

## Moldova

### Update on the context and situation of children

After nearly two decades of strong economic growth of more than 4 per cent of GDP, (IMF, 2021), the pandemic caused a strong economic contraction in 2020 estimated around –7 per cent (IMF). The World Bank’s outlook for 2021 expects a growth rate of 4.5 per cent, and Moldova is expected to reach the pre-pandemic GDP level by 2022. With the overall absolute poverty rate of 26.8 per cent in 2020, the poverty rate of children reached 26 per cent (2 percentage points more than 2019), while about 11 per cent of children lived in extreme poverty (NBS, 2021). Incomes of households with children are 25 per cent lower compared to households without children (NBS, 2020a). The poverty rate of children in rural areas (35.7 per cent) was three times higher compared to urban areas (12.5 per cent).

The inflation rate for food products was 17.46 per cent higher in December 2021 compared to December 2020 (NBS Data) threatening to exacerbate poverty. UNICEF data showed that 58 per cent of households with children have had to cut down on essential expenses such as clothing and health care, and 15 per cent on food.

As a crisis mitigation measure, the Government increased the guaranteed minimum monthly income for disadvantaged families from US\$ 146 to US\$ 172, and supported the most disadvantaged families by strengthening social assistance and energy subsidies.

The pandemic placed enormous pressure on the country’s health system, which registered over 440,000 COVID-19 cases and over 10,500 deaths. The rigid hospital system, fragmented health information system and insufficient personnel negatively affected access to quality health services. UNICEF’s analysis shows that during the pandemic, 37 per cent of households with children had less access to health services, as did people living with HIV/AIDS. Another report by the Ombudsperson found that over 60 per cent of family doctors consider that children's access to health services and prophylactic examinations was limited.

Moldova’s COVID-19 vaccination rate of 28.7 per cent is below the 40 per cent target for 2021. Coverage among healthcare workers is high (90 per cent), but only 52 per cent among the elderly (60 y.o. and higher). The immunization programme has a high overall coverage (84 to 97 per cent) without rotavirus and anti-HPV. However, vaccination coverage rates have been steadily declining over the past decade, posing a threat to the control of communicable diseases. Routine vaccination coverage continues to be below the national targets (95 per cent). In 2020 it worsened by a 5-10p.p. decline for almost all antigens for vaccine preventable diseases.

In 2020, 34,107 children (17,968 girls) were registered as being separated from their parents. The main reasons cited are emigration, followed by poverty, abandonment, and neglect. Children left behind by migrant parents are the group most exposed to neglect, abandonment, violence, and abuse.

Moldova made progress in developing family-type services and ensuring the transition from residential care to family-type care. However, some vulnerable children remain in residential care for various reasons, such as having a disability, experiencing trauma, or behavioral issues. Support services for children with disabilities (CWD) are very limited as they mostly target children who age out of the formal care system.

Violence against children and youth, including sexual abuse and severe physical violence, remains a major issue. Around 10,283 children (4,936 girls) are registered as children at-risk. Out of those, about

219 are CWD, 900 are children below 2 of age, and the majority (circa 7,000) are from rural areas.

Moldova is making progress in justice for children. The number of offences against children decreased while registered child sexual offences are increasing. Child victims are entitled to free legal aid, but other support services are still weak or lacking, and legal proceedings are lengthy. The Ombudsperson for children reported a deterioration of detention conditions due to COVID-19, including restricted access to healthcare, medication and hygiene products. Of concern is the situation of children with mothers in detention who stay there until the age of 3 with limited access to basic services.

The number of institutions and children enrolled in education are decreasing, mainly due to the significant decrease in the population. Average PISA scores are comparable with those of other countries in the region but lower than the OECD average. Students in urban educational institutions outperformed students in rural institutions, and students from low-income households performed worse than their peers. Distance learning was insufficiently available to many vulnerable children, such as the poor, rural communities without access to internet or IT devices. An estimated 16,000 students and 3,000 teachers lacked access to ICT.

Enrollment of CWD in regular schools at all levels registered great progress over the last decade. However, children with more severe intellectual disabilities remain excluded. To ensure availability of sex disaggregated data, Roma girls etc., UNICEF supports the development of an EMIS module on inclusive education. Access to early childhood education services is improving, especially for the 3 to 6 age cohort. A very positive development were the legislative changes adopted on alternative care, making it possible for private sector employers to provide childcare for their employees.

