 2019.

Changes in Montenegro's social, political and economic context

Although the overall context in Montenegro was stable in 2018, the socio-economic situation remained fragile, underscored by high rates of poverty and social exclusion. Continued shortcomings in the education and health sectors negatively impacted Montenegro's human capital development, as highlighted in the World Bank Human Capital Index from October 2018. Children born in Montenegro will reach only 62 per cent of their productive potential as adults. This highlights the need for continued advances in poverty reduction and human capital development.

In 2018 the Government of Montenegro continued to pursue reforms tied to three interlinked national priorities: advancing accession to the European Union, boosting macro-economic and fiscal reforms and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Fulfilling the rights of all children in Montenegro, especially those affected by poverty, adversity and exclusion, is at the core of those reform efforts. The UNICEF-Government of Montenegro

Country Programme of Cooperation 2017-2021, with its strong focus on 'leaving no child behind', makes a significant contribution to advancing Montenegro's national priorities.

In 2018 Montenegro underwent review by several UN treaty bodies, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child Committee. That Committee commended the country for its significant progress, but pointed to continued shortcomings affecting, in particular, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, children with disabilities, children in street situations and asylum-seeking and refugee children. The Government took initial steps to address those issues through a new strategy for the realization of child rights, including a costed action plan and a monitoring framework, which was under development at year end, with UNICEF support.

Global/regional events and trends impacting on the national context

European Union (EU) accession continued to be the main driving force behind Montenegro's reform efforts. The 2018 EU Enlargement Report commended Montenegro for further aligning its legislation with EU standards, but noted the need for further efforts to effectively protect human rights. The report also underlined that the Roma minority remained a highly vulnerable and discriminated community, and that gender-based violence and violence against children presented ongoing concerns.

The new EU Western Balkans Strategy and the Sofia Declaration of the EU-Western Balkans Summit in May 2018 presented an opportunity for Montenegro to gain increased support for its reforms. Six new flagship initiatives (rule of law, security and migration, socio-economic development, transport, energy and connectivity, digital agenda, reconciliation and good relations among neighbours) strengthened the 'social dimension' of the EU accession process and highlighted the role of adolescents and young people in relation to education, employability, mobility and reconciliation.

Montenegro continued its efforts to meet the ambitious Agenda 2030 objectives in 2018. The Government, together with UNICEF, other UN agencies and the EU Delegation, joined forces to map linkages, synergies and gaps between the 2030 Agenda and the EU accession process, as part of the mapping, acceleration and policy support process (MAPS) for SDG localization. The process revealed strong synergies between the EU accession and SDG agendas, as well as significant gaps. Some 35 per cent of SDG targets are not addressed by the accession process, which means Montenegro will need to accelerate its momentum on the SDGs.

Sub-regional humanitarian crises and migration

Montenegro has remained largely outside the main migration route to European Union countries, but in 2018 it did witness an increase in the number of migrants and asylum seekers transiting through its territory. The International Organization for Migration reported that a total of 4,645 new arrivals had been registered by Montenegro authorities in 2018, of whom 7 per cent were children. Migrant children faced challenges due to language barriers, limited educational opportunities and lack of adequate guardianship arrangements. Although the Government, International Organization for Migration and UN High Commission for Refugees provided basic support, Montenegro needs to strengthen its capacity to cope with sudden increases in migration-related pressures. The country made progress toward improving its legal framework, and capacities related to prevention of gender-based violence were strengthened.

Operational environment

UNICEF continued to enjoy strong support from the Government, which recognizes the agency's important contribution to ongoing national reform efforts. Public perception of UNICEF was also very positive. Diminishing donor attention and assistance and the country's small market for private sector investment presented constraints for UNICEF's ability to mobilize resources, while also motivating the search for new, innovative models for leveraging partnerships and mobilizing resources for children.

Leveraging partnerships to deliver results and mobilize resources for children

In 2018 UNICEF maintained strong partnerships with key government ministries and began to engage with the Ministry of Finance (on child-responsive budgeting) and Ministry of Public Administration (on cross-sectoral collaboration). UNICEF also strengthened ties with the Institute of Public Health and the Agency for Electronic Media.

New partnerships were established with civil society organization and academic institutions, including Montenegro's Association of Youth with Disabilities and High School Students Union, the University of Donja Gorica (on early childhood development policy and research), and the Centre for Young Scientists (on young peoples' participation and research).

UNICEF maintained strong collaboration with the EU Delegation in 2018. Through inputs to EU Enlargement Reports UNICEF ensured that child rights remained a key benchmark in the EU accession process. New cooperation was established with the European Training Foundation (for vocational education) and the sub-regional Youth Cooperation Office (for young people's skills development).

UNICEF continued to work closely with other UN agencies in result areas of the UN Development Assistance Framework 2017-2021. As a convener of the UN task team on adolescents and youth, UNICEF led preparations for a new biennial action plan for the joint UN youth programme in Montenegro. UN agencies also jointly mobilized resources for a new, multi-country youth programme ('Dialogue for the Future') to foster reconciliation and social cohesion in and between countries in the sub-region.

