

Region: ECAR

Office: Moldova

Evaluation Year: 2024

Evaluation Year: Formative and summative evaluation of childcare and deinstitutionalisation (DI) reforms in Moldova from 2009 to 2022

Evaluation Report Sequence Number: #Moldova/66/2024/20200

Person in Charge for Follow Up to Management Response: Flore Rossi, Chief Child Protection, UNICEF Moldova

Overall Response to the Evaluation: The evaluation was conducted rigorously, and the findings are reasonable and well-supported by the evidence collected. The lessons learned and recommendations provide a solid basis for informing the next phase of childcare and DI reforms in Moldova.

Planned Use of Evaluation: The evaluation findings highlight several areas that require attention and interventions including gaps relating to children with disabilities and "hard-to-place" groups; strengthening the social service workforce; enhancing coordination and alignment at the local level; ensuring sustainability through domestic financing; and informing evidence-based decision making. The evaluation also provides a robust evidence base that can inform policy and programming decision via strengthening the M&E system; informing the next phase of reforms; facilitating knowledge sharing and learning; and aligning national priorities with international and EU

RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS:						
Evaluation Recommendation 1: Policy						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key line Ministries (particularly MLSP, MER, MoH and MoF), in close consultation with NGOs, develop a costed national action plan bringing together the various policies relevant to DI and childcare reform into an actionable road map for the next three years. The action plan should be based on a ToC and include time-bound plans for the implementation of the following recommendations. The action plan should also factor in broader, cross-cutting or linked reforms (e.g. in child rights monitoring, education, social protection, healthcare, child justice etc.). 						
Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office/Section	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
To provide support to the MLSP (technical knowledge and expertise) in developing a comprehensive National Plan for the Transformation of the Residential Care System 2024-2027.	Child Protection	Flore Rossi	Dec 2024	Underway	UNICEF is working in partnership with the MLSP and civil society organizations (CSOs) to develop a comprehensive National Plan for the Transformation of the Residential Care System 2024-2027. A two days workshop was already organized to prepare the national and local Action Plan for the Transformation of the Residential Care System.	
Evaluation Recommendation 2: Continuum of care and social services:						
As part of the RESTART reforms, the MLSP, with the support of the MoF:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invests in and ensures the consistent availability of primary and secondary <u>family support services</u> in all districts to prevent unnecessary separation of children from their families, particularly of children aged zero to three years of age; Maintains the <u>gatekeeping and case management</u> mechanisms developed during the evaluation period; Further diversifies foster care (APP/CCTF) by <u>recruiting, training and supporting foster carers</u> to look after children with more complex needs, including by providing commensurate salaries, specialist training and support networks; Invests in and expands specialist <u>services for children with disabilities</u> and their parents/carers in all districts to prevent their institutionalisation and support their integration in the family and community, including rehabilitation services for children with severe disabilities, personal assistance, daycare and respite care, with commensurate allowances for parents/carers; Expands social services to <u>support children aging out of the childcare system</u> to transition to more independent living arrangements but which still provide social and pastoral support; Funds the development of community-based rehabilitation <u>programmes for children at risk of coming into conflict with the law</u> including family-focused social work and counselling; Develops a framework for the <u>accreditation and licensing of all alternative care providers</u> (including CCTF), including regular monitoring of the quality of alternative care services by an independent body. 						
Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:						

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Section	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage	Actions taken	Supporting documents
To provide technical and financial support to the MLSP and Chisinau Municipality in consolidating relevant services, including family support and services for children with disabilities, as well as recruiting and training of staff.	Child Protection	Flore Rossi	Dec 2025	Underway	2024-2025 RWPs with the MLSP and with Chisinau Municipality signed with direct financial and technical support for strengthening social services (including foster care, family support and specialized services for children with disabilities) UNICEF supported the recruitment and training of child protection specialists, guardianship authorities, and members of multidisciplinary teams.	2024 RWP with MLSP
To support Chisinau Municipality to develop and/or strengthen relevant services such as Maternal centers, Local Integration Services for children ageing out of care, and Foster Care Services (part of the 2024-2025 RWP signed with Chisinau Municipality).	Child Protection	Flore Rossi	Dec 2025	Underway	2024-2025 RWPs with Chisinau Municipality signed	
To advocate to the MLSP on incorporation of children at risk of committing crimes into the national legislation.	Child Protection	Flore ROSSI	Dec 2025	Underway	UNICEF advocated for incorporating children under the age of criminal responsibility in the Law on protection of children at risk. This will pave the way for developing and implementing relevant services and programs.	Law 140 amended in 2024 to cover children at risk of committing crime GD 270 will be subsequently amended in 2024
To advocate for strengthening the work of the gatekeeping commissions and enhancing intersectoral collaboration (approval of the GD).	Child Protection	Flore ROSSI	July 2024	Completed	Advocacy with the MLSP in developing and approving relevant GD. This is also a priority for the new project that UNICEF will implement on Care Reform and DI with the support of the government of Sweden.	GD 241/2024 approved by the Govt