The number of schools with poor water and sanitation conditions decreased, however, schools in rural areas remain with no centralised water and sewerage system and have poor quality drinking water. According to the Ombudsperson, a third of all education institutions need to improve their WASH facilities, requiring considerable support from UNICEF and other partners.

Youth equal access to education is seriously impacted by disparities between rural and urban areas, and between the richest and poorest income quintiles. Young people from rural areas, poor households and Roma minorities face significant barriers in accessing basic education. The youth unemployment rate is 11 per cent (57,3 for males, 42,7 for females), twice the adult rate. The lack of employment opportunities is a major push-factor for migration, particularly for youth from rural areas, where more than 60 per cent of youth migrants are from. Gender differences are significant as more young women than men choose to emigrate.

## Major contributions and drivers of results

### Protection from violence and exploitation

The 2022-26 National Child Protection Programme and costed Action Plan were developed with UNICEF support in 2021 are pending Government approval. The costed Action Plan for implementing the Municipal Child Protection Strategy was developed with UNICEF support and was approved by the Chisinau Municipal Council.

UNICEF supported a policy framework analysis to address bullying in schools, leading to an amendment of the Education Code to regulate bullying in schools adopted by Parliament. A package of guidelines and tools, including digital (stopbullying.md) to prevent and address bullying in schools were developed, and over 2,000 teachers, 1,000 parents and 600 adolescents (360 girls) were trained to identify and respond to bullying. A social behaviour change communication campaign to address

bullying was conducted reaching more than 250.000 people.

Within the EU funded EVA Project, UNICEF strengthened the capacities of local multidisciplinary teams to comprehensively address domestic violence, including to prevent and respond to violence against children (VAC) in all settings. Social workers from Cahul and Ungheni improved their knowledge and skills in addressing VAC cases. Guidelines for healthcare workers to address VAC cases were developed and all health workers from Cahul and Ungheni were trained and received anthropometrical kits for home visiting programmes.

Child Protection Policies were developed/reviewed in 21 schools from Ungheni and Cahul. More than 2,600 education professionals and 1,116 children and adolescents (566 girls and 550 boys) were capacitated on preventing and addressing VAC in schools. A curriculum support for psychologists' intervention in VAC was developed. Two parenting programmes are being implemented, with over 1,426 parents (1,391 women and 35 men) graduated in 2021.

500 adolescents from 25 schools were trained to identify, report, prevent and address violence via the UPSHIFT programme. 83 adolescents (24 boys, 59 girls) participated in the UPSHIFT programme, and 7 social innovation programmes were selected to be implemented in communities to contribute to a violence free social environment for women and girls.

A VAC awareness raising campaign reached over 50,000 young people.

## **Justice for Children**

UNICEF supported the strengthening of child justice in Moldova by promoting alternatives to detention, social reintegration for children in detention, building law enforcement and justice sector professionals' capacities, and advocating for the operationalization of Barnahus type services.

In 2021, 84 children (62 victims and 22 witnesses) were interviewed in the child-friendly interviewing room previously equipped by UNICEF. An MoU was signed among relevant institutions to facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation and adopt an integrated, Barnahus type model of integrated services approach for children victims and witnesses of crime.

In 2021, 24 child offenders (a total of 40 children since 2019) completed the mandatory initial probation programme for children in conflict with the law and 56 probation counsellors were trained to apply the programme. A new e-learning course for the justice sector professionals was developed and 155 professionals trained to apply and the benefits of alternatives to detention.

As a result of UNICEF's advocacy, the Amnesty Law adopted by parliament included the safe and preferential conditions for the release of children in detention imprisoned for certain crimes, provided they pass the mandatory probation programme previously developed and institutionalized with UNICEF support.

To prepare children for release and social re-integration, four behavioural programmes were developed. 78 professionals were trained in positive interaction with children in detention and applying behavioural programmes.

Based on an "Assessment of the National Indicators on Children in Contact with the Law", the existing set of indicators was reviewed for compliance with international standards and adjusted to address data gaps, and is pending ministerial approval.

To enhance mass-media capacities to report actively and ethically on child rights, two training

packages were developed and a pool of 30 journalists increased their knowledge and skills in applying a child-friendly media reporting.

The Internal Regulation of “A.S Makarenko” school for children in conflict with the law in the Transnistrian region was adjusted and a new Code of Conduct was developed. A programme preparing children for release was also developed.