Guided by its 2017–2021 resource mobilization strategy and supported by regional and global initiatives, UNICEF Montenegro continued to mobilize and leverage funds for children, promoting private and public sector partnerships and cooperation with regional financial institutions. UNICEF's adolescent empowerment programme was supported by ING, a global bank, and was extended for another two years. Through a new private sector partnership with Telenor, digital literacy and pedagogy were promoted in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sapienza University. Early childhood development for Roma children will be promoted in 2019 with funds from the Austrian Development Agency. Access to justice interventions will be supported by the Norwegian Government. The European Union remained a key donor. In 2018 it supported UNICEF Montenegro's work on violence and children with disabilities. Cooperation on early childhood development is being discussed for 2019. A new, innovative partnership with the Council of Europe Development Bank was being finalized to support early childhood education.

In 2018 UNICEF cooperation with government authorities at the national and local levels, civil society organizations, regional and international organizations and development partners contributed to important results for children in Montenegro and to achievement of key global and regional goals.

Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

Maternal and child health/early childhood development

In 2018 UNICEF provided critical evidence to the Ministry of Health that led to reform of home visiting services. UNICEF also supported steps by national and local counterparts to systematically strengthen capacities of home visiting professionals to provide quality, inclusive services for children and their families.

A roadmap for enhancing home visiting services, including a proposed model and budget, was developed by representatives of the health sector with support from UNICEF in 2018. The roadmap addresses key recommendations identified by an assessment of the home visiting/patronage nurse service conducted in 2017, with support from UNICEF, and presented to the Ministry of Health in 2018. Findings showed that in 2016 patronage nurses delivered just over half of the maternal and child health preventive services foreseen, and only one-quarter of foreseen visits to women who were pregnant. This demonstrated the need to improve the home visitation system, including by strengthening capacities of patronage nurses on quality preventative early childhood care.

UNICEF supported Montenegro's largest primary health centre to conduct a training needs assessment of patronage nurses working on maternal-child health, which identified priority topics for capacity development. Following an agreement with the Ministry of Health, a multi-disciplinary pool of trainers was created, consisting of 24 professionals from across the country. The first national training of trainers took place in December 2018, with UNICEF support, creating a robust resource for strengthening the capacity of patronage nurses in years to come. The training sought to enhance quality, preventative services for mothers, families and young children, using the regional home visiting resource module Supporting Families for Nurturing Care.

Goal area 2: Every child learns

Based on evidence gathered with UNICEF support, a comprehensive set of reform initiatives took place in 2018 both at the policy and programmatic levels to improve education system quality and inclusiveness. UNICEF Montenegro focused on three main areas: early child education and care, inclusive education and quality of education and skills development. Key results achieved in each of the three areas were:

Early childhood education and care

The Evaluation of Montenegro Early Childhood Education Investment Case (2017) served as a powerful advocacy tool for increasing national resources and leveraging external funding to expand services. Enrolment of children aged 3-6 in preschool education increased from 52 per cent in the 2013/14 academic year to approximately 70 per cent in 2017/18. In Northern municipalities with the lowest enrolment rates, preschool coverage increased by 25 per cent compared to 2013/14.

In response to the evaluation findings, UNICEF supported the Government in 2018 to improve access to preschool education by the most vulnerable groups and strengthen service quality. Outreach preschool services for children in rural areas were expanded to four additional municipalities, bringing early childhood education coverage totals to 16 out of 23 municipalities nationwide. Through cooperation between the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Education, children living in state care, who previously attended preschool within institutions, attended mainstream kindergartens along with peers, resulting in increased social inclusion. Roma and Egyptian children in municipalities with the largest Roma and Egyptian populations were enrolled in regular preschool programmes, rather than the two-week preparatory preschool programme previously attended. UNICEF supported efforts by the Ministry of Education to strengthen the capacity of 70 kindergarten teachers to provide quality education and care adapted to children's specific needs.

To improve the quality of early childhood education and care, UNICEF supported the Government to strengthen the capacity of preschool teachers and staff to provide early intervention support to children with visual, physical and combined disabilities in 2016/2017. Following the positive feedback from participating preschool staff, in 2018 capacity-building seminars were held on early intervention and support to children with disabilities related to autism, covering 232 teachers in all kindergartens in Montenegro. Follow-up monitoring and support visits were conducted to confirm quality implementation.

To ensure a holistic approach to development of children with disabilities and their social inclusion from the earliest years, the 'Young Athletes' programme was expanded to include 11 new kindergarten units in 2018 (for a total of 21 kindergarten units in 11 municipalities) through cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Special Olympics and UNICEF. A Training of Trainers was conducted to ensure further dissemination of the programme and local-level sustainability. To establish a quality parenting support programme, teachers from one of the largest kindergartens in Montenegro were trained, along with their colleagues from the health and social welfare sectors and civil society groups, as part of the UNICEF/WHO-supported 'Parenting for Lifelong Health' programme. A rigorous evaluation of the pilot programme confirmed its effectiveness and recommended replication in other kindergartens. In December 2018 the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro called on the Government to secure funds for scaling up the programme to reach all municipalities.

Inclusive education

UNICEF's strong focus on inclusive education contributed to consistent increases in the number of children with disabilities enrolled in mainstream education over the last decade. In the 2017/18 academic year, 2,323 children with disabilities were attending regular schools, almost 10 times more than in 2009.

A key milestone in 2018 was the Government's development and adoption of a new inclusive education strategy for 2019-2025, with support from UNICEF. The strategy sets out the directions for further increasing the number of children with disabilities in mainstream schools and ensuring that they learn and progress along with their peers. It also places strong emphasis on improving inter-sectoral cooperation as a prerequisite for providing quality and diversified services to children with disabilities and their families at both local and national levels.

