

## Eastern Caribbean Multi-Country Programme

### Part 1: Situation update in the country

The 12 countries and territories covered by the 2017–2021 Eastern Caribbean Area (ECA) multi-country programme - 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, and the Turks and Caicos Islands - are small island developing states (SIDS) (inhabited by about 2.3 million people, of whom 576, 000 are children).

The 2018 Human Development Index shows that Eastern Caribbean countries are classified as having 'high' or 'very high' human development, ranking from 58 (Barbados) to 103 (Dominica) out of 189 countries. This has been the case for at least the last decade. The devastating impact of September 2017 hurricanes in five of the countries simultaneously, with lasting effects well into 2018, showed the ECA's extreme vulnerability. In addition, the situation was to some extent exacerbated by aftershocks from the 2007-2008 economic crisis that were still being experienced by many countries and territories.

Following economic growth averaging a record low of 0.6 per cent in 2017 – largely due to the impact of the hurricanes on several economies – the sub-region's GDP growth was expected to rise to about 3.5 per cent in 2018. Except for Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, 2018 growth rates in most ECA countries were projected to be above 2 per cent; with Anguilla, British Virgin Islands (BVI) and Dominica showing a significant increase after negative growth in 2017. This upturn is underpinned by reconstruction activity, primarily in post-emergency countries, and robust performance by the tourism and construction sectors, as well as positive global developments for main trading partner countries (Canada, United Kingdom and United States).

High levels of indebtedness remain a challenge in the ECA, with increasing debt servicing payments crowding out the productive expenditure needed to stimulate growth. Excluding the UK Overseas Territories, all countries in the sub-region had a debt-to-GDP ratio above 60 per cent in 2017; Barbados' ratio was extremely high: 157 per cent of GDP. There are concerns over the ability of many ECA countries to achieve this 60 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio by 2030, a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target, especially given their vulnerability to natural disasters and external shocks.

ECA social sector expenditures, which according to the SDG target refers to the use of public resources for essential services to support the wellbeing of the population, was budgeted on average at 9.4 per cent of GDP for the latest fiscal year 2017/2018. The social services resource allocation ranges from 5 per cent of GDP in BVI to 20 per cent in Montserrat.

### Situation of children

In 2018 the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission and UNICEF disseminated evidence on child poverty in the Eastern Caribbean Area for the first time. The OECS is a transnational intergovernmental agency covering nine ECA countries. Findings, which covered 11 ECA countries and territories, revealed that child poverty varied considerably across the islands. While on average one in every three children in the ECA was (income) poor, poverty levels for children reached near or above 50 per cent in Grenada and Montserrat. The findings established important baselines for SDG 1 at national levels and for tracking progress towards the 2030 target of reducing poverty by half for all, including children and adolescents.

Unemployment, especially among adolescents and youth, continues to be a major concern, as economies contract due to natural disasters or external shocks. The latest data from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) show that, on average, 15 per cent of the population in the ECA sub-region is unemployed. The youth unemployment rate is twice as high as the overall total and accounts for nearly one out of three young people (31 per cent).

Children and adolescents remain at risk of violence and abuse, which can have implications for their emotional development and physical and mental health. For example, 70 per cent of children in Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and Saint Lucia experienced some form of violence (physical or psychological) as a means of discipline at home. About one in four secondary school children in Eastern Caribbean countries experienced bullying at least once during the past month, according to available data. Reliable reports on sexual violence against children show a high prevalence. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago one in four young women aged 18-to-19 years (24.8 per cent) had experienced sexual violence by the age of 18, as reported in a 2017 nationwide survey. In 2018 (Jan–Oct) there was a 59 per cent increase in the sexual penetration of minors when compared to the same period in 2017. Social media has been identified as a common method of luring victims.

The ECA remained vulnerable to natural hazards. Even though there were no major events in 2018, children from Anguilla, Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, and Turks and Caicos Islands continued to be affected as these islands recovered from the impact of the two major hurricanes in 2017. National child protection systems remained fragile and in need of workforce strengthening. In all affected countries and territories, despite overwhelming evidence: additional manpower is not yet in place to manage increased caseloads, foster care families have not benefitted from increased state stipends and the recovery of the lone children's homes in BVI and Dominica was slow and protracted. While in Anguilla, BVI and Dominica, significantly more community members and teachers were trained to support children's psychosocial needs in humanitarian situations, challenges remained. Dominica, for example, had only limited options for the creation of child-friendly spaces, due to the almost 5,000 houses and community structures reported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as being vulnerable to the elements. Furthermore, in late 2018, the offshore Ross University School of Medicine in Dominica, which had operated there since 1978, moved its operations to Barbados, citing post-Maria challenges. The university had served as a major source of economic activity, said to be producing a staggering 30 per cent of the island's GDP. The impact of this move on children and families is not yet known.