Evaluation Recommendation 3: Deinstitutionalisation

- The MLPS introduces a moratorium on new placements of children under the age of seven years in residential care.
- The MLSP develops a plan for and monitors the deinstitutionalisation of all children remaining in its large-scale RIs in Hincesti, Orhei, Chisinau and Balti (with a view to their closure and transformation within the next three years), and plans permanent care arrangements for each child (e.g. family; kinship care; long-term fostering; adoption).
- The stakeholders in recommendation 1 develop plans for the progressive scaling down and deinstitutionalisation of children in all remaining public and private temporary placement centres and community houses and the reorganisation of these settings into community-based services or temporary family-type settings for no more than six children for a maximum of six months.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Section	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage	Actions taken	Supporting documents
To provide support to the MLSP (technical knowledge and expertise) in developing Sub-national Plans for the Transformation of the Residential Care System 2024-2027 (regional - according to the administrative territorial structure, municipal (Chisinau), and autonomous territorial unit (UTA) Gagauzia).	Child Protection	Flore Rossi	Dec 2024	Underway	UNICEF supported National Planning Workshop held in July 2024 to initiate the development of detailed, time-bound implementation plans for the DI process at the national, regional (according to the administrative territorial	

The plans include components focused on prevention of family separation, as well as support for children aging out of the care system thus ensuring a continuum of care and support to vulnerable children and families.					structure), municipal (Chisinau), and autonomous territorial unit -UTA Gagauzia) levels. DI is a priority as part of the new UNICEF project on Care Reform and DI with the support of the government of Sweden. This project will continue to strengthen the social services including alternative care services.	
Evaluation Recommendation 4: Inclusive education:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministry of Education and Research (MER) and the Republican Centre for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance, in collaboration with Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance Services and NGOs in the sector, and with the support of the MoF, continue to develop <u>educational support services</u> to ensure inclusive education of children with disabilities and/or with special educational needs in mainstream schools, including pre-school and vocational education, and their smooth and supported transition between educational levels. 						
Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:						
Actions planned	Responsible Office/Section	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage	Actions taken	Supporting documents
To support the MER in conducting an analysis of the inclusive education (IE) system.	Education	Galina Bulat	July 2025	Not started	Discussion with the MER initiated	
To support the psycho-pedagogical assistance structures in developing IE services for children with complex needs; and will donate assistive technologies.	Education	Galina Bulat	Dec 2025	Not started		
Evaluation Recommendation 5: Monitoring & Evaluation						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MLSP conducts an <u>inventory of all remaining residential care settings</u> in Moldova to monitor their number, location, capacity (total number of beds), profiles of children placed in residential care, and the duration of placements, to inform the plans above; In developing its information management system for the social services system, ensures that it collects <u>data on the total number of referrals of children at risk to gatekeeping commissions</u>, the types of services to which they are referred and outcomes of these cases, including the number of cases in which family separation is prevented. 						
Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Partially Agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: Inventory of residential care settings has been performed by Changing the Way We Care in 2022 as well as by the MLSP as part of preparatory work for the development of National and sub-national DI Plans in 2024.						
Actions planned	Responsible Office/Section	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage	Actions taken	Supporting documents
To advocate for setting up an electronic child protection information and case management system (approval of the GD).	Child Protection	Flore Rossi	July 2024	Completed	Advocacy with MLSP in developing and approving relevant GD	2024 GD on CPIS approved by the Govt.
Evaluation Recommendation 6: Social Service Workforce Strengthening:						
The MLSP develops a five-year plan for the planning, development and support of the SSWF, with a focus on child protection specialists within the child protection system. This should include:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A <u>mapping of the social service workforce</u>. (SSWF) to understand their number, locations, workloads, training needs, quality of supervision, job satisfaction and factors driving turnover/retention; An <u>action plan for the effective planning, development and support</u> of the SSWF; Development of <u>compulsory pre-service and refresher training for child protection specialists</u> and other relevant categories of social service workers on topics such as working with vulnerable children and families to prevent family separation, best interests decision-making, monitoring children in the care system and supporting their integration into family placements, and permanence planning. 						
Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Partially agree						
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: A mapping of the SSWF has been performed under the 2022 Situational Assessment of Social Services For Vulnerable Children and Families performed by Changing the Way we Care Project funded by USAID, as well as by the MLSP in preparation for the RESTART reform enforced in 2024.						
Actions planned	Responsible Office/Section	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage	Actions taken	Supporting documents
To incorporate training and capacity building activities into the relevant	Child Protection	Flore Rossi	Dec 2025	Underway	Current and future partnerships/ PDs with	

