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Eastern Caribbean Multi-Country Program



Update on the context and situation of children

In 2019, the Eastern Caribbean Area (ECA) countries and territories continued to maintain a relatively stable GDP growth rate at 3.3 per cent average for the subregion, fuelled by reconstruction activity in post 2017 hurricane countries, robust performance of the tourism sector, and positive developments in main trading partner countries (Canada, United Kingdom and United States). Dominica, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Turks and Caicos Islands and Grenada experienced the largest growth rate. Exceptions are Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, who experienced tepid economic growth at 0 and 0.4 per cent respectively. In response, Barbados developed the 'Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation Programme', introducing measures and plans for a positive turnaround.

The British Virgin Islands, Monserrat and Dominica held general elections in 2019, and Trinidad and Tobago reshuffled the Cabinet. The new Cabinets present an opportunity for advocacy and positioning children, adolescents and young people in each country's national agenda, which will be prioritized in 2020.

The 12 countries and territories^[1] covered by the UNICEF ECA Multi-Country Office are Small Island Developing States (SIDS) comprising about 2.3 million people of which 26 per cent are children. Despite the progress made by ECA countries and territories in the fulfilment of children rights over the years, there are still several issues children and young people face, which negatively affect their well-being, opportunities and life chances.

Poverty rates for children have not changed significantly over the years, with one in three children (33 per cent) of children living in poverty in the ECA, and four per cent in extreme poverty. A significant number of vulnerable children reside in female-headed, large and migrant households. The latest data published by the Government of Saint Lucia in 2018, demonstrate a marginal reduction in child poverty between 2006 and 2016, from 36.7 to 34.5 per cent. Additional accelerating interventions will be required if the country is to meet the SDG target 1.2 to reduce at least by half the proportion of children living in poverty by 2030.

Despite progress in ensuring access to universal primary education, the Eastern Caribbean countries have low pre-primary (3-4 years old) attendance rates with approximately 20 per cent not enrolled. Access to pre-primary education is largely determined by the cost to parents, with centres predominantly run privately. This bottleneck has been recognized by ECA Governments, which have committed to explore policy options for addressing it.

Quality of education remains a concern, with only one out of three secondary school students (31 per cent boys, 37 per cent girls) meeting the required level of learning qualifications, measured by pass rates of the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate examinations. The inadequacy of an enabling school environment to support students in their learning has been identified as a key contributor to poor learning outcomes and school dropout. This includes lack of parental engagement, levels of abuse and violence, relevance of school curriculum with the current needs, harsh disciplinary approaches and inadequate provision for students with special needs. Transition from school to employability is a focus in the Eastern Caribbean countries, yet evidence from some countries highlights the discrepancy between educational qualifications offered and job market needs. In Saint Lucia for example, over 40 per cent of job openings require post-secondary qualifications, which are held by less than 10 per cent of those seeking work.

Violence against children, particularly in the form of violent discipline at school and in the home is significant in the ECA. Over two out of three children are subject to physical and psychological violence by parents or caretakers. In 2019, the commitment to abolish corporal punishment in schools by the Governments of Saint Lucia and Barbados has initiated national dialogues on positive discipline and the need for positive parental practices and may initiate discussions in other ECA countries and territories.

The situation of migrant children remained a concern, especially in Trinidad and Tobago, which received an influx of an estimated 24,300 migrants from Venezuela. Children represent approximately 10 per cent of all migrants. While capacities to support migrant, unaccompanied and asylum-seeking children and families have been strengthened, there are significant gaps in full realization of their rights that need to be addressed. As a temporary measure, UNICEF and UNHCR supported Child Friendly Spaces to facilitate all children's access to formal education, through a blended eLearning model, psychosocial support complemented by sensitization for children, caregivers, and the wider community on both lifesaving and positive behavioural messages. This innovative approach provided educational support using technology face-to-face and online, the inclusion of other services to support and develop the whole child and integration into the local community with added benefits to the local community. To date, it is estimated that 53 per cent of affected children received support.

The 2019 Situation Analysis (SitAn) of Children in the ECA highlighted that obesity and mental health among children and adolescents are emerging issues. It is estimated that 10 per cent of children under five are overweight, increasing to 30 per cent once they reach adolescence. The SitAn highlighted that 20 per cent of adolescents (24 per cent girls) have

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considered attempting suicide. UNICEF ECA will invest in further understanding these issues in 2020-2021 with a view to developing ways of addressing them in the next programme cycle.

