

## Jamaica

### Update on the context and situation of children

#### The Context: Jamaica and the Agenda 2030

Jamaica is classified as an upper middle-income country with a GDP per capita of USD 5,400 (2018). Improvement in the macro-economic situation has led the country to successfully conclude its economic reform programme in 2019, supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This has resulted in a stronger economy, an all-time low unemployment rate and a significant reduction in public debt that fell below 100 per cent of GDP. Despite this economic progress, the national poverty rate, which was 19.3 per cent in 2017, is still significant. Jamaica continues to be challenged by high crime and violence levels, emphasizing the need to address the issues of youth unemployment, gender equality, education and social cohesion. In addition, similar to neighbors in the Caribbean, Jamaica is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and the effects of climate change. Despite no major events occurring in 2019, the country needs to remain vigilant and prepared by reducing the growing concentration of assets and population in areas at high risk of impact by natural disasters.

Jamaica is in its fourth Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF), the implementation framework of the National Development Plan – Vision 2030 Jamaica. The current MTF clearly articulates the linkages between the national goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In July 2018, the Jamaican Government presented its Voluntary National Review (VNR) report on the SDGs and was able to report on just under 50 per cent of the indicators. The ability to report on most of the social indicators affecting children has been challenged by the long delay to conduct two of the main sources of socio-demographic indicators – the Reproductive Health Survey (RHS) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). In 2019, the Government of Jamaica and UNICEF successfully leveraged the necessary resources for the implementation of a new RHS that will allow Jamaica to produce fresh disaggregated data to report on progress on several SDGs by 2020.

The country recognizes the role of environmental sustainability. Increasingly, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction are being incorporated into development planning across social and economic sectors. To inform this strategic planning, UNICEF Jamaica undertook a Climate Landscape Analysis for Children (CLAC) in 2019.

#### Main Changes in the Situation of Children

##### Violence against Children

For many Jamaican children, violence is a normal part of life. Jamaica ranks 4th in the world for homicide rates – creating an environment for children that is saturated with high levels of violence. The homicide rate decreased from 60 per 100,000 population in 2017 to 47 in 2018, but the number of persons murdered in the year remained very high at approximately 1,300. Between January and November of 2019, 41 children were murdered. Exposure to violence starts very early in life – as toddlers learn to walk and talk and explore their new world. Eighty-five per cent of children under age 15 experience violent discipline (physical and psychological) on a regular basis at home.

In 2019, the National Plan of Action for an Integrated Response to Children and Violence (NPACV) was approved and launched. The NPACV provides a coordinated, structured approach to addressing key issues pertaining to children as victims, perpetrators and witnesses of acts of violence and abuse. It will guide stakeholders in understanding and fulfilling their obligations under Article 19 of the CRC as well as SDG 16.2. The Prime Minister established a National Violence Prevention Commission tasked with conducting a review of violence initiatives towards a 10-year action plan. UNICEF continues to be an integral part of this process by providing technical assistance and supporting advocacy efforts that include highlighting children's views and voices.

In 2018, 271 boys and 12 girls were arrested for committing major crimes, accounting for 10 per cent of perpetrators that year. The total number of juveniles appearing before the courts increased by 2.2 per cent from 2,457 (2017) to 2,511 (2018); 66 per cent of them were boys. UNICEF Jamaica continues to support the implementation of the Child Diversion Act which was passed in 2018, which is designed to strengthen the application of restorative justice for children.

##### Sexual Violence against Women and Girls

In Jamaica, around two out of 10 adolescents girls 15-19 years old have been subjected to sexual violence, and one out of 10 adolescent girls have been forced to have intercourse in her lifetime. Among women who were forced to have sexual intercourse, in more than half of the cases this first experience took place against their will before the age of 19. Violence against girls and women is integrally linked to unequal gender roles adopted from childhood and adolescence. Beliefs around gender roles are reproduced over generations.

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In 2019, Jamaica was selected as one of the recipients for the EU-supported Spotlight Initiative (SI) that will invest 8 million euros in the next three years to prevent and reduce violence against women and girls. The SI provides a unique opportunity for the UN system to support the Government of Jamaica and civil society to address the high levels of family violence in Jamaica's homes.

