

### Update on the context and situation of children

In the year marking the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Concluding Observations on the combined fifth and sixth reports of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) were issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on 5 December 2019. UNICEF supported the preparation of the State Report as well as the NGO Alternative Child Rights Report the Children's CRC Report. After a thorough review the Committee reminded BiH to take urgent measures in several areas such as enhancing the coordination of the CRC's implementation, ensuring non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, addressing abuse and neglect, improving education, juvenile justice and the standard of living of children. The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees agreed to develop, with UNICEF support, a new 2020-2025 BiH Action Plan for Children to address the CRC Observations.

Conducted with support from UNICEF and others, the first ever 2018 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) findings, published on 3 December 2019, showed that 15-year old students in BiH are on average about three school years behind their peers in OECD countries. The minimum level of functional literacy is not attained by 58 per cent of students in mathematics, 57 per cent in science and 54 per cent in reading. UNICEF will use the PISA results as a wake-up call to shift the public debate on education towards improvement of the quality and equity aspects of the education system, and away from the current focus on segregation and different curricula.

During the year Bosnia and Herzegovina faced political gridlock due to the long delay in government formation following the October 2018 General Elections. Only in December 2019 agreement was reached on a new government at State level. While the Republika Srpska entity government was established relatively quickly, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) entity had not yet finalized its government formation process at the end of 2019. As a result of the extensive political challenges around governance and other related issues, there was very little progress in adopting new legislation and policies in all areas. The rhetoric of division, fear and mistrust continued throughout the year, as the country still struggles with the legacy of the 1992-1995 war and the inability to determine a mutually accepted vision for the future of the country. Geopolitics further complicates the negative dynamics.

The population of BiH is among the most rapidly shrinking and ageing in the world. According to the latest available data the almost 700,000 children make up about 20 per cent of the total population. Adolescents (10-19 years) constitute about 12 per cent of the population. In 2019, many well-educated and young people as well as families continued to leave BiH in search of better opportunities elsewhere. U-Report polls conducted during the year confirmed the frustration among youth. The 60 per cent of young people living in rural areas are facing structural difficulties in accessing basic social services and employment opportunities. Those socially marginalised, such as children with disabilities, Roma and children who live in impoverished communities, continue to be deprived of quality social services.

In May 2019, the European Commission issued its Opinion on BiH's EU membership application, outlining the main challenges for the country and providing a set of fourteen reform priorities to be addressed before BiH can open accession negotiations. In December the European Council adopted the conclusions on the Commission's Opinion, indicating that BiH was still insufficiently prepared for EU membership, urging the country to accelerate efforts to strengthen its institutions to guarantee democracy, rule of law, fundamental human rights, protection of minorities and public administration reform.

As a follow-up to the BiH Reform Agenda for 2015-2018, driven largely by the international community, both entity governments adopted the "Joint Socio-Economic Reforms for 2019-2022" in October 2019. Subsequently the Council of Ministers of BiH adopted the "Action Plan for the Implementation of Priorities from the European Commission Analytical Report 2019-2020". Over the past years BiH maintained a 3 per cent average annual growth rate, but the economy is heavily consumption-driven. Unemployment remains high, with significant gender gaps. According to the latest Labour Force Survey youth employment was only 19.7% in 2018, with one in four young people (aged 15-24) neither in education, employment or training.

As a country exposed to several risks, in 2019 BiH faced a serious measles outbreak, with about 1,000 cases mainly in Sarajevo, as a result of a very low immunization coverage in the country. Air pollution was once again a significant health hazard, especially in winter, affecting several cities, while in May BiH experienced flooding in the northern and central parts of the country, confirming the need for more investments in disaster prevention and preparedness systems. In addition, BiH continued to struggle with an increasing influx of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees after previously popular migration routes to Western Europe through the Balkans shut down in 2017. Local authorities registered over 29,000 arrivals, a 21 per cent increase compared to 2018, mainly from the Middle East and South Asia. At the end of 2019 an estimated 8,600 remained in BiH, including about 20 per cent families with children and 12 per cent unaccompanied and separated children (about 700), mostly 15-17 year old boys, many severely traumatized by experiences in their home countries or while on the move. They have inadequate access to protection, appropriate care arrangements and support services that their situation demands, rendering them at heightened risks of violence, abuse and exploitation. By year-end

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about 5,000 refugees and migrants were accommodated in temporary reception centres, while about 3,000 were in private accommodation, squatting in abandoned buildings or in the open. As government authorities at different levels did not provide a coordinated response, the international community together with non-governmental organisations provided humanitarian assistance, including temporary accommodation, food, basic health care, protection and to some extent education.

