Executive Summary

In 2016, children and adolescents, particularly the most vulnerable, in Tajikistan were affected by natural disasters and the current economic crisis that continues to impact the region and the country. The economy was negatively affected by the reduction in the volume of remittances and the depreciation of the currency.

The year also marked the appointment of the first Ombudsperson for Child Rights under the President’s Executive Office, the Government’s commitment to adhere to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the approval of a new National Development Strategy (2016–2030), which prioritizes early child learning and nutrition.

With its new, life-cycle-focused programme, UNICEF continued to work with national partners to deliver life-saving interventions while providing capacity building to boost sustainable national systems to benefit children and communities. With support from Japan, the Russian Federation and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and working closely with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) to procure essential integrated management of childhood illness drugs, vaccines and micronutrients, UNICEF Tajikistan contributed to more than 90 per cent immunization coverage for all antigens. A total of 210,720 children in 33 districts received sprinkles for 60 days every six months, and 95,749 pregnant women in 35 districts received iron and folic acid tablets. Efforts to strengthen the health system continued through leveraging technical assistance in a range of areas such as: definition and costing of the essential package for reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health; introducing a maternal and child health (MCH) handbook; and integrating paediatric AIDS into primary health care.

The campaign to promote early childhood education (ECE) was launched nationwide and featured a locally designed animation programme aimed at reaching 70 per cent of children 3–6 years of age. This animation is the product of a collaboration that took place over several years with the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), USAID and the Open Society Institute. UNICEF also continued to mobilize its partners through the local education group to advocate for inclusive education and mainstreaming of girls and boys with disabilities in education and for curriculum reform. UNICEF engaged actively in response to multiple small-scale disasters in 2016, while boosting the capacity of partners to improve preparedness with funding from the United Kingdom Department for International Development.

For children in the second decade of their lives, UNICEF supported the establishment of a technical working group to introduce mental health counselling as part of youth-friendly health services (YFHS) and in schools. Given the high youth suicide rates in Tajikistan, this represented an important breakthrough and will fill a critical gap in prevention and counselling. In Sughd Region, in the areas near the border with Kyrgyzstan, with funding from the Government of the United Kingdom and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), working with local authorities and a local non-governmental organization (NGO), the Association of Scientific and Technical Intelligentsia, 500 adolescent girls and boys benefited from life-skills learning and creative and practical opportunities to contribute to social cohesion and conflict prevention and to promote inter-ethnic dialogue.
UNICEF worked closely with development partners, such as the European Union, to work with the Government to finalize the draft National Social Protection Strategy. Through strategic partnerships and engagement with the World Bank and the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF supported monitoring of the impact of the economic crisis on child poverty, nutrition and food security. This monitoring has provided critical real-time data to boost social protection interventions to reach the most vulnerable children.

With the support of UNICEF Tajikistan and other partners, the Government completed and submitted its report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and to the Universal Periodic Review processes.

In 2016, UNICEF mobilized resources to boost evidence on child indicators for programming and policy advocacy. Working with the MoHSP and with funding from the World Bank, data were collected for the National Nutrition Survey. In partnership with Drexel University and with funding from the Russian Federation, national research was conducted on infant young child feeding (IYCF) practices. With funding from the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a knowledge, attitudes, practice survey was completed on perceptions related to integration and the rights of children and women with disabilities.

Challenges included vacancies in key governmental posts, the more complex decision-making process at the national level and the reshuffling of mandates within child protection entities (yet to be resolved), all of which caused delays in the implementation of some UNICEF programming in the areas of child protection and justice for children.

UNICEF participated actively in joint work planning with United Nations agencies and national partners while pro-actively tapping into joint resource mobilization opportunities.

**Humanitarian Assistance**

Tajikistan’s children are highly vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters, with frequent earthquakes and other disasters that result in significant damage to infrastructure and sometimes loss of life. According to the Government’s Committee on Emergency Situations and Civil Defence, the most frequent natural hazards in Tajikistan are mudflows (on average 80 per year), avalanches (32 per year), followed by small-scale earthquakes (26 per year) and floods (10 per year). Considering the frequency of disasters, Tajikistan requires technical and financial support from development partners to effectively and efficiently address the consequences of disasters and ensure linkages between emergency response and sustainable development.

In 2016, UNICEF Tajikistan played a pivotal role in the emergency response to three major disasters by providing critical response interventions in education; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); health; and child protection.

On 7 December 2015, a powerful earthquake with a magnitude of 7.2 on the Richter scale hit eastern Tajikistan, directly affecting more than 4,000 persons (652 displaced) and causing significant damage to infrastructure, including schools, in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO). When the emergency struck, the inter-agency Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team and the Government of Tajikistan jointly conducted a rapid needs assessment. Based on the results of the assessment, UNICEF provided critical relief and response activities, focusing on education, child protection and WASH, for earthquake-affected populations. A total of 3,303 affected persons received support (2,165 directly and 1,138 indirectly), including approximately 317 school-aged girls, 374 school-aged boys, 167 preschool girls and 218 preschool boys. In addition, 1,313 students in Rushan schools benefited from improved access to appropriately designed
Heavy rains in May 2016 resulted in flash floods and mudflows in eight districts countrywide. These affected some 5,500 people, mainly in Rudaki and Panjekent districts. A total of 140 houses were fully or partially damaged in the two districts. With the Government and other humanitarian actors, UNICEF Tajikistan addressed the most critical needs (WASH, health, food and non-food items) of the affected populations through a coordinated response.

UNICEF also coordinated the education response to the consequences of a 5.5 magnitude earthquake, which struck Rasht on 1 July 2016. The earthquake damaged more than 30 residential houses and education facilities in Rasht. UNICEF, the MoES, the Committee on Emergency Situations and local education authorities established temporary learning classes and provided basic school supplies to ensure continuity of education for children at local schools affected by the earthquake. As a result, temporary leaning classes in Rasht District served 203 children (96 boys and 107 girls).

With funding from the Department for International Development, UNICEF Tajikistan also significantly boosted its own and local partners’ humanitarian capacity, including capacity to respond to mega disasters and refugee influxes, with improved contingency planning. This work was facilitated through the recruitment of a solid emergency officer. As part of its emergency preparedness for medium- and large-scale disasters, UNICEF signed contingency partnership and cooperation agreements with key partners. These partnerships are intended to help key stakeholders to be better prepared for and respond to emergencies, while drawing on the unique comparative advantages and facilities that each partner brings to rapid response. This partnership will also increase collective capacity to support the Government in effective emergency response.

Within the Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team, UNICEF Tajikistan continued to serve as a ‘knowledge broker’ for children and ensured coordinated action in preparedness, response and early recovery. As sector lead for education and WASH, UNICEF continued to build the capacity of key stakeholders to more effectively contribute to disaster response and early recovery efforts. At the request of stakeholders to enhance preparedness and resilience in the education sector in Tajikistan, UNICEF Tajikistan and UNICEF Headquarters in New York conducted a capacity development workshop in June 2016 on education in emergencies for government partners and UNICEF staff in Tajikistan and in the Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) region.

In October 2016, UNICEF actively participated in a two-day table-top emergency simulation exercise organized by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team in cooperation with the Government of Tajikistan. The exercise led to the development of action points and recommendations to advance overall emergency response preparedness in Tajikistan.

In partnership with the MoES and funding from the European Union’s Disaster Preparedness programme of the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Office, UNICEF also started implementation of a disaster risk reduction (DRR) programme in the education sector with the development of a comprehensive school-based DRR model with the aim of building resilient schools and communities.

**Emerging Areas of Importance**

The current UNICEF Tajikistan Country Programme (2016–2020) is organized around the life-cycle approach.
**Accelerating early childhood development (ECD).** In its new National Development Strategy (2016–2030) and the related Mid-Term Development Strategy (2016–2020), the Government recognizes early childhood learning as one of the country’s development priorities. This is because despite progress made in ECE in recent years, more than 80 per cent of boys and girls still do not have access to ECE. Furthermore, despite sectoral efforts related to early childhood development (ECD), there is no mechanism or vision for cross-sectoral collaboration to achieve ECD results.

For UNICEF and development partners, ECD is an important area of cooperation. Access to early learning is an entry point that can boost inclusive quality education and contribute to reducing disparities, including related to gender. UNICEF has also successfully mobilized donors. ECD was recently identified as a joint priority area for development partners, a fact that bodes well both in terms of joint advocacy and for resource mobilization for scaling up interventions.

To date, under the Global Partnership for Education and with UNICEF coordination, 432 ECE centres were equipped with supplies, benefiting more than 10,800 children (including 4,860 girls) annually. The capacities of more than 850 teachers to deliver the ECE programme were improved, as were the capacities of more than 400 school administrators and school accountants on financial management, to ensure the efficient operation of ECE centres. ECE centres in cross-border areas with Kyrgyzstan are intended to become models for such spaces can be proactively used to promote dialogue and peace in diverse communities. A successful exchange visit in early 2016 among Kyrgyz and Tajik ECE practitioners in border areas and national partners was received well on both sides of the border. In fact, further similar cross-fertilization opportunities between early childhood practitioners from both countries were requested.

An animation series that is the fruit of years of collaboration between UNICEF, USAID, the Open Society Institute and the MoES was recently launched. Documentation of the ECE intervention, currently underway, will also provide evidence to refine the existing model. In addition, in regards to the health and nutrition of children, new evidence available from recent research on IYCF; progress on early identification and detection of disabilities; and progress on defining and costing of a reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health package will all help to boost existing systems and programming for ECD. Tapping into global and regional networks of expertise, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Tajik State Pedagogical University, invited a Fulbright Scholar to Tajikistan in December. She delivered high-level capacity building to a group of teachers and pedagogues from Central Asia and engaged in technical and policy discussions. She played an instrumental role in highlighting the importance of ECD and the need to establish a multisectoral platform to advance this agenda in the region. All the above developments in 2016 set the stage for the acceleration of ECD results in Tajikistan.

**The second decade of life.** Adolescent programming is another pillar of the new Country Programme. UNICEF is seizing opportunities to not only achieve results for and with adolescent boys and girls but to also promote their participation in the community and in society. In 2016, the UNICEF team mobilized efforts to build a solid foundation for the programme through evidence generation, bringing new models of engagement to the country such as the innovation lab, resource mobilization, adolescent engagement, reviewing existing legislation and conducting a desk review of existing data.

In 2016, UNICEF continued to implement the peacebuilding programming in Sughd in partnership with the MoES and two NGOs—the Association of Scientific and Technical Intelligentsia and Young Generation of Tajikistan—with the aim of building the resilience and life skills of young people, reaching more than 500 adolescent girls and boys. Mental health programming for adolescents will be launched in 2017 as part of the effort to enhance YFHS.
Efforts are ongoing to improve the quality of life for adolescents living with HIV. The latter programming aims to develop the skills of young people to provide and seek peer support as needed, while raising awareness of the need to address stigma. Tajikistan is a pilot country for the Adolescent Country Tracker initiative, and UNICEF collaborated with the CEE/CIS Regional Office and UNICEF Headquarters to select global indicators for measuring progress related to adolescent development and participation.

Summary Notes and Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAE</td>
<td>centres for additional education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEE/CIS</td>
<td>Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
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<td>CRPD</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</td>
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<td>DRR</td>
<td>disaster risk reduction</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>EMIS</td>
<td>Education Management Information System</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization</td>
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<td>GBAO</td>
<td>Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast</td>
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<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<td>MCH</td>
<td>maternal and child health</td>
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<td>MoES</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Science</td>
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<td>MoHSP</td>
<td>Ministry of Health and Social Protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>OCHA</td>
<td>Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>OHCHR</td>
<td>Office for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
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<td>PBF</td>
<td>Peacebuilding Fund</td>
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<td>PRIME</td>
<td>Plan for research, impact, monitoring and evaluation</td>
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<td>RKLA</td>
<td>regional knowledge and leadership area</td>
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<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<td>SUN</td>
<td>Scaling Up Nutrition</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNDSS</td>
<td>United Nations Department of Safety and Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>UN Women</td>
<td>United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>WASH</td>
<td>water, sanitation and hygiene</td>
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<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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<td>YFHS</td>
<td>youth-friendly health services</td>
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Capacity Development

Capacity development is an important cross-cutting strategy in the Country Programme. The range of capacity-building initiatives are highlighted under most strategies and under sectoral and cross-sectoral results.

Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

UNICEF and partners embarked on real-time monitoring of poverty to gauge the effects of the regional economic crisis that began in 2015 on the most vulnerable households and children and to inform advocacy, policy and programme response. To this effect, UNICEF joined two initiatives: the WFP Food Security Monitoring Survey (since 2015), where questions on child nutrition were included and regularly analysed, and the World Bank’s frequent Listen to Tajikistan Survey (since 2016), which now includes questions about child
poverty. With more data and survey results becoming available, UNICEF plans to develop policy briefs on current trends from early 2017.

To help generate baseline data to monitor the new Country Programme and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and to fill data gaps on children in the country, UNICEF invested in major new research initiatives in 2016. These included: a) formative research on IYCF, which will inform the IYCF strategy with a strong communication for development component to address stunting and other forms of child undernutrition; b) a National Nutrition Survey jointly funded by UNICEF and the World Bank; c) a knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and practices study on children and women with disabilities that will be used to design a strategy on communication for social change and an awareness-raising campaign on inclusion of children with disabilities.

The preliminary data on IYCF was disseminated and validated at a forum in July 2016 with major national and development partners. UNICEF has either participated in or led the development of policy briefs and communications related to child deprivation and poverty. These efforts galvanized support for nutrition and investment in ECD by both the Government and development partners. Both nutrition and ECE have been recognized as areas for development in the 2016–2030 National Development Strategy and 2016–2020 Mid-Term Development Strategy.

**Partnerships**

In 2016, UNICEF Tajikistan stepped up its efforts to deepen existing strategic partnerships to mobilize resources for children and test and forge new partnerships, including with the private sector. Opportunities for evidence generation helped to galvanize strategic in-country partners such as the World Bank, USAID and WFP around common advocacy messages. In a recent retreat, the Development Coordinating Council reiterated its commitment to working together to tackle stunting and support ECD and have been jointly advocating for social protection financing with the Government.

Dialogue and field visits with bilateral donors in the country have translated into greater investment in child programming by partners such as Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and USAID. Several ambassadors became child rights advocates, particularly to promote more investment in nutrition and early childhood. Partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency over several years was instrumental in moving forward the development and implementation of an MCH handbook at the national level. United Nations partnership modalities were also leveraged for results in areas such as human security, peacebuilding and advocacy related to people with disabilities.

UNICEF conducted successful advocacy with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria emergency response grant for the MoHSP to procure reagents for dried blood spot laboratory analysis on HIV within 48 hours of birth. This represents a breakthrough, given that early infant diagnosis in Tajikistan had been hampered by the absence of reagents for almost a year.

A partnership was established with the ‘PurNur’ media agency, a private sector marketing company. At their conference in November, UNICEF supported their efforts to highlight child rights in this year’s conference. Participants (businesses and entrepreneurs) heard about child rights and business principles and learned why and how to provide the highest level of protection to children through targeted marketing and advertising.
External Communication and Public Advocacy

UNICEF Tajikistan was one of the pilot countries for testing the new global communication strategy. In 2016, communications efforts led to online and offline opportunities for the media, children and the public to learn about issues affecting children, as well as relevant interventions and results.

In close collaboration with the Youth Initiative of Tajikistan, on the International Day of the Girl Child in October, UNICEF engaged the public with online and offline talks about the importance of girls’ education. The importance of peacebuilding and the role of every individual in this process was the topic of several events in areas neighbouring Kyrgyzstan as well as in GBAO, where adolescents’ creativity was engaged to develop multimedia advocacy messages.

In partnership with the State Television and Radio Committee, UNICEF brought together adolescents and youth studying at secondary and tertiary levels to talk about the SDGs, particularly related to quality inclusive education. A television programme entitled As I Am Young, commissioned for the World’s Largest Lesson and broadcast in September, raised the voices of youth demanding quality education for all children, particularly the most disadvantaged, including children with disabilities and those living in rural areas.

In recognition of the introduction of the Child Rights Syllabus for journalism schools, a workshop was held in November that gathered teachers from nine universities across the country to participate in dialogue on child-friendly media. The workshop was intended to ensure that teachers have all the tools needed to teach the course to students from journalism schools and contribute to creating child-friendly and responsible media in the country.

The UNICEF 70th anniversary celebration was the final event of the year culminating in national and international development partners coming together to celebrate for every child – hope - message.

South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation

As a member of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement, Tajikistan has committed to establishing a multisectoral platform to achieve positive nutrition results for girls and boys. As donor co-convener, UNICEF supported a range of national partners to participate in two exchange visits in 2016. In April, participation was facilitated in a workshop on financing to accelerate efforts to cost nutrition-related interventions and to report on nutrition-relevant budget allocations. Developing and costing the Common Results Framework and multisectoral plan of action are high priorities for 2017. Another UNICEF initiative, in partnership with USAID, was a study tour for SUN partners to Nepal. The exchange focused on multi-stakeholder engagement at central and decentralized levels; the development, implementation and monitoring processes for the Common Results Framework and a related costed Multisectoral Plan of Action for Nutrition; and the importance of integrated, comprehensive nutrition interventions.

In November 2016, during a study tour led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with the participation of UNICEF and the European Union, participants learned about the social protection system in Croatia. Visitors identified a few areas for possible adaptation for Tajikistan including: data collection and vulnerability identification; social protection service provision for persons with disabilities; poverty analysis and impact analysis of social transfers; fund allocation for social protection service provision and monitoring of programme implementation; and capacity development for social workers.
It was agreed that the MoHSP and partners will jointly develop a concept for local-level partnership in 2017. The concept will cover follow-up actions to transform social assistance at home units.

The cross-border peacebuilding initiative between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan offered several opportunities for exchange visits such as that among ECE practitioners highlighted earlier. The European Union’s Disaster Preparedness programme of the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Office funded another important exchange in December on sharing good practice on DRR in education between Tajikistan and Armenia.

**Identification and Promotion of Innovation**

Adolescent participation and development is a pillar of the new Country Programme (2016–2020). Working with and for adolescents opens opportunities to test innovative methods of engagement. In this vein, UNICEF Tajikistan reached out to UNICEF 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)) to learn about the Innovation Lab model that has been tested and tried there. A team from UNICEF Kosovo visited Tajikistan in the summer of 2016 and made presentations about their model and results to government officials, adolescent girls and boys and the UNICEF Tajikistan team. Following this visit, the MoES agreed to test the Innovation Lab model in two centres for additional education (CAEs) in Tajikistan. These centres are primarily for adolescents who have either dropped out of school or are at risk of dropping out, including those who may have come in contact with the law. By offering this platform in CAEs, UNICEF and partners are ensuring that the most vulnerable adolescent boys and girls are reached and can access technology and life-skill development opportunities.

Another opportunity for innovation was contributing to a global initiative launched by UNICEF Headquarters entitled Adolescent Country Tracker. As a pilot country for the initiative, UNICEF Tajikistan reached out to national partners to discuss and agree on priority adolescent-related indicators that can be tracked to measure progress on adolescent development. This led to agreement on a list of indicators. Given the lack of data on adolescents in Tajikistan, the team also conducted a feasibility assessment for conducting an adolescent study that would also incorporate a ‘foresight’ exercise with adolescents. If this process moves forward, it will offer an opportunity to engage adolescents in discussions about their future in a new and innovative way.

**Support to Integration and Cross-Sectoral Linkages**

As explained in other sections of this report, UNICEF Tajikistan is actively working with partners and stakeholders in three areas of work that require cross-sectoral collaboration and integration: 1) the SUN movement and its multisectoral platform; 2) ECD; and 3) adolescent programming.

UNICEF’s work for results for children with disabilities is also cross-sectoral, engaging health, nutrition, education, child protection and social protection.

In 2016, through joint programming with other United Nations agencies, cross-sectoral efforts were engaged in the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security-funded programme on human security in the Rasht Valley, along with UNDP, WFP, the United Nations Entity on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and through the PBF in Sughd Region of Tajikistan near the border with Kyrgyzstan with UNDP, UN Women, WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The latter initiative is a cross-border programme that
engages United Nations agencies and government partners across the two countries of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in conflict prevention efforts. With missions from the UNICEF CEE/CIS Regional Office on ECD and inclusion of children with disabilities, national partners were exposed to the latest emerging thinking and trends on these topics and discussed openings and opportunities for multisectoral collaboration in these areas.

**Service Delivery**

In 2016, UNICEF engaged in system strengthening to assist the Government of Tajikistan to improve its service delivery in the critical areas of vaccines and immunization. As part of the GAVI Alliance Partner’s Engagement Framework, UNICEF Tajikistan collaborated with the UNICEF Supply Division to assist with the assessment of available supply financing options for sustainable procurement of vaccines. UNICEF is assisting the Government of Tajikistan in its application to join the Vaccine Independence Initiative.

Since 2014, UNICEF Tajikistan has been working with the World Bank and the MoHSP on a performance-based financing (PBF) initiative for primary health care with a focus on MCH services. In 2016, in addition to providing technical assistance to the MoHSP in semi-annual independent data verification exercises, UNICEF supported the revision of the PBF manual and tools, incorporating lessons learned to date. Comparative analysis of the independent data verification results in the early phase of the initiative shows the promising effects of financial incentives to improve service coverage and quality of care. At the same time, it underlines the persistent challenges in the health system, such as inaccuracy in medical documentation and reporting, service provider capacity gaps regarding essential MCH interventions such as growth monitoring, promotion and counselling, and the unavailability of laboratory equipment, reagents and some other basic commodities.

**Human rights-based approach to cooperation**

In May 2016, Tajikistan reiterated its commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child by appointing the new Ombudsperson for Child Rights. This came after years of advocacy by UNICEF and partners. The next step will be concerted institutional capacity building to meet expectations for this important role.

Tajikistan participated in the Universal Periodic Review and submitted initial reports on the two Optional Protocols to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. These are important milestones for gauging compliance with and commitment to Tajikistan’s human rights conventions. UNICEF worked closely with the Government and the Office for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as well as other United Nations agencies, to ensure timely submission of quality reports.

UNICEF has also used every opportunity to advocate for the signing of the CRPD, in close cooperation with United Nations partners such as UNDP and the World Health Organization (WHO), in the context of the Joint Programme funded through the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As a follow-up to the Universal Periodic Review, the Government indicated its intention to sign the CRPD.

During the cross-border programme funded by the PBF, UNICEF assessed the functionality of the Ombudsperson complaint mechanism for children and submitted recommendations to the Ombudsperson for Child Rights on ways to improve access by children.

Children and adolescents living with HIV are among the most vulnerable children in Tajikistan and are at risk of stigma and exclusion. The project, ‘I Want to Say’, facilitated by the Guli Surkh NGO, assisted parents/caregivers of adolescents living with HIV to disclose their status and, together, to overcome stigma-related challenges at the community level. A
summer camp brought a group of adolescents together to brush up on life skills and connect with each other as potential leaders and for peer support. This effort received very positive feedback from participants, parents and the MoHSP. The results were shared at the Children’s HIV Association workshop supported by the CEE/CIS Regional Office in Odessa on 7–9 November 2016.

UNICEF continued to work closely with a range of local civil society organizations to provide support and services to children with disabilities, adolescent participation, and learning and protection, as part of a systematic approach to building the capacity of this important stakeholder group.

**Gender Equality**

Girls’ education remains a priority area in UNICEF Tajikistan’s new Country Programme, and, as such, UNICEF Tajikistan has joined the ‘Endgame’ Girls’ Education Initiative at the global level.

Girls’ education, as a priority area, is pursued through a range of interventions: 1) ensuring the availability and use of gender-disaggregated data across the years of schooling in the education management information system (EMIS); 2) maintaining a focus on promoting girls’ transition to secondary education, particularly in rural areas, where one third of girls continue to drop out of school upon completion of mandatory basic education; 3) advocacy to address social norms of a more traditional view of girls and their expected roles in society; and 4) providing equal opportunities and access to life-skills and innovative programming for adolescent girls.