### Access to Health

The five leading causes of death in Jamaica are attributed to non-communicable diseases, making them one of the major public health challenges nationally. The country's response includes the "Jamaica Moves" campaign, which utilizes public-private partnerships to encourage and support healthy lifestyles. UNICEF will support the roll-out of nutrition and exercise programmes in schools in 2020. The government also adopted a policy to ban sugary drinks in schools which started in January 2019. In 2019, the Ministry of Health and Wellness certified three additional hospitals in the public sector as "Baby Friendly", under the UNICEF-supported National Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative.

The provision of effective health care for adolescents is impacted by legal barriers which prohibit services to children under 16 without parental consent and by a scarcity of adolescent-friendly health spaces. In 2019, an additional 18 public health facilities began implementing adolescent-friendly services, bringing the total number of adolescent-friendly sites to 44 – with at least three adolescent-friendly facilities in every parish.

The recent National HIV Knowledge, Attitudes, Behaviors and Practices Survey presented tremendous regression on key indicators for HIV prevention among adolescents and young people. Levels of knowledge of how to prevent HIV among adolescents and young people decreased from 40 per cent in 2012 to 32 per cent in 2017. The report also shows a reduction in condom use among young people from 70 per cent in 2012 to 62 per cent in 2017. Jamaica has also lost some of the gains made regarding the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT). The level of transmission was estimated at 1 per cent in 2015-6 – well within the target range of less than 2 per cent. However, this figure jumped to 6 per cent in 2017.

### Access to Education

Jamaica has made significant strides towards providing access to quality and equitable education for its citizens. Nonetheless, significant gaps remain in access to quality education. According to the Human Capital Index, children born today in Jamaica – given prevailing investments in education and health – will only be 54 per cent as productive as they could be if they had access to quality education services. In addition, for many students in Jamaica, the presence or threat of violence at school interferes with their right to education.

In 2018, an estimated 73.7 per cent of persons in the school age cohort (three to 24 years old) were enrolled in educational institutions. As planned, the "Jamaica Brain Builders Programme", the country's first zero early childhood development strategy for ages zero to three, rolled out in 2019. The strategy covers the first 1,000 days of childhood and addresses all aspects of child development including early stimulation and intervention.

Enrolment at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels remain high with gross enrolment rates of 98 per cent, 99.9 and 88.5 per cent, respectively (2018). Nevertheless, poor education outcomes continue to reflect gaps in education quality and affect students' matriculation to tertiary institutions. Outcomes of the Grade 4 literacy and numeracy assessment for 2017/8 showed 83 per cent of students achieving mastery in literacy (54.1 per cent of these were girls) and 63 per cent in numeracy (54.8 per cent of these were girls). For the 2017-8 school year, only 36 per cent of secondary school leavers at Grade 11 qualified for post-secondary or tertiary. In 2018, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (MoEYI) adopted a new strategy towards systemic qualitative improvements including a critical-thinking based transition assessment at Grade 6.

In 2019, Jamaica experienced the devastating effects of Hurricane Dorian, one of the most powerful hurricanes recorded in the Atlantic Ocean. The Government of Jamaica transported 120 recreational kits from their emergency stock supplied by UNICEF Jamaica to be used in schools and shelters. These recreational supplies helped about 6,000 children who were affected to overcome pain and trauma through play, sports and learning.

## Major contributions and drivers of results

### HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAMME

In 2019, UNICEF Jamaica's Health Promotion programme aimed to strengthen the access and quality of health and related services and systems for children and adolescents. UNICEF-supported interventions related to health dovetail with the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) Priority Area 1: "A Healthy Caribbean", which in turn fits with

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Jamaica's Vision 2030 National Development Outcome 1: "A Healthy and Stable Population". Interventions under this programme component are also aligned with national efforts toward the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs 2, 3 and 5.

### **Newborn Health and Infant and Young Feeding**

In 2019, Jamaica doubled the number of baby-friendly hospitals. A total of five maternity hospitals are now certified, having implemented the 10 steps of the baby-friendly hospital initiative (BFHI), which is led by the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MoHW) with support from UNICEF and PAHO. An additional 14 hospitals have also embarked on the road to certification and have begun implementing the 10 steps. UNICEF's advocacy has been a critical ingredient in prioritizing the promotion and support for exclusive breastfeeding. Once this issue became a priority aligned with the Jamaica Moves programme for the reduction of non-communicable diseases, the MoHW along with its four Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) facilitated the effort towards certification.