In July 2019, with support of the UN Country Team, BiH presented its first National Voluntary Report on Sustainable Development Goals at the High-Level Political Forum in New York. Work on a 2030 SDG Framework for BiH 2030 continued through stakeholder consultations, as one of the main guiding documents for national and sub-national development planning as part of the 2030 Agenda.

### Major contributions and drivers of results

#### Every child survives and thrives

UNICEF has been spearheading and supporting government with the Standards and Norms of Health Care Services, which were revised and implemented in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), one of the positive steps forward in 2019. Integrated early childhood development (IECD) services are provided through primary health care centres and funded by cantonal Health Insurance Funds. Several cantonal ECD centres are now fully sustainable.

In 2019, with support from the Austrian Development Agency and implemented through the local non-governmental organization EDUS, UNICEF strengthened the ECD knowledge and skills of over 100 health, education and social services professionals as well as community workers. As a result, they are now better able to use Developmental Behavioural Scales to detect developmental delays in children and provide basic early childhood interventions (ECI). This contributed to the provision of quality ECD services to over 2,000 children and their families. In addition, over 110 parents gained enhanced skills on ECD/ECI through parenting education provided in two cities. However, due to inadequate capacities of professionals and lack of funding such services are not readily available to all children.

UNICEF, the World Health Organization and other partners continued addressing the low immunisation coverage, estimated at less than 70 per cent according to the latest government data. Research showed that many health workers have difficulties communicating effectively with parents about immunisation and health centres do not provide reminders to parents on when the next vaccination is due. To address this, the UNICEF Regional Office with support from the BiH and Serbia Country Offices and expertise from the John Hopkins University adapted a global package on Interpersonal communication (IPC) on immunisation to the local context. A total of 313 health professionals improved their IPC skills through 14 workshops - 7 in FBiH and 7 in Republika Srpska -organised in collaboration with Ministries of Health and Public Health Institutes with funding from USAID. Pre and post tests showed that the trainings boosted the confidence of the health professionals in interacting with parents and provide them with adequate facts on immunization while answering difficult questions.

Furthermore, UNICEF with Ministries of Health and PHIs continued promoting an innovative 'Immunization App' during 2019. The app provides parents/caregivers with information on when the next vaccination is due and the closest health centre to make an appointment. UNICEF and PHIs also partnered with a local NGO to operate a dedicated blog to provide parents/caregivers with evidence-based facts on vaccines in user-friendly language. The blog was so far visited by 80,000 people and particularly well appreciated by parents during the measles outbreak in 2019, with peaks of up to 5,000 visits a day.

To address the extremely low immunization rate among Roma (4 per cent according to the latest available data), UNICEF in partnership with the FBiH Public Health Institute and two Roma NGOs (Romalen and Kalisara) strengthened work in several Roma communities, through Roma health mediators and using the IPC trainers and tools to increase immunization rates, with support from UNICEF Headquarters and the Alwaleed Foundation.

The Agency for Certification, Accreditation and Health Care Improvement (ASKVA) of Republika Srpska accredited four maternity wards in RS. UNICEF initiated Baby-Friendly Hospitals accreditation of another six wards, aiming for accreditation of all maternity wards in RS to help increase the currently low breastfeeding rate. In FBiH the accreditation process has become self-sustaining, and maternity wards due for re-accreditation are funding this with their own resources.

As the influx of refugees and migrants continued, UNICEF funded the procurement of over 5,000 doses of different vaccines from the national vaccine schedule to vaccinate over 300 refugee and migrant children in Una-Sana Canton in partnership with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), while at the same time UNICEF successfully advocated to use local stocks of vaccines while procurement was ongoing. A pediatric infirmary was established, providing primary health care services, emergency dental care and nutrition counselling for children in two temporary reception centres for families (Sedra and

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Borici). In 2019 more than 750 mothers and over 2,000 children benefitted from mother-baby corners, providing them access to a safe and private space for breastfeeding, information on infant and young child feeding, child development and access to psychosocial counselling. UNICEF supported children to obtain health certificates as a prerequisite for enrolling in local schools. UNICEF also developed a Protocol on properly using Baby Milk Substitutes in TRCs in Una-Sana Canton and other Cantons. In November winter clothes for children were distributed.

