

Strengthening Local Capacity in Monitoring and Evaluation in Moldova

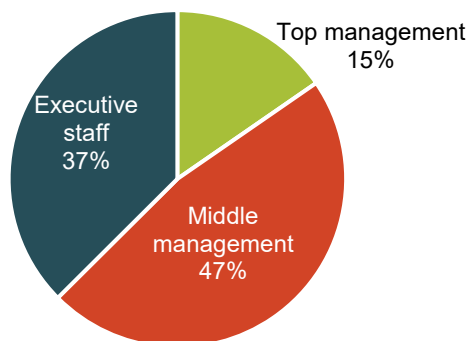
Background

There are 37 Territorial Social Assistance Structures (TSAS) in Moldova. TSAS are specialized local bodies with the mission to improve the quality of life of individuals and families by providing support to prevent, reduce or overcome adversity and promote social inclusion. They are also important producers of data on social assistance, reporting on beneficiaries to the central and district governments and other stakeholders. Following an assessment of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity in 2020, TSAS have been developing and implementing an M&E capacity strengthening plan with support from D4I. The results of the assessment showed that, despite a continuously increasing demand for data from different users, TSAS have faced challenges in assuring data quality as well as in the analysis and use of these data to inform decision-making, e.g., limited expertise with available software for basic analyses and data visualization, challenges in formulating performance indicators, and confusion between data reporting and data use.

Training and Mentoring in Data Review and Use

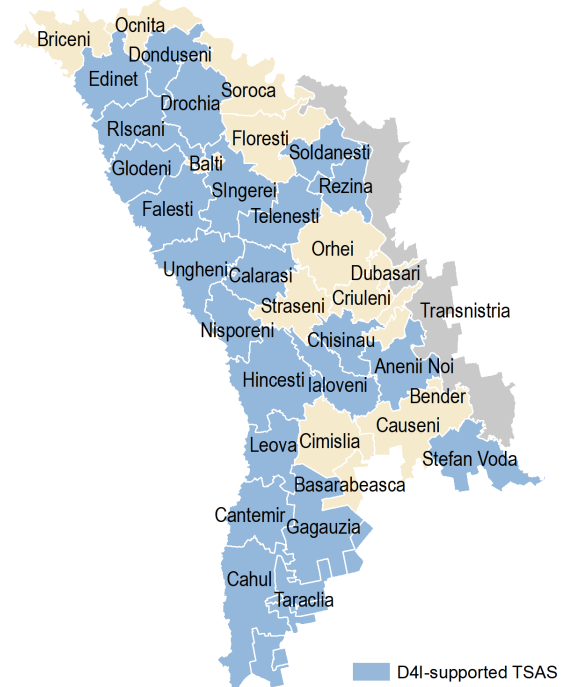
To address these challenges, D4I developed an M&E training curriculum and conducted training programs for all TSAS staff. The project also provided mentoring to 25 priority TSAS and their partners from education, health, and public safety sectors, whose service area covered 74% of the population of Moldova (Figure 1). Mentoring focused on implementing data review and use meetings as part of regular business processes at the district (*rayon*) level and was delivered in partnership with the National Social Assistance Agency. In all, 98 data review and use meetings were conducted, engaging 1,462 participants (1,320 women and 142 men) of whom about two-thirds were decision-makers (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Participants in data review and use meetings, by category (%)



these decisions has led to the establishment of 18 new child protection services and the expansion of 124 existing social services, reaching 4,080 children (Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6).

Figure 1. TSAS engaged in data review and data use processes supported by D4I



Data-Driven Decisions and Achievements for Children and Families

Decisions resulting from these meetings led to: (1) capacity strengthening of TSAS staff and guardianship authorities to improve data on children at risk and children with migrant parents; (2) improving access to and quality of social services provision in the rayon; (3) revising the budget and local regulatory framework to facilitate better support for children in need; (4) enhancing partnerships between civil society and social services providers; (5) raising public awareness on parenting responsibilities to combat child neglect. Action on



