Executive Summary

The year 2014 was marked by the development of a new Country Programme Document (CPD) and a United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPF) for 2016-2020. By end of the year, the drafts of these documents had been prepared through extensive consultations with the partners and the support of the Regional Office (RO). In the second half of the year, the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI) conducted an audit and found that the controls and processes over the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Country Office were generally established and functioning. None of the observations raised in the report were rated as high risk. UNICEF Turkmenistan prepared an action plan to address the few issues raised over programme management and operations support.

UNICEF Turkmenistan’s continued advocacy and technical assistance to Turkmenistan’s Government addressed issues of the unfinished child rights agenda, giving priority attention to the most vulnerable girls and boys. Maximising the momentum of the celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC@25), the Office enhanced its advocacy for full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and child rights international legal commitments. A series of advocacy activities, including a high-level conference on the CRC anniversary, provided a forum to highlight the CRC standards and discuss among national and development partners critical issues related to the realisation of child rights in Turkmenistan. These resulted in the acknowledgement of the need to: better monitor child rights; align legislation with international human rights instruments; and enhance quality and access of all children, particularly those from vulnerable groups, to health, education and social protection services.

Following the CRC Concluding Observations, the Government supported by UNICEF worked to develop a National Plan of Action for Children. A new version of the Law on State Guarantees of the Rights of the Children aligned with the CRC and Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) was adopted in 2014. UNICEF continued its advocacy for the ratification of the third Optional Protocol to the CRC on a communications procedure.

Access to credible and internationally comparable data on children’s wellbeing remained central for cooperation between UNICEF and the Government. In this regard, UNICEF welcomed the decision of the Government of Turkmenistan to conduct the next round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). Two studies on children with disabilities were conducted in 2014.

UNICEF Turkmenistan supported partners in building a foundation for advancing inclusive education and learning in the country. The international conference and development of a national roadmap on inclusive education provided a forum to discuss approaches to realise the right of every girl and boy to education, and demonstrated the Government’s commitment to adhere to this obligation.

In health, despite overall positive trends, neonatal, infant and child mortality remain high, especially when compared with other middle-income countries. Quality of health care remains a
priority issue to ensure integration of equity- and rights-based approaches to address specific vulnerabilities relevant to health. To address the gaps, the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry (MoHMI) adopted a comprehensive equity-focused National Strategy on Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (MNCAH). The strategy was developed with UNICEF’s technical assistance in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Resulting from UNICEF’s systematic evidence-based support to MoHMI on strengthening national vaccine management, the assessment of the cold chain system conducted by experts of the WHO and the Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization (GAVI) at the end of 2014 rated as high the quality of vaccine management at the central and provincial levels.

Despite national evidence on high rates of the Vitamin A deficiency among children under five and technical assistance from UNICEF, progress in this field was slow. To address this gap, UNICEF utilised the global expertise of the Food Fortification Initiative (FFI) to advocate with the Government to adopt a Vitamin A fortification strategy.

In 2014, the programme succeeded in leveraging government resources for implementation of rolling work plans for 2014-2015. The introduction of this cooperative approach affected the timely approval of the rolling work plans and led to the late initiation of some of the activities. Planned studies were launched in the last quarter of the year and will be completed in the first quarter of 2015.

As part of a review of state subsidies, the Government ended free petrol rations for private car and motorcycle drivers, and at the beginning of 2014 introduced costs for natural gas for the first time since 1993. The end of 2014 was also marked by the devaluation of the national currency by 22.8 per cent, with an established exchange rate of 3.50 manats to US$ 1, down from 2.85 manats. Petrol prices simultaneously rose by 60 per cent.

**Equity Case Study**

Turkmenistan was the first country in Central Asia to accede to the CRPD, in September 2008, with ratification of the Convention later that year, which highlights the Government’s commitment and obligation to ensure the realisation of rights of persons with disabilities.

Since 2010, UNICEF Turkmenistan has chosen to focus on disability as part of its priority agenda. Despite the global equity focus, relatively little is known about the situation of children with disabilities in Turkmenistan. As a first step toward addressing this paucity of information, in light of the CRPD, UNICEF Turkmenistan conducted a review of legislation and studies to establish information to feed into the situation analysis of the children with disabilities in Turkmenistan.

Turkmenistan is progressing in the creation of a legal basis for ensuring the socioeconomic well-being of children with disabilities. The country’s officially recognised disability policy is expressed in various laws and codes. Existing legislation provides a relevant supporting framework for protection of the rights of all people and children in general, including children with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. However, some sector-related legislation, particularly education and health, are not fully compliant with the CRPD provisions. In addition, current by-laws and regulations require revision in light of the CRC and CRPD standards. The extent of impairments and subsequent disability – whether physical, mental, intellectual or sensory – represents a growing issue for Turkmenistan, even as children’s capacities continue
to be frequently underestimated and their needs given low priority.

There are believed to be about 14,487 children with disabilities in the country (Ashgabat, 3,500; Ahal velayat (province), 2,175; Mary velayat, 2,322; Lebap velayat, 2,690; Dashoguz velayat, 1,860; Balkan velayat, 1,940), according to the Society for the Support of the Disabled, a national non-governmental organisation (NGO). People with disabilities constitute a particularly vulnerable and underserviced group. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, 73,813 people receive disability allowances in Turkmenistan, including about 12,000 children up to the age 16. However, these figures might be misleading because of the relative invisibility of such persons to their fellow citizens, and to the government. A 2008 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) survey showed that 30 per cent of people who are deaf and blind have not completed secondary education. The majority of people with disabilities are unemployed. Due to physical barriers, access to services and participation in socio-political life are often unattainable for people with physical disabilities. Even the facilities of the agencies dealing with disability issues are not physically accessible.

Finding evidence and bringing the situation of these children to light are necessary in order to close the gap between the most vulnerable and the rest of the population. The recent Survey of the Situation of Children with Disabilities in Turkmenistan provides some understanding of their situation. It is based on findings from parents of 150 children living in families, and the teachers or carers of 151 children attending residential boarding schools in three regions of the country. Not all children with disabilities surveyed are receiving disability pensions and some parents report some challenges in the process of acquiring disability status in order to access this type of social support. A medical model of disability appears to prevail among parents and specialists. Most children have access to medical services, although many parents note the uneven quality of services and provision of medicines for their children. Questions have also emerged from the survey about the skills and knowledge among medical personnel about some forms of disability and functional disorders and the overall lack of some types of disability specialities in the health and education sectors. Assistive technologies to aid communication, mobility and posture appear to be available in only a limited way, with few children having access to the latest assistive technology and devices.

Some children are excluded from mainstream or specialised pre-school and school provision of education for a number of reasons. While many children surveyed have access to some form of pre-school and school education services, these are often provided in residential boarding schools or kindergartens. Children attending residential schools and pre-schools appear for the most part to have daily and weekly contact with their families, which raises the question of whether these services need to be provided on a residential basis in the first place. Certainly, parents surveyed expressed a preference for the most part for their children with disabilities to remain in the care of their families while being educated, also noting in some cases a need for family support services. More than half of the children surveyed with disabilities living with their families are living with extended family members who for the most part play a role in supporting parents to provide care. Children with disabilities and their families are accessing some types of social support services at the community level. At the same time, some parents report considerable social and cultural barriers to inclusion in terms of societal attitudes to children with disabilities displayed on day-to-day basis in their communities.

The findings of the Survey of the Situation of Children with Disabilities and the Study on Children Aged 0-3 Years of Age in Institutions, as well as findings from other studies and the 2013 evaluation of the Child-Friendly School Initiative in Turkmenistan all helped to mainstream disability in programmatic strategies and interventions. UNICEF continued to advocate for
further alignment of legal frameworks and data collection on the situation of children with disabilities. In 2014, UNICEF Turkmenistan facilitated the introduction of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY) to partners. The UNICEF Country Office provided technical assistance in the development of inclusive education and the establishment of early intervention and development paediatrics, and built the knowledge of partners on community-based support and social work to prevent institutionalisation of children with disabilities and help to include children with disabilities in social life.