### **Every Child Survives and Thrives**

UNICEF provided technical support to the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the National Agency of Public Health (NAPH) on implementing the National Immunization Programme and increasing the demand for safe and high-quality vaccines for children. Around 0.9 million doses of vaccines for routine immunization of children were procured through UNICEF Supply Division and distributed.

A ToT was completed for 10 specialists from the Medical University (MU), health facilities, and NAPH in interpersonal communication for immunization, to support the integration of interpersonal communication aspects in the training of health professionals. Guidelines for interpersonal communication for healthcare workers in immunization were also developed.

With UNICEF support, further 228 primary healthcare workers improved their knowledge in implementing the home visiting programme, antenatal care standards, and implementation of the IMCI in Calarasi and Cantemir. All 176 nurses there were equipped with anthropometric equipment for home visiting. Furthermore, 3 offices for child health and 2 offices for antenatal classes were equipped, furnished and provided with informational materials to support pregnant women and families with children during visits.

Under the EU funded “EU4Moldova: Focal Regions programme”, 96 family doctors from Cahul and Ungheni regions received trainings on the practical application of the guidelines for "Surveillance of Healthy Child Development". Additionally, 265 family nurses from both districts were trained on the implementation of the adjusted Standards for child growth and development (home visiting programs), while 250 family nurses from 27 primary health centres from Cahul and Ungheni districts were equipped with anthropometry equipment for home visits. Around 16,000 copies of the Family Cards for parents, containing all the relevant information related to the child growth and development, including immunization and nutrition, were produced.

Additionally, 15 professionals from socio-medical sectors from Cahul region and 18 specialists from the Republican Children's Rehabilitation Center received trainings on Early Childhood Intervention (ECI). High quality, transdisciplinary, methodological support to 16 families with small CWDs or developmental delay from both regions was provided. Transdisciplinary ECI services were provided to another 67 CWDs or developmental delays from remote areas of the country.

Modules for the antenatal classes, including those on postpartum depression, vaccination, danger signs, risks in pregnancy were developed and applied in both regions, while informational materials on benefits of breastfeeding, food diversification, hand washing, prevention of obesity in children, vaccination counselling, oral health were developed and disseminated.

### **Every Child Learns**

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) to finalize the new Education Sector Plan (ESP) which includes a long-term Education Strategy 2030, mid-term Programme and Action Plan (2021-2025) and accompanying Simulation Models. This ESP adoption is expected in

2022.

UNICEF supported the development of the Concept Note for the National Programme on Inclusive Education, 2022–2025, which is under preparation, and successfully advocated with the Government to double its financial support to Inclusive Education. UNICEF’s report on Out-of-school children supported MER in identifying and developing a monitoring framework for children who have high rates of absenteeism, dropout, or are at risk of dropout.

UNICEF helped enhance the digital skills of around 10,000 (80 per cent) of pre-school staff. This will help to develop and apply digitalized learning methodologies benefitting 134,158 (89 percent) pre-school age children. Around 3000 early education professionals, including all EMIS (Education Management Informational System) focal points, strengthened their capacities to provide real-time information on the situation in pre-schools, including infrastructure and access to WASH.

Over 1000 young children, including CWD and Roma, benefitted of access to inclusive early education services and 163 children with special education needs (SEN) had access to continuing learning through provision of educational kits, didactical materials, cognitive toys, furniture, ICT equipment and rehabilitation of preschools.

Under the EU funded “EU4Moldova: Focal Regions programme UNICEF supported the refurbishment of two kindergartens in Cahul and Ungheni and the procurement of educational materials, furniture and ICT equipment benefitting 790 children of improved access and quality of education. Additional didactical materials and cognitive toys were procured for 37 kindergartens and 32 schools from the same regions. Additionally, 466 preschool teachers and 450 primary school teachers were trained in child centered approaches and formative assessment.

### **Every Child has an Equitable Chance in Life**

A tool measuring multiple deprivations among children was tested in the Rezina district and the results were presented to Local Public Authorities - LPAs and development partners. This tool can assist LPAs to identify the main child deprivations , and develop local level strategies, action plans, services and interventions to address them. UNICEF plans to replicate and scale-up the model in other regions in 2022.

Within the EU funded “EU4Moldova Focal Regions Programme” implemented in partnership with UNDP, UNICEF supported the capacity building of LPAs in Cahul and Ungheni on Public Finance Management, including strategic planning and budgeting. The PFM training modules were specifically tailored to the needs of the officials in the two municipalities. A total of 40 staff at the municipal and regional level took part in the training workshops.