The situation of migrant children remained a concern, especially in Trinidad and Tobago, which continued to experience an influx of migrants from Venezuela. In 2017 about 40,000 Venezuelans were estimated to be living in Trinidad and Tobago and the figure was expected

to increase in 2018. Of the 9,231 people of concern registered with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) by October 2018, Venezuelans accounted for 72 per cent (6,758), of whom 38 per cent were females and 62 per cent males. Eight per cent were children. The number of legal Venezuelans arriving in Trinidad and Tobago was 25,648 in 2016 and 18,571 in 2017, and 20,287 in 2018. The situation of children and youth in migrant families remains critical in several areas, including health, education, economic security, housing and work opportunities. Only 15 per cent of children living in the country for between one month and one year had access to education services, and only 24 per cent of those living there for over one year had access to this critical service.

While the situation of the region's children was negatively influenced by these challenges, policy changes and legislative reforms have the potential to impact children in a positive manner. For example, on 20 November 2018, the Government of Saint Lucia passed the Child Justice Bill and the Children's Care, Protection and Adoption Bill. The passage of these bills was an important step toward operationalizing the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international instruments for the care, protection and rights-based treatment of children through domestic legislation. The Child Justice Bill affects children in conflict with the law and introduces a new mandatory process called the 'initial inquiry', while the Children's Care, Protection and Adoption Bill provides a more comprehensive way to address neglect, abuse, exploitation and violence affecting children.

Although the SDGs are a key priority for governments and partners in the Eastern Caribbean, only 42 per cent of data on child-related SDG baselines is available, three years after the launch of the 2015-2030 Sustainable Agenda –highlighting large socio-economic data gaps in the region. Limited human capacities and budget allocations at statistical offices are a continuing bottleneck for effective monitoring and planning for children.

## **Part 2: Major results including in humanitarian action and gender, against the results in country programme documents**

### Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

UNICEF ECA's work on early childhood development (ECD) aimed to Increase knowledge of stakeholders in the early childhood sector on issues that can affect the survival and capacity of young children to develop and learn in a sustainable way.

Having access to current data on child development is vital to ensuring that children survive and thrive. Data and information on good practices were shared at the regional early childhood research conference held in Antigua and Barbuda in February 2018 under the theme 'early moments matter – nurturing care in the early years ensures that individuals and societies thrive'. The conference served to increase knowledge of stakeholders in the early childhood sector about key issues that can affect the survival and the capacity of young children to develop and learn in a sustainable way. The dialogue and interaction served to stimulate thinking among participants with the potential to influence policy direction and programme development of high-quality ECD services and programmes.

The conference was a collaboration among several partners, hosted by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, with the CDB and UNICEF as the main financial contributors and support from the extensive technical expertise of academic and other development partners in the

regional and international communities. Through an interdisciplinary platform, multisectoral regional and international stakeholders benefitted from the opportunity to understand that ECD is critical to sustainable development. Leading research and academic scholars, development and other regional partners, policy makers and ECD practitioners from the health, education and social development sectors accessed research findings, information on new trends, key achievements and persistent challenges in the delivery of high-quality early childhood programming for children from birth to five years old. Stakeholders committed to follow up in countries and seek to strengthen multisectoral partnerships for more effective use of resources and technical expertise in the private and public sectors. As a follow-up to the conference, UNICEF ECA provided technical and financial assistance to support the development and competencies of 22 teen mothers and 10 young fathers in Nevis to improve their childrearing practices and provide the best care for their children.

UNICEF also enhanced the capacity of caregivers and duty-bearers to use play and communication strategies more effectively to support the learning and development of young children using the care for child development (CCD) methodology in different settings.

UNICEF ECA technical and financial assistance supported the governments of Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda and British Virgin Islands to enhance the capacity of approximately 150 multisectoral stakeholders, including ECD practitioners and family members, during a practical training workshop in the use of CCD methods. Care for child development, which has been endorsed as a good practice, provided relevant guidance in assisting parents and caregivers to use play and communication effectively to support early childhood learning and development in both emergency and non-emergency situations. Plans were launched in each country for a systematic roll-out of the programme in 2019. This has the potential to fill a significant gap in services for children, particularly those in the 0–3 age group.

UNICEF supported enhanced knowledge and skills among caregivers/duty bearers in the early childhood sector to recognize the signs of developmental delay in children in their care, and to maximize opportunities to make timely referrals and support early intervention.