Thanks to UNICEF's technical and financial support, 700 health care workers including nurses, obstetrician-gynecologists, pediatricians, nutritionists, dieticians and community health aides were trained in Infant and Young Feeding Practices in 2019 across 19 facilities. Some 25,000 pregnant and lactating women were counseled on exclusive breastfeeding. UNICEF delivered technical support through participation in the National Infant and Young Child Feeding Committee. This body is comprised of public health technical experts on infant and young child nutrition and proposes guidance based on international standards for the sector. UNICEF also sits on the National PMTCT Technical Working Group, which oversees the implementation of PMTCT guidelines and policies and makes recommendations for system level improvements. UNICEF has also provided financial support to the MoHW for its Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and child nutrition programmes.

### **Access to Health Services for Adolescents**

Adolescent pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and sexual violence are among the most persistent problems affecting the health, social, economic and political progress and empowerment of young women and girls in Jamaica. Efforts to increase access to sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents accelerated during 2019 and UNICEF played an important role by advocating at the highest levels and by providing technical support for policy formulation, gender responsive programming, capacity development and system strengthening and by leveraging new resources for adolescent health.

UNICEF's continued technical support to the MoHW helped to increase the number of facilities implementing adolescent-friendly service standards from 26 to 44 (51 per cent of target). The facilities have designed adolescent-centered programmes and service delivery guided by the standards that emphasize non-judgmental attitudes towards teen girls and boys.

The MoHW has also recognized the importance to extend non-traditional access points for adolescents outside of health facilities. The Teen Hub, an innovative MoHW intervention supported by UNICEF, served more than 6,500 adolescent boys and girls (10-19 years) between January and October 2019. HIV counseling and testing was provided for 496 adolescents (262 girls and 234 boys) aged 16-19, who know their results. The Teen Hub also provides other sexual and reproductive services including HIV prevention counseling, pregnancy testing and counseling on effective family planning methods. Adolescents can also access mental health counseling and referrals as well as conflict mediation services. The uptake in services over the past two years has been sustained and thus the model is being expanded to five additional locations over the next two years. UNICEF supported the drafting of a Teen Hub guidance document and the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation framework for the MoHW to guide its scale up and will be supporting its expansion through the EU-supported Spotlight Initiative.

UNICEF continued working with civil society partner Eve for Life to provide psychosocial services and life skills education to build resilience among adolescent girls and young women living with HIV and/or survivors of sexual violence. One hundred and five adolescent girls received psychosocial support and skills including treatment literacy and legal literacy in 2019. Among the many living with HIV, 80 per cent were reported as "lost to follow-up" cases after they interrupted their adherence to medication for more than one year. Fifty-three per cent of these clients were reporting improved diagnostic test results with viral loads below 200 copies, resulting in improved general health outcomes.

### **LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME**

All UNICEF-supported interventions in education were aligned with Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goal 4 and Goal 1 of the Vision 2030 National Development Plan that aims for "world class education and training". Interventions in 2019 targeted: (i) increased access to early childhood developmental environments for infants and young children, (ii)

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enhancement of capacity for data-driven programming, and (iii) increased delivery of equitable and inclusive education services.

### **Inclusive Early Childhood Development**

In 2019, UNICEF supported the Early Childhood Commission (ECC) to increase the scale and inclusivity of their current interventions by strengthening policy, capacity development, systems and the delivery of essential early childhood services. UNICEF supported the ECC to ensure greater inclusion in the implementation of the First 1,000 Days strategy through the launch of the Brain Builder Boost project, designed to provide adaptive material for all day care centres known as "Brain Builder Centres", and the development of a First 1,000s Days mobile app for parents, launched in late 2019. This free app features material from UNICEF's global Early Moments Matter campaign. UNICEF provided technical and financial support to produce an early childhood development (ECD) online course about children with special needs, which is designed for ECC's Development Officers who will go on to train ECD practitioners using both face-to-face and online modalities. UNICEF also facilitated the training of 55 senior officers at the ECC in the reduction of violence against children, using the Jamaican Irie Classroom Toolbox methodology, to enable the scaffolding of all practitioners representing national scale up in 2020.