### Every child learns

A major milestone in 2019 was the launch of the results from the first PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) test held in BiH. UNICEF together with the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United States Government, the Norwegian Government, Save the Children and the Open Society Foundation supported the BiH Agency for Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education (APOSO) in conducting the test in 2018 and subsequently preparing the comprehensive PISA report. At the launch on 3 December 2019 the findings showed that 15-year old students in BiH are on average about three school years behind their peers in OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries. Overall, the minimum level of proficiency is not attained by 58 per cent of students in mathematics, 57 per cent in science and 54 per cent in reading. Socio-economically advantaged students significantly outperformed disadvantaged students. Additional information about 'school life' revealed that 25 per cent of students were bullied regularly.

Together with its partners UNICEF will use the results of PISA 2018 as a wake-up call to shift the public debate on education towards improvement of the quality and equity aspects of the education system, and away from the current predominant focus on segregation and different curricula. The 'PISA shock' made it clear that the education systems do not adequately equip students with the necessary skills and competencies they need to be effective workers and citizens in the 21st century knowledge society. Before and after the PISA results launch a series of interactive local debates on how to improve the quality of education were organised with students, teachers, school directors and local communities. Additional debates will be held in 2020. UNICEF will continue supporting APOSO in implementing the campaign 'Education for a New Era', while advocating with all ministries of education and other stakeholders to support education reforms in the coming years and step by step improve learning outcomes.

Furthermore, complementing PISA, with support from UNICEF and the Government of Norway a Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) was conducted successfully in BiH during 2019. APOSO in coordination with all competent ministries of education implemented TIMSS in 179 schools. The results will be published in December 2020.

In preschool education some progress was made as the percentage of children attending obligatory programmes in the year prior to primary school increased by 24 per cent in the past three years. However, a major challenge remains with including Roma children into preschool programmes. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education of Republika Srpska with a comprehensive capacity development programme for preschool teachers to enhance their skills. This programme applied a two-tier approach: strengthening skills and knowledge of preschool teachers and work on specific manuals with a focus on early childhood interventions and partnering with families. In November 90 per cent of all preschool institutions in Republika Srpska attended the first training programme. UNICEF continued the partnership with the Ministry of Education in Canton 10 of FBiH as the preschool participation rate increased from about 20 per cent in 2013 to over 95 per cent in 2019, with local authorities now covering 90 per cent of the costs.

Inclusive education (IE) was further institutionalised with Banja Luka University signing a MoU with UNICEF in July 2019. As part of a comprehensive road map a dedicated programme on IE will be rolled out. Sarajevo University completed the first cycle of the programme for teaching staff with three modules on inclusive education adapted to the University context.

As part of UNICEF's humanitarian response, a total of 2,977 children on the move benefitted from formal education (522) and non-formal education programmes (2,455). Refugee and migrant children were enrolled in five schools in Una-Sana Canton and two schools in Sarajevo Canton. This proved to be a good way to positively engage parents of local children, teachers and local communities.

### Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

In 2019, UNICEF BiH continued to support government partners in BiH to ensure that an increased number of boys and girls use a continuum of child protection services aimed at preventing and adequately responding to violence, abuse, exploitation and family separation, and that these children benefit from equitable access to justice. UNICEF further strengthened the protective environment through critical investments in child protection systems, extending to child care,

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welfare and justice, in partnership with government partners at different levels, UN agencies, NGOs and CSOs. This was done both within UNICEF's regular development programme and as part of the humanitarian response to the refugee and migrant influx.

Overall, more than 205,000 children benefitted indirectly and more than 12,000 children directly from UNICEF-supported programmes and interventions, of whom 1,570 children identified at risk of harm and/or offending, 2,671 children in contact with the law: 956 victims, 672 witnesses and 1,043 alleged offenders; over 300 children at risk from family separation; and some 8,200 children on the move, including 2,740 unaccompanied and separated boys.

With support from the Swiss Government and the Swedish International Development Agency, UNICEF continued to support government partners in reforming the justice for children system by developing legal regulatory frameworks, capacity building of professionals, strengthening child-friendly procedures, and enhancing data management. Significant progress was made in expanding the school-based secondary prevention programme, which aims to enhance the wellbeing and protection of children through the early identification of risk factors and support to children identified at risk. In close collaboration with Ministries of Education and Pedagogical Institutes, over 205,000 children in over 400 primary and secondary schools were reached, covering the entire Republika Srpska and all elementary schools in the two most-populous cantons in FBiH (Tuzla and Sarajevo).