Another important area of programming concerns adolescent health, particularly in HIV/AIDS prevention and a new focus on the promotion of mental health programming. The latter is particularly critical as suicide rates are high among adolescent girls in certain regions of Tajikistan. In this new area of programming, UNICEF will work closely with the MoHSP and MoES (its two main partners in mental health programming), as well as local NGOs, to ensure gender responsiveness through better understanding of the issues affecting adolescent girls and boys.

In 2016, with support and facilitation from the UNICEF CEE/CIS Regional Office, UNICEF Tajikistan conducted a gender programme review that was preceded by a desk review focusing on gender mainstreaming and the existence of evidence and analysis related to gaps and opportunities in gender-responsive programming in Tajikistan. This review culminated in the mainstreaming of gender across programmatic pillars, with each section committing to at least one area for the mainstreaming of gender, the establishment of a core group of gender focal points and a commitment to further build the capacity of staff on gender equality.

**Environmental Sustainability**

UNICEF Tajikistan has been actively practicing measures to reduce its environmental footprint, such as keeping lights off when leaving the premises even temporarily; using a shuttle instead of several cars for meetings and travel within and outside the city; using a car instead of a plane for remote travel when allowed by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS); and using videoconferencing instead of air travel to participate in out-of-country meetings when possible.

All of the office’s peripheral equipment, such as copy machines and printers, has been set to function in energy-saving mode, thus reducing electricity consumption. In August 2016, UNICEF Tajikistan conducted its second Environmental Footprint Assessment, and the
results were thoroughly compared with the results of the preceding year. The exercise showed a noticeable reduction in electricity consumption, paper and vehicle fuel as a result of the measures noted above. The comparison also revealed that some areas needed more deliberate measurement techniques (e.g. significant differences in water consumption). UNICEF Tajikistan is going to address this in its expected move to a new location in 2017.

UNICEF will actively explore climate change programming in Tajikistan in consultation with partners in 2017.

**Effective Leadership**

One of the highlights of 2016 was receiving and closing all audit recommendations. Thanks to this process, improvement measures were put in place to further strengthen effectiveness and efficiency practices in the office. One of the actions required by UNICEF Tajikistan concerned the business continuity plan update and related capacity building for the team supported by UNICEF Headquarters and the UNICEF CEE/CIS Regional Office.

The country management team met six times in 2016 and oversaw a) the annual management plan and priorities for 2016; b) the audit follow-up; c) revision of the table of authority and in-house committees; d) mandatory training on the harmonized approach to cash transfer (HAFT) and the related assurance plan; e) follow-up on the global staff survey; and f) monitoring of office performance in scorecard. The country management team also monitored implementation of the plan for research, impact, monitoring and evaluation (PRIME), the management response to evaluations, the gender action plan and the resource mobilization strategy. Four new field offices were established with four child rights monitors (United Nations volunteers modality).

The contract review committee met to review and recommend 22 cases for the Representative’s approval in 2016. Seven programme coordination meetings were held and focused on the review and update of the Early Warning Early Action system, PRIME, joint work planning with United Nations agencies, HACT assurance activities, fund utilization and thematic areas of programming. The Joint Consultative Committee met four times. Major issues included: a) organizing a retreat focused on diversity and inclusiveness; b) work-life-balance activities; c) utilization of staff welfare funds; and d) security orientation. The partnership and cooperation agreement review committee reviewed 13 cases for the Representative’s approval.

The following processes were reviewed internally, and briefings were organized for all staff: travel, supply and procurement, Virtual Integrated System of Information roles, supporting documents, internal controls, segregation of duties, HACT spot checks, Achieve and MyCase.

**Financial Resources Management**

With the beginning of the new Country Programme cycle, UNICEF Tajikistan took measures to boost HACT compliance and capacity on the team and also with partners. The range of activities included: a) simplified micro-assessments of two civil society organizations; b) three spot checks of two civil society organizations and one government implementing partner. With UNDP and UNFPA, UNICEF Tajikistan initiated and completed a HACT macro-assessment, and with UNDP, it retained Deloitte to undertake an internal control audit of the MoHSP. UNICEF Tajikistan continued to monitor direct cash transfers closely. As a result, the un-liquidated direct cash transfer balance above six and nine months was 0 per cent as of 29 November 2016. The UNICEF Tajikistan finance assistant and the Regional HACT specialist conducted HACT training for implementing partners, including for all UNICEF staff on spot checks.
As per the Global Shared Services Centre statistical report to the UNICEF Regional Office, direct cash transfers and temporary appointment payments were processed within two days, and payroll and bank reconciliations were processed on a timely basis.

Utilization of non-grant funds by the end of 2016 reached 99 per cent; other resources and other resources emergency expiring grants reached 100 per cent; and the institutional budget reached 100 per cent.

**Fundraising and Donor Relations**

During this first year of the Country Programme, UNICEF Tajikistan accelerated resource mobilization on multiple tracks and managed to secure 52 per cent of other resources funds for the entire programme cycle. Donor relations with locally based bilateral donors were expanded. Management used global missions to meet partners and advocate for resource mobilization with support from the CEE/CIS Regional Office, the UNICEF Public Partnerships Division and the UNICEF Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division. Collaboration with UNICEF Kyrgyzstan helped to mobilize a second round of funding from the Government of the United Kingdom for cross-border peace and resilience programming for the next four years.

Stronger partnerships with United Nations sister agencies locally led to the development of joint proposals to United Nations funding modalities and the European Union. Critical funding for early years in the areas of health and nutrition was secured through Japan, the Russian Federation and USAID. With the support of the CEE/CIS Regional Office, resources were mobilized from the Beckham Fund for engaging communities on the integration of children with disabilities. Meanwhile, ongoing conversations with the World Bank led to the mobilization of World Bank resources for the 2016 National Nutrition Survey.

While fund-raising with various donors and partners has been extremely successful, especially to fund health and nutrition programming and (to some extent) adolescent programming, fund-raising for child protection and education requires further concerted efforts. In these areas, as well as in HIV/AIDS, UNICEF Tajikistan continues to rely more heavily on global thematic funding.

UNICEF Tajikistan began documenting its results in 2016 and intends to continue this into 2017. An advocacy package introducing the new Country Programme, including advocacy messages, was prepared in 2016 and launched during UNICEF’s 70th anniversary celebration. In 2016, all donor reports were submitted on time. UNICEF Tajikistan was also among the UNICEF country offices that took part in the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network exercised in 2016.

**Evaluation and Research**

In early 2016, UNICEF Tajikistan received the final report of the 'Evaluation of UNICEF Tajikistan’s work in priority districts (2010-2015)' conducted in late 2015. This evaluation was reviewed by UNICEF Headquarters in New York and was rated as one of four outstanding good practice evaluations of 2015.

A management response to this evaluation was developed in early 2016 and closely monitored by the programme team and the country management team. The evaluation findings have already informed the development of a set of criteria for the selection of target districts in the new Country Programme. The evaluation has also informed the need to
develop a solid monitoring and evaluation framework for the selected districts to allow UNICEF Tajikistan to monitor and measure progress towards results.

UNICEF Tajikistan is also closely monitoring the management response to evaluations conducted in previous years.

UNICEF has invested in establishing baseline data for the new Country Programme. PRIME activities are on track for the most part with two important national surveys, one important national research project and an update to the situation analysis of universal salt iodization. UNICEF Tajikistan also followed up on critical monitoring and evaluation capacity-building efforts with a focus on data collection and analysis with the MoES in relation to EMIS data. With UNDP and the European Union, it has also supported the MoHSP’s newly established social policy analysis unit, which is mandated to boost the rigour of the Ministry’s social protection activities. Efforts are also underway to develop the capacity of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade by establishing a platform for storing and tracking local-level indicators.

**Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings**

In 2016, UNICEF Tajikistan continued to take measures to reduce transactional costs. It successfully implemented the following measures:

- Procuring non-refundable instead of full-fare air tickets, which saved UNICEF Tajikistan an estimated US$56,000;
- Extending 16 long-term agreements (LTAs) for core programme supplies and services (including four common United Nations LTAs) to increase business efficiency and reduce transaction costs;
- Timely travel planning and coordination, early booking, collecting travel options and rationally calculating travel days;
- Selecting low-cost venues for meetings and other events, using UNICEF Tajikistan’s conference room and government stakeholders’ conference facilities for small meetings;
- Saving on utility expenses, especially by turning off lights, air conditioning, computers, printers and other equipment when leaving the office;
- Outsourcing office cleaning services, which allowed UNICEF Tajikistan to save US$6,515;
- Rationalizing and prioritizing travels and outside missions.

**Supply Management**

The supply component of the Country Programme in 2016 amounted to US$3,692,676.61. The following table breaks this figure down further.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme supplies</td>
<td>US$2,813,031.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational supplies</td>
<td>US$19,742.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>US$859,902.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UNICEF Tajikistan continued to facilitate procurement services among the UNICEF Supply Division, the Government and United Nations agencies, including UNDP and UNFPA, as well as other projects funded by the World Bank.

In 2016, long-term agreements (LTAs) were extended for the following categories of common United Nations procurement practices related to services and supplies: vehicle repair and supply of spare parts, led by UNICEF; provision of printing services, led by UNICEF; supply of fuel, led by UNDP; and travel management services, led by UNDP.
UNICEF and interested United Nations partners retendered the invitation to bid for United Nations common premise relocation. It is expected that this process will be completed by the end of 2016.

A non-expendable property physical count was carried out once in August, and a physical warehouse count was carried out once in December 2016, without any discrepancies.

Sixteen LTAs were extended in 2016 for the provision of emergency supplies, translation services, and fuel and travel services. In regards to event management and organizing catering services, UNICEF Tajikistan announced an invitation of bids for services to establish LTAs in January 2017.

UNICEF Tajikistan continued to use two warehouses to store emergency supplies: Republican Medicine Procurement Centre warehouse for perishable items and the Committee on Emergency Situations warehouse for non-perishable supplies. The total value of supplies received in the warehouses was US$144,777.93, and the total value of supplies released from the warehouses was US$94,158.07. The current value of inventory is US$175,624.57.

Security for Staff and Premises
UNICEF Tajikistan continued to receive assistance from UNDSS on safety and security-related matters, including: zone warden and safety and security in the field trainings, which were organized by UNDSS in August and September, respectively; the defensive driving training, which was conducted by UNDSS for all drivers in October; a radio check, which was carried out every week for Security Management Team members, agency security focal points and wardens; security briefings, which were conducted for all visitors (staff and consultants) within five working days of arrival; and regular security updates, including daily updates on road conditions, which were received from UNDSS.

Two measures were taken to enhance the office's compliance with the Minimum Operating Security Standards: 1) obsolete fire extinguishers were replaced with new ones; and 2) the access control system was maintained.

UNICEF Tajikistan updated the business continuity plan following a drill that helped the office prepare its After Action Review Report. Management and focal points reviewed and updated the Tajikistan's Early Warning Early Action pages in June. The threat levels in Tajikistan did not change in 2016. However, UNDSS established individual threat levels for each of the four regions in Tajikistan. Key actions and preparedness activities were discussed during programme and management review meetings and will continue to be incorporated into rolling workplans.

An in-house risk control self-assessment exercise was carried out in June. A working group consisting of management, programme and operations colleagues reviewed and updated major institutional, programme and operations risks to UNICEF Tajikistan.

In August, the business continuity focal point conducted the ‘Organizational Resilience Management System and Business Continuity Workshop’ for all critical staff. The focal point also supported a review of the business continuity plan and developed recommendations to strengthen the mainstreaming of the plan in regard to several scenarios.

Human Resources
In 2016, with the start of the new Country Programme, UNICEF Tajikistan focused on completing eight fixed-term and temporary appointment recruitments, and one recruitment
was underway at the time of reporting. In partnership with the United Nations Volunteers programme, three child rights field monitors were recruited for Khujand, Khorog and Rasht field offices, and a fourth recruitment is in progress for Kurgan-Tappe. The year marked the appointment and promotion of one national specialist from Tajikistan to an international post abroad, while UNICEF Tajikistan recruited two national specialists from other country offices to fill posts in Tajikistan as international professionals.