An ongoing partnership between UNICEF and the Child Development and Guidance Centre in Saint Lucia continued to strengthen the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to respond to the special needs of children with developmental delays and disabilities. In 2018, through a targeted approach, 42 ECD practitioners strengthened their skills for identifying children in their care who are demonstrating developmental delays. Approximately 420 children under five years of age will benefit from their caregivers' ability to use the new information effectively and make timely referrals. Twenty-one nurses also have enhanced skills to conduct developmental screening as a result of their participation in a training-of-trainers (TOT) programme, designed to be cascaded to trainees at all health centres. This ongoing intervention will benefit all children under the age of five in Saint Lucia (approximately 11, 800) through the continued emphasis on supporting quality early learning and development.

## **Goal area 2: Every child learns**

**Early childhood development:** In 2018 the global 'early moments matter' theme was at the centre of all capacity-building initiatives implemented in collaborations between UNICEF, governments and other partners. Capacity building remained a major strategy in ECD programming, in a landscape where many key stakeholders have only limited knowledge and understanding of the ingredients necessary to provide high-quality care and education.

Recognizing the risks to positive development for children in their communities, efforts aimed to bridge some of the knowledge and skills gaps and to enhance the environments in which children under five live, grow, play and learn.

**Positive child-rearing and child care practices:** Capacity-building initiatives were crafted based on scientific information that emphasizes that the quality of early life experience has a lifelong impact on development and learning. UNICEF provided technical and financial assistance that resulted in providing approximately 1,000 stakeholders (including teen mothers, fathers, teachers, health care workers and other caregivers) from the 12 ECA countries and territories with increased knowledge and skills to more effectively support the development of children under five. Key thematic areas included: the ability to identify signs of developmental delay in young children and to monitor developmental progress; utilization of a child-centred curriculum to create stimulating and safe environments; how to protect children from sexual abuse; supporting early child development using everyday items; using the CCD methodology; and guiding adults to use a conscious discipline methodology to enhance skills for safety, connection with others and problem-solving.

During 2018 a sub-regional integrated operational framework and sub-regional curriculum framework for ECD were established to strengthen standardization and harmonization in the region. Partnership between UNICEF and the OECS education development management unit focused on utilizing the sub-regional framework and curriculum for ECD, which were designed to strengthen systems and processes for coordination and harmonization of programmes and services in the early childhood sector, both at national level and across the region. UNICEF's specific contribution consisted of technical and financial assistance.

To promote an integrated approach to ECD services and programmes, key stakeholders from the health, education and social services sectors benefitted from their participation in a series of national awareness-raising exercises in Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which introduced them to the usefulness of the integrated operational framework for providing high-quality ECD services and programmes. The stakeholders committed to identifying opportunities to build on existing structures to harmonize systems and processes for effectiveness ECD interventions. The new framework was developed in response to concerns that, while it is understood that high-quality ECD is a responsibility shared by families and health, education and social services departments, care and early education were still being delivered from a siloed sectoral approach. Stakeholder groups in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines included both personnel occupying policy and decision-making posts and those responsible for delivering services and programmes on the frontlines.

The phased introduction of the regional curriculum framework, including a TOT component, commenced in Anguilla, British Virgin Islands and Saint Lucia and resulted in a cadre of trainers with the competencies needed to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes of early childhood practitioners for utilizing the framework to design and deliver child-centred ECD programmes. The framework was developed in response to an ongoing challenge: many early childhood practitioners in the region continue to deliver ad hoc programmes meant to support early learning and development, but not based on sound educational philosophy or understanding of child development. The curriculum framework was developed using an extensive consultative process, and encompasses sound pedagogical approaches that promote early development and learning in active learning environments.

**Education in emergencies (EiE):** UNICEF ECA sought to increase the knowledge of stakeholders in EiE with regard to their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, and to increase their commitment to strengthening safe schools programming.

Natural disasters can negatively impact the goal of ensuring that every child learns, as demonstrated by the catastrophic effects of the 2017 hurricane season, which exposed the vulnerability of the ECA's education sector. To better understand the specific gaps and challenges, UNICEF partnered with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector, the OECS, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and IsraAID, a humanitarian agency, to convene a meeting of ministries of education across the region for an after-action review and SWOT analysis. The more than 90 participants sought to identify key lessons learned and outline the way forward for countries and regional partners, based on the three pillars of the comprehensive safe school framework (safe learning facilities, school disaster management and risk reduction and resilience education).

The three main lessons learned collectively by the countries centred on the need for: psychosocial support for both teachers and students, updated intersectoral preparedness plans that clearly define roles and accountability and a means to secure important school records and protect information systems. The importance of advocacy, development of regional guidance, capacity building around EiE, technical assistance and collaboration between countries to better implement the comprehensive school safety framework (CSSF) were also underscored.

As a follow-up, UNICEF and its partners provided technical and financial support for training over 80 education personnel from across the region in EiE programming. Participants were exposed to the minimum standards of the inter-agency network for education in emergencies (INEE) as well as basic tools to help strengthen risk-informed educational responses. As a result, there is increased knowledge of EiE roles, responsibilities and accountability across education stakeholders and commitment to strengthening safe schools programming.