**Summary Notes and Acronyms**

CCC – Core Commitments for Children  
CFS – Child-Friendly Schools  
CMT – Country Management Team  
CPD – Country Programme Document  
CPMP – Country Programme Management Plan  
CRB – Central Review Body  
CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child  
CRC – Contract Review Committee  
CRPD – Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities  
DCT – Direct Cash Transfer  
DRR – Disaster Risk Reduction  
ECD – Early Childhood Development  
FFI – Food Fortification Initiative  
GAVI – Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization  
GS – General Service Staff  
HACT – Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers  
HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus  
HRBA – Human Rights Based Approach  
HRD – Human Resources Development  
ICT – Information and Communication Technology  
ICF-CY – International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth  
IMEP – Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan  
JCC – Joint Consultative Committee  
LQAS – Lot Quality Assurance Sampling  
MCH – Mother and Child Health  
MICS – Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey  
MNCAH – Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health  
MoHMI – Ministry of Health and Medical Industry  
MP – Member of Parliament  
MTR – Mid-term Review  
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation  
NO – National Officer  
OIAI – Office of Internal Audit and Investigations  
PBR – Programme Budget Review  
PCA – Programme Cooperation Agreement  
PHC – Primary Health Care  
PSB – Property Survey Board  
RKLA – Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda  
RBM – Results Based Management
Capacity Development

In 2014, capacity-building activities supported actions to contribute to the development of a new CPD and UNPF and to achieve the established annual results. UNICEF Turkmenistan conducted a training session to expose national partners to results based management (RBM), human rights based approaches (HRBA) and gender equality to establish a common understanding and agreement on cooperation results and indicators to measure progress. Extensive knowledge sharing with stakeholders during the programming processes helped enhance national ownership and accountability and promote coordination of national partners in CPD and UNPF implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In early childhood development (ECD), UNICEF Turkmenistan worked to foster the capacity of the staff of the ECD centres and pre-school teachers in play therapy techniques and early intervention practices. In the same pilot regions 365 family doctors, feldshers and nurses increased knowledge of child growth and development monitoring, early detection of developmental delays using growth monitoring of child development and WHO growth monitoring tools. The trained frontline health workers provided counselling to parents of 659 children. During the sessions, advice was provided on how to respond to children’s specific conditions. UNICEF Turkmenistan continued to increase capacity of health managers in application of the lot quality assurance sampling (LQAS) methodology to monitor the effectiveness of programme interventions and provide evidence for policy alignment.

Key stakeholders (60 millers and food quality assurance specialists) improved their knowledge on the quality assurance of the flour fortification programme and better monitoring during a workshop conducted in partnership with FFI. The capacity of a multi-sectoral group of 35 core specialists was improved on universal salt iodization monitoring at the production and retail levels.

To build a knowledge base on inclusive education, UNICEF Turkmenistan, through development of the inclusive education roadmap and the inclusive education conference, shared best practices and lessons learned in realisation of the rights to education of children with disabilities.

UNICEF Turkmenistan supported the Parliament in conducting a series of seminars at which Members of Parliament (MPs) shared knowledge on national legislation and child rights realisation with 200 participants from local departments of education, health and social protection. The capacities of two NGOs, the Union of Economists and the public disability organisation “Yenme” were strengthened in research and designing training modules on strategic planning and budgeting for children.
Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

In 2014, UNICEF Turkmenistan conducted a number of studies and surveys to increase knowledge on the situation of children with disabilities and young children. The Study on Children 0-3 Years of Age in Institutions examined reasons for abandonment of babies, and revealed a higher level of institutionalisation of children with disabilities and weak gatekeeping mechanisms to prevent relinquishments of children in maternity hospitals and placement in institutions. The study highlights a need to develop psychosocial support services for vulnerable families and introduce early intervention services. It also recommends reviewing existing regulations of infant homes to enhance support functions that these institutions de facto deliver. The study also confirms a comparatively low level of institutionalisation of children under three years of age, which, along with connections that families maintain with their children placed in institutions, provides a strong basis to decrease the number of young children in residential care.

The Study of Social Services and the Survey of the Situation of Children with Disabilities aimed to identify the availability of and gaps in service provision for children with disabilities. The survey provides insights into the needs of families with children with disabilities, and the operation of special education boarding schools. Evidence from this body of research, conducted in 2014, helps with efforts to advocate for the rights of children with disabilities to be included in the society and sharpen the programme’s equity focus.

Given that ECD, as well as equity, is central to the programme of cooperation, UNICEF Turkmenistan and partners reviewed the implementation of the National ECD Programme, 2011-2015. This stocktaking exercise assessed progress, identified lessons learned and implementation gaps, and outlined directions for further cooperation in ECD.

To operationalise the Government’s commitment to the Promise Renewed initiative, UNICEF Turkmenistan employed a substantive knowledge base on maternal and child health and nutrition to advocate for adoption of a multiyear strategy on MNCAH, which was adopted at the end of 2014. Research conducted during previous years helped initiate development of a national concept on early intervention services for young children with developmental difficulties, and supported policy review of mother and child health (MCH) home-visiting services.

Partnerships

By assisting the Government of Turkmenistan in the implementation of the National Nutrition Programme (2012-2016), UNICEF focused efforts on strengthening quality assurance of the ongoing flour fortification programme in the country. In this respect, the partnership with the FFI that aimed to raise capacity of key stakeholders in advanced technology for flour fortification helped to increase knowledge and skills in quality assurance and allowed food control authorities to better analyse flour for the added micronutrients, such as vitamins and minerals. In 2014, knowledge transfer was focused on exposure of partners to the world’s best practices in food fortification.

Endorsed by the MoHMI, the MNCAH Strategy (2015-2019) was developed with UNICEF’s technical support and in partnership with WHO and UNFPA, thereby reinforcing the Government’s international commitments, such as Child Survival: A Promise Renewed, the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General’s Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health, the WHO Health 2020 Regional Strategy, the European Child and Adolescent Health Strategy for 2015-2020, and the “Post-2015 World Fit for Children” programme. The comprehensive Strategy and accompanying Action Plan will contribute to strengthening Turkmenistan’s health
system to effectively deliver mother and child health care services with an equity focus. UNICEF’s partnership with WHO and UNFPA in the MCH area also resulted in the adoption of a national policy on regionalisation of perinatal care services.

Considering that the country is vulnerable to a number of potential disasters, a joint situation analysis for identification of major potential risks was conducted and an interagency contingency plan was prepared with the participation of partners representing core government ministries, UN agencies and development partners. The UNICEF Regional Emergency Unit of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States provided its support in emergency preparedness and response training as part of a four-day Emergency Capacity Workshop for UNICEF Turkmenistan and partners. UNICEF’s key sectoral stakeholders were oriented on the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) in Humanitarian Action. As a result, a number of the programmatic actions across the sectors were jointly developed to build the national preparedness capacity vis-à-vis CCCs for the first time.

**External Communication and Public Advocacy**

To put the rights and wellbeing of children, and especially the most disadvantaged, at the heart of social, political and economic agendas, UNICEF Turkmenistan collaborated with the government, civil society, media, and academia to support shifts in public policy, fuel social engagement, and increase resources for children.

The CRC’s 25th anniversary (CRC@25) coincided with the 20th anniversary of Turkmenistan’s adoption of the Convention. It created an opportune momentum to sustain UNICEF’s role as a credible and trusted voice for children; to reach and engage a large number of stakeholders with compelling, evidence-based messages about the rights of children; and to send out a call to take action for the most vulnerable children and families. The CRC@25 celebrations commenced with a media briefing to get insights into the role of journalists in promoting child rights. Schoolchildren across the country increased their knowledge of their rights by participating in a drawing contest to depict the CRC articles. UNICEF supported the Government in organising an advocacy meeting, with the participation of high-level officials and children with and without disabilities to highlight progress and stress the unfinished business in advancing the child rights agenda. UNICEF Turkmenistan launched the 2015 Report on the State of the World’s Children at the meeting. UNICEF interactively engaged students and professors to raise awareness of the CRC and encouraged them to become young advocates of child rights. Around 550 babies born on 20 November received congratulatory letters, and symbolically marked the first day of their lives with the recognition of their rights to survival, growth, development and protection.