All staff members completed their 2015 PAS and 97 per cent of staff completed their performance planning for 2016 using the new platform, ‘ACHIEVE’.

Following the training plan and priorities, various training events were conducted, including on HACT and FACE form, as well as business continuity.

The programme team also had opportunities to learn about the integration of children with disabilities into programming, as well as gender mainstreaming and education in emergencies through regional and global mission visits to UNICEF Tajikistan. The Agora online platform was actively used by staff to identify various learning opportunities. In 2016, UNICEF Tajikistan extended support to and received support from other country offices through the stretch assignment modality. These exchanges were with Afghanistan, Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Pakistan and the CEE/CIS Regional Office in Geneva.

In response to the priorities identified in the global staff survey, UNICEF Tajikistan is constantly working for staff development and work-life balance. A two-day staff retreat for team building was conducted in July 2016 to enhance team spirit and promote an inclusive and diverse work environment. UNICEF Tajikistan introduced weekly stand-up meetings for all staff to improve the flow of communication across teams.

**Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology**

UNICEF Tajikistan completed all information and communication technology-related tasks as planned. The office began to actively use cloud-based technologies such as Microsoft Office 365 applications. As a result, the staff significantly improved its mobility and productivity in terms of online collaboration and accessibility of business-critical data.

In response to the increasing demand for Internet bandwidth by cloud-based technologies, UNICEF Tajikistan doubled the speed of the office Internet connection. In addition, mobile service providers were revisited, and, under the new contract, staff have more minutes, text messages and data available per month.

To improve the overall productivity of the office, information technology hardware was upgraded for business-critical segments such as the Security Gateway, the satellite modem and the servers.

An additional meeting room was equipped with information technology and presentation facilities, as well as improved Wi-Fi coverage, to increase UNICEF Tajikistan’s capacity to use its own facilities optimally and efficiently for conferences.

Remote connectivity tools such as Citrix, virtual private network and mobile Internet modems were actively used throughout the year to improve staff mobility for delivering programme results.

In October, UNICEF Tajikistan conducted a Business Contingency Plan drill and developed and tested its Information Technology Disaster Recovery Plan. As a result, an After Action Report was developed with a set of recommendations to improve UNICEF Tajikistan’s
business continuity capacity, including the procurement of additional information and communication technology equipment.

Programme components from the Results Assessment Module

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 Programme effectiveness outcome

Analytical statement of progress:
In 2016, UNICEF Tajikistan established solid foundations for the new Country Programme cycle by reviewing and revising internal coordination systems, putting in place a matrix management system and thematic cross-sectoral results groups and mobilizing resources for children through advocacy and concerted partnership efforts.

OUTPUT 1 Programme coordination

Analytical statement of progress:
The analytical statement for this output has been merged with the output on planning, monitoring and evaluation. In 2016, as the first year of the Country Programme, solid foundations for the programme cycle were laid through evidence generation across sectors and coordination of successful resource mobilization efforts that raised 52 per cent of the funds required for the whole programme cycle, and partnerships were forged to advance results for children in Tajikistan. In addition, the programme team designed modalities for cross-sectoral collaboration in the areas of ECD, peacebuilding and working with children with disabilities to accelerate the achievement of results that require contributions from multiple sectors. Emergency preparedness and response was coordinated effectively while responding to a number of emergencies and small-scale disasters in Tajikistan. The team was also supported through provision of professional support in areas such as business continuity and HACT. The programme team met seven times during 2016 to discuss both programme and thematic issues, enhance programme monitoring and stay abreast of global and local developments. Donor reports were developed and submitted on time.

OUTPUT 2 External relations

Analytical statement of progress:
Details of external communications are captured under the output on advocacy.

OUTPUT 3 Programme planning and monitoring

Analytical statement of progress:
Positive partnership is in place with the Agency of Statistics under the President of Tajikistan. Further steps have been taken to enhance child rights data collection and management.

A roundtable was held with line ministries at the central level and three regional-level capacity-building workshops were conducted in GBAO, Sughd and Khatlon in the framework of the TransMonEE initiative. These sessions provided an opportunity to share information on data collection needs and gaps to follow up on an initiative that began in November 2015 for all commissions for child rights to maintain registry books. As not all commissions on child rights were complying with the requirements, the Agency of Statistics provided
technical feedback on how to maintain the registry. At the time of reporting, the TransMonEE analytical reports for 2015 were being finalized by the Agency of Statistics and work was underway on access to justice data—the new theme selected under TransMonEE for 2016.

The Agency of Statistics continues to maintain the TojikInfo database, the only platform that provides disaggregated data across various administrative divisions of Tajikistan on child rights indicators. UNICEF Tajikistan is making further effort to improve data disaggregation against a larger number of critical indicators processed through the TojikInfo platform. Despite a temporary setback to the establishment of TojikInfo within the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, efforts are underway to find the best approach to integrate TojikInfo within Ministry planning and monitoring systems to track and compare progress related to child rights indicators at the district level.

In partnership with USAID, discussions are underway for UNICEF to support the 2017 Demographics and Health Survey (DHS) efforts. Successful advocacy has led to the inclusion of a child discipline module in the DHS. In the context of UNDAF joint workplans, UNICEF Tajikistan has engaged with other United Nations agencies to strategize on the inclusion of the SDGs in the UNDAF results matrix and to support national capacity-building efforts for SDG monitoring in future years.

The capacity of UNICEF Tajikistan in child rights monitoring will be significantly improved in 2016 with the recruitment of four national United Nations volunteers as child rights monitors in four regions of the country.

UNICEF Tajikistan monitored the status of PRIME and the management response to evaluations. Two major research studies were completed in 2016, and a third study is in the data collection phase. One evaluation on a targeted district approach that was completed and reviewed by UNICEF Headquarters in early 2016 received an outstanding rating. The findings of this evaluation are informing UNICEF Tajikistan’s approach to selecting target districts and ensuring the availability of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework.

OUTPUT 4 Communications, advocacy and partnerships

Analytical statement of progress:
In 2016, the UNICEF Tajikistan communications section focused on integrating UNICEF’s global agenda into programme interventions to provide online and offline opportunities for the media and the public to learn about UNICEF activities and engage adolescents and youth in issues affecting their lives and futures.

A workshop entitled ‘Peace Starts from Us’, which brought adolescent boys and girls from areas neighbouring Kyrgyzstan together to learn how to make short films, created an inclusive platform for participants to better appreciate the value of dialogue and inter-ethnic exchange. A drawing and crafts competition with the same theme allowed children and adolescents in the remote GBAO to express their views on peace and tolerance in their communities.

In close collaboration with the Youth Initiative of Tajikistan, on the International Day of the Girl Child in October, UNICEF engaged the public with online and offline talks about the importance of girls’ education.

In partnership with the State Television and Radio Committee, UNICEF brought together adolescents and young people studying at secondary and tertiary levels to talk about the SDGs, particularly on topics related to quality inclusive education. A television programme entitled As I am Young, commissioned for the World’s Largest Lesson and broadcast in
October, raised the voices of youth demanding quality education for all children, particularly the most disadvantaged, including children with disabilities and those living in rural areas.

In recognition of the introduction of the Child Rights Syllabus for journalism schools, a workshop was held in November that gathered teachers from nine universities across the country to participate in dialogue around child-friendly media. The workshop was intended to ensure that teachers have all the tools they need to teach the course to students from journalism schools and contribute to creating child-friendly and responsible media in the country.

A comprehensive Communication Plan was designed for a nationwide campaign, Education Starts from Early Years, which reached all target groups during the official launch in the capital city and, through a mobile group, reached all regions in November and December. The campaign spread messages on the importance of early education and mobilized families and children to benefit from the first indigenously produced animated film, Sanduqchay Zulbivo, for children aged 3–7 years.

The workshop, ‘Photojournalism and Child Rights’, was held in May for students from the Tajik State University journalism faculty. The photos taken at the workshop were exhibited during UNICEF’s 70th anniversary celebrations in December.

A special event dedicated to UNICEF’s 70th anniversary focused on ‘for every child, hope’ gathered more than 200 partners to celebrate achievements and discuss children’s issues in Tajikistan. More than 1,500 people, including hundreds of children, attended the week-long event comprised of a photo exhibition and cultural programme prepared by youth for children. UNICEF’s anniversary and its contribution to Tajikistan during its 25 years of presence in the country was also celebrated offline, online through outdoor visibility campaigns.

OUTPUT 5 Cross-sectoral expenses

Analytical statement of progress:
Most of the results under this section are expanded on in detail under management results. The supply component of the Country Programme in 2016 amounted to US$3,692,676.61 out of which: US$2,813,031.72 was for programme supplies; US$19,742.89 was for operational supplies; and US$859,902.00 was for services.

UNICEF Tajikistan continued to facilitate procurement services between the UNICEF Supply Division, the Government and United Nations agencies such as UNDP, UNFPA, as well as other projects funded by the World Bank. LTAs were extended for the following categories of common United Nations procurement practices related to services and supplies: vehicle repair and supply of spare parts, led by UNICEF; provision of printing services, led by UNICEF; supply of fuel, led by UNDP; and travel management services, led by UNDP.

UNICEF and interested United Nations partners retendered the invitation to bid for the United Nations common premise relocation. It is expected that this process will be completed by the end of 2016. A non-expendable property physical count was carried out once in August, and the warehouse physical count was carried out once in December 2016, without any discrepancies. Sixteen LTAs were extended in 2016 for the provision of emergency supplies, translation services and fuel and travel services. In regards to event management and organizing catering services, the office announced invitations for bids for services to establish LTAs in January 2017.

UNICEF Tajikistan continued to use two warehouses to store emergency supplies: the
Republican Medicine Procurement Centre warehouse for perishable items and the Committee on Emergency Situations warehouse for non-perishable supplies. The total value of supplies received in the warehouse was US$144,777.93 and the total value of supplies released from the warehouse was US$94,158.07. The current value of inventory is US$175,624.57.

OUTCOME 2 More children, including the most marginalized, are surviving, healthy, well-nourished and developing to their full potential in their early years, with focus on the first 1,000 days

Analytical statement of progress:
In November 2016, the MoHSP reported a fall in neonatal, infant, child and maternal mortality. This reduction is consistent with United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation data over the past 10 years, which shows reductions in child and infant mortality between 2005 and 2015, from 65.2 to 44.8, and from 54.1 to 38.5 per 1,000 live births, respectively. However, mortality is still high, disparities by wealth and geographical locations continue, and progress on neonatal mortality reduction has been modest. The Government has committed to accelerating maternal, neonatal and child mortality reduction in the National Development Strategy 2030, which is aligned with the SDGs.

Poor MCH outcomes in Tajikistan relate to systematic health sector issues, including substantial shortfalls in state funding, aging infrastructure and outdated knowledge and skills among health workers, which affect access to and quality of care at all levels. In commencing the new Country Programme in 2016, UNICEF began supporting several important initiatives for system-level change, including defining and costing the essential package for reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health; introducing an MCH handbook to the health system; revising the Elimination of Mother-to-Child HIV Transmission Policy; and integrating paediatric AIDS into primary health care. This will support ongoing healthcare reform in Tajikistan to achieve the ultimate goal of strengthened primary health care and universal healthcare coverage. In addition, assessment exercises undertaken in 2016 on immunization supply chain data management and universal salt iodization will inform the design of future interventions for system strengthening.

The number of new HIV cases reported among children has increased at an alarming rate in recent years, from 11 in 2009 to 174 in 2015 and 63 in the first six months of 2016, with most being children aged 0–10. The introduction of national HIV testing criteria for children in 2011 contributed to improved case detection, which can explain the sharp increase in the number of new cases in this population group. However, monitoring conducted in 2016 showed that health managers and service providers in northern Tajikistan have little awareness of the testing criteria. Addressing this gap may signify increased detection of cases and hence the number of new cases reported among children in the near future. Successful advocacy by UNICEF and partners led the MoHSP to confirm, during a recent Joint Annual Review preparatory meeting, that strengthening elimination of mother-to-child HIV transmission programmes and paediatric AIDS services is one of the top priorities for 2017.