UNICEF also supported the bridging of data and knowledge gaps related to the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic. In a follow-up to the Best of UNICEF Research (BOUR) in 2020 nominated study on assessment on the impact of the pandemic on the level of remittances and the coping strategies of families, UNICEF expanded its analytical focused on Roma families, CWD and the impact of distance learning. The report shows that households with children with disabilities and Roma experienced greater financial challenges, and had less access to nutrition, education, and health services. The study findings and recommendations were presented as policy options to the government and development partners, and UNICEF will continue to advocate for their implementation in 2022.

### **Youth and Adolescents**

UNICEF supported the establishment of a 10-member UN Adolescents and Youth Advisory Panel (AYAP) to provide support to all UN agencies in programming, reporting, advocacy and other activities. AYAP and UNICEF organized 3 advocacy campaigns and actions on key issues affecting adolescents' rights in Moldova.

Piloting programs for caregivers of adolescents are piloted in 4 key districts of Moldova (Singerei, Chisinau, Cahul and Ungheni). Around 100 specialists were trained and engaged in delivering parenting sessions to over 300 parents of adolescents. Approximately 1500 adolescents and 800 caregivers were engaged in social media campaigns on positive parenting.

U-report Moldova launched over 15 polls and informational questionnaires to about 30,000 young people, parents, and children. U-report issued 12 monthly bulletins informing the public and policy makers about the views of young people on issues that affect them.

The capacity gap assessment of pupils' councils in Moldova was completed and presented to MER. UNICEF plans to establish pupils' councils in 15 localities in Cahul and Ungheni to pilot democratic participation mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating quality of schooling and youth transition to employment.

## **Child Rights Monitoring**

UNICEF support to the office of the Child Rights (CR) Ombudsperson led to a commitment to be part of the European Network of CR Ombudspersons (ENOC) -UNICEF initiative for a multi-country impact assessment of COVID-19 states' measures on children's rights to protection. Support was provided to the Ombudsperson to conduct a Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) with special focus on the rights of children in detention institutions. UNICEF also supports the CR Ombudsperson with the production of regular reports and information on the realization of child rights in Moldova, which are publicly available and used for advocacy.

Support to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) resulted in improvement of data on children to monitor national policies and SDGs. The finalized child-related SDG road map highlighting data gaps proposed a way forward to include all indicators into national policies and monitoring frameworks. Several key statistics on children were updated, including a child poverty analysis, while NBS staff improved their capacity in data visualization.

A comparative analysis of education statistics highlighted the need to enhance the quality of data and informational flows to reduce the reporting burden on educational institutions at all levels.

## **Response to COVID-19**

UNICEF and WHO supported the development and costing of the National Vaccine Deployment Plan (NVDP), and a simulation exercise to prepare the country to receive, distribute, store and administer the SARS-Cov-2 vaccines. On March 5th, Moldova was the first country in Europe to receive COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX facility. Since then, the country was supported to receive over 2.7 million vaccine doses and fully vaccinate a 1/3 of its population.

With generous funding from our major donors (USAID, UKAid), and donations provided through the Multi Partner Trust Fund, UNICEF was able to support the national COVID-19 immunization efforts.

To enhance vaccine storage capacities, UNICEF procured and distributed 432 units of cold-chain equipment (including one ultracold chain freezer). UNICEF supported the procurement of 3 million syringes, equipment and medical furniture to organize Vaccination Marathons immunizing over 12,000

people, and provided transportation of mobile vaccination teams of MU that reached additional 1,000 people in rural areas.

To support vaccine uptake, UNICEF and WHO helped MoH to develop a Communication strategy and Action Plan on COVID-19 immunization, and implemented a nationwide awareness campaign „Be safe: get COVID-19 vaccine” including targeted messages on the benefits of vaccination, printed materials, video and audio messages, and a webpage.

UNICEF equipped all immunization centres with visuals and information materials to increase confidence in the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine among health workers. Additionally, 450K brochures and 10K posters, were distributed at the polling sites during the Parliamentary elections, while the partnership with Viber to promote the MoH channel on COVID-19 immunization helped increase the number of followers from 17,000 to 38,000.

Infection protection and control (IPC) support was provided to all health, education and child protection facilities. Over 80,000 surgical masks, 24,800 FFP2 respirators, 10,000 face shields, 200,000 gloves for health facilities staff were procured reaching 2,800 front line health workers from hospital care. Training on IPC was provided to over 1,500 healthcare workers from 290 Primary Healthcare Centres and 37 Public Health Centres in the country.