Child victims and witnesses benefitted from improved access to and quality of services as a result of continued mentoring, coaching and supervision of 23 victim and witness support providers. The capacity building of these professionals focused on conducting forensic interviews based on the NICHHD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) Protocol 2000-2011 and psychosocial counselling of children and their parents. The role of victim and witness support providers was further expanded to support children and families after the formal proceedings and also support specific cases of children in conflict with the law. Data on child victims and witnesses is expected to be improved in early 2020 with the endorsement of specialised data collection forms including essential information for children's protection during and after proceedings (disaggregated by gender, age and vulnerability).

Building on the progress made in reforming the childcare system during 2016-2018, achieved with support from the EU, line ministries and Centres for Social Welfare (CSW) invested significant resources in further strengthening foster care and child protection case management. Positive steps were made in transforming two public institutions for children without parental care into service centres for vulnerable children and families in Banja Luka and in Mostar, with the establishment of six new services for vulnerable children and families and a 20% reduction of children in residential care. A conference on childcare reform in May 2019, attended by UNICEF's Regional Director, contributed to a renewed commitment of key stakeholders to accelerate deinstitutionalisation and prioritize cross-sectoral collaboration. However, much more investments are needed to ensure the deinstitutionalisation of all children, particularly in preventing family separation due to poverty and disability, as well as in the provision of a whole continuum of care services, including foster care for children with disabilities and Roma children, immediate emergency foster care and small group homes for young people, which UNICEF will continue to advocate for.

With support from the Global Fund to End Violence against Children, UNICEF in partnership with Save the Children and IFS-Emmaus contributed to a more protective environment for children at risk of online sexual exploitation and abuse. A Safer Internet Centre with Awareness Centre, Hotline and Helpline was established; over 750 professionals enhanced their capacities; forensic equipment was procured for the police; and more than 1,700 parents and 300 children were educated about child online protection. As a result, there was a notable improvement in the investigation and prosecution of several child sexual abuse material crimes, and in the support provided to children at risk of online sexual exploitation and abuse.

In 2019, as part of UNICEF's humanitarian response to the influx of over 29,000 migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, some 8,200 children on the move benefitted from UNICEF-supported child protection interventions. This included 2,740 unaccompanied and separated children, almost exclusively boys. The support provided was made possible mainly with financial assistance from the European Union, the Basque Government and UNICEF global emergency thematic funds. UNICEF in partnership with Save the Children, SOS Kinderdorf, World Vision and Zene sa Une supported local authorities in Herzegovina-Neretva, Sarajevo and Una-Sana Cantons in providing child protection support such as legal guardianship, case management, mental health and psychosocial support as well as to the extent possible adequate reception capacities for unaccompanied and separated children. The support to the rising number of unaccompanied boys has been crucial considering the multiple protection risks they are faced with, in particular gender-based violence and human trafficking.

### **Every child lives in a safe and clean environment**

Bosnia and Herzegovina faces the highest mortality rate in Europe due to household and ambient air pollution according to WHO statistics, Both short and long-term exposure to air pollutants is associated with health effects, especially for those

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with pre-existing conditions, elderly, children, those living in poverty, and other vulnerable populations. Although air pollution is not a dedicated programme focus, UNICEF BiH contributed to several initiatives along with the international community to educate parents and children on the negative effects.

As one of the signatories of the clean-air pledge, 'Climate with No Smoke,' together with partners such as the World Bank and other UN agencies UNICEF BiH continued to hold all public events and meetings and events in smoke-free venues and hotels. Joint advocacy efforts to reduce tobacco consumption continued in 2019.

The new UN Joint Programme on disaster risk reduction (DRR), involving UNICEF, UNDP, FAO, UNESCO and UNFPA, was officially launched in February 2019 after some delays. This comprehensive initiative is partially funded by the Swiss Government. UNICEF supported the establishment of local DRR platforms in 10 selected municipalities that will serve as catalysts for cross-sectoral DRR coordination in line with the Sendai Framework.