In line with the 2017 Antigua and Barbuda Safe School Declaration, and propelled by the major impact on the education sector in five countries (Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin islands, Dominica and Turks and Caicos Islands), 2018 saw a major focus on a review of the countries in relation to the safety framework. The assessment process (field visits, desk reviews and interviews) conducted by UNICEF examined the level of implementation of the framework, covering safety at learning facilities, existence of national policies and teachers' and students' responses to risks and the specific challenges and capacities of each country.

Insufficient focus on developing emergency contingency plans and limited national capacity to do so were identified as major challenges. To assist in addressing this, UNICEF ECA, with its partners, advocated and provided technical and financial support for a comprehensive approach to building school-level capacities, developing emergency school plans and promoting the infusion of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience education into daily teaching. Updated school safety plans, developed with student input, now exist for all 74 schools in Dominica and similar work is continuing in the other countries.

**Enhancing educator capacity in child-friendly classroom strategies:** Implementing the effective/child friendly schools framework across ECA continued to be a strategy for improving learning and behavioural outcomes and school retention, as well as reducing violence.

In 2018 UNICEF used a slightly adjusted version of the TOT model to cascade the number of teachers in countries exposed to effective child-friendly schools principles. As a result, 45 facilitators (at least three per country) were trained and committed to replicating the training in their countries over the next two years. Additional support was provided to assist in this task and during the last six months of 2018 these facilitators trained an additional 1,182 teachers in nine countries, impacting 28,300 students. These actions were complemented with other communication for development (C4D) strategies, contributing to more holistic changes in school practices, student engagement and ultimately, improved learning and student behaviour. The importance of addressing gender disparities in educational completion was underscored, given that studies confirm that boys are almost twice as likely as girls to repeat grades and/or drop out of school.

UNICEF ECA continued to work with the governments of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Turks and Caicos Islands to take specific actions to follow up on 2015/2016 studies of out-of-school children. UNICEF carried out advocacy around the findings and related challenges/constraints in education planning, policies and programming. Studies showed that most children and young adolescents were in school, but that traditional, didactic teaching approaches contributed to the significant number of students struggling academically.

Strengthening systems for inclusive education requiring greater focus: Efforts in this regard were constrained somewhat by a renewed focus on disaster risk reduction due to the impact of the 2017 hurricanes, which required the limited education personnel to shift efforts from one priority to another. Consequently, insufficient progress was made in elucidating inclusive education policies, developing new partnerships for student support and engaging schools for multi-faceted approaches to this challenge.

UNICEF worked with the OECS and other partners to support a consultation with teacher educators to examine how enhanced teacher training (scope and approach) could help to strengthen teacher engagement and delivery in schools. An advisory committee (with representation from governments and teacher training colleges) was established to explore capacity strengthening at these colleges, to more effectively prepare new teachers for their multiple roles as facilitators of learning, mentors and counsellors. This action, in concert with parallel efforts to improve student engagement and participation in positive and supportive learning environments, is expected to ultimately improve learning outcomes for all students.

### **Goal area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation**

**Commitments to address corporal punishment:** The child protection sector arrived at a watershed moment in 2018, in relation to protecting children from violence and exploitation. Continued partnership with the OECS Commission netted political commitment by all OECS social development ministers to pursue the abolition of corporal punishment of children. With the goal of its elimination from all settings, children will no longer be exposed to this form of violence.

With the passage of a new Child Justice Act on 20 November, 2018, children in Saint Lucia benefitted from the outlawing of corporal punishment as a sentence, bringing to nine the number of countries that have abolished this practice. As a result of continued high-level advocacy by UNICEF, relevant ministers in Barbados also signalled policy decisions for the

abolition of corporal punishment in education and penal institution settings and as a sentence.

**Strengthening legal frameworks and service delivery for children and families affected by violence:** UNICEF continued to support the elimination of the threat of forced sex on both boys and girls. Combined strategic, high-level dialogue between the OECS Commission and UNICEF led Saint Lucia to pass a new Child Protection Act, which *inter alia*, enforces mandatory reporting of this and other forms of abuse by professionals. With its convening power, the OECS Commission will use annual social development meetings to ensure that best practices are disseminated across its member states.

Moreover, a new and exciting partnership between the U.K. National Crime Agency, Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands and UNICEF ECA was created responding to the ongoing challenge of providing timely, sensitive support for persons with concerns or actual cases of sexual abuse. Together these entities collaborated to open the Ethel Ingham Centre in December 2018. This sexual assault referral centre is an interagency service for victims of rape and sexual assault, aimed at improving their mental and physical health as well as the criminal justice outcomes of their cases. The new centre has the potential to become a Centre of Excellence for the sub-region.