UNICEF and national partners trained around 200 OBGYN, neonatologists and nurses from both banks of the Nistru River on emergencies in neonatal and perinatal care in condition of SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

Essential hygiene products were provided to over 8000 frontline workers in 1,300 Primary Health Centres and 41 Youth Friendly Health Services nationwide, including over 50,000 litres of sanitizer and 40,000 litres of liquid soap. 29 medical institutions providing care to pregnant women and newborns, including 9 institutions from Transnistrian region received essential WASH/hygiene supplies. UNICEF provided 900 litres of disinfectant, 700 l of liquid soap, more than 4,800 diapers and other WASH supplies for children and Municipal Hospital for Contagious Diseases for Children.

UNICEF helped children learn safely in school by training 12,466 schoolteachers and 30,000 staff in schools and local administrations in IPC. UNICEF provided over 1,000 litres of hand sanitizer, 4,600 non-sterile examination gloves and over 10,000 masks for preschool, primary, secondary pupils with hearing deficiencies. 163 educational kits (books, stationary) from UNICEF/Global Partnership for Education, aimed to promote access to continuing learning for children with SEN. UNICEF purchased WASH/hygiene supplies for over 20 residential institutions for children, reaching approximately 1500 children.

## **UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships**

As a part of the 2019–2022 joint United Nations programme to strengthen human rights in the Transnistrian region, UNICEF contributed to improving child friendly justice system by bringing the regional normative framework closer to international standards, ensuring compliance with the rights of children in custody, strengthening the capacities of law enforcement and justice sector professionals in working with children in contact with the law, and promoting child rights through the media.

UNICEF Moldova partners with UNDP and UN Women to implement two large EU-funded joint projects, EU4Moldova: Focal Regions, and EVA Project: Strengthened Gender Action in Cahul and Ungheni. Both focus on the districts of Cahul and Ungheni. (More information about the partnerships and projects can be found under the section, Major Contributions and Drivers of Results.)

UNICEF Moldova partners with WHO in supporting the Ministry of Health vaccination against SARS-CoV-2. Valuable financial contributions from GAVI and COVID19 Delivery Support (CDS) funds, as well as USAID targeting strengthening cold chain, capacity of health care workers in provision of immunization services, waste management and demand generation for vaccination have enabled the results reported in the previous section.

Under UBRAF umbrella, UNICEF supported the Assessment of impact of COVID19 on access to services for people living with HIV (PLWH). The assessment was designed and conducted in close partnership with UNAIDS, Ministry of Health, Coordination Unit of the HIV prevention and control programme, health service providers and CSOs. The launch of the final results and the subsequent development of a road map for improving services for PLWH under the leadership of MoH is planned for early 2022.

UNICEF partnered with WHO, UNFPA and UNAIDS and provided joint support to the carrying out of the Assessment of the COVID-19 impact on the Continuity of Essential Health Services. Within the assessment, UNICEF helped analyse the impact of COVID-19 on mother, child and adolescents' health services. The Integrated Assessment Report is to be finalized in early 2022.

UNICEF supported the evaluation of the current UNSDCF 2018-2022 as part of the process for developing the next UNSCDF 2023-2027. Once completed, the evaluation report was externally assessed with the support of UNICEF and received very high marks for quality based on UNEG standards for evaluation reports. Additionally, UNICEF supported the drafting of the Common Country Analysis 2021 in partnership with all UN resident and non-resident agencies in Moldova, under the coordination of the UN Resident Coordinator.

Our achievements are not purely our own. Apart from government, development and donor partners, our NGO partners were invaluable in implementing joint solutions to the problems affecting the Moldovan families and children in the context of the pandemic. UNICEF partnered with 17 national, local and international civil society organizations to deliver services, trainings and supplies to children, families, duty bearers and other stakeholders in the country. These results were achieved under difficult conditions and tight deadlines, so we would like to extend our special gratitude to national implementing partners and applaud their contribution.

## Lessons Learned and Innovations

### *Agile programming in the context of the pandemic*

Having made considerable adjustments to the Country Programme as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Moldova CO continued to adapt to the everchanging circumstances on the ground. While most of the support to the country's management of the pandemic in 2020 was around infection prevention and control, as well as supporting the secondary impact of the pandemic by ensuring the continuity of essential services in health, education, child protection and others, this year the CO spent considerable human, technical and financial resources on supporting the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine procurement, distribution, storage and delivery, as well as communication and outreach activities to encourage vaccine uptake.