Figure 3. Number of new social services set up during 2022–2023, by type

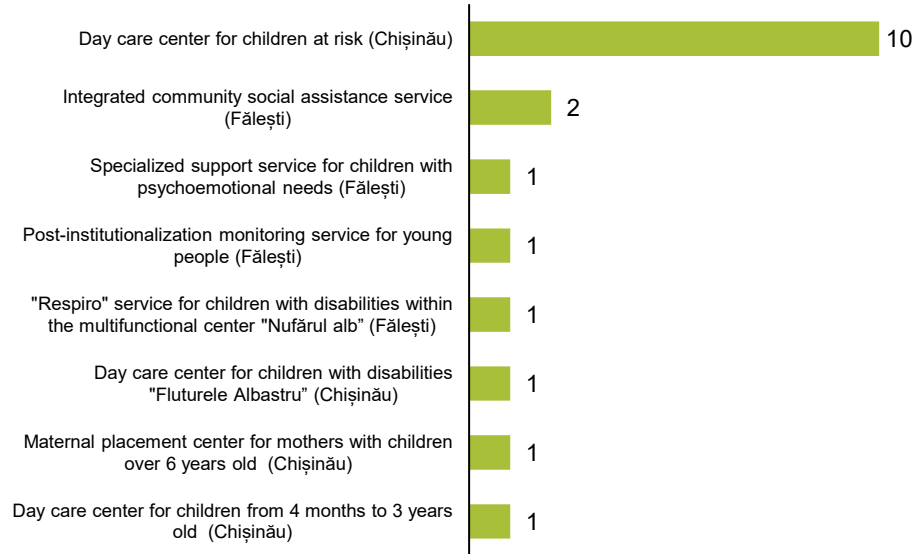


Figure 4. Number of existing social services which were expanded during 2022–2023, by type

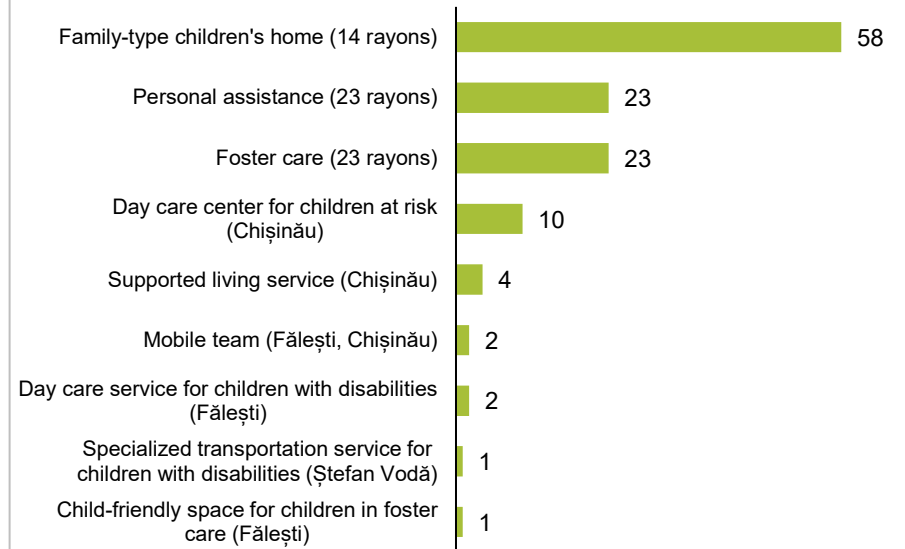


Figure 5. Number of beneficiaries of social services set up in 2022–2023 year, by type of service