UNICEF supported several programmatic interventions introduced to improve inclusive education culture and practices in schools. Nine textbooks were adapted into digital accessible

information system (DAISY) format (in line with Universal Design for Learning principles). UNICEF-supported training built the capacity of teachers from 20 primary schools on how to use DAISY textbooks, thus expanding coverage to 70 of the country's largest schools.

Based on an analysis of reading skills of children aged 6-9, a set of recommendations was developed and capacity-building seminars were conducted, enabling 74 schools to apply effective teaching methods to improve the reading skills of all children, particularly those with learning difficulties.

With UNICEF support, the country's three resource centres (for children with visual and physical disabilities, speech and hearing impairments and disabilities across the autism spectrum) received the equipment and training needed to establish 'assistive technology units.' This enabled the centres to support efforts by mainstream schools to develop quality teaching and learning plans for children with disabilities.

Quality education and skills development

In 2018 UNICEF supported central educational institutions in Montenegro to consolidate and scale up a programme for developing socio-emotional skills among primary and secondary school students, now covering 47 primary and secondary schools. More than 15,500 children and adolescents benefited from the programme in 2018 through formal and non-formal education. This was 10 times as many as in 2015, when the programme was first introduced at four pilot schools.

The socio-emotional skills programme was adapted as a non-formal activity for the most vulnerable groups and was rolled out in eight of the poorest municipalities in the North of the country. UNICEF also supported the creation of a pool of 20 certified trainers and development of a handbook and guide for teachers.

To create an evidence-based, effective system for dropout prevention, the Montenegrin Education Information System was upgraded to include an early warning system that provides alerts on students at risk of drop-out. The system also includes a new feature: production of a School Profile Card that provides feedback on relevant data to schools and the system in a user-friendly format. Both initiatives were being piloted in 20 schools in late December 2018.

According to Programme for International Student Assessment results from 2006 through 2015, almost 50 per cent of Montenegrin students did not achieve minimum literacy levels in one of the three domains (mathematics, reading and science) after eight to nine years of compulsory education. Compared to their Organization for European Cooperation and Development (OECD) peers, the academic achievement of Montenegrin 15-year-olds lagged behind by 1.5 school years, highlighting the urgent need to improve the quality of education and enable the country's children and adolescents to acquire the skills and competencies required for success in school and the labour market. In response, the Ministry of Education and other central educational institutions, with support from UNICEF, developed the national Programme for International Student Assessment 2015 report and action plan for the period 2019–2023, setting out measures to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Montenegro schools. The plan is scheduled to be adopted in early 2019.

Goal area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

To ensure protection of children from violence and exploitation, in 2018 UNICEF Montenegro

focused on strengthening child rights coordination and monitoring systems; intensifying efforts to end violence against children; and ensuring equitable access to justice for all girls and boys, empowering them to seek redress for child rights violations.

UNICEF's efforts to prevent institutionalization and ensure transition to family and community-based care continued, and the number of children in institutional care decreased by 10 per cent. More than 50 per cent of the children in institutional care were children with disabilities, highlighting the urgent need to develop family- and community-based alternative care and support services for those children.

Child rights monitoring

The independent evaluation of the child rights monitoring system in Montenegro finalized in 2018 was widely shared by UNICEF. The evaluation highlighted the need to strengthen systematic monitoring of child rights, beyond data collection and periodic reporting to a proactive process of collecting, analysing and using data to address inequities in child rights realization and to ensure accountability of duty-bearers. The evaluation also called for professionals and the general public to recognize children as rights-holders.

By late 2018 implementation of child rights monitoring evaluation recommendations had already yielded some positive results, supported by strong UNICEF advocacy and technical assistance. A permanent Secretariat for the Council on Child Rights, staffed by four full-time civil servants, was set up to ensure that the Council could work effectively. The Secretariat is included in the organizational structure of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and will become operational in 2019. Intra-governmental discussions took place on funding to be allocated for implementation of activities outlined in the Council's action plan.

A costed strategy on realization of child rights was being developed under the guidance of the Council through a participatory approach involving multiple sectors and with meaningful child participation. The strategy takes into account the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols, the CRC Committee's concluding observations and the need to focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of children.

Action points pertaining to the Parliament of Montenegro were included in the 2018 action plan of the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights and Freedoms and were being implemented. The Parliament used its role as a key child rights monitoring stakeholder to question the Government on its child rights record and implementation of recommendations by the child rights monitoring evaluation.

Violence against children

Implementation of the national strategy on prevention and protection of children from violence (2017-2021), developed with UNICEF technical assistance, remained a government priority. The parenting for lifelong health programme, conceptualized in 2017, was tested and piloted in 2018 and reached 137 parents of children aged 2-9 in the four largest municipalities through kindergartens, health centres and nongovernmental organizations. This resulted in significant reductions in physical and emotional punishment and dysfunctional parenting and improvements in child and parent well-being, as shown in the pre- and post-assessments. The programme will be further scaled up in 2019/2020. The parent help line continued to provide counselling services for parents on non-violent child-rearing methods.