UNICEF Turkmenistan amplified its advocacy with various constituents to compel greater attention and action on disability issues. UNICEF and its partner NGO powerfully communicated with the broad public on the abilities of children with Down syndrome through a photo exhibition. Childcare professionals were introduced to the ICF-CY, which created an opportunity to advocate for social inclusion of children with disabilities. An international conference on inclusive education served as a platform to share good practices in inclusive education, such as appropriate legal frameworks, suitable policies and financing. Finally, UNICEF advocacy resulted in the adoption of the equity-based MNCAH Strategy for 2015-2019.

**South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation**

In 2014, the potential of South-South cooperation in the form of technical support was used mainly to improve health and development outcomes for children. The expertise of the Trieste
WHO collaborative centre, the “Curatio” NGO from Georgia and the Armenian “Arabkir” MCH Centre were engaged to strengthen the health care system and policy development in the field of MNCH, primary health care (PHC) home visiting and developmental paediatrics.

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

The 2013 mid-term review (MTR) concluded that the Programme of Cooperation would until 2015 be built around the concept of early child wellbeing as a strong umbrella to bring synergy among relevant sectors for improved outcomes of young children. UNICEF Turkmenistan and partners agreed that UNICEF’s technical assistance within the framework of implementation of the National Programme on ECD and School Readiness should support healthy development of children; provide assistance in designing early intervention services for children with disabilities and developmentally challenged children; help in expanding early learning opportunities for young children; and assist with formulating the country’s strategies to introduce inclusive education.

A working group comprising representatives of the health, education and social protection sectors was established to coordinate the implementation of the ECD Programme. UNICEF facilitated dialogue on inclusive services for young children, invested considerable efforts and resources to build capacity of the group in delivery of integrated ECD services and supported their implementation in two demonstration regions. In 2014-2015, UNICEF Turkmenistan in collaboration with national and local stakeholders trained health care providers in growth monitoring, and modelled two ECD centres that assist parents with, and provide counselling on, the development of young children.

Research conducted in 2014 revealed gaps in coordination and referrals among sectoral services, and the lack of data about the needs of vulnerable children and families. It recommended the introduction of social work to strengthen health, education and social protection services for disadvantaged children and families and encourage their better interaction with statutory guardianship bodies at the local level. The ECD Programme review reiterated recommendations on building referrals, promotion of a multidisciplinary approach in service delivery and improved monitoring of child outcomes to provide evidence on the ECD Programme’s success and failures.

**Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation**

The year 2014 provided opportunities to strengthen internal and partners’ knowledge of HRBA. The development process of a UNPF and a CPD for 2016-2020 was used to highlight the importance of applying international human rights values, principles, standards and goals in programming. The Country Analysis reflects major gaps in the realisation of human rights. Studies conducted with UNICEF support revealed barriers to inclusion of children with disabilities. The body of evidence and a workshop on HRBA and RBM for partners and UN officials helped to formulate a UNPF and CPD with equity-focused outcomes, benchmarks and targets needed to address the identified gaps.

Availability of data on child rights realisation and monitoring mechanisms continued to be at the centre of UNICEF advocacy and programmatic interventions. UNICEF brought to the attention of the Government a significant discrepancy between child mortality national data and estimations of the United Nations Interagency Group on Child Mortality Estimation (UNIGME). Through intensive dialogue, the parties agreed to conduct MICS 5 to obtain, *inter alia*, data on this sensitive indicator. Completeness and quality of national data to report on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was assessed, which also revealed gaps and inconsistencies in
UNICEF Turkmenistan continued to support the Government in the realisation of the right of children with disabilities to health, development and education. The revised version of the Law on State Guarantees of the Child Rights now has a provision on inclusive education, an inclusive education road map was drafted, and a concept to introduce early intervention is being designed.

The CRC places a clear resource obligation on State Parties to ensure that public resources are made available, allocated, and spent in order to progressively realise children's rights. In light of this principle, UNICEF Turkmenistan supported the development of a training course on strategic planning and budgeting. It aims to increase understanding and skills of national and local authorities in designing programmes that adequately respond to children's needs and are translated into actions through budget formulation, implementation and oversight, thus strengthening duty bearers’ accountability for children’s outcomes.

**Gender Mainstreaming and Equality**

Gender aspects continued to be actively threaded through all areas of UNICEF work in the country. In the education sector, gender-specific issues were considered through the finalisation of the national child-friendly schools (CFS) package with specific gender-related standards and indicators. Piloted family support pre-school education services provide counselling and advice, as well as early learning opportunities based on individual characteristics of boys and girls, including those with developmental difficulties.

With UNICEF support, the Government adopted the NMNCA Strategy and Action Plan. A situational analysis and the National Strategy both include gender analysis and take into account gender disparities and inequalities.

Gender was effectively mainstreamed through all activities in the area of social protection, including capacity-building activities for provincial officials and at CRPD workshops for young boys and girls and their teachers in summer camps.

From the staff development perspective, two female staff members were appointed and successfully performed short-term development assignments in other Country Offices.

**Environmental Sustainability**

Turkmenistan is exposed to both short- and long-term climatic risks. These risks have negative impacts across a range of economic sectors, particularly the agriculture sector, and can adversely influence the livelihoods of vulnerable populations in affected regions, as well as degrade natural resources and biodiversity.

During the Post-2015 national consultations, a great number of participants mentioned environmental sustainability in the “Future we want” as a theme that requires considerable efforts. Young people interpreted sustainable development as active civil participation in the life of the society and the country as they believe that the key to the future and good health is “good climate, good environment and ecologically sustainable communities.”

Current climate risks, potential future changes in their severity and frequency and risk management are not clearly reflected in Turkmenistan’s policies, normative frameworks, or development programmes. The adoption of the National Strategy on Climate Change in 2012
should be mentioned as a positive development. The Strategy, however, lacks linkages with disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures. Overall, a national vision is needed for environmental sustainability that includes climate risk management and disaster risk reduction as core elements of adaptation to climate change.

In 2014, UNICEF Turkmenistan continued its advocacy work and provided technical support to enhance the country’s engagement in international forums on environmental sustainability issues with a focus on DRR reduction policies and measures to prevent, mitigate and prepare for the adverse impacts of natural disasters. To develop and strengthen institutions, mechanisms and capacities to build resilience of children, UNICEF Turkmenistan continued to support mainstreaming DRR into education through curriculum development, awareness-raising for strategic intermediaries, such as teachers and school principals, and capacity building of technical experts.

**Effective Leadership**

In 2014, the Country Management Team (CMT) met quarterly to discuss, *inter alia*, management issues related to strategic directions, programme/management priorities, funding, donor reporting, major programme planning, work processes, human resources issues, training/learning, office/staff security. The results of management meetings, such as programme coordination and operations meetings, were included in the standard agenda. The CMT also adopted performance standards for Programme and Operations staff during the year. The annual appraisals of staff performance records were conducted and documented. An updated list of established office committees as well as tables of authority and reference were maintained. Office and corporate priorities and their actual fulfilment were rigorously monitored by the CMT. All oversight committees, including PCA, CMT, Central Review Body (CRB), Contract Review Committee (CRC), Human Resources Development (HRD), Joint Consultative Committee (JCC), and Property Survey Board (PSB), met on a regular basis and performed internal control functions.

Since 2014 was marked by the preparation of a new Cooperation Programme, considerable time was devoted to the development of a CPD and Country Programme Management Plan (CPMP). The drafts of these documents were submitted in a timely manner to the RO.