The fall in child mortality in Tajikistan does not mean that all children who survived will reach their full potential. Malnutrition is still widespread, with one quarter of children stunted and 10 per cent wasted (according to DHS 2012). Four per cent suffer from severe acute malnutrition, although, according to MoHSP service statistics, only 204 children were admitted for treatment in the first nine months of 2016. Multiple layers of capacity gaps and financial constraints compound the low coverage of treatment services. In 2016, UNICEF assisted the expansion of inpatient services for children with severe acute malnutrition with
complications from four therapeutic feeding centres to all 64 district hospitals, and efforts to introduce an outpatient therapeutic feeding programme are also underway.

One of the major challenges for nutrition programming is the absence of a nutrition surveillance system to track the nutritional status of the population. The Health Management Information System also does not capture many key international indicators of the nutritional status of women and children. In this context, to better calculate the prevalence rate of micronutrient deficiencies, conduct trend analysis and identify any regional disparities, in 2016, UNICEF, in collaboration with the World Bank and the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, supported the MoHSP to initiate a nationwide nutrition survey. The survey aimed to analyse the haemoglobin levels, iron status, vitamin A and D status, iodine deficiency and the nutritional status of children aged 6–59 months and women of reproductive age. Field data collection has been completed, and laboratory analysis will commence in January 2017. The new data, expected to be published by July 2017, will guide evidence-based decision-making and programme design to improve the nutritional status of children and women. The survey will also provide baseline values for key indicators to measure the progress of the National Development Strategy 2030 and its medium-term plan.

Although Tajikistan has achieved considerable progress in domestic food production, poverty-related food insecurity is still prevalent. The 2015 International Food Policy Research Institute’s Global Hunger Index for Tajikistan is alarming at 30.3, the fourth highest in Asia after Timor-Leste (40.7), Afghanistan (35.4) and Pakistan (33.9). Moreover, the current economic downturn may further exacerbate the situation. As such, monitoring and analysing trends and links between food security and nutrition status is critical in Tajikistan. For this reason, UNICEF collaborated with WFP to integrate child health and nutrition modules into the Food Security Monitoring System that WFP has been supporting in the country. The Monitoring System primarily looks into household members’ movement, income, access to education, household expenditure, agriculture and livestock, shocks and household coping strategies, household food consumption and the health and nutritional status of children under 5, twice a year. The last monitoring, conducted in May 2016, showed that low dietary diversity and inadequate meal frequency among young children remain big concerns and have deteriorated since the last survey in December 2015. UNICEF has used this and other data to monitor and galvanize resources and support to address child undernutrition in Tajikistan.

**OUTPUT 1** More pregnant women and children benefit from the Government’s increased, efficient, transparent and equitable budget allocation and utilization regarding maternal and child health and nutrition interventions

**Analytical statement of progress:**
Despite ongoing health financing reform, insufficient allocation of public finance and inefficiencies in public expenditure on health, nutrition and other aspects of ECD continue to be critical bottlenecks to early childhood survival and development.

In 2016, UNICEF’s support focused on the following: defining and costing the reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health service package; sustainable immunization financing; and performance-based financing for primary health care.

In 2014–2015, a review of the per capita financing formula for primary health care highlighted the lack of clear definition for the essential reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health service package. In this context, UNICEF engaged technical experts to support the MoHSP to define and cost the essential service package. By the end of 2016, in close consultation with national specialists and development partners, an initial list of
essential evidence-based interventions by different levels of health service delivery had been developed, along with a proposed methodology for costing the package. Once finalized in 2017, the costed package could inform future priority setting in the health sector and health financing discourse (including per capita financing and the basic benefits package), enhance the accountability framework for reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health services and potentially contribute to an increase in non-salary budgetary allocations for primary health care and reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health.

As part of the GAVI Alliance Partner’s Engagement Framework, UNICEF Tajikistan collaborated with the UNICEF Supply Division to assist with an assessment of available supply financing options for the sustainable procurement of vaccines. Following stakeholder consultation and readiness expressed by technical experts from the MoHSP and the Ministry of Finance to join the Vaccine Independent Initiative, UNICEF is assisting the Government in its application. Once joined, the Vaccine Independent Initiative will allow the Government to procure vaccines without advanced payment and help prevent vaccine stock-outs due to temporary delays in cash-flow disbursements.

Since 2014, UNICEF has been working with the World Bank and the MoHSP on a PBF initiative for primary health care, with a focus on MCH services. The initiative supports piloting of financial incentives for primary healthcare facilities in selected districts, based on performance against agreed quantitative and qualitative indicators, with a view to reducing informal payments and incentivizing primary healthcare workers for better service provision. In 2016, in addition to providing technical assistance to the MoHSP for twice-yearly independent data verification exercises, UNICEF supported the revision of the PBF manual and tools, incorporating lessons learned to date. Comparative analysis of independent data verification results in the early phase of the initiative showed the promising effects of financial incentives, with improvements in service coverage and the quality of care. At the same time, it highlights persistent challenges in the health system such as inaccuracy in medical documentation/reporting, service providers’ capacity gaps in essential MCH interventions such as growth monitoring and promotion/counselling, and the unavailability of laboratory equipment/reagents and some other basic commodities.

**OUTPUT 2** Caregivers and communities are supported to adopt healthy behaviours and appropriate nutrition and care practices for all children, including children with disabilities, HIV and tuberculosis, with special attention to the first 1,000 days

**Analytical statement of progress:**
Since 2014, UNICEF has supported the MoHSP to introduce an MCH handbook to educate mothers, fathers and families on childcare practices and record MCH status in the thousand critical days from conception to age 2. In 2016, UNICEF and the Japan International Cooperation Agency supported testing of the MCH handbook in five districts around the country.

To improve support for optimal family care practices by mothers and caregivers, a technical guide was developed for primary healthcare workers. During the testing, 7,877 pregnant women and mothers of infants under 1 year received the MCH handbook through 280 trained primary healthcare workers. The testing showed high acceptance from mothers and the feasibility of implementation within the existing primary healthcare system. MoHSP experts and managers also learned about how the MCH handbook can be used to ensure client-centred services and the continuum of care across time and location. The MoHSP recently decided to roll out the MCH handbook in 2017 with support from development partners. Once scaled up nationwide, the handbook, which will be distributed to every pregnant woman at the time of her first antenatal visit, would benefit 250,000 newborn children every year.
IYCF requires strengthening. Major gaps exist in Tajikistan, with only 20 per cent of children aged 6–23 months receiving optimal IYCF. In order to intervene effectively across diverse regions, ethnic and cultural groups, UNICEF and Drexel University assisted the MoHSP to research the drivers behind concerning nutrition statistics. Using multiple qualitative methods, the research pioneered in Tajikistan. It highlighted many challenges as well as positive aspects of family support and cultural values concerning IYCF. The findings will inform the design of a national IYCF strategy, which will include a strong Communication for Development component that UNICEF plans to support in 2017.

The formative research confirmed confusion about breastfeeding and initiating complementary feeding among caregivers and healthcare providers. Therefore, UNICEF supported the Republican Family Medicine Centre to enhance IYCF counselling capacity. Twenty family doctors from district Centre educational branches are now equipped to act as master trainers on IYCF counselling, and Centres incorporated IYCF modules into family medicine curricula for professional re-training of primary healthcare workers.

For exclusive breastfeeding promotion specifically, a communication campaign run by the MoHSP and UNICEF during World Breastfeeding Week reached more than 125,000 lactating mothers and 3,500 health workers through 10,000 copies of 'Breastfeeding is a Key for Sustainable Development' materials in all health facilities nationwide. Moreover, a media blitz also supported by WHO reached more than 60 per cent of the population.

To sustain efforts toward universal salt iodization in Tajikistan, UNICEF continued to support community mobilization with local NGOs. Enhanced community awareness and stakeholder accountability led to significant improvements in tests in 2015 and 2016. More households were using iodized salt in Rasht Valley (from 17 per cent to 59 per cent); more households were using iodized salt in eight districts of Sughd (from 26 per cent to 74 per cent); and more retailers were selling iodized salt in eight districts of the Districts of Republican Subordination (from 51 per cent to 74 per cent).

OUTPUT 3 Parents, caregivers and children demand and benefit from improved quality of maternal, newborn and child healthcare services, in accordance with international standards, including during emergencies

Analytical statement of progress:
In 2016, UNICEF, the German Development Agency, the NGO, LDS Charities, and USAID trained 150 MoHSP health professionals on essential baby care, helping babies breathe and helping mothers survive. After introducing and testing the programme, institutionalization efforts targeted 25 tutors at medical colleges and training institutions across Tajikistan.

UNICEF also supported capacity building on the following:
- Integrated management of common childhood illness for 30 paediatricians, neonatologists and primary healthcare workers in five remote and vulnerable districts in Rasht through computer-based training (the Illness Computerized Training Tool) to facilitate cost-efficient continuous medical education;
- The Birthweight Group and Age-at-Death Boxes for an Intervention and Evaluation System matrix for 130 oblast and district health managers to strengthen perinatal surveillance and facilitate systematic analysis and use of perinatal data for decision-making at district and oblast levels;
- Treatment of severe acute malnutrition for 85 doctors to support the expansion of facility-based severe acute malnutrition treatment services to all 64 district hospitals in Tajikistan;
• The comprehensive child-friendly paediatric AIDS service package for 20 primary healthcare specialists, supporting the integration of paediatric AIDS services into the primary healthcare system as part of healthcare reform;
• Infection control and prevention for staff of children’s hospitals in Dushanbe through the Illness Computerized Training Tool to reduce risks of nosocomial infection at MCH in-patient services. Ninety-two per cent of staff in selected hospital departments completed the course and thus acquired knowledge on infection control and prevention.

Along with capacity building of healthcare professionals, through regular resources and with support from Japan, the Russian Federation and USAID, UNICEF procured neonatal equipment, essential integrated management of childhood illness drugs, vaccines (reaching approximately 520,000 children), cold chain equipment and micronutrients (vitamin A, iron, folic acid and sprinkles). This contributed to more than 90 per cent immunization coverage for all antigens and 99 per cent coverage of children aged 6–59 months during the twice-yearly vitamin A campaign in June. Some 210,720 children in 33 of Tajikistan’s 64 districts received sprinkles for 60 days every six months, and 95,749 pregnant women in 35 districts received iron and folic acid tablets as part of their primary healthcare antenatal care.

Prior to approval of a revised national policy on the elimination of mother-to-child HIV transmission in October, UNICEF assisted a series of sub-national consultative meetings with key managers from MCH and SES. Under the revised policy, the MoHSP will optimize and rationally distribute restricted resources to help achieve the global 90-90-90 targets. More specifically, the policy features improved management and horizontal coordination with clearly defined responsibilities, a more cost-effective HIV testing algorithm, a procurement modality for HIV test kits for primary health care and an enhanced monitoring mechanism. A new clinical protocol based on Option B+ is also being finalized.

Finally, through analysis of national statistics on paediatric AIDS and evidence-based advocacy, UNICEF leveraged resources from a Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria emergency response grant for the MoHSP to procure reagents (to cover between 100 and 150 babies) for dried blood spot laboratory analysis on HIV within 48 hours of birth. This is a major breakthrough, as early infant diagnosis in Tajikistan had been hampered by the absence of reagents for almost one year.

**OUTPUT 4** Government’s capacity to coordinate and manage multisectoral nutrition and early childhood interventions is strengthened

**Analytical statement of progress:**

In 2016, at the Government’s request, UNICEF and USAID, the donor co-conveners for the SUN movement, supported a study tour to Nepal that offered a good model for engagement in SUN. Fifteen representatives of different ministries and organizations in Tajikistan took part. They learned good practices on multi-stakeholder engagement at both central and decentralized levels; the governance and financial mechanisms required for integrated and comprehensive interventions; and development, implementation and monitoring of the Common Results Framework and the costed Multisectoral Plan of Action for Nutrition. Lessons learned from both Tajikistan and Nepal were documented as a successful example of South-South collaboration.