**Post-emergency psycho-social support:** Following a UNICEF-convened lessons learned emergency after-action review meeting with all countries and territories, it was agreed that teachers, rather than child protection workers, would be responsible for ensuring implementation of the Return To Happiness (RTH) programme in post-disaster situations. UNICEF provided financial and technical support for the training of all teachers on Anguilla and British Virgin Islands; training includes interagency referral and a case management process for children flagged as requiring individual support and assistance in humanitarian situations. This capacity-building process is being managed by participating governments.

## **Goal area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life**

**Enhancing social protection systems for children:** In 2018 UNICEF ECA provided technical assistance for improving the delivery of inclusive, equitable social protection systems for boys and girls through the first national rights-based social protection policy in Anguilla (building on the 2105 Social Protection Act) – the first for the British Overseas Territories. This policy impacts 3,778 children, ensuring that their economic and social vulnerabilities will be adequately addressed.

In addition, UNICEF continued technical and financial assistance to Antigua and Barbuda's social protection reform to ensure coverage of over 24,782 children, taking significant steps to establish the social protection floor. This includes a policy that will lead to better design and delivery of social transfers for poor and vulnerable children, as well as protecting their families and caregivers from falling into poverty and ensuring that children realize their right to quality living standards and social security. Key products developed with UNICEF technical and financial support in 2018 included: the social protection policy, action plan and monitoring and evaluation framework; restructuring of the Social Policy Department's human resource portfolio; and a functional review of the flagship cash transfer programme in Antigua and Barbuda. These products were developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Transformation and Human Resource Development and its directorate of gender affairs.

Building on the lessons learned from the first World Food Programme-UNICEF joint emergency

cash programme in Dominica, after Hurricane Maria in September 2017, UNICEF ECA provided technical expertise to strengthen operational delivery of the country's flagship cash transfer intervention – the public assistance programme. This included development of an operations manual to formalize targeting, coverage, roles and – most importantly – will integrate social service delivery, to provide targeted interventions for children who face multiple social and economic vulnerabilities. Technical assistance from UNICEF ECA also strengthened shock-responsive social protection system-building in Dominica and in hurricane-affected islands like the BVI, which also administered humanitarian cash transfer programmes. Additionally, in collaboration with the OECS, UNICEF ECA advocated and built capacity for shock-responsive social protection, as part of its continuing efforts to support social protection reform.

**Enhanced awareness of children's issues by policy makers:** In St. Kitts and Nevis, UNICEF ECA, through technical support to both of the two federation states, generated evidence to inform the design and impact of cash transfer programmes for children through an evaluation of pilot cash transfer programmes (MEND in St. Kitts, RISE in Nevis). The findings informed policy dialogue and programme design for the newly established cash transfer programme in St. Kitts, scheduled for launch in early 2019, while in Nevis the findings justified the scale-up of RISE to cover more families and children. The evaluation also played a major role in supporting the case for investment in inter-sectoral coordination with other government agencies.

Evidence was also generated in Trinidad and Tobago as part of the UNICEF/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) joint programme on measuring multi-dimensional poverty. Qualitative and participatory research took place in 14 regions of Trinidad and in Tobago. The research findings will form part of the evidence used to develop a national poverty reduction strategy that would impact not only poor and vulnerable children but the entire child population of 330,102. As part of the qualitative study, UNICEF also produced an advocacy product in the form of a book of photographs on child poverty that captured the voices of children from the research.

**More SDG data disaggregated for children and adolescents:** UNICEF ECA provided technical and financial support to the governments of the Eastern Caribbean to conduct several data-focused interventions in 2018. One key result was the establishment of national technical capacity for monitoring social SDGs through use of the multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) in the Eastern Caribbean.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Equity, Social Justice, Empowerment, Youth Development, Sports and Local Government, a flagship analysis and report on adolescent well-being and equity in Saint Lucia was published in December 2018. The report utilized UNICEF technical assistance to analyse all of the latest socio-economic datasets relevant to adolescents. This publication puts young people at the forefront of the national development agenda and highlights, based on evidence, the current challenges faced by adolescents and areas requiring policy and programme support in Saint Lucia.

Building on continued collaboration with the OECS Commission, the Caribbean Development Bank and central statistical offices for monitoring poverty in the ECA, a dedicated chapter on child poverty was developed and included in Saint Lucia's report on living conditions published in 2018. UNICEF provided technical support for the data analysis and amplified the findings of the national report with results on children. This not only contributed to mainstreaming

monetary and multi-dimensional child poverty measurements in the report, but also led to a consultative process with relevant government stakeholders that concluded with the development of a national 2019-2028 programme of action (PoA) for addressing critical findings, including on child poverty. The recommendations from the PoA were submitted for inclusion into various agencies' budgets, policies and work programmes.