UNICEF Turkmenistan was under a desk review by the headquarters audit team in August-November 2014. Performance was assessed through an open and interactive process between the OIAI and UNICEF Turkmenistan. All required documents and responses to the questions of the auditors were submitted in a timely manner. The audit found that the controls and processes at the UNICEF Country Office were generally established and functioning. None of the observations raised in the report was rated as high risk. UNICEF Turkmenistan agreed with the observations and prepared an action plan to address the few issues raised over programme management and operations support, which will be closed in the shortest possible time.

**Financial Resources Management**

In 2014, the CMT continued to pay considerable attention to financial management, including the establishment of planning levels for outcomes and outputs under the institutional and programme budgets, and rigorous monitoring and regular reporting on utilisation of resources. The CMT also reviewed whether the allocated resources were used in the most efficient way to achieve annual office and programme cooperation targets established for 2014. These measures resulted in the timely utilisation of expiring other resources (OR) grants, zero outstanding direct cash transfers (DCTs) throughout the year and about 90 per cent
achievement of annual targets.

In an effort to ensure sustainability of resources and increase accountability for common results for the children of Turkmenistan, UNICEF Turkmenistan obtained the commitment of the Government to contribute public funds for the implementation of UNICEF and the Government joint work plans for 2014-2015. To ensure transparency of UNICEF Turkmenistan’s operations, at technical and annual programme review meetings, partners were informed about financial resources spent for the Programme of Cooperation. With a joint funding modality now in place, UNICEF Turkmenistan and the Government are working on the establishment of mechanisms to monitor and report on the implementation of financial commitments of the parties.

At the 2014 retreat, the staff discussed and reviewed the effectiveness and efficiency policy adopted by the office in 2013. In line with that policy, the staff used economy class for all air travel. The purchase of a vehicle was deferred at the beginning of the year; however, given the considerable financial resources required for vehicle repairs, the CMT made a decision that the purchase of a new one would be more cost-effective than maintaining the old one.

**Fund-raising and Donor Relations**

Turkmenistan’s growing wealth, reflected in its upper middle-income status (World Bank, 2012), provides an opportunity to leverage public funds in the country. Drawing from emerging opportunities, in 2013, UNICEF Turkmenistan designed a Resource Leveraging Strategy for 2014-2015 to maximise strategic investments for children, especially the most vulnerable, in support of ongoing and future joint programmes. Since then, UNICEF Turkmenistan has managed to attract public resources for the establishment of two pilot ECD centres and also to secure Government funding in the amount of US$ 1,334,303 for implementation of 2014-2015 joint work plans with the Government of Turkmenistan. However, considerable funding gaps remain, especially in social policy and child protection. UNICEF is now working with line ministries and the Ministry of Finance to put in place mechanisms to monitor and report on actual public investments into joint programmes. This is expected to increase ownership and partners’ accountability over jointly set results for children.

Turkmenistan’s steady economic growth makes the country a potential donor that can contribute funds beyond its borders, like the Russian Federation, Turkey and Kazakhstan. UNICEF Turkmenistan is undertaking steps to discuss a new role that the Government of Turkmenistan can play. Attempts taken to attract funds from potential private sector donors were only partly successful because of an underdeveloped normative framework and lack of mechanism in the country to attract and absorb corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds. The UNICEF Turkmenistan will continue seeking opportunities for attracting funding through South-South cooperation with the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), especially in the health sector, with the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ), the European Union and the Asian Development Bank in inclusive education. UNICEF will also seek new donors for DRR, and will work to launch dialogues with the Government on engaging businesses in child wellbeing issues through the expansion of CSR for social development and advancement of the unfinished child rights agenda in the country.

**Evaluation**

No evaluation was commissioned in 2014. However, UNICEF Turkmenistan provided a follow up management response to the evaluation conducted in 2013 and worked to integrate the recommendations into its programming. The Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) for 2014 was approved at the beginning of the year with two studies and one survey.
The realisation of the rights of vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, continued to be at the centre of UNICEF Turkmenistan’s research agenda. At the beginning of the year, the 2013 Study on Children Aged 0-3 Years of Age in Institutions, which highlighted the main reasons for abandonment of young children, was validated with partners. The study revealed that children with disabilities were overrepresented in the infant home population. Reasons included inadequate services that segregate these children, and lack of appropriate support in the community and physical barriers. A medical model that identifies disability as a problem persisted. The study also stressed the necessity to gain more information about older children with disabilities to understand the scope of needs and support that they and their families receive in communities. These issues were addressed by the two studies undertaken in 2014, the Study of Social Services and the Survey of the Situation of the Children with Disabilities. Their purpose was to strengthen an evidence base for advocating a shift in policy relating to children with disabilities and determine ways to address gaps in service delivery.

In ECD, a study was launched that aimed to obtain information on access to and quality of education and learning in kindergartens and parenting centres. In addition, UNICEF and partners reviewed the implementation of the ECD Programme to assess progress and identify gaps.

### Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

As part of its effectiveness and efficiency strategy, UNICEF Turkmenistan continued to adhere to a policy of cost savings. The strategy included such measures as travel by economy class for any length of travel, with the exception of transoceanic flights when business class applied, and increasing efficiency of vehicles and drivers’ work by establishing fixed hours for delivery of correspondence. Promotion of a green policy and green behaviour was further pursued. In terms of making the office “green”, the following measures were encouraged: energy saving by making it a habit to turn off the lights when the staff leave any room for 15 minutes or more, utilising natural light whenever possible, and optimisation of the use of equipment. The latter included maximisation of computer efficiency by turning computers off when the staff leave for more than a day; printing on both sides or using the back side of old documents for faxes, scrap paper, or drafts; avoiding colour printing whenever feasible; and going paperless. UNICEF continued to use a joint procurement option, which is more cost effective, making use of the UNDP procurement unit as required.

### Supply Management

UNICEF Turkmenistan has only a small supply component for the UNICEF-assisted programme and does not have a warehouse in the country. Good collaboration was established with the UNICEF Supply Division in Copenhagen to facilitate procurement of vaccines, premix for flour fortification and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) tests for the Government. Turkmenistan pays for the supply of these goods, which are received, cleared, stockpiled and distributed to end users by authorised public entities, such as the MoHMI and the National Bread Association. In 2014, the Government of Turkmenistan spent US$ 2,056,500 to procure vaccines, injection devices for immunisation and HIV tests.

Few supplies were procured locally, mainly office consumables and spare parts for computers. Play equipment and materials were provided for two pilot ECD centres. The total value of supplies procured locally in 2014 was US$ 53,400.
Security for Staff and Premises

As a member of the Security Management Team, the UNICEF Representative participated in its meetings at which measures to enhance security of staff and premises issues were discussed. The Team reviewed the Security Plan and the updated Security Risk Assessment for the country, which found that the security situation in the country remained stable and safe. The main risks were posed by natural disasters (earthquakes) as the capital city and other regions of the country are situated in seismic areas. Given increased demand to ensure the safety and security of their personnel, representatives and heads of agencies delegated a portion of their responsibilities to Country Agency Security Focal Points. The wardens system in Turkmenistan operates on a geographic principle. Its operation was reviewed to enhance wardens’ participation in the implementation of the security plan. Wardens are accountable to the Designated Official for their security-related functions, irrespective of the employing organisation. Two concentration points were established: the UN House and, as an alternative, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA) Office.

UNICEF Turkmenistan shares the premises with other UN agencies and participated in UN capacity-building activities such as drills and safety-related activities. Security guards were trained on safety and security awareness. An emergency preparedness exercise simulating actions to be undertaken within the first 24 hours by an affected UNICEF office was conducted by the RO emergency team.