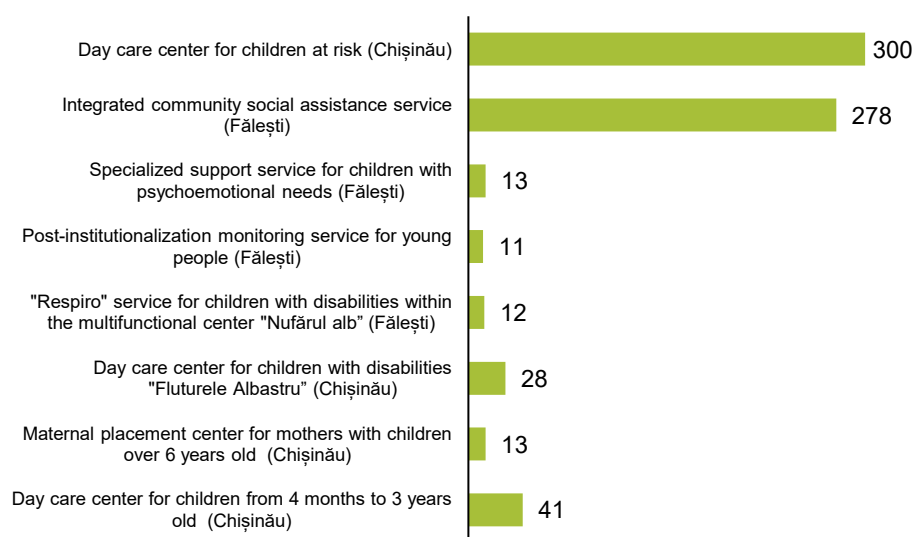
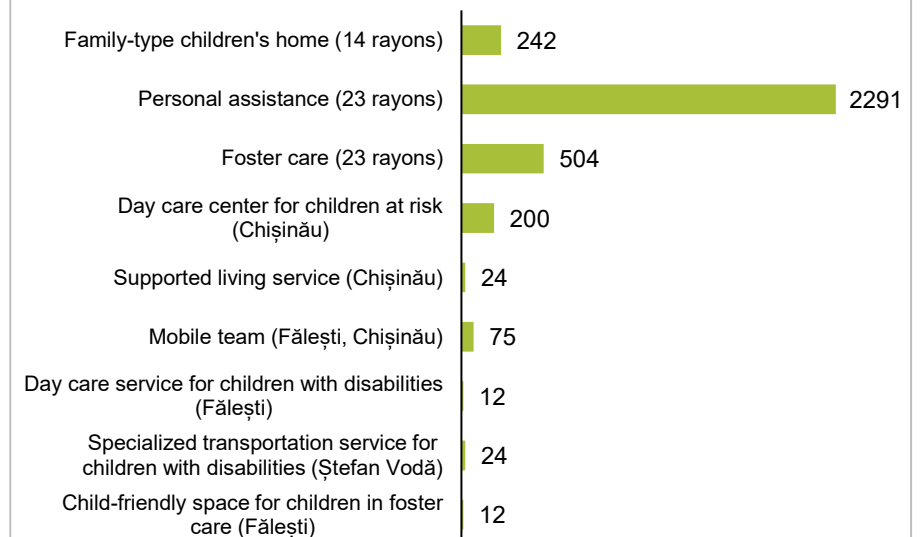
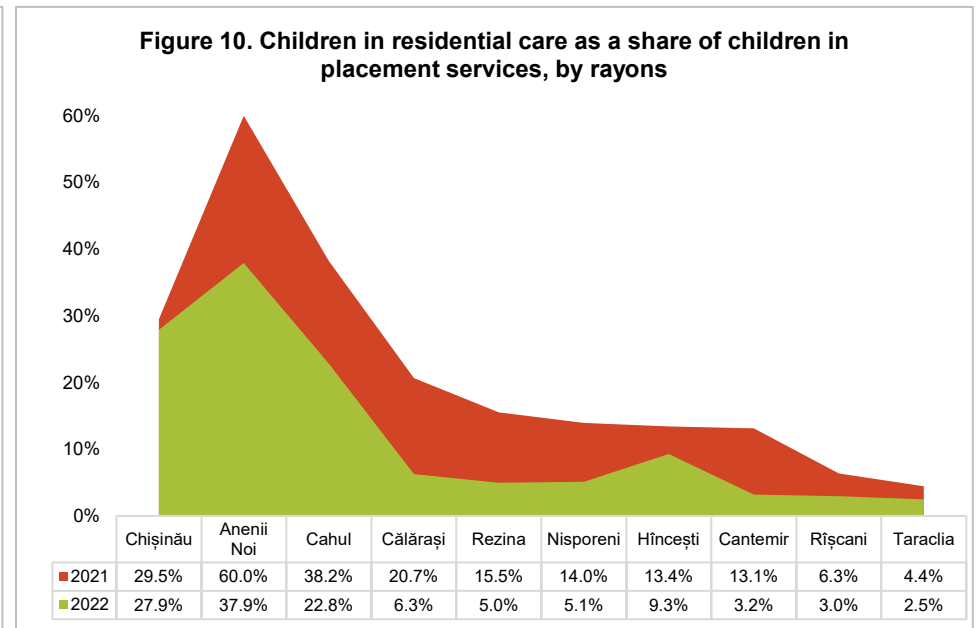