UNICEF ECA developed a series of child-focused SDG country profile fact sheets, based on validated national and regional data sources for the 12 Eastern Caribbean countries and territories in 2018. The fact sheets were disseminated to government partners during 2018 annual review and planning meetings, and used to guide and contextualize discussions of the needs and milestones involved in planning interventions to reach the child-related SDGs in the ECA. The fact sheets, which were road-tested, will continue to be used as advocacy tools and regularly updated, jointly with governments, as new data become available.

**Migration:** In response to the flow of migrants to Trinidad and Tobago UNICEF ECA, with technical support from the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO), generated evidence on migration facts and humanitarian programme performance. As a result of this systemic knowledge about the migrant children living in Trinidad and Tobago and regular humanitarian performance data on nutrition, child protection and education, UNICEF ECA successfully enhanced implementation of the humanitarian response plan with the Living Water Community, a local NGO and implementing partner, and was able to produce more evidence-based situation reports, donor reports and advocacy materials.

**Strengthened capacity and commitment to conduct MICS:** A comprehensive SDG and MICS survey design workshop was held in May 2018, in partnership with the OECS Commission and the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), with participation by 76 government and development partner representatives. As a result of UNICEF's advocacy, Trinidad and Tobago and Turks and Caicos islands included the surveys in their country statistical plans for the next fiscal year and secured substantial government funding to conduct their next MICS. A memorandum of understanding on MICS was signed with the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands, and Trinidad and Tobago's version is nearing finalization. Preparations for data collection in 2019 are ongoing, and countries are customizing the survey tools, including questionnaires and computer-assisted personal interviewing data entry applications. MICS data are expected to represent a key contribution to evidence-generation for children and SDG monitoring in 2019.

## **Cross-cutting issues**

### **Gender**

UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Living Water Community to conduct gender-sensitive focus groups with migrants residing in Trinidad and Tobago. Focus groups were conducted separately with migrant boys, men, girls and women to ensure that the special concerns of each group were reflected in the development of a C4D strategy to support UNICEF's response to the Venezuelan migrant crisis. In addition, in teacher training, efforts focused on ensuring that teachers: (1) have a comprehensive understanding of how gender concerns and treatment impact learning (2) understand the critical importance of avoiding gender bias through unintentional actions and (3) maintain equal academic and behavioural expectations for all students.

## Humanitarian action

No major humanitarian crises occurred in the Eastern Caribbean in 2018. However, UNICEF ECA continued to provide financial and technical support to countries and territories recovering from 2017 hurricanes. In addition, national social protection systems were strengthened to enhance their capacity to administer humanitarian cash transfers in emergencies

UNICEF and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) designed and developed the first joint emergency cash transfer programme in the sub-region, building on Dominica's national social protection system and making it shock-responsive. The programme reached 6,143 children with child grants supported by UNICEF and 24,466 persons with food grants supported by WFP (child grants included). Vulnerability needs assessments of household's social and economic vulnerabilities were conducted. UNICEF also provided technical support for a joint cash platform to administer the humanitarian cash transfer programme in the BVI, reaching 1,012 children aged 0–17 years old) as well as 732 five-to-17 years olds and 280 infants. The Ministry of Health and Social Development spearheaded the establishment of the joint cash platform with its local implementing partners (Caritas, British Red Cross, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency) and funding from the UK's Department for International Development (DfID).

**Enhanced capacity for preparedness actions:** UNICEF supported countries' and territories' preparedness actions by convening meetings with strategic stakeholders in the education and child protection sectors to review lessons learned from the 2017 hurricane season and provide technical and financial assistance for interventions to build resilience in these sectors. Technical support was also provided to countries for the development of social- and behaviour-change campaigns aimed at creating awareness of how to be better prepared for hurricanes and floods.

Support for quality education services: Schools were significantly damaged by hurricanes in 2017 in impacted countries. In 2018 UNICEF continued to work with governments in Antigua and Barbuda, BVI and Dominica, in particular to support programming to ensure: relevant adjustments to the curriculum (formal and informal), the availability of basic learning resources and needed adjustments to school compounds to address critical hazards. Some 6,245 students benefitted from this work.

**Improved post-emergency awareness for parents and caregivers in Trinidad and Tobago:** Trinidad and Tobago experienced severe national flooding, leading UNICEF ECA to provide technical support for the development and dissemination of lifesaving messages on health and hygiene that reached approximately 80,000 persons. Technical and financial support was also provided for implementation of the Return to Happiness programme for children residing in shelters following the flooding.