### Every child has an equitable chance in life

In 2019 UNICEF continued advocating for legislative and policy reforms in the area of social protection, while providing technical support to policymakers. The long delay in government formation meant there was little progress in agreeing on new legislation. However, one major step forward was that the Federal House of Representatives finally adopted the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children in FBiH. The Ministry of Finance allocated a new budget code for the law, which is expected to be approved in 2020 by the Federal House of Peoples after a public consultation process. UNICEF provided expert technical advice for drafting and costing the law. If adopted this will be the most significant step in addressing discrimination in terms of access to child and maternal cash benefits in FBiH after the 1992-95 war. Although the competences for social and child protection were mainly attributed to the Federal level after 1995, in practice many legislative and financing responsibilities were delegated to the ten Cantons, thereby creating huge differences in accessing social benefits by families with children.

Several other social protection laws are in the pipeline, the most important being the Law on Social Services, drafted with technical support from UNICEF during 2019. Furthermore, to ensure better informed policy-making and advocacy for more public investments in children, UNICEF initiated the development of two budget briefs on social protection and on child protection. These will include an in-depth analysis of the size and composition of budget allocations for 2019-20, providing insights into the efficiency, effectiveness, equity and adequacy of past and future spending.

In partnership with the Social Inclusion Foundation and as part of a broader EU-funded initiative, UNICEF supported the development of two policy papers as a basis for developing social inclusion strategies, integrating a multi-dimensional approach to social inclusion analysis considering age-specific vulnerabilities, poverty, demographics as well as institutional gaps across sectors.

Further progress was made in rolling out the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) methodology among professionals from various sectors. This generated a better understanding of the social model of disability. An analysis of the disability assessment procedures for children in FBiH was made, highlighting significant gaps and weaknesses of the assessment and referral procedures. A road map for the implementation of concrete recommendations was validated by social and child protection, education and health professionals from federal and cantonal level.

### Adolescents and Youth

In 2019 UNICEF worked with and for adolescents and young people in several programme areas. U-Report polls were conducted regularly about a wide range of topics, such as priorities in life according to young people, civic engagement, gender issues, online safety, and disaster risk reduction. UNICEF, as part of the IT Girls joint UN initiative, supported a crowdfunding campaign which raised funds for ten Arduino workshops on programming for 200 girls aged 13 to 15. The campaign achieved 150 per cent of its target.

The UN Joint Programme 'Dialogue for the Future (DFF) 2 - Promoting Social Cohesion and Diversity', implemented by UNICEF (as convening agency), UNDP and UNESCO in close collaboration with the BiH Presidency and supported by the UN Peacebuilding Fund, brought young people together. Over 26,000 people across ethnic divides participated in 24 projects and local dialogue platforms in 28 municipalities across the country. A total of 3,640 adolescents and youth (1,950 girls and 1,690 boys) enhanced their skills in cross-ethnic collaboration, volunteerism, critical thinking and media literacy. Additionally, 50 students from DFF municipalities engaged in volunteering during the European Youth Olympic Festival. The

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public campaign against hate speech, called 'Choose your words', reached about 3 million people and generated over 100,000 views on YouTube, Instagram and Facebook. Over 6,000 positive comments were received and not a single 'hate' comment. The campaign involved awareness raising and youth engagement via public concerts, and regional cooperation between artists promoted tolerance and acceptance among young people.

### Lessons Learned and Innovations

In 2019, the delay in formation of the State and Federal Governments after the 2018 general elections significantly affected progress in most legislative and policy initiatives and the implementation of programmatic interventions by the Country Office. Overall programme implementation often remains complicated due to the multi-layer government with responsibilities at many different levels.

#### Lessons learned and innovations

##### 1. Working with communities, influencers and young people:

During 2019 UNICEF BiH reached out directly to young people, parents and communities in a variety of different ways, such as through social media, U-Report polls, the IT Girls initiative and by organizing local level dialogues and debates with young and not-so-young people from diverse backgrounds. This kind of direct outreach brought very positive results in terms of engagement. One good example is the engagement of social media 'influencers' to promote the 30th anniversary of the CRC. This rather innovative approach proved to be successful in reaching a significant audience and engaging the social media influencers' followers. As part of the Joint UN Programme 'Dialogue for the Future' popular musicians from BiH and Serbia produced the engaging song and video 'Choose your words', addressing hate speech. The catchy music video went viral with 101,000 views since its launch in November 2019, and over 4,000 comments without a single hate comment. To promote U-Report among the target population of adolescents, UNICEF BiH engaged with popular Youtubers at the 'Balkan Tube Fest', and consequently attracted around 1,000 new U-Reporters aged 12-18 from Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNICEF's partnership and capacity development of media professionals during the year included the two most popular young YouTubers, engaging over 400,000 of their followers and opening a new communication channel with children and adolescents. The first 'live' session with these YouTubers generated over 100 written questions and comments in only 20 minutes of airtime. This practice will be further explored and extended in the coming years.