UNICEF Turkmenistan took appropriate steps to manage and enhance the safety and security of the staff and premises. All UNICEF staff members were equipped with handheld Very High Frequency (VHF) stations. The United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) conducted monthly radio checks mandatory for all UN staff with VHF stations. The UNICEF VHF channel was used for radio checks. UNICEF vehicles are equipped with the required means of communications. There are Broadband Global Area Network (BGAN) and satellite phones that could be used as back up means of communications. All staff members completed courses on Basic and Advanced Security in the Field. The Business Continuity Plan was updated in 2014. Implementing the audit observation on the storage of back-up data, UNICEF Turkmenistan, in accordance with the policy on the physical and environmental security of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources, arranged to store backup media in a suitable off-site location.

UNICEF extensively contributed to the preparation of an Inter-Agency Contingency Plan (IACP) for the period 2014-2016, which was developed jointly by UN resident agencies, programmes and funds as well as the National Red Crescent Society following guidance from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA). It was a useful exercise for UNICEF as efforts were made to align UNICEF’s internal risk assessment with the IACP’s planning scenarios for the three priority risks. UNICEF ensured that IACP planning for these risks was completed in compliance with the CCCs in Humanitarian Action. The newly developed IACP identified cluster approach arrangements for lead agencies during a possible large-scale emergency. In line with global arrangements, UNICEF Turkmenistan took the lead in the Education, Nutrition, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) clusters.

Human Resources

In 2014, UNICEF Turkmenistan addressed human resources issues related to changes in staff and funding limitations with minimal disruptions and problems. The Office had only one vacant local post (ECD Specialist, NOC). This post was upgraded after the MTR in March 2013 to meet the demand for higher expertise to work on capacity building, data analysis and programme
activities in public education and ECD. Despite several rounds of recruitment, the Office could not find candidates that meet post requirements under the revised job profile. The Office re-advertised the post for a third time to review a new pool of potential candidates. The Office also hired two staff members on temporary appointments for the position of Education Officer, NOB, to fill the gap in education and ECD expertise, and NOA, for the period of the DRR project.

Upon request from Headquarters and the RO, two qualified staff provided assistance to other Country Offices. The Communication for Development Officer went for an emergency assignment to support communication activities in Tacloban, UNICEF Philippines, as a response to the Typhoon Haiyan Emergency Call. The Finance/Human Resources Assistant was deployed to Kyiv to provide human resources support to the recruitment of local temporary staff at UNICEF Ukraine.

The Office continued to review its structure and functionalities vis-à-vis country requirements and organisational priorities to identify opportunities for increased effectiveness and efficiency of the operations by combining functions, and redistributing tasks to make better use of staff strengths, competencies and capacities. A new office structure that would ensure the achievement of results established in a CPD for 2016-2010 was discussed at CMT and staff meetings. A draft CPMP proposes staffing that takes into account specifics of the country environment, a required level of expertise, the scope of operation and funding projections.

Performance appraisals were conducted on a regular basis and aimed to identify and strengthen competencies that are critical for staff members’ performance and could help them in promoting their careers.

The 2014 training plan was prepared at the beginning of the year and shared with all staff in the office. The plan was monitored and a progress review was undertaken at the end of year. The staff was further encouraged to enhance their capacity through available UNICEF on-line courses and other learning opportunities.

The staff participated in Regional and Global staff surveys. The results of the Regional survey were discussed with the staff, while the results of the Global survey were to be announced in early 2015. The staff adhered to UN Cares principles and initiated a number of activities, such as a stress management session at a staff retreat, participation in the UN Cares survey, familiarisation with post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) kit guidelines and information on the prevention of Ebola.

**Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology**

UNICEF Turkmenistan followed corporate best practices and made maximum use of shared services such as the common workspace (Sharepoint), Cloud-based Office 365, headquarters’ and RO FTP servers; internal Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) communication, Skype and Lync conferencing. These facilities and techniques helped to maintain pace with the organisational transition to improved business processes aimed at providing effective support to the office operation and programme implementation and provide access to global knowledge and intellectual property information at the lowest possible cost.

Keeping the practice of using the Supply Division as the main source of equipment procured for the office needs allows the office to meet all global UNICEF ICT standards. The same practices were applied to software standards and solutions and UNICEF Turkmenistan is in full compliance with corporate policies and standards and regularly updates them. In addition, the
office took an active role in pilot projects contributing to the development of new ICT solutions for global implementation.

To reduce the carbon footprint for effective usage and to cut paperwork, UNICEF Turkmenistan implemented several measures such as reducing the number of printers. In addition, the SAP environment promotes electronic copies instead of paper files.

**Programme Components from RAM**

**ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS**

**OUTCOME 1** Nationally, vulnerable children benefit from improved health, education and protection and prevention services

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
Rights of children to health, education and protection in Turkmenistan are at the centre of policy dialogue and advocacy with Government and Parliament. In 2014, the programme worked to help partners review and align sectoral policies with international standards and best practices; expand the knowledge base of partners on child rights; increase awareness about accountability of duty bearers for the realisation of the rights of vulnerable children, particularly children with disabilities; and enhance national technical expertise in strengthening mainstream systems to provide quality and inclusive services.

Contributing to the UNICEF 2014-2015 Strategic Plan Outcomes on Health and Nutrition and RKLA Result Areas 6 and 7, the health-systems strengthening component of the Country Programme succeeded in promoting the review, development and adoption of a series of policy documents directed at improving MCH in Turkmenistan.

In 2014, the evidence-based and equity-focused National MNCAH Strategy with a detailed Action Plan for the coming five years was finalised and adopted by the MoHMI on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the CRC and the 20th anniversary of its adoption by Turkmenistan.

Under this strategic umbrella and its commitments as part of the Promise Renewed initiative, the MoHMI developed and approved the first national policy on regionalisation of perinatal care services in the country, and intensified work for updating PHC/family medicine policy on MCH care with a focus on upgrading home visiting services. A roadmap to increase effectiveness of home visiting services based on international standards was developed by UNICEF expert group under the RKLA Result Area 7.

In addition, the MoHMI was equipped with a tool to estimate cost effectiveness of the existing home visiting system and the proposed models. Based on the local evidence of serious gaps in availability of early detection and intervention services for children with developmental difficulties, UNICEF Turkmenistan in close cooperation with the RO under RKLA Result Area 7 provided technical assistance to the Government in developing a national concept of early detection and early intervention/developmental paediatrics services. The work started with the engagement of international experts within the framework of South-South cooperation.

Support was provided to the development of a regional training package for home visiting professionals to build capacity of PHC national frontline health workers on child development and care.
In 2014, UNICEF Turkmenistan succeeded in strengthening the government’s partnership with the FFI aimed at quality assurance and sustainability of ongoing flour fortification with iron and folic acid, and introduction of food fortification with Vitamin A.

In the education sector, UNICEF supported the Government in laying the foundation for advancing inclusive education and learning in the country through concerted efforts in line with priorities under RKLA Result Area 4. Pilot family support ECD centres provided inclusive learning environment for pre-school age children, including those with developmental difficulties. The centres’ staff practised play therapy and early intervention techniques for children’s development. These services also included support for families. Parents received advice on optimal development of their children, including children with disabilities and developmentally challenged children.

The National CFS certification package – a set of regulatory national standards and indicators, guidelines and procedures to certify schools for conformance with internationally accepted standards in line with the principles of the CRC and CRPD – was ready for use by schools across the country. The Ministry of Education, with UNICEF support, plans to adapt and introduce inclusive, child-centred gender-sensitive and protective standards to kindergartens.

The international conference on inclusive education provided a strong resource platform and strengthened a political commitment to advance inclusive education. At the end of 2014, a national road map on inclusive education was developed. It will be elaborated and operationalised in 2015. This work was complemented by the introduction of the ICF-CY to the national childcare professionals, which is a significant step towards supporting the transition from the medical model to the social rights-based model of disability.