In 2018 UNICEF also supported national and local level counterparts to strengthen capacities

of professionals for timely identification, reporting, referral and protection of children at risk and/or exposed to violence. As a result, 42 paediatricians and medical nurses were trained to recognize child sexual abuse and 40 professionals from the Centres for Social Work benefited from a nationally accredited training programme on violence against children and women in family. The health sector developed a new draft protocol on health system response to cases of violence against children and adolescents, with technical assistance from the World Health Organization and UNICEF, which is expected to be finalized in 2019. UNICEF also continued to support the national network of nine non-governmental organizations to monitor child protection from violence as part of the regional EU-funded initiative 'Protecting children from violence and promoting social inclusion of children with disabilities in Western Balkans and Turkey.'

To fill the data gap on violence against children, data from all sectors on equitable access to justice were mapped. A representative of the National Statistical Office became a member of the international Inter-Agency Expert Group on Data on Violence Against Children to support the review and adoption of Guidelines for the Production of Data on Violence against Children. The Expert Group aims to set standards for measuring violence against children and enhance local capacity for the collection, analysis and use of data.

UNICEF continued to support the NGO-run national parent line, which provided telephone counselling services on approximately 500 occasions since its launch in February 2017. The parent line was licensed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in late 2018 and is expected to receive state funding. Based on this good practice, a child helpline was established as part of transformations at Mladost, the Children's Home, and was launched on 21 December 2018.

Justice for children

In 2018 UNICEF continued to support national counterparts to improve children's access to justice, including by increasing the capacity of judicial and other professionals to promote and apply child-friendly, gender-responsive justice in both civil and criminal law. The Ministry of Justice and other relevant partners promoted awareness on children as rights-holders among judicial and social work staff, lawyers and other professionals. UNICEF supported the separation of juveniles from adult offenders in a newly arranged separate building and provided educational and recreational equipment.

As part of Montenegro's justice reform, UNICEF provided support for effective implementation of newly adopted amendments to the national Family Law. UNICEF organized an inter-sectoral training on the law for more than 80 professionals (judges, social workers and defence attorneys), in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, Judicial Training Centre, Bar Chamber and Institute for Social and Child Protection of Montenegro. The training focused on child participation in justice proceedings and determining the best interests of the child, and was accredited by the Judicial Training Centre and Bar Chamber. UNICEF and the Ministry of Justice offered specialized training for 17 professionals licensed as support persons to a child in court proceedings, who ensure that the best interests of the child are respected in family law-related cases. The Ministry created a register of trained and licensed support persons.

UNICEF also supported government efforts to create preconditions for the application of child-friendly hearing procedures, through development of a new 'Study on Modalities for Creation of Child-Friendly Spaces in the Justice System of Montenegro.' The study suggests options for establishing child-friendly spaces in Montenegro's judiciary based on international standards, comparative experience and practice and national legislation. A roadmap for implementation,

with concrete actions and timelines for multi-year implementation, was developed and validated by an inter-sectoral group of partners.

UNICEF provided support to the Centre for Mediation, which developed a handbook on victim/offender mediation for juveniles in conflict with the law to ensure uniform procedures across the country. With UNICEF support, professionals at the Institute for Execution of Criminal Sanctions were equipped with specific skills and techniques for working with juveniles in conflict with the law.

UNICEF also provided technical assistance for the development of a child-friendly page on the Ministry of Justice website to enable children to become more familiar with their rights during justice proceedings. Guidelines for the provision of free legal aid to children were developed under the leadership of the UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, with active participation by justice sector professionals and decision-makers from Montenegro. The guidelines were shared with the Ministry of Justice and Bar Chamber for further dissemination and follow up.

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

In 2018 UNICEF Montenegro continued to support partners to strengthen multi-sectoral, integrated systems to ensure that every child has an equitable chance to realize her/his rights. Strong focus was placed on improving access to quality social and child protection services, protecting rights of children with disabilities and adolescent development and empowerment. UNICEF also sought to mainstream gender equality in all of its programmes.

Social and child protection

In 2018 UNICEF Montenegro's key strategies on social and child protection were evidence generation and capacity building. A key milestone was the release by the National Statistical Office of new child poverty data for 2013-2017, based on EU- Survey on Income and Living Conditions data, with support from UNICEF. The data highlighted the extent of child poverty in the country: 40 per cent of children were at risk of poverty and 18 per cent lived in severely deprived households. The data also strengthened the argument that child poverty needs to be addressed as a key underlying reason for multiple overlapping deprivations affecting children in Montenegro.

A comprehensive analysis of the work of Centres for Social Work was completed in 2018. It called for improving the Centres' outreach functions and strengthening organizational capacities and the social service workforce, with a focus on increasing the number of professionals working directly with children and families. As part of systematic support for reform of the social and child protection sector by UNICEF, UNDP and the EU Delegation, the Ministry of Labour and Social Work and Institute for Social and Child Protection strengthened quality assurance of the social and child protection system. As a result, the number of licensed professionals increased from 12 in 2017 to 357 in 2018.

UNICEF also supported the Institute for Social and Child Protection to update its knowledge on the latest European Union policies in social and child protection, including opportunities to access EU funds, which led to the first joint proposal (with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia) for strengthening the countries' capacity to deliver counselling services for children and families.

To strengthen capacity within the social service workforce to apply human rights-based and culturally sensitive approaches to its work with Roma and Egyptian populations, UNICEF organized a series of trainings, in cooperation with the Institute for Social and Child Protection and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The aim was to increase the outreach and quality of work in the sector, to improve social and child protection services for Roma and Egyptian children and families and prevent statelessness, in line with the UNHCR-UNICEF statement on every child's right to nationality.