In the spirit of SUN, UNICEF catalysed enhanced coordination among nutrition partners. With USAID, UNICEF convened the SUN Development Partners’ Network for the first time to ensure broader multisectoral donor coordination to support Tajikistan’s SUN agenda. UNICEF initiated and supported the MoHSP to organize the first-ever National Nutrition Forum on the theme, ‘nutrition is key for sustainable development’, with USAID, WFP and the German Development Agency. The forum brought together some 100 local and
international partners and practitioners, as well as media organizations, to renew promises to eradicate malnutrition among children in Tajikistan using a multisectoral approach. The participants concluded the forum with a resolution proposing steps to improve the nutritional status of women and children in Tajikistan.

In Tajikistan, of the four critical processes of the SUN movement, aligned programming (process 3) and financial tracking and resource mobilization (process 4) remain the biggest gaps to further SUN. In this context, UNICEF supported the SUN multisectoral platform to accelerate its efforts to report on nutrition-relevant budget allocations. The budget analysis exercise aimed to estimate total budgetary allocations relevant to nutrition across key sectors and to understand, with key ministries, departments and agencies, how investment can be made more effective and reach further. Tajikistan is not yet able to measure progress against clear financial targets due to lack of costing of required nutrition-related interventions. The earlier-mentioned work to define and cost the reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health service package, which includes nutrition interventions, as well as the development of the costed Common Results Framework and Multisectoral Plan of Action for Nutrition, will be instrumental to filling this gap.

UNICEF supported the MoHSP to initiate collaboration among various stakeholders to establish a functional service delivery system to improve the coverage and quality of early detection and intervention for children with developmental delays and disabilities. A multi-stakeholder governmental and non-governmental working group reviewed screening tools and instruments and adapted some for Tajikistan’s context. It mapped existing projects and resources at the community level that could support early detection and early intervention services. Once the service delivery model is finalized in 2017, selected districts will conduct pilot testing.

The DCC Food Security and Nutrition Cluster was instrumental in advocating with the Government to prioritize nutrition in the national agenda. UNICEF worked closely with the co-chairs of the Cluster—USAID and WFP—in this process. UNICEF also co-chaired the UNDAF Result Group 4 with WFP.

OUTCOME 3 All children have improved access to quality inclusive education from early learning to secondary education, particularly those who are most marginalized

Analytical statement of progress:

Children in Tajikistan, particularly those from poor households and rural areas, as well as children with disabilities, girls and ethnic minorities, continue to face several bottlenecks impeding their access to quality inclusive education. From the early years, only 12.4 per cent of young children (135,740 children) access ECE programmes, the lowest proportion in the region. Meanwhile, frequent natural disasters such as earthquakes, mudflows, landslides, floods and avalanches expose children to risks and threats hampering their right to overall well-being.

Enrolment rates in ECE programmes modelled by UNICEF have almost doubled in recent years. In addition, 6 per cent of ECE centres now, for the first time, assess learning outcomes of children to continuously improve the quality of service provision. Meanwhile, South-South cooperation on teacher preparation for ECE brought together pre-service teacher training providers from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to share learning and good practice. Additional important cross-country cooperation took place in the Ferghana Valley between national- and local-level education experts from the governments of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, academia and civil society. A social platform was established to discuss the prerequisites for a conducive learning environment for young
children, while also strengthening cross-cultural respect among children and families from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Although there is almost universal coverage of basic education (Grades 1–9), disaggregated data indicate that more than 70 per cent of children with disabilities do not enjoy their right to education. According to 2015–2016 EMIS data, 26 per cent of children with disabilities receive formal education, out of whom 40 per cent still attend special segregated schools. Children with disabilities are gradually mainstreaming into regular schools but without systematic support, such as teacher training and reasonable accommodation. A recent knowledge, attitude, practices and behaviour survey confirmed that social norms and beliefs significantly hinder inclusive education in Tajikistan.

UNICEF continued to advocate with and mobilize partners in regards to the inclusive education agenda from ECE through the entire education cycle. At a roundtable on children with disabilities in November, UNICEF called for the ratification of the CRPD.

UNICEF continued to systematically build the capacity of teachers in Tajikistan. Now 140 faculty of the Tajik State Pedagogical University and the Rasht Pedagogical Institute can apply active learning and innovative teaching techniques with future schoolteachers. Cohorts of teachers were also trained on inclusive education and student-centred approaches. A network of 60 teachers skilled on inclusive education was established in GBAO.

A persistent gap in the education sector is tackling the number of out-of-school children and high drop-out rates. To address this gap, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the MoES to upgrade the EMIS to generate evidence on dropouts and student absenteeism. School and district level authorities’ capacity was also enhanced to generate and use the data. To address bottlenecks linked to access and participation at the school level, the MoES was supported to develop and introduce an early warning system to identify children at risk of dropping out and take preventive action. In 2016, of 2,696 children (1,146 girls and 1,550 boys) identified as at risk of dropping out in 50 schools in targeted districts, only 0.7 per cent dropped out. This relatively low rate is due to close cooperation between school officials and parent-teacher associations.

While the rates of out-of-school girls in lower secondary have fallen from 9.1 to 6.2 per cent, their transition to upper secondary (non-compulsory) education is just 74 per cent. Since sociocultural barriers are a major bottleneck to their continuing education, UNICEF has worked to mobilize communities and schools in three districts to increase demand for girls’ enrolment in higher grades and support academic advancement. Adolescent peer groups have been activated and 96 per cent of girls in Grade 9 who pledged to continue their education after compulsory school are now continuing their studies in Grade 10. The transition rate for girls in target schools has increased by 10 percentage points on average.

In addition, UNICEF coordinated and responded to three major disasters (two earthquakes and floods) in GBAO and Rasht, which endangered the lives of children and their right to education. UNICEF helped provide access for 1,279 children (591 girls and 688 boys) to education through child-friendly spaces and temporary learning classes. Given Tajikistan’s vulnerability to natural hazards, the need to reinforce systematic and sustainable DRR interventions was identified, and, with funding from the European Union’s Disaster Preparedness programme of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Office, a comprehensive school-based DRR model is being developed to build resilient schools and communities. In addition, UNICEF continued to ensure coordinated action in preparedness, response and early recovery, in line with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action.
In 2016, UNICEF continued to play a key role in improving coordination between development partners and the Government in the education sector and providing technical assistance and coordination to guide key reforms in education, including of the curriculum, ECE and inclusive education. UNICEF also chairs the UNDAF Results Group for Education in the context of the joint workplan signed between United Nations agencies and the MoES.

**OUTPUT 1** More children aged 3-6 years benefit from increased capacity of government, partners, communities, and caregivers as duty bearers to provide and promote early learning (RKLAs 3 and 4).

**Analytical statement of progress:**
In Tajikistan, preschool education is not compulsory and access is limited, particularly in rural areas, reaching only 12.4 per cent of children aged 3–6, the lowest rate in the region. This means that most children are deprived of an opportunity to attain the emotional, behavioural and cognitive skills needed to learn and be fully prepared to start primary school. Children in rural areas from poor households and those with disabilities face the hardest challenges accessing the limited number of early learning facilities in the country.

To assess the learning outcomes of children who benefit from ECE programmes, tools were developed and tested in 132 ECE centres in 2016. To generate evidence for a possible scale-up of the ECE model, UNICEF commissioned documentation of the model. In the next phase of ECE expansion, attention should be paid to achieving greater and more widely spread benefits for the most marginalized children and their caregivers. To date, under the Global Partnership for Education 4 grant and with UNICEF coordination, 432 ECE centres where more than 10,800 children benefit from early education opportunities every year have been equipped with supplies. The capacity of more than 850 teachers to deliver the ECE programme have been equipped with supplies, and more than 400 school administrators and school accountants have enhanced their skills on financial management to ensure the efficient operation of ECE centres. In addition, with funding from the Government of the United Kingdom, a total of 42 new ECE centres serving Tajik, Uzbek and Kyrgyz boys and girls have been established in the last two years and have contributed to local-level social cohesion in border areas with Kyrgyzstan. These centres provided spaces for communities to come together and enjoy constructive dialogue and interaction around young children’s development. Furthermore, more than 30 Tajik and Kyrgyz national and local education experts from government, academia and civil society institutions participated in a joint workshop in Kyrgyzstan and discussed the importance of an inclusive ECD programme for child development in both countries.

In October, UNICEF, in collaboration with the MoES and development partners such as USAID and the Open Society Institute, launched the Education Starts from Early Years nationwide campaign to promote early learning among diverse stakeholders. The campaign includes community mobilization events in four districts through mobile theatre performances to generate discussions among participants and community members on the importance of ECE. This campaign will continue through 2017 with the broadcasting of the animated television series *Magic Journey*. This series is the fruit of years of collaboration between the MoES, UNICEF and the Open Society Institute, as well as the Academy of Education, USAID and local animation companies. The 25, 15-minute animated episodes consist of developmentally and culturally appropriate material packaged in an entertaining format that will help children learn about healthy nutrition, literacy, numeracy, equality, inclusiveness, tolerance, safety and creativity.

**OUTPUT 2** More children, including adolescent girls and boys, demand and benefit from an increased political commitment, national capacity and accountability to adequately
programme to improve access and participation to complete preschool and basic education, and transition to further education, in an equitable environment (RKLA 3 and 4).

Analytical statement of progress:
In Tajikistan, according to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics data, 1.9 per cent of primary school-age children (7–10 years old) and 5.6 per cent of lower secondary-age children (11–15 years old) were out of school. In lower secondary, the rate for girls was 9.1 per cent, compared with 2.4 per cent for boys. Girls and children with disabilities, as well as children in conflict with the law, make up most of the children who are out of school. Continuing efforts started in 2015 to improve indicators on drop-outs and absenteeism in the EMIS, UNICEF enhanced the capacity of education departments in all 68 districts of Tajikistan to generate and use data. Moreover, 158 education economists and statisticians trained at the district level (69 female and 89 male) are expected to conduct cascade training covering all schools in their own districts beginning in 2017.

In 2016, UNICEF, in partnership with a local civil society organization, Economics and Education, continued to support the application of the Early Warning System to identify children at risk of dropping out in 50 project schools in four districts. As a result of the Early Warning System, school officials and parent-teacher associations in target schools have proactively identified 2,696 children (1,146 girls and 1,550 boys) and have been working to identify the main causes of dropping out in order to address these issues by developing individual child response plans. Of all the identified at-risk children in project schools, only 18 (9 girls and 9 boys, 0.7 per cent of those identified) dropped out of school.

In line with RKLA 3 and 4, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the MoES to develop and pilot an accelerated learning programme to enable students, including refugee children, to complete their basic education (Grades 1–9) and transition back into mainstream education or into the workforce. In 2016, following the completion of the first year of the pilot, the MoES decided to review the existing government evening schools programme. Currently, the evening school programmes and accelerated learning programme are being revised under a common framework, which will pave the way for the development and delivery of a comprehensive second chance education programme that will provide opportunities for out-of-school adolescent boys and girls to catch up, enrol in mainstream school and complete their basic compulsory and general secondary education.

Support for girls’ transition to secondary education continued in 2016. Sixteen schools in three districts of Tajikistan participated in the campaign. This academic year, 96 per cent of girls (661 girls in total) in Grade 9 who pledged to continue their education after compulsory school, transitioned to and continued their studies in Grade 10. The transition rate for girls in project schools increased on average by 10 percentage points. In 2016, the girls’ education project was expanded to three additional districts. In the new districts, both officials and students were engaged in dialogue and capacity-building efforts to continue mobilization related to the girls’ education agenda.

OUTPUT 3 All children benefit from improved capacity at the national level to legislate and plan for strengthening of education to realize quality learning in a safe and inclusive environment (RKLA 3 and 4).

Analytical statement of progress:
While the Government has initiated reforms, including the development and introduction of competency-based curriculum for primary education, the accessibility and quality of education remains a major challenge. This is particularly true for the most marginalized, such as girls and children with disabilities. According to EMIS 2015–2016 data, the
proportion of children with disabilities receiving formal education has increased to 26 per cent, though 40 per cent of children with disabilities who attend any form of education are still segregated in special schools. Mainstreaming children with disabilities in regular schools is gradually happening but without any systematic support or reasonable accommodation, and social norms, according to the knowledge, attitudes, practice and behaviour survey, are seen as a major barrier to the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream school.