UNICEF Turkmenistan continued to engage with governmental institutions and agencies in an effort to build capacities and improve the child protection system, which remains a critical determining factor for sustainable improvement of policies, rules, regulations and inclusive environment for the most vulnerable children and their families. The Government announced its decision to open rehabilitation centres for children with disabilities, which poses a potential step back given the current tendency of decreasing the number of children in institutions. These centres are not yet functional and the scope and terms are not clear. UNICEF Turkmenistan is advocating for transformation of these institutions to non-residential day care centres for children with developmental difficulties and disabilities.

**OUTPUT 1** By 2015, health system delivers quality service in mother and child health, in line with international standards

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
In parallel with evidence-based policy advocacy and assessment of the health system with a view to strengthen MCH care, substantive assistance was provided to help increase partners’ knowledge on child health and wellbeing in demonstration regions.

Utilising approaches based on Regional Knowledge and Leadership Agenda (RKLA) Result Area 7 and capitalising on the previous year’s targeted training activities on early childhood care, the focus in 2014 was on capacity building of family doctors and nurses in child growth and development monitoring, early detection of developmental difficulties and delays using the Guide for Monitoring Child Development and WHO growth monitoring tools. The trained health workers observed 659 children and provided follow-up counselling on revealed development
problems to the children’s parents.

Further support was provided to build capacity of health managers in ECD demonstration regions in applying advanced monitoring techniques for child-related programmes. The effectiveness of the training activities of PHC facility- and community-based health workers in targeted areas was assessed applying LQAS methodology. Supportive supervision techniques were used to address the revealed capacity gaps.

Under the RKLA Result Areas 6 and 7, to address high rates of Vitamin A deficiency among children under five years of age, UNICEF Turkmenistan advocated with and provided technical assistance to the MoHMI on the adoption of a policy on Vitamin A supplementation. While progress is slow, an alternative Vitamin A fortification strategy was put on the agenda of a nutrition-related discussion with the MoHMI using the potential of the international expertise of the FFI.

Revision of existing infection control systems in health facilities with a focus on MCH care institutions was initiated as a crucial component for child survival, particularly in the neonatal period. A system for risk assessment and surveillance at the health-facility level was established under the leadership of the State Sanitary Epidemiological Service (SSES) as a follow up to the workshop on implementing effective strategies to healthcare-associated infections that was held with technical assistance from the RO.

Building on the multi-level cold chain temperature monitoring study conducted in 2013 and recommendations made on strengthening vaccine management at the district level, SSES trained specialists on application of the developed standard operating procedures to ensure quality vaccine management at all levels. As a result, the assessment of the effectiveness of the cold chain system conducted nationwide by WHO/GAVI experts in 2014 revealed high-level capacity for and quality of vaccine management at all central and velayat stores, recommending some improvements at the etrap (district) PHC facility level.

**OUTPUT 2** By 2015, education system meets international standards on ECD and CFS

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
In the framework of support to the ongoing education sector reform process with a focus on expanding access to, and quality of pre-school education and inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education, the following major outputs were achieved:

- The national CFS certification package was validated and a strategy for its implementation was elaborated
- The international conference on inclusive education is conducted and a road map on inclusive education was drafted
- Review of parenting centres is undertaken and recommendations for their strengthening was discussed with the Ministry of Education
- A mandatory pre-primary education programme was drafted
- ECD monitoring framework was elaborated and tested in a selected velayat
The national CFS certification package was validated, and a package of normative documents for provision of quality inclusive education with DRR mainstreamed in primary and secondary education was made ready for further enforcement throughout pre-school, pre-primary, primary and secondary education in the country. Importantly, support for the organisation of the international conference on inclusive education with solid external expertise provided a strong resource platform and strengthened the country’s commitment for further policy planning under the inclusive education agenda. In parallel, support under the inclusive education agenda resulted in development of the draft national road map on inclusive education for further finalisation and implementation in 2015.

The ongoing technical assistance for implementation of the National Programme on ECD and School Readiness for 2011-2015 focused on developing the institutional capacity for establishing community-based family support pre-school education services, as well as strengthening the quality and inclusiveness of pre-school education services with a focus on pre-primary learning programmes for school readiness. A review of parenting centres as part of the comprehensive review of pre-school education services identified the critical gaps to further address for developing pre-primary education programme. This work, coupled with the planned ECD survey, is expected to contribute to development of a mandatory pre-primary education curriculum for five year olds, which will be piloted in 2015 together with the proposed ECD monitoring framework.

Piloted family support ECD centres were operationalised and now provide an inclusive learning environment for pre-school age children, including those with developmental difficulties, based on newly introduced play therapy and early intervention techniques. These services also include support for families for optimal development of their children including children with disabilities and special needs.

Overall, the concerted efforts of UNICEF Turkmenistan laid a foundation for further advancing inclusive education agenda in the context of continuity of pre-school, pre-primary, primary and secondary education to further contribute to improving the quality of education in the country.

OUTCOME 3 Relevant authorities administer policies in line with international standards for vulnerable children

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF together with the Government continued to engage a wide range of stakeholders in an effort to build capacities and improve the child protection system, which remains a critical determining factor for the sustainable improvement of policies, rules, regulations and inclusive environment for the most vulnerable children and their families.

In an effort to follow up its international commitments, the Government of Turkmenistan with support from UNICEF commissioned a study on the situation of children under the age of three in institutions. The study gathered and analysed secondary data at the national, regional/infant home and individual levels, and gathered primary data through interviews with parents in maternity hospitals and infant homes.

The study identifies a typology of three groups of children who enter the care of the infant homes: 1) babies without disabilities; 2) babies and older infants with disabilities who enter mainly because of their disability or developmental difficulties; 3) babies and older infants who enter mainly for social reasons or parental illness. Existing practice in maternity hospitals to prevent relinquishment are largely ad hoc and unstructured, and rely mainly on the individual
initiative of individual staff members to give mothers advice and try to convince them to take their baby. Maternity hospital staff are not able to offer mothers much practical support or information about how they can address their problems when they leave the hospital with their newborn child.

In 2014, the Government of Turkmenistan also announced its decision to open and operate new larger institutions. However, the institutions are not functional and the scope and terms are not clearly defined.

Implementation of the Government of Turkmenistan-adopted General Programme on the Development of the Juvenile Justice made little progress. The Ministry of Adalat (Justice) prepared the terms of the national body overseeing the reform of the justice for children; however, it is currently being examined in conjunction with the need to establish a body with a wider mandate to oversee all aspects pertaining to the rights of the children and youth. In addition, no monitoring and evaluation mechanism was enacted after the endorsement of the programme, although responsible institutions and authorities were identified in the Presidential order. This is causing another bottleneck in assessing the programme’s progress.

OUTCOME 2 The country fulfils the concluding observations of the CRC on resources for children, awareness and capacities of public sector to formulate and support social policies, reporting and legislation on child rights

Analytical Statement of Progress:
The Government of Turkmenistan continues to place wellbeing of children and families at the top of its socio-economic transformation agenda through increased resources for education, health and social protection of children. The gross domestic product (GDP) growth totalled 10.3 per cent during the reporting period and significant investments were made in social infrastructure development along with a steady increase in the payments to families with children, e.g. the amount of a child grant and universal child allowances increased by 10 per cent. The Government worked to address the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and nearly 80 per cent of all observations were addressed. Special efforts were made to bring national legislation in line with international child rights standards, e.g. legislative prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings and consolidation of the rights of children with disabilities to inclusive education, etc. This can be in part attributed to continuous advocacy and technical assistance of UNICEF Turkmenistan, which were guided by relevant conventions’ observations and recommendations of treaty bodies, including the CRC, the Convention to eliminate all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Universal Periodic Review.

With UNICEF technical support, a national plan of action for children was drafted that reflects the CRC committee recommendations and incorporates priority issues to be addressed for bettering child outcomes, including data collection and analysis, and improvement of quality of services in health, development, education and child protection spheres. The Government is also considering the possibility of establishing an ombudsperson institution. The portfolio of this body and effectiveness is yet to be assessed. As a step towards further aligning its legislation with international standards, the Government adopted a new and revised version of the Law on State Guarantees of the Rights of the Child.