In 2018 UNICEF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Work initiated a comprehensive assessment of the social protection system to gather insights for optimizing the system and inform further reforms. Following an inception phase (desk review and 25 key informant interviews) to define the scope and modalities for a social protection system assessment, terms of reference for a full-scale assessment to be undertaken in 2019 were being prepared at year end. The study, once completed, will lead to the formulation of models for efficient and cost-effective design and implementation of social protection policy for children (cash transfers and services), for consideration by the Government.

Children with disabilities

Although progress was made in inclusive education and the number of support services increased, children with disabilities were still among the most vulnerable and socially excluded groups in Montenegro. They were overrepresented in state care institutions and very few attended preschool or secondary school or entered the labour market. Limited data on children with disabilities hampered policy and programme development. Only very limited publicly funded services were available for children with disabilities and their families.

Against this backdrop, an analysis of cross-sectoral responses and support to children with disabilities in Montenegro was commissioned in 2018 by UNICEF, at the request of the Council on Child Rights. The analysis confirmed serious shortcomings. The new evidence showed that multi-sectoral cooperation and capacities to provide quality and diversified support to children with disabilities and their caregivers were limited across relevant sectors (health, social welfare, justice and education). The lack of quality disaggregated and child-focused data remained a challenge for developing effective programmes and interventions for inclusion. The analysis provided recommendations for improving the policy and legal framework, definitions and terminology, data collection systems and cross-sectoral cooperation spanning early intervention, protection and rehabilitation of children with disabilities. It also called for improving the work of each sector, with the aim of strengthening the overall accountability framework. With guidance from the Council on Child Rights, the recommendations will be translated into an action plan for removing barriers preventing inclusion of children with disabilities.

UNICEF was asked by the Government in 2018 to strengthen capacities of health professionals in diagnosis and support of childhood autism. The first-ever training on administration of two internationally renowned diagnostic tools (ADOS and ADI-R) took place in Montenegro in September 2018. Some 30 health professionals from the National Centre for Autism and Developmental Disabilities and from local primary health care centres benefited from the training, which will enable them to design cost-effective interventions and support services for children with autism and their families.

Adolescent skills and empowerment

In 2018 UNICEF scaled up its adolescent and youth programmes and contributed to the new Youth Law, which is expected to be adopted in 2019. The total number of adolescents directly

or indirectly reached through the UNICEF-supported Youth Innovation Lab reached more than 30,000(35.1 per cent of all adolescents in Montenegro). The number of adolescents reached through UPSHIFT alone increased by 47.9 per cent compared to 2017. U-Report Western Balkans, the first UNICEF multi-country U-Report initiative, covering Montenegro, Kosovo (Note that all references to Kosovo in this report should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)) and Albania, was a new platform for seeking the views of adolescents and youth and allowing them to effect societal change. After seven months of operations, Montenegro had more than 3,500 registered active U-Reporters.

Montenegro was home to approximately 85,000 adolescent boys and girls, accounting for 13.8 per cent of the country's population. They were not widely recognized as a resource to be invested in or prioritized on the public policy agenda and were poorly served by the national education system (half of Montenegro's students scored below basic literacy levels). Since 2015 UNICEF has played a lead role in the joint UN youth empowerment programme to ensure that the most marginalized adolescent girls and boys gain the skills required for success in school and the labour market and are empowered to make informed decisions about their own lives.

At the policy level, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Sports (in charge of youth) in the development of a new Youth Law, which defines youth policy and youth work in Montenegro, regulates youth organizations and deals with youth issues at all levels. The law is expected to be adopted in 2019. UNICEF also provided technical assistance to support the development of an action plan for Montenegro's Youth Strategy (2017–2021).

Initiatives organized by the UNICEF-supported Youth Innovation Lab included UPSHIFT (a skills and mentoring programme for social change); Hackathon for Social Change (a workshop for designing digital solutions) and socio-emotional skills development workshops. Through those initiatives, UNICEF reached more than 14,000 adolescents and youth in 2018. Those programmes empowered young people, especially those from marginalized groups, by helping them gain social, emotional and cognitive skills for personal development and success in life. Since the programmes supported social innovation and social entrepreneurship, the wider community also indirectly benefited from the solutions developed.

In 2018 UNICEF also invested extensive efforts in raising awareness among health, education and other social system professionals on adolescence as a crucial phase of development and on enhancing their capacity to respond to the needs of adolescents, including through cross-sectoral cooperation. More than 100 professionals went through a series of six two-day seminars, developed following a 2017 capacity gap analysis of education, healthcare and social protection systems. The analysis highlighted a lack of knowledge about adolescent development among professionals in Montenegro, along with a lack of specific skills needed to provide adolescents with quality support.

In May 2018 youth and adolescents in Montenegro gained access to U-Report Western Balkans, a new participation tool that amplifies their voices and gives them a say on issues of importance to them. This was UNICEF's first multi-country U-Report initiative, developed as part of a cross-border collaboration to strengthen connectivity and social cohesion among adolescents in the Western Balkans. With a cost-effective digital platform (delivered through Viber, What's App and Facebook Messenger), U-Report is envisioned to serve as a tool for direct communication with youth and adolescents. It is an open platform that government institutions and nongovernmental organization partners can also use, but is primarily a way to

enable adolescents and youth to effect societal change on topics that matter to them.