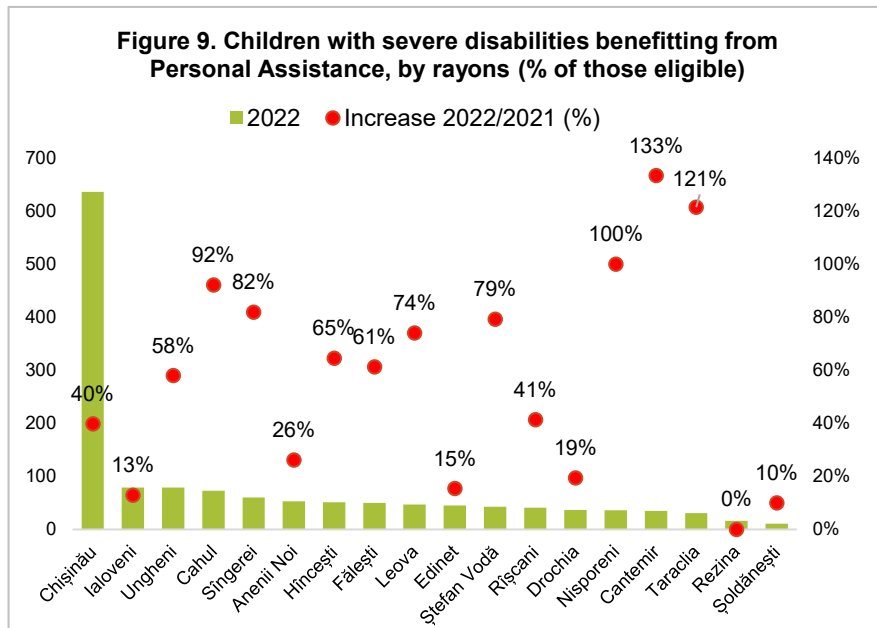
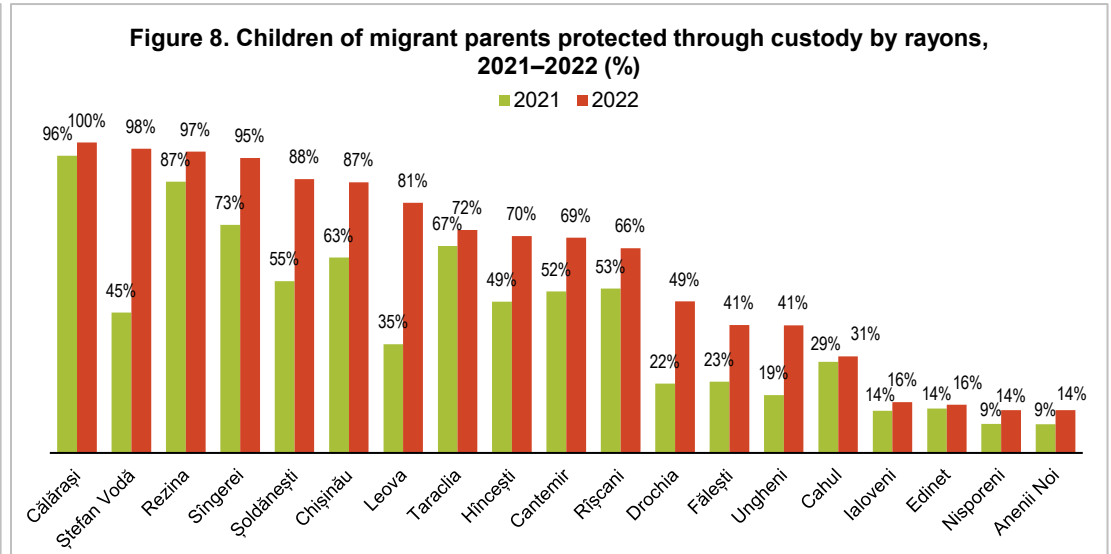
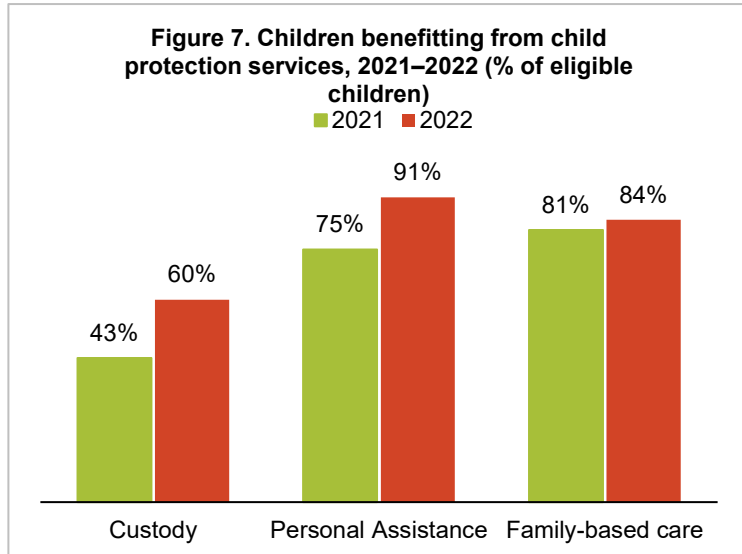