UNICEF Turkmenistan supported the preparation of modules on Strategic Planning and Budgeting for Children. Prepared together with the Mejlis, the Civil Service Academy and the Union of Economists of Turkmenistan, the training course is intended for government officials at
central and local levels to strengthen child-centred planning and increase investments for children. These modules will be incorporated into the curriculum of the Civil Service Academy.

In order to enrich one of the main pillars of effective and efficient policy making, the Government continued to improve its evidence base for the new policies aimed at improving the wellbeing of children. A Study of Social Services and a Survey of the Situation of Children with Disabilities were commissioned together with public agencies and civil society organisations. This study aims to further improve social protection for the most vulnerable children and families. The research recommendations highlight barriers in the realisation of child rights and provide advice on how to address gaps in service provision. The Survey of the Situation of Children with Disabilities, which is based on findings from parents of children with disabilities living in families and the teachers or carers of children attending residential boarding schools in three regions of Turkmenistan, sheds some light into understanding of their situation. Challenges persist in receiving disability pensions and in acquiring disability status. A medical model of understanding disability appears to prevail among parents and specialists. Most children have access to medical services, although many parents note the uneven quality of services and provision of medicines for their children. Questions have also emerged from the survey about the skills and knowledge among medical personnel about some forms of disability and functional disorders and an overall lack of some types of disability specialties in the health and education sectors. There is a lack of assistive technologies for communication, mobility and posture. Few children have access to modern assistive technologies and devices.

As in previous years, UNICEF Turkmenistan continued its technical support to the State Statistics Committee on finalising the Census, and assisted in building the institutional capacity of the agency to produce data relevant to children and continued to advocate for the collection and submission of data to TranMONEE. Addressing statistical data gaps, a new round of the MICS was successfully negotiated with the Government, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed and preliminary plans were made for timing and duration of the survey.

Communications for development efforts advocated for sustainability, a cross-sectoral approach and effectiveness of institutional communication capacities. As part of wider advocacy efforts, MPs conducted a nationwide advocacy event on the rights of the children with disabilities. Duty bearers put a specific focus on social inclusion of all children, empowerment of the right holders and creation of the enabling environment.

Although one of the primary bottlenecks for the timely implementation of the programme in 2014 was the delay in the signing of the work plans for 2014-2015, most of the planned activities were implemented.

**OUTPUT 1** By 2015, evidence-based budget allocations for national plans are increased and equitable

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
During the year, UNICEF Turkmenistan continued to sensitise the Government on allocation of more resources for children. To support these advocacy efforts and enrich one of the main pillars of effective and efficient policy making, the Country Office together with government and civil society organisations conducted the Study of Social Services and the Survey of the Situation of Children with Disabilities. The study and survey aimed to provide better insight into the situation of children with disabilities, identify needs of these children and their families and assess the scope and responsiveness of existing services, as well as identify service provision gaps. According to the research findings, there are a number of bottlenecks and challenges in
access to existing government services: lack of understanding of a psychosocial approach to
disability; associated stigma; considerable gaps between the service demand and supply; and
shortage of health, education and social protection specialists and frontline workers with
knowledge and skills to support children with disabilities and their families. All these affect
inclusion of children with disabilities in society and their participation in mainstream services.
The research recommendations point to an urgent need to increase investments in human
capacity development, including the development of a social work profession. There is also a
need to provide access to assistive technologies and strengthen community-based supports to
effectively address vulnerabilities of disadvantaged children and families.

To improve planning and budgeting for the children of Turkmenistan, the programme supported
the participatory development of a course on Strategic Planning and Budgeting for Children. Led
by international consultants, a group of representatives from the Mejlis (Parliament), Civil
Service Academy and the Union of Economists of Turkmenistan designed a training course that
will be used to build capacity of local and central government officials. The course is based on a
new Budget Code that will be put in effect in 2015 and was informed by national laws and
policies that target children. It will help trainees to understand the budget process and analyse
budgets to assess how far the political commitment of the government towards its young
citizens is translated into policies and programmes backed by financial outlays.

Efforts were also made to address constraints in the quality of statistical data as a determining
factor for effective and efficient government social policies. Negotiations for the next round of
MICS were concluded, and preparatory work, including capacity building of the national partners
on survey design, was commissioned. Technical support was provided to the State Statistics
Committee in finalising the Census findings and incorporating the latest GIS technology to
present the findings, which proved to be instrumental in building the institutional capacity of the
agency to produce data on child rights.

OUTPUT 2 Child rights legislation and reporting

Analytical Statement of Progress:
In a continuation of the efforts made in previous years, advancement of child-related legislation
continued to be a focus of cooperation under this output during the reporting period. In
particular, as a step towards further aligning the legislation with international standards, with the
technical support of UNICEF Turkmenistan, the Government adopted new legal acts and
revised the Law on State Guarantees of the Rights of the Child.

Furthermore, with technical support of UNICEF Turkmenistan, the Government prepared a draft
of a National Plan of Action for Children with the wide participation of representatives of the
concerned ministries and civil society. As part of the Presidential initiative to review the national
legislation, including the Constitution, and make it more coherent and compliant with
international standards, the Government was also tasked with reviewing the possibility of
establishing an institution of ombudsperson.

UNICEF Turkmenistan assisted the Government with the preparation for the hearing of its
combined second, third and fourth national reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child
through regular consultations, and clarification of processes, timelines and content with regard
to the list of issues received by the country from the Committee.

Although the Government exhibits willingness to revise and create new child rights legislation to
bring its policy and normative environment into greater compliance with international standards,
the implementation of legislation and its monitoring proves to be challenging, thus posing a major bottleneck in wider enjoyment of the rights.

**OUTPUT 3** Child rights knowledge on child rights, gender, life skills, and HIV prevention increased

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
UNICEF Turkmenistan continued to create and increase awareness for, and ownership around, the rights of vulnerable children, highlighting the leading role of government and civil society in promoting and protecting the rights of all children, particularly vulnerable children, to inclusive and quality health, education and social protection.

To mobilise target audiences for action, UNICEF Turkmenistan collaborated with the Parliament, public agencies, specialist groups and NGOs, particularly with disability organisations. The Office extensively used the opportunity of the 25th anniversary of the CRC, the 20th anniversary of ratification of the Convention by Turkmenistan, and the Government’s preparation for the hearings of state party reports on CRC and CRPD, scheduled for 2015, to create a discussion forum on child rights. A series of advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives, targeted at various stakeholders from government, civil society, children, academia and media, took stock of progress, suggested ways to bridge implementation gaps and made a strong call for making the vision of the Convention a reality for all children, as well as to highlight innovative approaches that can transform the lives of children. A high-level advocacy event highlighted the equity-focused child rights agenda across key social sectors, such as health, education and protection, and identified a way forward in realising the rights of the most excluded children in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. Implementation of the CRC concluding observations, the accountability of duty bearers, and the availability and quality of data and monitoring mechanisms were repeatedly brought to the attention of partners.

While working on a national action plan for children, members of the working group under the Inter-ministerial Commission on Turkmenistan’s implementation of the international human rights obligations and humanitarian law addressed the issues of child participation, partnerships and engagement of civil society and looked into child rights promotion, implementation and monitoring. Through a series of seminars, Parliament shared knowledge on national legislation and child rights realisation with newly elected members of local departments of education, health and social protection. These interactive activities provided an opportunity for MPs to obtain feedback on implementation of child rights legislation and increased knowledge of more than two hundred participants from local governance structures on child rights and family-related issues. More than a thousand children in summer camps and their teachers learned about the rights of children with disabilities and the social model of disability at participatory sessions led by MPs.

**OUTCOME 3** Adequate support to effective programme implementation and joint UN activities

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
In 2014, UNICEF Turkmenistan had an offsite audit. The OIAI found that the controls and processes over UNICEF Turkmenistan were generally established and functioning. None of the observations raised in the report was rated as high risk. The UNICEF Country Office prepared an action plan to address the few issues raised over programme management and operations support.