UNICEF Jamaica is also supporting the MoEYI and the ECC to better utilize evidence as a driver of change, to help ensure more inclusive early childhood services for children with disabilities. UNICEF completed a national mapping of services for children born with congenital disabilities. The findings were disseminated during an Early Years Care and Support workshop with over 50 participants from the health and education sector, in which a cross-sectoral Early Years Care and Support Committee was established under the purview of the ECC. UNICEF also initiated support to the ECC for the national implementation and analysis of the Jamaica School Readiness Assessment (JSRA), which is administered to all four year-olds as a developmental marker and early screening tool. Delays in the timely processing of the data to enable the provision of targeted interventions have led to the current support to streamline the data processing system and use of the findings.

### **Child-Friendly Schools**

In 2019, UNICEF-supported interventions to promote child-friendly schools targeted close to 200,000 students aged six to 12 years old, through the promotion of positive behavioural support to students, safer access to schools and the provision of game-based learning and inclusion.

Since the beginning of the current country programme, UNICEF Jamaica has been implementing strategic pilot interventions to help ensure a more child-friendly school environment for children through the School-wide Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support (SWBPIS) framework, the Edusport programme and road safety initiatives. These projects have been designed and implemented in collaboration with the MoEYI and civil society organizations such as the Breds Foundation and Jamaica National Foundation. Those pilots have yielded positive results over the last year and with UNICEF's technical and financial assistance have started the process of being taken to scale.

Violence in and around school continues to deter many children from accessing quality education. To move from punitive discipline to constructive behavior support, UNICEF provided technical assistance to develop a national scale-up plan for the SWBPIS framework, which will be based on the findings of the evaluation of the pilot programme that UNICEF conducted in 2019. The scaling up of the SWBPIS framework began through USAID support to MoEYI, and the targeted schools increased from the initial 56 pilot schools to an additional 217 schools. Thanks to UNICEF's support and advocacy, SWBPIS was recognized by the MoEYI as integral to its behavioral support strategy and has been highlighted as a key intervention under the recently approved National Plan of Action for an Integrated Response to Children and Violence.

In the quest for more child-friendly schools, UNICEF supported the development of an online professional course for school leaders in the Child-Friendly School (CFS) model, tailored to Caribbean realities, through a new partnership with the National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL). The CFS course integrates written content with videos of examples from schools across Jamaica demonstrating the concepts. The development and pilot phase were completed in 2019, with launch set for early 2020 and open access to school leaders thereafter. The course will become a requirement for all Principals intending to obtain NCEL certification and potentially could be used by other English-speaking Caribbean islands.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

As part of disaster contingency planning and risk reduction, 500 Recreation Kits were handed over to the national Disaster Preparedness and Response Agency, and 120 of these were sent to the Bahamas following Hurricane Dorian. UNICEF and MoEYI convened the Education in Emergency Working Group that met regularly and is finalising an action plan to be launched in 2020 during a regional Disaster Risk Reduction platform meeting to be held in Jamaica.

### **SAFETY AND JUSTICE PROGRAMME**

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### Violence against Children

UNICEF Jamaica has made the prevention and reduction of violence against children (VAC) its main programmatic priority. All interventions under the Safety and Justice programme aim to support the achievement of SDG target 16.2: "End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children". Progress made under the Safety and Justice programme was achieved and amplified through the collaboration of multiple partners from government and civil society organizations active at community level in the most volatile communities in the island.

A number of interlinked strategies were employed by UNICEF to address VAC in 2019. These involved engaging children to hear their views and empowering them to amplify their voices, which along with UNICEF advocacy efforts led to high-level political commitment on addressing VAC in Parliament. Furthermore, UNICEF continued to provide expert technical assistance to support system strengthening around parenting support programming, access to justice and direct service delivery to children and adolescents affected by violence. All interventions were framed under the principle of leaving no one behind and they specifically targeted those communities most affected by poverty and violence.