Gender equality

UNICEF Montenegro continued to work on ending child marriage, in line with the priorities of the global Gender Action Plan. The research report on gaps and lessons learned in the country's response to child marriage, prepared in 2017 in partnership with the Roma Women's nongovernmental organization, continued to gain traction. The report was formally presented at a national event in February 2018, co-hosted by UNICEF and the Ministry of Interior. As of December 2018, close to 900 Roma and Egyptian adolescents (47 per cent girls) had benefited from interventions helping to strengthen their resilience and social-emotional skills through formal and informal education, which could potentially contribute to preventing child marriage. UNICEF also developed an internal roadmap for addressing child marriage in coming years.

UNICEF worked to mainstream gender norms and gender socialization into its work related to building adolescents' social and emotional skills. The non-formal education programme, which targeted 501 vulnerable and at-risk adolescent boys and girls, was enhanced to include a workshop on gender stereotypes. A handbook and guide developed for teachers incorporates a gender dimension through its selection of examples, games and activities, with a reach of nearly 15,000 students (approximately 14 per cent of children aged 6-18 in Montenegro). In the health sector, the national training of trainers for patronage nurses included a component on gender roles and gender socialization. Representatives from the Centres for Social Work, border control, asylum centres and UN agencies strengthened their capacity to prevent gender-based violence in emergencies at a UNICEF-supported sub-regional workshop in Belgrade in September 2018.

Cross-cutting – communication, advocacy and partnerships

UNICEF Montenegro developed an advocacy and communication strategy in 2018 to strengthen the impact of its work vis-à-vis policy makers and the broader public. Key advocacy areas included advancing child rights in the EU accession process, reducing inequity and poverty, promoting early childhood development and supporting adolescent skills, development and empowerment.

During 2018 more than 2,000 local media reports were generated as a result of UNICEF activities and media releases. The number of UNICEF Montenegro followers on Facebook doubled; on Instagram, it increased by 56 per cent; and on Twitter it increased by 17 per cent. A recent independent perception survey by IPSOS showed that one in two citizens spontaneously named UNICEF as the first UN agency that came to mind. Ninety-two per cent of citizens had heard of UNICEF and 91 per cent had a positive opinion.

The first nationally representative media barometer conducted in relation to Montenegro's children and parents was implemented within the 'Let's Choose What We Watch' media literacy campaign promoted by Montenegro's Agency for Electronic Media and UNICEF. It pointed to worrying developments. During the past 12 months most children and parents had not been to the theatre, a museum or the cinema, and more than 40 per cent of parents and 20 per cent of children had not read a single book (apart from school books for children). At the same time, on average, children aged 12–17 spent approximately eight hours a day in front of a screen. Half of the children surveyed expressed an interest in participating in the media or producing programmes for young people in Montenegro, and their parents supported this aspiration. The

campaign promoted media literacy among parents and children and, in cooperation with the Thomson Reuters Foundation, helped strengthen the capacity of journalists to report on child rights issues and produce quality media programmes with and about children.

A network of UNICEF volunteers ('Young Reporters') was created in 2018, amplifying the voices and perspective of children and young people on key social issues. Through social media, they reached more than 600,000 people in just a few months. Together with UNICEF Montenegro's National Goodwill Ambassador, they created a song and video to promote media literacy that reached more than 200,000 people on social media within the first week of its release.

The campaign's success, along with activities designed for improving digital literacy for every child, attracted considerable interest from the private sector, resulting in the mobilization of increased resources to communicate children's concerns and advocate for enhanced awareness of child rights.

World Children's Day was celebrated with a children's session of the National Parliament and a youth talk on bullying. The latter was organized as part of the global #End Violence campaign and resulted in extensive media coverage.

Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

The 2017–2021 UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation aims to support ongoing reforms in Montenegro through an integrated, holistic, evidence-based, result-oriented and multi-sectoral approach that focuses on key areas affecting child rights: health, childcare, social protection, education, participation, justice and finance. Particular attention is paid to strengthening institutional capacity in long-term strategic planning, evidence-based policymaking, child-focused budgeting and child rights monitoring. The key programme assumption is that the rights of all children in Montenegro will be progressively realized as more boys and girls benefit from quality, equitable and inclusive services and live in supportive family environments where they are better protected from adversity, exclusion and poverty.

Completion of the work plan for 2017–2018 presented an important opportunity to take stock of the first two years of country programme implementation and reflect on areas for adjustment and acceleration. For this reason, UNICEF Montenegro held an internal strategic moment of reflection in 2018 to discuss achievements, constraints and lessons learned, including whether the programme components and results framework remain relevant and whether change strategies have been effective for achieving results for children. In late 2018 UNICEF consulted with a widerange of government and institutional partners (including the Ministries of Health, Education, Labour and Social Welfare and Finance and the EU Chief Negotiators Office) on key results achieved during 2017 and 2018 and key priorities for cooperation during the next biennial workplan.

Relevance of programme components and results framework

An important conclusion from the strategic moment of reflection and partner consultations was that the UNICEF Country Programme Document programme components and results framework remained highly relevant in the context of the three interlinked national priorities being pursued by Montenegro (EU accession, the economic reform programme and the

national sustainable development strategy). Realizing the rights of all children in Montenegro, especially those affected by poverty, adversity and exclusion, remained at the core of those national reform efforts and, with its strong focus on 'leaving no child behind', the UNICEF Country Programme represents a significant contribution to advancing Montenegro's national aspirations.