##### 2. Innovative approach to improve vaccine coverage:

Some of the other innovations include the country-wide roll-out of an 'Immunization App' in collaboration with Ministries of Health and Public Health Institutes. This provides parents/caregivers with information on when the next vaccine for their child is due and the closest health centre to make an appointment. This was complemented by support the development and operating of a blog, through a local NGO, to provide parents/caregivers with essential facts on vaccines in user-friendly local language.

##### 3. Multi-sectoral approach:

UNICEF continued to leverage its comparative advantage by convening and supporting multi-sectoral programmes and partners. Examples include: the advocacy for early childhood development and for social inclusion of children with disabilities; the promotion of the ICF methodology; strengthening multi-sectoral coordination and mainstreaming child-specific vulnerabilities in local analysis, action planning and implementation under the Joint UN-Swiss Disaster Risk Reduction Programme; a multi-sectoral response to the refugee/migrant crisis; and technical advice for policy development and systems strengthening across the spectrum of child rights, at both state, entity, cantonal and municipal levels. Government counterparts as well as multilateral institutions such as the EU, and bilateral donors recognised the expertise and capacity of UNICEF BiH in advancing the realisation of child rights. As one of the main lessons learned over the past years the cross-sectoral and multi-sectoral approach will remain an essential strategy of choice in the new CPD for 2021-2025.

##### 4. Applying lessons from studies and evaluations to programming:

This includes the findings of the first PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) test for BiH and the recommendations from the evaluation of the 2016-2019 EU-supported programme 'Transformation of Care Institutions and Prevention of Family Separation'. The latter confirmed that prevention is a priority for childcare reform and must be appropriately balanced against the provision of alternative care. UNICEF will advocate with government partners across the country for specific goals for childcare reform based on the evaluation recommendations. The recent media attention to

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violations of rights of certain children with disabilities in institutions generated a new momentum to further advocate for the deinstitutionalisation of all children. Additionally, there is a need to advocate for the overall child care system to be more inclusive of unaccompanied children on the move, considering the inadequate reception capacities and the absence of alternative care for them (foster care, small group homes).

### **5. Coordination challenges for refugee/migrant response:**

Most of the humanitarian response, as in 2018, was provided by international actors, including the UN and NGOs. This pertains to accommodation in temporary reception centres, food, health care, protection and temporary education. UNICEF has been advocating consistently for the protection of children on the move including the many unaccompanied children. Although the crisis has gained some international media attention, it has still been very difficult to mobilise funds for the humanitarian response: UNICEF BiH managed to raise only 45 per cent of the projected needs for 2019. There is an urgent need to leverage commitment and resources for the humanitarian child protection response, considering the overwhelmed child protection system and the increasing cases of (gender-based) violence, abuse and exploitation, and for improved coordination among all protection actors, both in terms of advocacy as well as service delivery on the ground.

### **6. Limited availability of recent data to inform evidence-based decision-making:**

A continuing challenge with regard to data in BiH remains the scattered availability of statistics and a lack of up-to-date comprehensive country-wide surveys and data collection systems in a number of sectors. For example, in 2019 there was still no agreement reached with government partners on moving ahead with the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). This has affected evidence-based decision-making in several ways, although some of the challenges were mitigated by maintaining solid partnerships with the statistical institutes and supporting different types of assessments such as PISA, which generated a wealth of new information.

### **Strategic prioritization and forward planning**

During 2019 the Country Office developed an updated Situation Analysis of Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina based on the latest evidence available and in consultation with key stakeholders. Based on this a strategic prioritization was conducted, as part of which a number of Programme Strategy Notes were developed to inform the content of the new Country Programme for 2021-2025. Regional Office advice was taken into consideration and gender considerations were duly taken into account in the programme design. The new UNICEF Country Programme is also informed by the UN Common Country Assessment and derived from the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2021-2025. The Country Programme Document will be finalized in 2020, incorporating key lessons learned and setting out the main programmatic priorities, including a range of cross-sectoral interventions.