partnerships with NGOs and will advocate with the MLSP for setting up a robust initial and continuous training for SSWF.					AVE Copiii, TdH, La Strada, CNPAC, P4EC, CCF and Keystone	
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Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 7: Intersectoral coordination

- National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights keeps childcare and DI reforms as a priority issue on its agenda and uses the forum to ensure coherent decision-making among stakeholders towards this aim, including with NGOs and LPAs through local councils.
- MLSP, MER, MoH, MoF and childcare NGOs consider re-establishing a coordination council to work with LPAs and remaining RIs to ensure the coherent implementation of the reforms at all administrative levels.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Section	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage:	Actions taken	Supporting documents
To advocate keeping childcare and DI reforms as a priority issue on NCCRP agenda	Child Protection	Flore Rossi	Dec 2024	Underway	The issue raised at the ad-hoc meeting with the State Chancellery / NCCRP Secretariat and key line ministries	24 6 NCCRP MoM

Evaluation Recommendation 8: Social and Behavioural Change

- The MLSP with the support of the MoF, plans and implements a country-wide social and behavioural change strategy to promote the importance of guardianship care provisions for children left behind and DI, and recruit potential foster carers and adopters, particularly for children who are hard to place (children with disabilities; children with special educational needs; Roma; children at high risk of offending). These efforts should be coordinated with parallel social and behavioural change strategies to eliminate discrimination, reduce violence against children and the social / educational inclusion of children with disabilities.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Partially agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: The [2022-2026 National Program for Child Protection](#) partially covers the recommended actions (Objective 3.3 Strengthening family-type alternative care services and ensuring their availability and accessibility for each child)

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Section	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
To advocate for developing a country-wide social and behavioural change strategy and provide support in recruiting and training foster carers.	Child Protection	Flore Rossi	July 2025	Underway	A campaign was launched in 2023. The efforts will continue in 2024-2025	

Evaluation Recommendation 9: Emergency preparedness

- Throughout all childcare and DI programming, all stakeholders (line Ministries, LPAs, NGOs and UNICEF), factor in strategies and contingencies for emergency/crisis preparedness rather than reflect these as assumptions/risks to their ToCs/programming.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Section	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage	Actions taken	Supporting documents
To support the strengthening of the MLSP capacity in the field of child protection and refugee crisis management	Child Protection	Flore Rossi	Dec 2025	Underway	The activity is specified under 2024-2025 RWP signed with the MLSP and UNICEF is provided financial and technical support to the MLSP to integrate refugee caseload into the national child protection and social system.	

Evaluation Recommendation 10

- UNICEF: Provide technical expertise, advocacy and strategic advice to implement the recommendations above and support the government and NGO stakeholders to mobilise financial and material resources for this purpose.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible Office/Section	Responsible Person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage	Actions taken	Supporting documents

To elaborate EMR in close consultation and collaboration with the MLSP and other key partners to address and implement the recommendations	Child Protection	Traian Turcanu	July 2024	Completed	EMR elaborated, endorsed by the Management and properly noted in EISI / EMR system	EMR uploaded into EISI
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Developed by: Traian Turcanu, Child Protection Specialist (under the guidance and support of Elena Laur, M&E/CRM Specialist and in cooperation with relevant Programme colleagues (Child Protection, Education, SBC)

Agreed by: Flore Rossi, Chief Child Protection, UNICEF Moldova

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