Effectiveness of key change strategies ('what worked')

UNICEF Montenegro employed a number of change strategies to achieve results at scale for children that have thus far proven to be effective.

Institutional strengthening of national systems

As Montenegro continued to implement reforms to meet European Union accession requirements, UNICEF contributed to institutional strengthening of national systems. This was accomplished through technical assistance on evidence-based strategies and policies and upgrading sectoral information management systems. Capacity-building activities for professionals across different sectors to enhance coordination and strengthening of human rights-based and culturally sensitive approaches to working with vulnerable groups also contributed to that progress.

With technical assistance from UNICEF Montenegro, the Government strengthened the legal framework and evidence-based policy development to provide quality and equitable services, as well as to enhance awareness among professionals and the general public of children as rights-holders. Results of this work included: the new strategy for inclusive education, development of a new youth law (to be presented to the Parliament in 2019) and preparations for a 2019-2023 strategy on realization of child rights.

With enhanced capacities of professionals in various sectors, a number of multi-sectoral system responses were initiated that need to be further strengthened. Those include the provision quality of care to children and their families; prevention of family separation; protection of children from violence and ensuring the rights of children with disabilities and children from minority groups.

Harnessing the power of evidence (data and analysis)

Evidence-generation was one of the main strategies used in 2018 to build a stronger knowledge base for informed policymaking related to ongoing reforms in different sectors, and to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

An independent evaluation of Montenegro's Child Rights Monitoring system was completed. Its findings and recommendations were validated by national partners and implementation was underway, including involvement by children and adolescents in the preparation of a five-year strategy on realization of child rights, expected in 2019.

The child poverty snapshot based on data collected through the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions will enable the Government to assess the effectiveness of its development and social protection systems in responding to the needs of poor and vulnerable groups, especially children. The survey provides comparable data across EU member states and accession countries and fresh evidence for prioritizing responses to child poverty in all reforms linked to the EU accession process.

A number of research studies and analyses were developed in 2018 to assess the national system's performance and inform reforms and development of new policies on, for example: improved support for children with disabilities, enhancing the work of Centres for Social Work and identifying the training needs of patronage nurses to support families in nurturing care of young children.

A flagship evidence-gathering activity in 2018 was UNICEF's support to the National Statistical Office to carry out the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, the country's second-largest household survey. Survey data covered a sample of 7,000 households of the majority population and almost all Roma families living in settlements. For the first time, the survey also collected information on children with disabilities. The results, which will be available by mid-2019, will yield internationally comparable data on children and women and inform future evidence-based policymaking on children and monitoring implementation of the national sustainable development strategy.

Fostering innovation to empower adolescents

UNICEF continued to support the Youth Innovation Lab, which provides space and opportunity for young people, particularly the most marginalized, to practice innovation, co-create solutions to socio-economic challenges and build entrepreneurial skills. The Lab has added at least one programme per year on adolescent empowerment and participation. It runs UPSHIFT, Hackathon for Social Change, socio-emotional skills workshops in non-formal education environments and U-Report. UNICEF supported outreach to vulnerable adolescents, for example by including UPSHIFT teams from the North of the country, the region most affected by poverty, and by ensuring representation of adolescents from minority groups, such as Roma and Egyptians. Initiatives carried out by the Lab contributed to the generation of knowledge on adolescent empowerment at the global level.

Montenegro was selected as one of 16 countries to take part in the first 'Generation Unlimited Youth Challenge' global competition, which encourages youth participation and engagement. At the regional level, UNICEF Montenegro facilitated knowledge exchange and shared good practices on UPSHIFT and U-Report with UNICEF offices in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Ukraine.

Challenges ('what did not work')

Montenegro made considerable progress in recent years toward upgrading its legal and policy framework on human rights, including child rights, to meet the requirements for EU accession and fulfil its international human rights obligations. Implementation of the legal and policy framework in terms of quality, inclusive services for children and adolescents and an effective child rights monitoring system require greater attention and investment. The April 2018 EU Enlargement Report noted: 'On fundamental rights, Montenegro further aligned its legislation with EU standards. [...] Implementation of the legislation remains weak and institutional capacity on human rights needs to be increased.'

This 'implementation-gap' is common among societies in transition. It is driven by a complex set of inter-linked systemic and societal challenges, including lack of multi-sectoral coordination and limited institutional capacities; insufficient systematic planning, budgeting and monitoring of programmes; limited systematic collection, analysis and use of disaggregated data for evidence-based policy making; and persistent, negative or harmful social norms that constitute barriers to fulfilling child rights.

UNICEF Montenegro also faced constraints around resource mobilization. As an upper-middle-income country and front-runner in the EU accession process, Montenegro experienced decreasing levels of overseas development aid in recent years, which limited resource mobilization opportunities with public sector donor partners.

Lessons learned

A key lesson learned from implementation of the 2017–2018 workplan was that in order to tackle existing constraints, UNICEF’s country programme focus needs to be sharpened. The assumption is that by concentrating on cross-cutting priority areas, UNICEF and partners will be able to accelerate and scale-up programming to achieve results for children, especially the most vulnerable.