Countries and territories affected during the 2017 hurricane season continued their transition from recovery to development, in line with efforts initiated in 2018. In September, the devastating impacts of Hurricane Dorian served as an alert that efforts are required to build climate resilient communities. With a focus on building resilience, several countries, such as Barbados and Grenada, were among the first in the sub-region to unlock significant climate financing, with both projects in the water sector. UNICEF supported a study on Climate, Environment, Energy and Landscape Analysis for Children (CEELAC), with recommendations on key interventions to strengthen climate resilience.

[1] Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands.

Major contributions and drivers of results

Every child learns

Across the 12 Eastern Caribbean countries and territories, 53,594 children and adolescents from early childhood, primary and secondary education and 6,482 parents, caregivers, education professionals and policy makers benefited from initiatives such as the Safe School Programme and care for child development which were implemented through national, regional and international partnerships. This contributed to strengthening the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to provide quality developmental and educational experiences for children in development and humanitarian situations.

Within primary and secondary schools, 2019 saw increased efforts by countries to build teacher capacity for wider mainstreaming efforts towards improved psychosocial environments characterized by more inclusive, student-centred approaches. In-service training, supported by UNICEF ECA, resulted in 2,444 teachers and principals trained to practice inclusive child-centred teaching and learning processes, impacting over 38,200 students. Complementary efforts with partners resulted in development of a White Paper on Teacher Education addressing standards for Teacher Educators for wider capacity to both teach but as well as model appropriate pedagogical and classroom management practices which contributed to improved learning outcomes.

Within early childhood education, strategic partnerships were strengthened with multi-country institutions for improving ECD services and programming standards, through collaboration with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission, St. George's University, Child Development and Guidance Centre and other regional and international partners. UNICEF provided technical support to improve the equity and inclusion in ECD environments, including ECD and health centres as well as in community spaces. Interventions equipped approximately 1,680 parents, caregivers and other stakeholders with knowledge and skills to provide nurturing care, protection, psychosocial support and appropriate early education to influence positive educational and developmental outcomes for children under five years.

In addition, two key pieces of research: a Cost Benefit Analysis of supply and demand in the ECD sector in Saint Kitts and Nevis; and an Assessment of Systems available for early identification and early intervention conducted in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada were conducted to influence policies to increase access and quality of ECD services. A key recommendation of the Cost Benefit Analysis was for Saint Kitts and Nevis to consider a mixed approach of alternatives based on the identified needs of children and families, including the provision of community-based play groups for younger children, constructing at least two government Child Development Centres in the vulnerable communities and to define a unified policy between both islands that ensures a more targeted and equitable distribution of subsidies to vulnerable families, seeking to reduce poverty in the Federation as a whole. A key finding from the Assessment of early identification and intervention systems was that children with developmental delays would benefit from an integrated system to track their age, gender, developmental delays and disabilities, time of assessment, intervention and effectiveness. These provide critical evidence to assist both governments to make informed decisions for improvement of quality and expansion in the sector. The information will be used to strengthen linkages between line ministries (education and health) for coordinated and informed planning to strengthen integrated ECD programmes and services.

The planning and policy function within Ministries of Education to mainstream disaster risk management was strengthened with OECS and UNICEF support. Following the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety in the Caribbean, countries adopted the School Design Guidelines, promoting resilient schools. CDEMA and UNICEF also collaborated under

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the Safe School framework, strengthening the school safety policy and capacity to assess schools in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia. UNICEF continued to build the capacity of Ministries of Education, principals and teachers to develop instruments and draft evidence-based contingency plans in Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Montserrat, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and the Turks and Caicos Islands. In addition, UNICEF supported the OECS Commission in review of the Regional Education Sector Plan to incorporate disaster risk management as a cross-cutting priority. This effort was matched at national level, with UNICEF providing technical assistance to develop education sector contingency plans in the national emergency response mechanisms, and with health and child protection sectors.

Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

Violence against children (VAC) remained a top priority for this subregion, given strong social norms, religious beliefs and laws that condone the use of corporal punishment and other forms of violence, in children's upbringing. UNICEF continued its support to address the issue at varying levels to address these barriers, while working to ensure evidence-based diversionary services for children with significant behavioural challenges that often bring them into contact with the law, ensuring that children are protected by both policy and practice. This ensured that migrant children and their families in Trinidad and Tobago were also covered with protective services.

Countries benefitted from UNICEF's technical, advocacy, capacity building and evidence generation support in three main ways. Firstly, UNICEF continued to support enhancement of the enabling environment in all countries, to ensure that CRC-inspired law reform efforts are fully realized for children. In 2019, tangible results were netted for children. Antigua and Barbuda raised the minimum age of marriage from 15 years with parental consent, to a minimum age of 18 years without parental consent, from the originally planned age of 16 years. Anguilla adopted the OECS model legislation on Child Protection. The Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' Parliament passed its 2019 Child Justice Act. Meanwhile, Barbados' Cabinet approved the 2019 Child Justice Bill and requested UNICEF to support the development of an implementation plan, ahead of parliamentary review and approval. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago approved its Child Policy and Child Protection Implementation Plan. All countries completed national child protection systems-reform action plans and ten neared/completed national protocols for abuse prevention, reporting and management.

As a result of UNICEF's technical and financial support to national governments, along with interventions from national NGOs and regional organizations such as the OECS Commission, CDEMA and Cricket West Indies (CWI) steady progress has been made in enhancing the capacity of duty bearers and rights holders to better address physical and sexual violence. Approximately 28,000 boys and girls across five countries increased their knowledge and skills to prevent and report violence, in partnership with organizations such as CWI, Crime Stoppers Inc. and national NGOs, while 43,500 caregivers across eight countries were sensitized on positive practices to prevent VAC in different settings in partnerships with local and regional media.

In 2019, UNICEF ECA mobilized regional commitments by OECS Ministers of Social Development to the abolition of corporal punishment from state settings and encourage national action against corporal punishment. UNICEF supported a study, which identified key change strategies and interventions to transition from the use of corporal punishment to positive discipline, and a framework for monitoring behaviour change among key duty bearers in the education sector. In 2019, the Government of Saint Lucia suspended the use of corporal punishment in schools, while Barbados publicly declared its intention to abolish the practice of corporal punishment in school settings.

Collaboration between UNICEF, CDEMA and Flow Telecommunications, sensitized public across all Eastern Caribbean countries on actions to protect children from harm and violence during humanitarian crises, enhancing knowledge on resilience. Inclusive and protective environments for migrant children were supported through child friendly spaces. The model brought both migrant children together with primary school-aged children from host communities, enhancing social cohesion and reducing xenophobia.

Advancing ECA's evidence generation processes for continual review and retooling of approaches against VAC remained a priority for evidence-based and strategic programming. Barbados became a pilot country in the regional Child Protection Workforce Survey, while the ECA subregion participated in the desk review of the regional VAC Study. To better ensure the successful implementation of these policy shifts, UNICEF ECA collaborated with partners to start the institutionalization of national training systems and harmonization of management information systems across the subregion. A training needs assessment and plan for institutionalization of staff development opportunities at both pre- and in-service levels was completed; and the subregion's first set of harmonized social protection indicators was approved by participating governments. UNICEF also made key investments in supporting year-long dedicated technical support for systems strengthening in Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica, two countries that were highly impacted by the 2017 hurricanes. In 2020, priorities will include high level political engagement for full repeal of state sanctioned forms of violence against women, girls and boys, under the UN Spotlight Initiative against gender-based violence.

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Every child has an equitable chance in life

In 2019, UNICEF provided technical assistance to strengthen and further develop inclusive, equitable social protection systems with a focus on children and their families across the ECA. This included the adoption of Anguilla's Social Protection Policy in February 2019, which will enhance the well-being of approximately 3,778 children and their families through social and cash transfers and services geared towards the most vulnerable.

UNICEF continued to partner with OECS, advocating for shock-responsive social protection across the region. The 2019 Meeting of the OECS Council of Ministers of Human and Social Development organized with UNICEF support and hosted by Dominica, resulted in commitment by Ministers to work towards fully implementing the provision of "equitable and easy access to quality social services, including health, education and social protection services" under the 2015 OECS Policy on Contingent Rights.