The lessons learned from last year related to teleworking and managing partnerships and programmes remotely were extremely valuable and enabled the CO to refocus its attention and quickly adjust its activities to include the much needed vaccination support. Working closely with WHO and the Ministry of Health, UNICEF supported the development and implementation of the National Vaccine Deployment Plan and the accompanying Communication Strategy. Being part of the national

coordination teams responsible for implementing both was invaluable. It helped the country secure more than 2 million vaccination doses and vaccinate more than one million people.

### ***Intensifying Youth engagement***

A number of initiatives were implemented to ensure a more comprehensive, consistent and impactful youth engagement. These activities were informed by the lessons learned from our engagement with youth over the past years, and used tools and approaches that proved effective in the country and elsewhere. This included a more strategic use of social media for two-way communication with youth, strengthened real-time data collection, engagement with youth organizations and others.

For the first time, UNICEF, in partnership with UNFPA helped establish a UN Adolescents and Youth Advisory Panel (AYAP). The role of the 10, openly and transparently selected AYAP members is to advise the UN agencies on all aspects of their work, from planning, to programming and implementation, reporting, advocacy and others. AYAP became functional in the fall of 2021, and has already made an impact on our work, participating in advocacy campaign, planning the new UNSDCF, and others.

Youth engagement through social media was significantly scaled up. U-Report was used to not only collect real-time views and opinions of youth, but to also share messages and information with youth to support our efforts to address bullying, violence, COVID-19 and others. Facebook was used as a platform to engage youth in real time by organizing live talk shows to inform and engage youth and adolescents on a variety of topics related to the pandemic, but also on violence, mental health and others. In partnership with VIBER, UNICEF reached youth with messages on anti-bullying and kindness as part of its national campaign.

Lastly, through the innovative UPSHIFT programme implemented in two regions, Cahul and Ungheni, 500 adolescents from 25 schools (14 Ungheni, 11 Cahul) were trained on community problems identification, reporting, preventing and addressing all forms of violence, and 7 social innovation programmes were selected for implementation to contribute to creating violence-free communities, with a special focus on women and girls.

### ***How to programme more effectively – lessons from the Country Programme Evaluation and the Gender Programmatic Review***

With the support from ECARO, UNICEF Moldova benefited from an evaluation of its Country Programme of Co-operation between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and UNICEF 2018-2022 (hereinafter: CPE). The evaluation's purpose is to strengthen accountability of UNICEF to national stakeholders by evaluating UNICEF's contribution to the results for children at scale especially for the most vulnerable. The CPE evaluated the programme relevance, coherence and impact, and provided some valuable lessons learned that are currently being considered in developing the next CPD 2023-27.

One of the most relevant findings of the CPE was that UNICEF's efforts over the programme cycle focused on developing and strengthening the legal frameworks and policies addressing the legal bottlenecks that impede the realization of child rights. The findings revealed that a lot of the identified gaps that remain are related to institutional capacities and capacity gaps, hence the UNICEF focus should shift to these.

Another recommendation from the CPE was to invest additional efforts in increasing public spending on key child rights priority areas by improving budget planning and political advocacy. Insufficient budget allocations for plans and commitments for children are a major impediment that needs to be addressed in all aspects of the programme from the very beginning of implementation of activities, as

it was done successfully within the Youth Friendly Health Services programme.

A third finding and a recommendation from the CPE is related to the need to ensure programming is targeted at the right level, either central or subnational. The latter is especially important to affect real change in the lives of children, but it is frequently plagued by a lack of knowledge, capacity or resources. It is therefore imperative for programming to ensure local authorities and stakeholders are provided with information on the benefits of decentralization, and to strengthen their capacities to provide inclusive and quality care for children.

Similarly, with ECARO's support the CO benefitted from a Gender Programmatic Review (GPR), assessing potential entry points for gender mainstreaming and priority areas for investment in the next programme cycle. The GPR provided invaluable sector-specific and general recommendations, such as expanding existing programmes with the potential to achieve gender transformative results, mainstream gender evenly in all programme outputs, enhance the gender lens of specific interventions, and others.

All recommendations from the CPE and the GPR were already considered for the remaining period of the current CPD 2018-2022, and reflected in the planning for the next CPD.