**Improved access to services and support for migrant children:** In 2018 Trinidad and Tobago continued to experience influx of Venezuelan migrants. As a result of UNICEF technical and financial support to the Living Water Community, access to education for migrant children was improved through expansion of the temporary learning space; 188 migrant children received psychosocial support; one community-based child-friendly space was established; and 83 children aged 6–59 months benefitted from nutritional screening.

**Enhanced capacity of national partners working with migrant children:** UNICEF took the

lead in providing technical and financial support to build the capacity of key national actors to better respond to and address the needs of children on the move. As a result, 53 persons who work with migrant children benefited from enhanced capacity in positive behaviour management, child-friendly methodologies, and the provision of psychosocial support. In addition, financial assistance was provided to enhance the skills of partners in communication and accountability to affected populations and in child protection in emergency minimum standards through participation in regional workshops on these topics.

**Improved awareness of migrant families on child health and protection:** UNICEF played a leading role in the development of a C4D strategy to reach migrant communities with lifesaving and other information. As a result of UNICEF ECA's financial and technical support to the Living Water Community, focus groups were held with migrant families (boys, girls, men and women) to inform the development of the C4D strategy and to ensure feedback from migrant populations. By end-2017, 5,697 migrants had been reached with information on health, hygiene and where to access healthy sources of food, while 3,452 were reached with messages on child protection.

**Consultation mechanism established for addressing needs of migrant and refugee children:** In Trinidad and Tobago UNICEF collaborated with UNHCR to establish a child protection working group, which includes the Children's Authority and other child protection agencies. To date, this group has developed policies and a national standard operating procedure for management of unaccompanied, separated and trafficked children.

## **Advocacy**

UNICEF ECA expanded partnerships and integrated young people into its communication strategy as it continued to advocate on behalf of all boys and girls in the Eastern Caribbean. The advocacy and communication strategy focused on four main areas: access to quality early childhood development care and pre-primary education, measures to reduce sexual violence and abuse against girls and boys and obtaining political and social commitment to reducing poverty and inequalities.

**Enhanced advocacy capacity for adolescents and young persons:** As the global 'Generation Unlimited' initiative took shape, UNICEF ECA empowered young people aged 15-to-24 from all 12 programme countries to advocate on a range of issues. World Children's Day was used as an opportunity to engage over 100 young people on the future of the Eastern Caribbean's education system. This engagement came through the establishment of an online training and discussion platform, a regional youth WhatsApp discussion group and the first ever face-to-face sub-regional youth symposium.

The global U-Report platform also arrived in the region with roll-out in Trinidad and Tobago, home to the Eastern Caribbean's largest youth population.

To propel this increased youth advocacy focus, UNICEF strengthened its partnership with the University of the West Indies (UWI) Youth Initiative, and provided support for organizing 'Activate Talk' discussions around SDGs from a youth perspective. These discussions, which brought to life the connection between the SDGs and the reality of the sub-region's youth, explored such areas as environmental sustainability, gender issues, education and violence. Additionally, new alliances with ministries of youth in Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia resulted in strengthening youth parliaments and other avenues,

providing young people with sustained platforms to project their voices to peers, policy makers and the public at large.

The traditional media continued to be a strong ally, even as new technologies were embraced to reach diverse audiences with UNICEF's voice. A new initiative to reach radio audiences in all 12 programme countries/territories was launched with an initial regional online press conference organized through the continued partnership with the Caribbean Broadcasting Union. A new initiative with the Caribbean Media Corporation also took shape, resulting in the first televised Activate Talk. These innovations expanded the reach of UNICEF's voice to new audiences.

Additionally, to be more effective at public advocacy, UNICEF ECA increasingly used its digital platforms to influence debates and advance the equity agenda. The social media platform assumed greater strategic importance: the office's Facebook page witnessed a 110 per cent increase in 2018 over 2017, while the strategy of increasing advocacy through short digital products spurred a 39 per cent growth in YouTube views over the previous year.

### **Communication for development**

Communication for development continued to play a key role as a change strategy to ensure that boys and girls have the enhanced knowledge and skills required to prevent and report all forms of violence, and that caregivers and other duty-bearers have enhanced knowledge and skills to implement positive childcare practices.

**Enhanced awareness on violence:** Through UNICEF technical and financial support to ministries of education and child protection departments, national social and behaviour change campaigns were developed and more than 60,000 school-aged children across three countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and Turks and Caicos Islands) gained greater knowledge about how to prevent interpersonal violence in school. Further, approximately 40,000 boys and girls across six countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago and Turks and Caicos Islands) gained knowledge and skills related to preventing and reporting sexual abuse.