In 2016, UNICEF galvanized support among partners to promote inclusive education. The Government drafted an education legislative framework that captures issues in inclusive education. However, concerns have been raised about the approach to inclusive education. In addition to communication events through the media and roundtables, UNICEF also mobilized technical assistance from the Regional Office to ensure that inclusive education is in line with the General Comments to Article 24 of the CRPD. The World’s Largest Lesson was implemented for the second year in a row. This opportunity was used to reach out to students and teachers in 40 schools to discuss the SDGs and inclusive education.

In 2016, the Tajik State Pedagogical University and the Rasht Pedagogical Institute provided courses on student-centred approaches to 140 faculty staff. This group of trained faculty is conducting classes using active learning to support future school teachers. In September, the Pedagogical Mastery Course, a foundational course on competency-based teaching and learning, was integrated into the Tajik State Pedagogical University curriculum. Similarly, 204 teachers in mainstream schools benefited from an in-service teacher training programme on student-centred approaches and inclusive education. The Psychological Medical Pedagogical Commission has created a network of 60 inclusive teachers to further support the professional development of inclusive teachers in GBAO.

A country exposed to frequent natural disasters, Tajikistan needs to mainstream DRR and resilience building into key sectors, including education. Guided by the regional agenda (RKLA 9), to reinforce the implementation of systematic and sustainable DRR interventions, a comprehensive school-based DRR model has been developed in line with the Comprehensive School Safety Framework. UNICEF continued to lead coordinated action in preparedness, response and early recovery in the education and WASH sectors. Furthermore, UNICEF has coordinated and responded to three major disasters in 2016. As a result, 1,279 children in humanitarian situations (591 girls and 688 boys) have benefited from formal and non-formal basic education through child-friendly spaces, temporary learning classes, basic school supplies and hygiene kits. Moreover, in 2016, UNICEF contributed to a high-level international symposium on SDG 6 hosted by the Government of Tajikistan. Thus, it had a chance to promote children’s issues within the policy measures, actions and means of implementation of SDG 6 and its targets.

OUTCOME 4 Adolescents, including the most marginalized, are recognized as equal members of society and empowered to participate meaningfully in all aspects of life

Analytical statement of progress:
In 2016, UNICEF focused on building a strong foundation for a new pillar of the Country Programme—adolescent development and participation. The framework of the programme is aligned with the priorities of the CEE/CIS region (RKLA 10). This entailed both a more deliberate approach to mainstreaming adolescent programming across relevant pillars of the Programme and exploring new models of programming related to participation and resilience building among this important target group. The work of the Adolescent Programme in 2016 covered three main areas: 1) analysing and understanding the normative framework for adolescent development and participation and budgeting for adolescents; 2) deepening and expanding the existing health-focused programme, namely youth-friendly services, ensuring continued access by adolescent boys and girls, particularly the most marginalized, to quality
and germane adolescent health services; and 3) testing and initiating models of adolescent programming to promote adolescent participation in social life, social cohesion and decision-making on issues of direct concern to their lives.

In the first domain, UNICEF Tajikistan began establishing a foundation to advance a normative framework and budgeting for adolescents and engaged with national partners on this. As data gaps hamper programming and policymaking for adolescents, UNICEF mobilized efforts for evidence generation on the situation and needs of adolescents. This included the finalization of the UNICEF-commissioned desk review on adolescent and youth marginalization in Tajikistan, beginning a review of national legislation on adolescents to identify gaps and conducting a feasibility assessment combined with the methodological design of a possible nationwide adolescent study in 2017. The desk review identified that data on marginalized adolescent girls and boys and/or youth was unreliable, out of date and non-systematic in the country. Most importantly, the situation of youth who are not in employment, education or training is not known to an extent that would allow for evidence-based programming and/or policymaking. The preliminary report on the feasibility of a nationwide adolescent study in 2017 shows that there is a good understanding among UNICEF’s governmental and non-governmental partners of the need to identify and monitor adolescent indicators.

UNICEF Tajikistan also continued to strengthen the existing normative framework for providing services to adolescent girls and boys within the scope of YFHS. Technical assistance also continued to the MoHSP to improve access to quality youth-friendly information and services by strengthening the existing infrastructure for adolescent-friendly services, beginning with the expansion of YFHS referral mechanisms and providing a child/adolescent-friendly environment at primary healthcare facilities. To further expand the package of existing services for adolescents, and driven by the results of the suicide study commissioned by UNICEF in 2011 that pointed to a relatively high rate of adolescent suicide (particularly among girls) in Sughd Region, UNICEF began new programming on adolescent mental health. The aim of the new initiative is to provide access among adolescent girls and boys, especially the most vulnerable, to quality psychological (mental health) support and counselling services. This initiative requires cross-sectoral involvement by at least two line ministries—the MoHSP and the MoES. The MoES has enthusiastically welcomed the initiative and has already established a working group of experts from the field who are tasked with developing a detailed plan of action. For the remainder of the Country Programme, technical assistance will be provided for the designing, piloting, assessing and documenting of a model of coordinated mental health and psychosocial care service provision for adolescent boys and girls aged 12–19 in regions of Tajikistan with high reported suicide rates.

Progress was also noted in moving the adolescent participation agenda forward. With funding from the Government of the United Kingdom and the PBF and in partnership with the NGO, the Association of Scientific and Technical Intelligentsia, approximately 500 adolescents, especially the most vulnerable, including adolescents with disabilities and those who came into contact with the law, were engaged in promoting social cohesion at the community level. They also learned life skills and related competencies.

Limited life-skills education opportunities for adolescents and youth in Tajikistan were flagged in a UNICEF-commissioned desk-review on adolescent and youth marginalization. Recognizing the need for further investment in this area while also bringing new innovative ideas to Tajikistan, the concept of adolescent innovation labs was introduced to the MoES, NGO partners and adolescents as part of South-South cooperation with UNICEF Kosovo. The MoES agreed to test the project and proposed two CAEs to pilot the labs in 2017. The roadmap for piloting and potential scale-up was developed with CAE management, the Department of Innovation and Science of the State Institute for Educational Development
and local civil society and international education experts. This, in turn, ensured national ownership of the project from the outset.

Participation was also practiced and modelled for adolescents living with HIV. By assisting parents and caregivers of adolescents living with HIV to disclose their status and together overcome stigma-related challenges at the community level, the project explored work with and for adolescents living with HIV to empower them to fulfil their potential and improve their quality of life.

The groundwork on data and evidence generation started in 2016 will be followed up on in 2017 with a nationwide adolescent study that will both identify the Country Programme Document outcome-level baseline for the programme and provide the basis for evidence-based programming for adolescents in Tajikistan. The programme will need to overcome sensitivities related to adolescent participation and programming through ongoing advocacy and awareness raising with decision makers.

OUTPUT 1 Adolescents have opportunities to participate in and contribute to social cohesion and development in their communities

Analytical statement of progress:
In 2016, UNICEF Tajikistan began advancing the normative framework and budgeting for adolescents by supporting evidence generation on the situation and needs of adolescents and continuing efforts to strengthen the existing normative framework for providing services for adolescent girls and boys.

A desk review of the situation of adolescents was commissioned to capture data on participation, education, health, adolescents with special needs, child protection and multidimensional poverty. The review identified that data on marginalized adolescents and/or youth is unreliable, scarce and unsystematic. Crucially, the situation of adolescents who are not in employment, education or training is insufficiently known to allow for evidence-based programming and/or policymaking. While research on specific issues concerning adolescents is welcome, there is also a need to start treating them as a separate category distinct from children and youth and systematically collect data about them.

In this context, UNICEF Tajikistan advocated for strengthening data collection and monitoring of adolescent-related indicators by piloting the Adolescent Country Tracker, an initiative driven by UNICEF Headquarters for which Tajikistan was selected as a pilot country. Launching the first consultation on adolescent indicators with key national and international stakeholders, UNICEF began promoting the use of global adolescent indicators, while identifying country-specific indicators as well. The Adolescent Programme will continue to generate data on adolescents through the 2017 planned national adolescent study that will both set the Programme’s (Country Programme Document) baselines and identify the needs of various adolescent girls and boys, including vulnerable groups, through a future-oriented participatory methodological approach. The preliminary feasibility assessment for the adolescent study reveals a good understanding of the need to identify and monitor adolescent indicators among governmental and non-governmental partners.

In 2016, UNICEF Tajikistan launched a review of national legislation on adolescents to determine (and document) the current normative basis for adolescent rights and development and to identify gaps and areas requiring further improvement in national primary and secondary legislation to ensure adolescents’ rights and freedoms under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
UNICEF Tajikistan supported the strengthening of the normative basis of YFHS based on the revised Law on Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights and Government Regulation 748 of 2015 on providing medical services to adolescents and youth, including at-risk groups. In close collaboration with the MoHSP, following the recommendations of the 2014 evaluation of the YFHS programme in Tajikistan, revision of the Regulation of YFHS Units was launched. By MoHSP decree, a working group was formed for this task to agree on the expanded package of services, cost services, revisit clinical protocols and analyse the need for psychological support and counselling for adolescents.

To identify further interventions regarding budgeting for adolescent programming, UNICEF Tajikistan began an initiative to cost the defined primary healthcare-level service package for adolescents to assist the healthcare system to optimize and effectively use restricted resources, strengthen accountability and improve the quality of adolescent-friendly services.

OUTPUT 2 Adolescents, including the most disadvantaged, demand for and have access to quality youth-friendly information, services and capacity development

Analytical statement of progress:
In 2016, work to provide access to quality youth-friendly information and services continued by strengthening the existing infrastructure for adolescent-friendly services, beginning expansion of YFHS for developing referral mechanisms, providing a child/adolescent-friendly environment at primary healthcare facilities and launching the Adolescent Mental Health Programme in Tajikistan.

In the framework of a peacebuilding programme (funded by the PBF), which is aimed, inter alia, at ensuring the provision of social services to children and adolescent boys and girls that may be exposed to violence and conflict, UNICEF Tajikistan engaged with national and local partners to develop referral mechanisms for youth-friendly services in selected cross-border districts of Tajikistan. This is intended to increase access by adolescent girls and boys to existing services within the scope of YFHS units.

With support from the M·A·C AIDS Fund, UNICEF is assisting with the ongoing reform of family medicine through the integration of paediatric AIDS into primary health care by expanding child/adolescent-friendly rooms. Steps were taken to ensure a child-friendly environment in 10 outpatient facilities (in Dushanbe and RRS) for children and adolescents living with HIV. Upon the completion of the renovation and design of child/adolescent-friendly rooms in primary healthcare centres (in the first quarter of 2017), more than 100 children and adolescents will have access to safe areas for check-ups and follow-up examinations, in which parents can meet each other for pre-treatment support, with the aim of improving treatment outcomes.

Given the results of the 2011 UNICEF-commissioned suicide study and the increasing importance of mental health programming, UNICEF proposed to the MoES and the MoHSP to increase the access of adolescent girls and boys, especially the most vulnerable, to quality psychological (mental health) support and counselling services in order to promote the well-being of adolescents. Based on global best practices and evidence in regions where high incidence of suicide among young people are reported, it was proposed to pilot a model adolescent mental health programme adapted to the specific needs and challenges in Tajikistan. The model will include the provision of both professional and peer counselling psychological services. It will also explore the provision of treatment for adolescents at various entry points. The MoES has already established a working group composed of experts from the field, tasked with developing a detailed plan of action. In 2017, UNICEF, in close cooperation with the MoES and the MoHSP will continue to provide technical assistance for designing, piloting, assessing and documenting a model for coordinated
mental health and psychosocial service provision for adolescents, boy and girls aged 12–19 in regions with high reported suicide rates.

OUTPUT 3  Adolescents have opportunities to participate in and contribute to social cohesion and development in their communities

Analytical statement of progress:
In 2016, the Adolescent Programme worked to model adolescent participation through interventions within the Peacebuilding Programme (funded by the Government of the United Kingdom and the PBF), the launch of the adolescent innovation labs and continuing programming for children and adolescents living with HIV.