Figure 6. Number of beneficiaries of existing social services which were expanded during 2022–2023, by type of service





Positive progress has been demonstrated by TSAS in increasing the access of children to: (1) protection through custody (protective guardianship of children with migrant parents); (2) personal assistance (children with severe disabilities); (3) family-based care as opposed to residential care (children separated from parents) (Figure 7). The level of progress has varied across rayons where D4I worked (Figures 8, 9, and 10).





Attention to Data Issues in TSAS Routine Working Procedures and Publications

The meetings have also made an impact on the routine working procedures of TSAS. Currently, more attention is paid to data quality assurance, such as avoiding double counting of children at risk, ensuring that the aggregation of data on children with disabilities is done similarly across sites, making sure the staff is using the same procedures year to year to collect data on separated children, ensuring the completeness of data submitted annually by community social workers using the recommended form, etc. Data quality issues are now being discussed within regular supervision meetings with the community social assistants, during preparation meetings for annual reporting, and as part of working meetings with the rayon partner institutions and social services providers. With the support of D4I, Făleşti, Rîșcani, and Sîngerei rayons developed information bulletins on the status of children in the social assistance system and presented results on developing their networks of social services during the D4I's Share Fair on best practices in data use (Chișinău, July 1, 2022). Two other rayons—Rezina and Drochia—and Chișinău Municipality have also developed such bulletins depicting the situation of children in adversity over the period 2019–2022. These will be presented during the second edition of the D4I Share Fair, planned for December 2023.

Skills gained during the data review and use meetings have been used by the TSAS in assessing people that would require social services in 2022-2023 and planning of extrabudgetary resources provided by donors through the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MOLSP). Lessons learned from the regular data review and use meetings informed the development of a D4I methodological guide “Data Review and Data Use to Inform Decision-Making for the Benefit of the Child”, which was widely disseminated at the first edition of the D4I Share Fair in 2022 and uploaded on the website of the National Social Assistance Agency (<https://www.anas.md/examinarea-si-utilizarea-datelor-pentru-luarea-deciziilor-beneficiul-copilului/>). At the end of 2022, all TSAS were involved in a consultation process launched by the MOLSP and co-facilitated by D4I aimed at fine-tuning the instructions for completing the annual statistical report CER 103 “Children at Risk and Children Separated from Parents”. During the consultation process, the TSAS mentored by D4I contributed practical proposals to adjust the instructions based on current working practices of data collection, review, and use. The instructions were subsequently institutionalized by the MOLSP through Order No. 112 of December 16, 2022 and uploaded on the ministry website (<https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Ordin-Instructiuni-pentru-completarea-Raportului-statistic-nr-103..pdf>). To ensure correct data entry in the CER 103 form, based on instructions, a series of data review meetings were organized by the TSAS with community social assistants (December 2022 to January 2023). D4I consultants attended several of these meetings as observers during which they noted the strengthened capacity of TSAS to conduct such processes autonomously and provide useful guidance to front-line staff, e.g., data quality checks, basic analyses, the use of data in the day-to-day management of their cases.

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For more information

D4I supports countries to realize the power of data as actionable evidence that can improve programs, policies, and—ultimately—health outcomes. We strengthen the technical and organizational capacity of local partners to collect, analyze, and use data to support sustainable development. For more information, visit <https://www.data4impactproject.org/>

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