In 2019, after a long process supported by UNICEF through advocacy and technical support, Jamaica approved and launched the National Plan of Action for an Integrated Response to Children and Violence (NPACV), the first step to fulfill the Government of Jamaica's commitments as a Pathfinder Country. The NPACV was finalized by a multi-sectoral Technical Working Group of which UNICEF was an integral member. The development of the document was highly consultative and participatory and included inputs from children. The long-awaited document provides a roadmap for a coordinated, structured approach to address the key issues and challenges pertaining to children as victims, perpetrators and witnesses to acts of violence, abuse and exploitation.

In addition, UNICEF successfully partnered with other UN agencies (UNFPA, UN Women and UNDP) to submit a successful joint proposal for the EU-funded Spotlight Initiative that will invest 8 million euros in Jamaica over the next three years. Thanks to UNICEF's effective advocacy and strategic engagement, violence against children was selected as one of the priority areas by Spotlight, and NPACV as one of the main normative frameworks to be supported. Communication for Development, social mobilization and positive parenting were also highlighted as the main strategies under the Prevention Pillar of the Spotlight Initiative, which is under UNICEF's technical leadership.

UNICEF Jamaica's strategic communication and advocacy efforts in 2019 revolved around the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and focused on the most important programmatic priority for UNICEF Jamaica – preventing and reducing violence against children. The strategy was based on three simultaneous approaches to raise public awareness, engage adolescents and advocate for action by decision-makers. Strategies were developed and executed in a highly collaborative effort with key government agencies – the Office of the Children's Advocate and the Child Protection and Family Services Agency – and with Talk Up Yout, a vibrant youth-focused NGO. Internationally, UNICEF Jamaica also worked closely with the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. The centerpiece of the CRC30 activities was a series of townhall events in which close to 300 children were engaged in sharing their views, leading up to a culminating event in the form of an unprecedented Special Session on Violence against Children, where a group of children represented the views from the townhalls and presented to the Parliament for the first time in Jamaican history. This combined effort prompted commitments by the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition with respect to the newly-launched National Plan of Action for an Integrated Response to Children and Violence.

### Child Diversion

After years of advocacy by UNICEF and partners, the Child Diversion Act was passed in Parliament in late 2018. In 2019, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Justice to prepare for its implementation by providing expert technical assistance for the island-wide roll-out of the National Child Diversion Programme. This included the successful implementation of a Stakeholder Sensitization Plan in 12 of the island's 14 parishes, which targeted police officers, justices of the peace and social workers; establishment of 14 Child Diversion Parish Offices; creation of a National Oversight Committee and 13 Parish Child Diversion Committees and drafting of a Child Diversion Manual to facilitate implementation. Through capacity building efforts and specific procedures and programmes put in place with UNICEF's support, children in conflict with the law will be channeled away from judicial proceedings, thereby avoiding the potential long-term negative effects of such experiences.

## CHILD RIGHTS MONITORING AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY PROGRAMME

### Child Rights Monitoring and Data Generation

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In 2019, UNICEF Jamaica continued to harness the power of evidence to drive changes for children in the island through advocacy and evidence-based programming. A targeted research agenda was implemented throughout the year with:

- Two new evaluations conducted to inform programme implementation – one focused on VAC-related programming over the last three years and another on the SPWBIS pilot.
- A comprehensive research initiative on the quality of state care and an analysis of the climate landscape for children.
- Production of two publications – one examining violence against children in home, community and school settings, and a mapping of services for children born with congenital disabilities.
- Completion of a Gender Programmatic Review of UNICEF programmes.

After more than a decade since the last Reproductive Health Survey (RHS) and nine years since the latest Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), the Government of Jamaica and UNICEF successfully leveraged the necessary resources for the implementation of the long-awaited RHS that will use a UNICEF-supported MICS technical collaboration framework. Planning and preparation for the survey were carried out during 2019 in collaboration with the National Family Planning board and the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN). In this process, UNICEF Jamaica provided financial and high-level technical assistance through the MICS technical assistance framework to support the design phase and the preparation for the fieldwork. This survey will fill data gaps on sexual and reproductive health for women and adolescents, infant and young child feeding, violence against children, early childhood development and the situation of children with disabilities – thereby supporting the government with necessary evidence to monitor progress on SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 16.