In addition, as a result of UNICEF ECA's provision of technical and financial support for awareness-raising workshops, 400 early childhood caregivers and pre-school teachers across four countries (Barbados, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Turks and Caicos Islands) have stronger skills for teaching young children about sexual abuse and bullying in an age-appropriate manner. Approximately 9,000 persons across seven countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and Turks and Caicos Islands) who work in school settings were also sensitized on positive behaviour management strategies and protecting children from abuse. Critical to achieving these results was the growing political will to address these issues, creating a positive climate for C4D interventions and collaboration with new partners, such as the Power of Choice Inc., and old partners such as Cricket West Indies and Crime Stoppers.

**Enhanced knowledge by policy makers on interventions addressing child sexual abuse:** Gathering evidence on the effectiveness of C4D interventions to address sexual abuse is critical. As a result of UNICEF advocacy with child protection departments in Barbados, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, it was agreed that an assessment of the 'Break the Silence-End Child Abuse' campaign in these countries would be conducted. With UNICEF's

financial support, this assessment was completed and the study findings shared with policy makers working in child protection in 12 Eastern Caribbean countries and territories. The findings are expected to inform improvements in future C4D interventions. In 2019 UNICEF ECA will support child protection departments to ensure that the findings shape their programmatic and C4D interventions on child sexual abuse.

**Capacity built for C4D in emergencies:** Recognizing that responses in C4D programming before, during and after emergencies needed to be strengthened, UNICEF ECA (with support from UNICEF LACRO) provided training in C4D for national implementing partners from the education, child protection and social protection sectors of 11 of 12 countries, under its multi-country programme. Approximately 60 persons now have enhanced capacity to develop and implement C4D behaviour-change interventions in emergency situations.

**Feedback from affected populations:** Feedback was generated to inform future C4D interventions in emergencies targeting parents and caregivers. C4D was used in 2018 as a strategy to support feedback and accountability to populations. In Dominica, 47 consultations were held across communities and feedback was received from 632 Dominicans on issues that affected them during and after Hurricane Maria.

### Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

The Eastern Caribbean continues to be susceptible to natural hazards; one of UNICEF's key contributions in the aftermath of disasters is support for the provision of psychosocial programming to children aged 5-12 years.

One of the key lessons learned during a review after the 2017 hurricanes, held in 2018 jointly with stakeholders from the child protection and education sectors, was that the scope, target group and lead agency for psychosocial programming need to be re-examined. Traditionally the national lead agency for the provision of psychosocial programming is the social development sector. However, it emerged that the education sector, because of its natural link with children, was better positioned to implement Return to Happiness programming to a wider cross-section of affected children. Further, participants found that it was critical for those implementing Return to Happiness to have access to mental health/psychosocial support, as they too will have been affected by the emergency.

In this regard, in 2019 UNICEF will continue to ensure that Caribbean countries have strengthened capacity to deliver mental health and psycho-social support services in the event of natural or man-made disasters. It will support the training of all teachers across the 12 countries under its multi-country programme in RTH methodology. Further, it will partner with the UWI, CDEMA and sister UN agencies to develop a mental health and psychosocial support training and coordination package to be rolled out across the Caribbean sub-region.

A second lesson learned was that an adequate response to the migrant crisis in Trinidad and Tobago required overcoming several bottlenecks and data gaps. One bottleneck concerned the lack of holistic understanding of the migrant population residing in Trinidad and Tobago. This information gap impacted negatively on UNICEF ECA's ability to implement evidence-based programming for the migrant population. Another bottleneck concerned current national legislation, which does not allow migrant and refugee children to attend public schools.

As it continues to respond to the migrant crisis in 2019, UNICEF ECA will keep advocating for the conducting of a displacement tracking matrix survey. Advocacy with relevant authorities to fill the gap in legislation on refugees and migrants will also be pursued, in collaboration with UNHCR and the UN Resident Coordinator. However, in the interim, UNICEF will collaborate with the Notesmaster global learning programme to provide a blended online education programme that follows the Caribbean Examination Council syllabus, so that migrant children will be able to access quality and certified education. Furthermore, UNICEF will strengthen the capacity of human resources in Trinidad and Tobago to better respond to migrant and refugee children's programming in education, child protection and C4D. Two international UN volunteers were under recruitment in late 2018: a senior humanitarian coordinator and an education specialist.

Recognizing that other countries under the UNICEF ECA multi-country programme that have issues concerning migrant children, UNICEF ECA will take the lead in advocating for inter-agency dialogue to support a communication campaign on xenophobia and discrimination against migrant and refugee children.

The third lesson learned concerns data. The Eastern Caribbean sub-region is data-poor. During 2018 UNICEF ECA invested in data generation and capacity development, in partnership with the OECS, ECLAC and the Caribbean Development Bank, as well as with countries and territories. SDG fact sheets and similar products on young people were produced. However, filling the needs of most countries and territories in regard to data gaps requires an interagency approach under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator. The UNICEF ECA Representative will be advocating for a unified United Nations approach on SDG engagement, including capacity development and data generation with countries and territories.

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