UNICEF, with local NGO, the Association of Scientific and Technical Intelligentsia and local authorities, modelled adolescent and youth participation for social cohesion in two cross-border districts between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan as part of the Government of the United Kingdom-funded project. At the outset, 460 adolescent and youth, including children in contact with the law and other vulnerable groups, were trained in life-skills education and learned about active participation in decision-making on matters of direct concern to their lives. A model of adolescent and youth participation in community life through dialogue between youth and local government was tested in these two cross-border districts of northern Tajikistan (Isfara and Bobojon Gafurov).

One-minute junior videos developed by a group of adolescent girls and boys, including the most vulnerable, modelled adolescent participation through art and peace messaging. This model of participation was an effective tool for both skill-learning and adolescent-for-adolescent advocacy and messaging.

Considering the limited life-skills education opportunities among adolescents and youth in Tajikistan, UNICEF Tajikistan introduced an initiative entitled Adolescent Innovation Labs. With the support of the Youth Innovation Lab team from UNICEF Kosovo, the Adolescent Programme prepared the groundwork for establishing Adolescent Innovation Labs within existing educational infrastructure and conducted a series of consultations with the leaderships of MoES and the CAE. The MoES supported the project and proposed two CAEs to pilot adolescent innovation labs in 2017. The roadmap for piloting and potential scale-up was developed jointly with the CAE leadership, the Department of Innovation and Science of the State Institute for Educational Development and local civil society and international education experts. This, in turn, ensured national ownership of the project from its outset.

In 2016, participation was also practiced and modelled for adolescents living with HIV through a project called, ‘I Want to Say’, facilitated by the Guli Surkh NGO. This intervention assisted parents/caregivers of adolescents living with HIV to disclose their status and together overcome stigma-related challenges at the community level. The follow-up summer camp for adolescents living with HIV empowered the core group of 21 peer activists living with HIV to promote the rights of children exposed to violence, stigma and discrimination. The group of 21 adolescent girls and boys living with HIV learned critical thinking, tolerance and stress management skills, including the ability to address concerns related to their lives. Within the project, a group of psychologists developed a manual on HIV status disclosure for adolescents. Efforts over the years have contributed to a significant change in antiretroviral therapy adherence and quality of life for adolescents living with HIV. The findings of this initiative were shared with colleagues at the Children’s HIV Association workshop supported by the UNICEF Regional Office in Odessa on 7–9 November 2016.
OUTCOME 5 Children who are most at risk benefit from a better functioning protective environment that prevents and responds to deprivation, violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect

Analytical statement of progress:
The drop in remittance flows due to the current economic crisis in the region affected the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable families and their children in 2016.

In partnership with the World Bank, WFP, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the German Development Agency, UNICEF has been monitoring the situation, in particular as it affects children. Evidence has been generated to understand the short- and medium-term effects of the loss of household income on the well-being of children. The partners are currently building momentum to influence the Government to take the additional measures necessary to protect the most vulnerable segments of the population, including women and children.

Once adopted and funded, the new Social Protection Strategy, developed with the support of UNICEF in close consultation with the European Union and other development partners, will enable the Government to put in place preventative and protective interventions. These interventions will help shield vulnerable populations from economic shocks such as the ones seen this year, as well as those who are generally trapped in poverty.

UNICEF has built new evidence that will help the Government develop programmes to promote social inclusion of children and women with disabilities as it prepares to join the CPRD. The baseline study on perceptions among the general population of children and women with disabilities will be used to raise awareness of the need for a more inclusive society. UNICEF continued to engage with a range of civil society organizations, such as Zarshedabonou, to work with families of children with disabilities as a means to increase capacity for service provision at the local level.

More needs to be done concretely to prevent families and primary caregivers from further deprivation, such as having to place their children in residential childcare institutions. The number of children aged 0–4 residing in baby homes has increased by 25 per cent from 245 as of December 2014 to 309 one year later. This development requires the urgent attention of the MoHSP. Children are expected to contribute to earning income to help their families. According to the 2012–2013 Child Labour Survey findings released in January, 23.3 per cent, or 522,000 children aged 5–17 in Tajikistan, were working. The survey found that 68.7 per cent of girls aged 5–17 were involved in unpaid household services (household chores) compared with 55.8 per cent for boys of the same age. The number of children receiving a disability pension has remained stable at 25,178; however, this figure only covers children with disabilities who are registered and are therefore eligible for state support.

Social protection programmes do exist in Tajikistan, but their coverage remains limited and they do not necessarily target the most vulnerable population groups, including those in the informal sector. The year 2016 saw little progress in regards to strengthening the child protection system to ensure that children at risk of placement in institutions and those vulnerable to neglect, abuse or violence are protected through effective gatekeeping and continuum of care. Furthermore, late in 2016, the MoES was made responsible for child protection as provided for in the 2015 Law on Child Protection. At the time of reporting, there was no clarity provided by the Government as to what the institutional and other practical implications of this decision would be. Moreover, the capacity of the Ministry to deal effectively with this expanded mandate has yet to be determined.
OUTPUT 1 Protection systems are based on sound policy and legal frameworks aligned with international standards, are adequately resourced, evidence-based, and equitably executed through strong inter-sectoral coordination both at central and local levels.

Analytical statement of progress:
In 2016, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the working group led by the Presidential Executive Office to finalize the Social Protection Strategy centered around a life-cycle approach. Approval is expected in early 2017, and costing will be conducted with UNICEF support.

UNICEF supported the establishment of the new Unit on Social Protection Policy Analysis within the MoHSP to reinforce data analysis capacity for social protection. UNICEF, UNDP and the European Union enhanced the capacity of the Unit through training and experience sharing with Croatia. The Unit’s first priority is to ensure that data collected by different agencies are consolidated and harmonized and that existing data gaps are identified. The Unit will also monitor the implementation of the Social Protection Strategy starting in 2017.

In May 2016, the Ombudsperson for Child Rights function was created within the Ombudsman’s Office following a 2010 Committee on the Rights of the Child recommendation. This step is an indication that the Government wants to place children’s rights on its agenda. Areas identified for future cooperation with the Ombudsperson for Child Rights include institutional strengthening and child rights monitoring.

In 2016, UNICEF helped to develop the capacity of Ombudsman’s Office field staff for child rights and supported a rapid assessment of its complaint mechanism. The rapid assessment revealed that children do not use the complaint mechanism, partly due to its inaccessibility. Recommendations were made to the Ombudsperson for Child Rights. UNICEF also extended technical assistance to the Ombudsman’s Office to monitor the situation of children in seven residential childcare institutions. In order to boost accountability of those managing and supervising these institutions, two roundtables were organized to discuss actions taken by the concerned authorities to implement the Ombudsperson for Child Rights recommendations.

In October, Tajikistan submitted its initial reports on the two optional protocols (Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography) to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which were due in 2004.

UNICEF advocacy for legal reform to bring national legislation into greater compliance with international standards has been unsuccessful. The Government states that budgetary constraints are the main bottleneck. Existing legal provisions not fully protecting children in contact with the law could not be amended. The outcome of the Criminal Code reform has not been made public. Therefore, it is not clear whether provisions related to children have been amended.

Institutional changes and staff turnover in early 2016 caused serious delays and uncertainty regarding plans to develop and strengthen alternative family care (including foster care) for children at risk of institutionalization. This revealed a need to advocate with and educate the new officials.

In June, UNICEF assisted the MoHSP to consult a wide range of concerned stakeholders to seek inputs to the revised baby home regulation. However, the MoHSP review process has taken longer than expected. Following approval of the new regulation (now planned in early 2017), incremental transformation of the four baby homes in Tajikistan, where some 309
children under 4 reside, will begin, and families at risk of placing their children in baby homes will be supported to keep them and will receive day-care services.

**OUTPUT 2** National and local authorities have increased capacity to provide quality child protection services and social benefits, including during emergencies, for children most at risk and their families

**Analytical statement of progress:**
UNICEF played a critical role, in collaboration with UNDP as the lead agency, in ensuring that the MoHSP assessed the functionality of the social assistance at home units—home-based care services provided by para-social workers to elderly persons, adults and children with disabilities—to improve their coverage and effectiveness. The findings and recommendations of the functional assessment were presented to the MoHSP for further action.

With UNICEF financial and technical support, the Rasht District Social Assistance-at-Home Unit assisted 82 persons, including 43 children from poor households at risk of placement in institutions (26 boys and 17 girls) and 13 children with disabilities (nine boys and four girls). After two years of direct support, UNICEF successfully advocated that Rasht Local Authority take over the Unit’s operational costs by incorporating those costs into the local budget from January 2017.

To complement this, UNICEF entered into partnership with local NGO Zarshedabonou to implement a community-based rehabilitation project. The NGO, Mobile Group, identified 190 additional children with disabilities, including 96 girls, in eight (of 14) jamoats. Seventy-two children with disabilities (26 girls) and their families received assistance, including support to enrol in mainstream schools.

Following the December 2015 earthquake in Rushan (GBAO), 168 children (including 78 girls) received psychosocial support. UNICEF collaborated with local NGO, Lojvar, the Centre for Psychological Support and Tajik National University to train 23 staff (including 11 women) from Khorog, Rushan and Murghob local authorities, local NGOs and psychosocial support associations. The training was intended to build a pool of local-based individuals with basic psychosocial support skills to respond immediately to future emergencies in remote and hard-to-reach locations.

UNICEF built the capacity of law enforcement and justice professionals to ensure respect for the rights of children in contact with the law. Following the Council of Justice’s abolition in May, UNICEF developed a working relationship with the Supreme Court, the institution now responsible for pre-service and on-the-job training of judges. To ensure the sustainability of these interventions, 10 new master trainer judges and 10 new master trainer police (including two women) at the Supreme Court and the Ministry of Interior, are poised to play a leading training role in their respective institutions upon completion of the full set of trainings in early 2017.

Due to continuing UNICEF support to juvenile support services, 170 children who had committed minor offences were diverted from the criminal justice system to six district CAEs in Sughd (including 21 girls) and Khatlon (19) regions between January and November. They received psychosocial support and their parents learned about how to prevent re-offending.

**OUTPUT 3** Knowledge and awareness of caregivers on the negative effects of violence and institutionalization of children are enhanced
Analytical statement of progress:
Within the framework of the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities project implemented in partnership with WHO and UNDP, UNICEF generated new evidence by conducting a baseline study on knowledge, attitudes, practices and behaviours related to children and women with disabilities in Tajikistan. The research used both quantitative and qualitative methods, including the administration of a questionnaire to 2,000 adults and 441 children, 24 focus group discussions and 19 key informant interviews. At the time of reporting, the study report was being finalized. Preliminary findings clearly indicate that the ‘medical model’ rather than the ‘social model’ is prevalent in the country among both the general population and service providers. Social acceptance of children and women with disabilities varies widely depending on whether respondents live in the capital city or in rural areas. It also differs based on the type of disability (physical or intellectual/mental) and the issue (a majority of respondents are broadly in favour of their children attending the same class as children with disabilities but would not accept their children marrying persons with disabilities). Stereotypes and misconceptions about disability are widespread. More positively, almost all respondents (97.6 per cent) said that it was not acceptable to discipline (corporal or any other form) a child with disability, whereas the proportion was 83 per cent for children without disabilities.

The results of the knowledge, attitudes, practices and behaviours study are being used to inform the development of a multi-year comprehensive Communication for Social Change Strategy and to design an awareness-raising campaign that should be ready in March 2017.

Additional efforts to raise awareness of children with disabilities and other vulnerable children were made in Rasht District in partnership with Hayot dar Oila, a local NGO specializing in alternative family care. Through sensitization and orientation sessions, Hayot dar Oila was able to raise awareness among a range of stakeholders in selected communities about the importance of children growing up in a safe and protective family environment. As a result of this cooperation, 26 district-level decision makers and health, education and social protection service providers (15 males and 11 females), 117 jamoat-level representatives (58 males and 59 females) and 195 mahalla leaders and other individuals (110 males and 85 females) from four target jamoats in Rasht District were sensitized on the need to avoid unnecessary separation of children from their families.
Technical guide on implementation of for Maternal and Child Health Handbook – for health workers

Modules on psychosocial work with children living with HIV and their families: Process of disclosure of HIV status to children

“Improving quality of life and support to children living with HIV”

**Lessons learned**

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**Programme documents**

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