In addition, UNICEF provided technical expertise to strengthen operational delivery of social protection programmes, including their ability to prepare for and respond to shocks, such as Dominica's Public Assistance Programme, which covered approximately 2,200 households. Following the implementation of a Joint Emergency Cash Transfer in Dominica's in 2017/2018 jointly with World Food Programme (WFP) and through the national flagship programme, UNICEF supported the development of an operations manual to formalize roles and procedures, which in 2019 was complemented with capacity development for village councils, as the first point of contact for those in need - as such as the humanitarian cash transfer. Furthermore, a pilot was prepared to further integrate social service delivery through improved case management, identification and reach of the vulnerable, database maintenance and assisting in the delivery of health and child protection services, which will be implemented in 2020.

UNICEF also co-led the Joint Programme "*Enhancing Resilience and Acceleration of the SDGs in the Eastern Caribbean: Universal Adaptive Social Protection*" approved in 2019, the first UN joint initiative to be implemented in the Eastern Caribbean region by the Joint SDG Fund to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. Over two years, it aims to strengthen people's resilience through predictable access to adaptive and universal social protection in Barbados, Saint Lucia and the OECS, implemented by UNICEF and WFP as co-leads, jointly with the ILO, UNDP and UN Women. The SDG Fund supports the Regional Coordinator's Office and inter-agency Sub-Regional Team under the "Leave no one behind and Social Protection" window to contribute to Eastern Caribbean countries' achievement of the SDGs.

In order to increase evidence-based advocacy for efficient and effective national resources and investment for children, a report on the 'Voices of Children on Poverty in Trinidad' was launched in 2019 supported by UNICEF under the Joint Programme with UNDP and in partnership with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. The report captures the opinions of children across the 14 regions in Trinidad, contributes towards a multidimensional measurement of poverty and deprivations and builds on ongoing advocacy on child poverty and informing policy dialogues to benefit over 300,000 children.

Advocacy, partnerships and leveraging results for children

Addressing the data and evidence-gap as well as the use of innovation remained a focus in 2019 and positioned UNICEF as a key partner on data for children in the Eastern Caribbean. A key result achieved by the National Statistical Offices with UNICEF support, is the implementation of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) in three countries/territories (Turks and Caicos Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and Saint Lucia). Government funding of nearly US\$1 million, together with UNICEF financial and technical support ensured the steady progress of the surveys; and positive survey response rates of above 95 per cent. The MICS will continue in 2020.

The successful launch of the 'Adolescent Wellbeing and Equity in Saint Lucia' study, continued with a second series of 'Generation Unlimited: The Well-being of Young People in Barbados'. UNICEF supported with technical assistance for data mining and capacity building of the Ministry of Equity in Saint Lucia and the Ministry of Youth in Barbados to analyse the data and interpret the results. These studies put young people at the forefront of the national development agenda, providing baseline information for developing effective youth policies and programmes, and contributed to renewed Government focus on the 'second decade' and on the national theme: Generation Unlimited.

UNICEF's partnership and advocacy with OECS Commission, Caribbean Development Bank and statistical offices led to the inclusion of a dedicated chapter on Child Poverty in the Saint Lucia Report of Living Conditions in 2018, and sustained national demand for monitoring child poverty in 2019. During the reporting year, the Governments of Grenada and of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines committed to include child poverty analysis in their national report and requested UNICEF support with the data analysis and capacity building. This achievement demonstrates the sustainability of mainstreaming child poverty measurement in national reports, increasing national demand for data on child poverty, and the importance of regional collaboration leveraged over the years.

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The 2019 Gender Programmatic Review conducted by UNICEF highlighted that although some gender gaps have been reduced in the Eastern Caribbean on issues related to basic health and school attendance; for girls, efforts need to be intensified to eliminate the sexual and physical abuse of young women and further reduce the incidence of unintended pregnancies. For boys, focus should be on addressing issues of inferior educational performance and combating their heightened propensities to delinquent and criminal behaviour, and non-consensual sexual activity towards females. For boys and girls alike, issues which significantly pertain to both are poverty, obesity, violent disciplining and bullying. The gender-related evidence will be used to strengthen advocacy and targeted interventions going forward.