Given the cross-sectoral nature of the expected results for children and the need to engage with partners in a more integrated and holistic manner, UNICEF Montenegro decided to develop a cross-sectoral strategy to produce sustainable results in the lives of children. UNICEF took into consideration the facts that multiple, overlapping deprivations experienced by children cannot be addressed by any one sector alone and reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children requires holistic, multi-sectoral approaches. Accelerated progress is needed to reach the ambitious targets of the country programme and to support Montenegro to meet its EU accession goal and SDG commitments.

Child development needs to be prioritized as part of the national reform agenda in order to achieve sustainable results for children in Montenegro. Strengthening child development means that Montenegro will need to provide essential investments in human capital development, a key area of the economic reform programme. The April 2018 European Commission assessment of Montenegro’s 2017–2019 economic reform programme highlighted this as an area requiring further improvement, noting: ‘The key obstacle to growth and competitiveness remains the skills mismatch and weak inter-institutional cooperation between education and labour market [...]. Weak performance in basic education and low investments in teacher training and transversal skills affect performance in the later stages of education. This link with basic education is not acknowledged in the ERP.’

Given limited fiscal space and the Government’s commitment to reducing public debt, UNICEF will increasingly support authorities, including horizontal ministries such as the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Public Administration, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public spending and reallocation and redistribution of resources within the existing overall budgetary ceiling. The aim is to improve resource allocation, planning, targeting, coordination and monitoring of programmes to effectively meet the needs of vulnerable groups, especially children.

Key strategies for 2019-2020

The review of the 2017–2018 workplan and recent government consultations constituted a valuable learning exercise for UNICEF Montenegro and informed the development of the draft 2019–2020 workplan.

Cross-sectoral strategy for enhanced coordination and programming at scale

Based on the 2017–2021 Country Programme, four cross-cutting priority areas were identified:

early childhood development; adolescent and young people's skills and empowerment; safe, inclusive communities (protecting children from violence, adversity and exclusion, especially the most vulnerable and excluded groups) and child poverty reduction.

In consultation with Government partners, it was agreed that those four multi-sectoral priorities would be addressed in the new 2019–2020 workplan. Concerted efforts will be needed to make that vision a reality. Partnership is essential to achieving cross-sectoral priorities. On the positive side, as a result of multi-year efforts, national and local partners from the health, education and child and social protection sectors have acquired increased understanding of the importance of multi-sectoral cooperation, and there is growing support for integrated approaches to deal with the most disadvantaged children and families. But in reality, the new strategy exists in the sector-based working context of a public administration faced with major reforms, transitional issues and rigid work processes. Additional expected challenges include limited cooperation between Government and civil society actors and a highly politicized, risk-averse society. The strategy may encounter implementation challenges, as the public administration perceives itself as already overburdened with the demands of the EU accession agenda, including public administration reform. This means that UNICEF will need to integrate the cross-sectoral approach in the already substantial programme of cooperation, ensure inclusion of all stakeholders, delicately manage power imbalances (between state and non-state actors and partners at national and local levels) and ensure close monitoring to facilitate implementation.

Planning, budgeting and monitoring

Another key area for cooperation between the Government and UNICEF will be to ensure that child rights are placed at the core of the 2020–2021 Economic Reform Programme and ongoing public administration reform supported by the EU and other major donors. In response to requests from the Government, UNICEF will provide technical assistance for two major exercises in 2019–2020. UNICEF will support a comprehensive assessment of the social protection system to assess the extent to which social assistance and social and child protection services are responding to the needs of the poor and excluded. The assessment will help stakeholders to define a long-term vision for social protection with viable policy options that can be implemented within the existing fiscal space. UNICEF also will support an education sector analysis and plan, including support for resource mobilization, to strengthen institutional capacities for quality sector planning, budgeting, coordination and monitoring of education reforms. This will help the Government to develop a systemic and sustainable approach to reforms, mobilize additional resources, optimize public spending and ensure implementation.

Those efforts will be complemented by a sharper focus on child-responsive budgeting and public finance for children, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, to coincide with the introduction of programme budgeting in 2019, representing a major opportunity for ensuring that child rights are at the heart of the Economic Reform Programme.

Strengthening evidence

More and better disaggregated data is needed to identify gaps and measure progress toward 'leaving no child behind'. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey results will provide a wealth of new data on child well-being, including on Roma children and, for the first time, children with disabilities. The survey will inform implementation of EU accession reforms and the national strategy on sustainable development 2030, as well as the creation of future evidence-based policies relevant to children and families. Together with the child poverty data from the EU-

Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2013-2017, the survey will provide opportunities for UNICEF to support a comprehensive analysis of child poverty, including multi-dimensional poverty, as one of the key underlying causes of child rights violations.

Strengthening advocacy and communication for social change and leveraging partnerships for children

Continued advocacy and communication for social change and broad partnerships, including with children and adolescents, are needed to deliver results for children. By building on the 'young reporters' volunteer activities, UNICEF will further strengthen its communication for social change activities by harnessing the potential of children and youth as agents of change. With support from the Global Volunteer Office, UNICEF will introduce new volunteering activities in the education sector and in communities. Working closely with academic institutions, UNICEF will ensure that advocacy for children's rights is firmly anchored in economic arguments, including through a planned conference on fiscal and public administration imperatives for early childhood development. UNICEF will also further strengthen partnerships with international and regional financial institutions (the World Bank, Council of Europe Development Bank) and the private sector.

END/