The Global Shared Service Centre (GSSC) was an overall management priority in 2014. Taking
into account the establishment of the GSSC and based on an assessment of number and volume of transactions, UNICEF Turkmenistan will undertake an interim analysis of current operations staff functions and develop an optimised office staffing strategy for a new Country Programme for 2016-2020.

A new CPD and a UNPF for 2016-2020 were developed, and by end of the year, the drafts of these documents were prepared through extensive consultations with the partners and support of the RO.

UNICEF supported the Government in preparing a country report to the CRC Committee. Prior to the CRC Committee review of Turkmenistan’s report, UNICEF participated at the CRC pre-sessional hearing, sharing the progress and challenges of CRC implementation in Turkmenistan.

UNICEF and the Government of Turkmenistan highlighted the CRC implementation using the momentum of the 25th anniversary of the CRC and 20th anniversary of Turkmenistan’s ratification of the Convention. A series of advocacy activities provided a forum to highlight the CRC standards and discuss critical issues of the realisation of the child rights in Turkmenistan with national and development partners.

**OUTPUT 1** Operational support to programme implementation

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
As part of its effectiveness and efficiency strategy, UNICEF Turkmenistan continued to adhere to a policy of cost savings. The strategy included such measures as travel by economy class for any length of travel, with the exception of transoceanic flights when business class applied, and increasing efficiency of vehicles and drivers’ work by establishing fixed hours for delivery of correspondence. Promotion of a green policy and green behaviour was further pursued. In terms of making the office “green”, the following measures were encouraged: energy saving by making it a habit to turn off the lights when the staff leave any room for 15 minutes or more, utilising natural light whenever possible, and optimisation of the use of equipment. The latter included maximisation of computer efficiency by turning computers off when the staff leave for more than a day; printing on both sides or using the back side of old documents for faxes, scrap paper, or drafts; avoiding colour printing whenever feasible; and going paperless. UNICEF continued to use a joint procurement option, which is more cost effective, making use of UNDP’s procurement unit as necessary.

**OUTPUT 2** Joint UN activities

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**
To put the rights and wellbeing of children, and especially the most disadvantaged, at the heart of social, political and economic agendas, UNICEF Turkmenistan collaborated with the government, civil society, media and academia to support shifts in public policy, fuel social engagement and increase resources for children.

The CRC’s 25th anniversary in 2014 created momentum to sustain UNICEF’s role as a credible and trusted voice for children and reach and engage a large number of stakeholders with compelling, evidence-based messages about the rights of children. It also provided an opportunity to call for actions for the most vulnerable children and families. A number of initiatives were launched to raise awareness of various stakeholders on the CRC, such as a high-level advocacy meeting, media briefings, a drawing contest, a student lecture, the launch
of The State of the World’s Children, adoption of the MNCAH Strategy and congratulations extended to all children born on CRC Day.

UNICEF Turkmenistan amplified its advocacy with various constituents to compel greater attention and action on disability issues. UNICEF and its partner NGO powerfully communicated with the broad public on the abilities of children with Down syndrome through a photo exhibition. Childcare professionals were introduced to the ICF-CY, which created an opportunity to advocate for social inclusion of children with disabilities. An international conference on inclusive education served as a platform to share good practices in inclusive education, such as an appropriate legal framework and suitable policies, practices and financing.

A high-level meeting on CRC implementation led by UNICEF was also organised to commemorate Human Rights Day jointly celebrated by UN sister agencies. Another joint UN activity – a UN exhibition and UNICEF statement at the international conference on Turkmenistan’s Neutrality Day – fostered great interest among stakeholders on child rights implementation in Turkmenistan.

OUTCOME 7 Governance structures and systems to adequately manage risks and achieve programme results

Analytical Statement of Progress:
UNICEF Turkmenistan employed management practices to improve and rationalise governance systems, and improve management and stewardship of resources and human capacities. To adequately manage risks, internal controls were strengthened to ensure effective oversight and assurance with regard to the use of UNICEF resources. The relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the UNICEF programme were prioritised. Quality of financial information was assured. Communication technology resources and assets were effectively maintained and regular stocktaking was undertaken. Implementation of administrative policies, procedures and systems was under regular control.

OUTPUT 1 Governance and systems

Analytical Statement of Progress:
The results of management meetings, such as programme coordination and operations meetings, which were convened regularly, were included into the CMT standard agenda. The CMT discussed recommendations of these meetings and monitored the implementation of agreed actions and decisions. Progress and/or completion of these actions were reported at the next CMT meetings.

Discussions also addressed UNICEF’s role in the implementation of UN reform at the country level, through joint UN initiatives (United Nations Development Assistance Framework [UNDAF], HACT, UN advocacy and communication).

The work of UNICEF statutory committees was executed during the year. All committees, including PCA, CMT, CRB, CRC, HRD, JCC and PSB, functioned on a regular basis based upon needs. UNICEF Turkmenistan paid special attention to staff-related issues and found ways to support the employees in cases of urgent needs. Office events and activities were monitored regularly.

OUTPUT 2 Effective management and stewardship of financial resources
Analytical Statement of Progress:
This output covers management of financial and other assets of the organisation, including activities and costs associated with office administration, salaries and related non-staff costs of administration and finance, rent, office furniture and equipment, office security, maintenance and vehicles. The institutional budget was utilised and implemented in accordance with the organisational needs to cover corresponding activities. UNICEF uses the national currency – the manat – for payments of national consultants and DCTs. Bank transfers are used for almost all payments.

Communications, particularly the V-Sat, was the most expensive item in the budget. The Common Services share was another large outlay as UNICEF is using a common building and is obliged to contribute its share into the budget.

The harmonised approach to cash transfers (HAICT) has been deferred in Turkmenistan due to challenges with regard to gaining access for spot checks and assessments.

OUTPUT 3 Effective and efficient management of human resources

Analytical Statement of Progress:
Based on the approved programme budget review (PBR) after an MTR, UNICEF Turkmenistan started the recruitment process for two newly established General Service posts – Education Specialist and Social Protection Specialist – and three General Service posts in the programme section: two Programme Assistants and one Program/Administrative Assistant. The General Service staff member, whose post was abolished, was selected and hired for the post of Social Protection Specialist. The post of Education Specialist was re-advertised to expand the pool of candidates. Three General Service posts were filled by the two current incumbents on abolished posts and the re-employment of a former staff member.

The performance appraisal process is closely monitored, with emphasis on identifying competencies that would greatly help staff enhance their knowledge and skills and meet performance expectations.

UN Cares in Turkmenistan succeeded in piloting an HIV training session for children of UN staff in collaboration with the UNICEF Staff Association, and introduced a Human Resources Briefing Kit, including a section on UN Cares, main sources of information on UN policies and benefits relating to HIV, and key information about post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) starter kits and custodian contact details. UN Cares materials, brochures and HIV-related information are also provided in the corridors of the UN offices in Ashgabat for the benefit of all UN staff members and any visitors. The UNICEF staff retreat concluded with a session on HIV prevention and UN Cares and best ways to ensure compliance and implementation of the Minimum Standards in the national context of Turkmenistan. Remaining challenges related to access to quality HIV counselling and testing, treatment and care services in the country.

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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Sequence Number</th>
<th>Type of Report</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMEP</td>
<td>2014/001</td>
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Other Publications

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<tr>
<td>PMTCT Counselling Chart</td>
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<td>PMTCT booklet for pregnant women</td>
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<td>PMTCT Protocol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Booklet for travellers abroad</td>
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<td>Development of the ECD material for parents on child care and monitoring of child growth and development</td>
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<td>CRC-25 years of progress booklet in Russian and Turkmen</td>
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<td>Child friendly CRC</td>
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Lessons Learned

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>Lesson Learned</td>
<td>Engaging Parents and Including All Children in Early Learning: Piloting ECD Centres in Local Communities</td>
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