Partnerships were at the core of UNICEF ECA's advocacy efforts, with collaboration for awareness and leveraging support for child rights. Strategic engagement with the regional bodies, including CARICOM, OECS, CDEMA, CWI and SGU, continued in order to advance child-related issues and leverage sustainable results for children. The OECS has continued to be a strong and critical partner in Effective Schools programming supporting the development of sub-regional frameworks and providing advocacy at Ministerial level as well technical oversight for the national level implementation in Member States.

UNICEF ECA continued to work jointly with UN Agencies and in-country donors. Two joint proposals were developed and successfully funded to accelerate the sustainable development goals: (i) SDG Accelerator Fund for Social Protection; and (ii) Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls.

Resilience agenda

Promoting equity and protecting the most vulnerable remained a focus of UNICEF's agenda, with a particular focus on migrant children, adolescents and families in Trinidad and Tobago.

UNICEF worked in collaboration with UNHCR, Living Water Communities and Freely Give Foundation to operationalize 10 child friendly spaces providing migrant learners access to quality education, through a blended eLearning model for approximately 53 per cent of the beneficiary population. Through the use of technology, the national curriculum has been placed online, enabling migrant learners' access to quality education in Spanish and English. This is aimed at bridging a learning gap and enables the opportunity for integration into formal school settings. In addition to education and psychosocial support services, childhood education, nutritional screening and infant and young child feeding programmes were provided by partners as a part of the migrant response.

In 2019, UNICEF ECA leveraged on strong partnerships with CDEMA following the Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on School Safety in the Caribbean. CDEMA supported countries developing their capacity to assess the schools, while UNICEF built the capacity of Ministries of Education, principals and teachers to develop instruments and draft evidence-based contingency plans in Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Montserrat, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and the Turks and Caicos Islands. In addition, UNICEF provided technical assistance to start the process of developing and implementing education sector contingency plans that are articulated with the national emergency response mechanisms, and with other important sectors such as health, and child protection. As a result of the partnership with OECS Commission, there were two significant milestones achieved in 2019: (1) the adoption by all OECS countries of the School Design Guidelines; and (2) the review of the Regional Education Sector Plan to incorporate disaster risk management as a cross-cutting priority.

At the local level, partnerships with the Antigua and Barbuda Red Cross and IsraAID (in Dominica) resulted in progress towards a culture of preparedness and resilience building. In Antigua and Barbuda, UNICEF and the Red Cross trained 150 teachers in first aid. The Red Cross also played a key role in delivering innovative after school programming for psychosocial support of children and adolescents in Barbuda that were still recuperating from the impact of Hurricane Irma. Forty-seven (47) per cent of children and adolescents in Barbuda participated in after school activities such as photography, filmmaking, drama, dance or robotics offered for six months.

UNICEF ECA introduced climate resilience as a cross-cutting programmatic priority. The most significant achievement was the elaboration of a CEELAC, published in November as an advocacy document under the title Caribbean Children Facing the Climate Crisis. The report, which includes key policy recommendations, represented the first regional attempt to comprehensively analyse climate change impacts on children in the region, as well as national and regional responses. In collaboration with the Caribbean Youth Environment Network, UNICEF ECA also initiated an unprecedented consultation of Caribbean children and young people, culminating with the launch of a call for action capturing the voice of more than 2,200 children. This coincided with strides in UNICEF's approach to climate change, from the release of a global climate change strategy to the launch of an intergovernmental declaration on children, youth and climate change at COP25.

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Lessons Learned and Innovations

The year 2019 was characterized by challenges and lessons learned, presenting opportunities from which UNICEF ECA will shape future programme implementation over the next two years.

Since the ratification of the CRC by the ECA countries and territories, the reporting process has inspired and drawn political attention to children's rights. To support countries to domesticate the CRC principles and provisions to enhance the protective environment for children, UNICEF and partners supported the development of model laws and policies for the region. Nevertheless, over the years, ECA countries and territories had been generally slow in revising existing laws and regulations to include legal guarantees of and responsibilities for responding to violations of children's rights.

In 2019, the longstanding commitment to law and policy reform by UNICEF, OECS Commission, UN and other development partners, resulted in successes for the family and child protection reform agenda. With UNICEF support, Antigua and Barbuda raised the minimum age of marriage from 15 years with parental consent to a minimum age of 18 years without parental consent, instead of 16 years contemplated by Government. Anguilla adopted the OECS model legislation on Child Protection; the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' Parliament passed the 2019 Child Justice Act, and Barbados' Cabinet approved its 2019 Child Justice Bill. Policy-wise, UNICEF's advocacy and technical support also resulted in approval of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's Child Policy and Child Protection Implementation Plan as well as the Government of Saint Lucia's suspension of the use of corporal punishment in schools, and the public pledge to abolish the practice of corporal punishment in school settings within the short term, by the Minister of Education in Barbados. The key lesson learned is that UNICEF's strategic engagement on child rights legislative and policy change is long-term and incremental in the Eastern Caribbean and should be continuously planned and sustained over time.

UNICEF ECA's South-South Cooperation on Care for Child Development (CCD) involving the UNICEF offices in Belize and Haiti, the CARICOM Secretariat, OECS and the Governments of Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Turks and Caicos Islands provided a valuable learning experience for the early childhood team from the Caribbean Region. The CCD methodology is designed to support families in promoting the positive development of young children through health, early childhood and education services and provided through the relevant sector and community providers. This South-South Study mission or "horizontal cooperation" was implemented in February 2019 and was designed to share knowledge and good practices and demonstrate the critical value of providing programmes which emphasizes nurturing care for young children during the first 1,000 days in life. This period has been scientifically established as critical for the overall health and development of a child. The horizontal exchange presented an opportunity for Government ECD Officers to strengthen their knowledge and skills to be more effective in enabling young children to develop resilience to cope in difficult situations, to improve their developmental outcomes and to benefit from the exposure to Belize's model of fully integrated ECD. The interactive sessions included Technical Seminars and Clinical Practice sessions in Health Clinics, Community Centres and homes in Toledo, District. The demonstration of strong leadership and intersectoral collaboration in the systematic implementation of the CCD methodology in various community settings in Belize was effective in highlighting the potential for replication and adaption in the Eastern Caribbean. The training in the CCD methodology was implemented in Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda and British Virgin Islands in 2019.

In 2019, UNICEF ECA expanded the use of innovative tools and approaches for data generation to achieve results for children and young people. In collaboration with OECS Commission and Innovation Team (HQ), the Project Connect "Mapping Schools to improve Connectivity and Learning Environment in the Eastern Caribbean" was launched in November 2019. The initiative aims to map all schools in the OECS member states and their level of access to facilities and connectivity in real-time, to identify gaps, measure vulnerabilities and risks and optimize service delivery and emergency preparedness.

This initiative is innovative because it uses a combination of traditional and new data collection sources and tools, such as machine learning technology to capture geographic position of schools, followed by data verification using GPS devices, and admin data providing information on school facilities and attributes. For the first time the Eastern Caribbean countries will have digital maps visually reflecting the SDG indicator 4.a.1 on school facilities, which will provide participating partners with the information to harness public-private and trans-national partnership for investments in education. Approximately 184,700 children and adolescents attending 1,147 schools in the 9 OECS members states are expected to benefit from this initiative.

Project Connect on School Mapping in the Eastern Caribbean aligns with UNICEF's innovation principles and priorities for children and is part of the global UNICEF-ITU GIGA "GAVI for Gigabytes" initiative to connect every school to the internet, and in this way – every young person to information, opportunities and choice. The innovation has the potential to expand in breadth to include other Eastern Caribbean countries and in depth to map additional public infrastructures (health facilities, sports centres) relevant for children and young people.

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Gains in 2019 also illustrated that work on real-time data and innovation is critical and should be strengthened to enable expansion. The mobile phone-based application 'U-Report' has enabled UNICEF programmes to engage with young people in Trinidad and Tobago and leverage information and communication technologies. UNICEF ECA has not yet fully embraced the innovation platform potential, which will require ensuring sufficient support the scalability and sustainability potential. In 2020, UNICEF ECA plans to establish partnerships that would use U-Report to increase VAC case reporting and psychosocial support and provide cost efficient and targeted solutions to improve response and quality of child protection services and address bottlenecks in reporting of cases of violence in both development and humanitarian contexts.