UNICEF entered into partnership with the World Bank to jointly support the government to conduct a Public Expenditure Review of the Education sector and to strengthen the capacity of the MoEYI to collect and use data and measure the efficiency of public spending and resource allocation in education. UNICEF facilitated support for this initiative from the Ministry of Finance and Planning Institute of Jamaica. The review is expected to support the MoEYI to better monitor and report on the expenditure on education, link outcomes and results to spending and plan and respond to the needs of the sector.

### **Social Protection and Inclusion of Children with Disabilities**

Strengthening the outreach of social protection programmes has been identified by government and development partners as one of the key accelerators to boost the implementation of the SDGs. The community of people with disabilities in Jamaica, including children and their families, continue to experience multiple deprivations that impede their access to key services. In 2019, UNICEF sought to address some of these gaps through a public-private collaboration with the Digicel Foundation, the philanthropic arm of leading telecommunications company Digicel, and the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (JCPD), a government agency.

This collaboration resulted in 847 new child registrants aged zero to 17 in the National Registry for Persons with Disabilities operated by the JCPD. The project covered the period May 2017-December 2019. These newly-registered children can now access benefits and services offered by the government which support education and income generation. UNICEF also partnered with the JCPD and Digicel Foundation to promote awareness and inclusion of children with disabilities through a multi-media “I am Able” campaign – focused on highlighting the abilities of children with disabilities and encouraging their inclusion – which ran for six weeks. The traditional media content on TV, radio and print platforms and UNICEF’s related social media content (which focused on user-generated posts) reached over a million people in August and Disabilities Awareness Week in December.

In 2019, UNICEF also supported the establishment of inter-sectoral approaches across different government institutions to promote inclusive early childhood development. UNICEF supported a mapping of services for children born with congenital disabilities which was shared with stakeholders from the education and health sectors in a successful Early Years Care and Support (EY C&S) workshop that also facilitated the dissemination of regional best practices. The workshop’s two main recommendations were the need for: (i) increased advocacy and dialogue around the need for more EY C&S services, and (ii) information about the existing services to be made available to families. In this vein, UNICEF supported the establishment of a cross-sectoral Early Years Care and Support Committee under the purview of the Early Childhood Commission.

## **Lessons Learned and Innovations**

### **Section 3: Lessons Learned and Innovations**

#### **Integrated Strategy on Violence against Children**

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In 2019, UNICEF Jamaica took a deliberate approach to combine communication, advocacy and programming efforts for a concentrated and sustained focus on violence against children over several months, under the banner of the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Conventions on the Rights of the Child. A multi-pronged strategy was developed with inputs from the entire office. It included programmatic interventions at community level, donor engagement, evidence-generation activities to inform advocacy and a communication and social mobilization campaign. The strategy was continuously monitored and adjusted throughout the year as plans evolved.

Throughout the process, the office learned about the importance of engaging children in a meaningful way and for different outcomes – both as participants from whom we could glean useful information, and as advocates (as young as age seven) who could speak out as powerful messengers to gain national attention in a unique way. We also gained valuable insight about the significance of combining evidence generation, high-level advocacy with on-the-ground interventions and driving momentum towards an ultimate event that pulled these initiatives together with a singular advocacy objective focused on violence against children. These simultaneous efforts culminated in a Special Session on Violence against Children in Parliament – a major advocacy event in which children presented to the Parliament for the first time in Jamaican history and called on the government to take action. Both the Government and Opposition expressed commitments to the operationalization of the National Plan of Action for an Integrated Response to Children and Violence, which was launched on the same day. The Special Session had extensive media coverage – in one week, UNICEF Jamaica reached 1.4 million people, of whom 108,000 were engaged on social media.

### **Bottlenecks to Drive Legislative Reform on VAC and Adolescent Health Services**

Jamaica is yet to become one of the countries where children enjoy full legal protection from corporal punishment at home and at school. For instance, teachers are still justified in administering “moderate and reasonable” corporal punishment under common law. Despite the expressed intentions of the Government of Jamaica to ban corporal punishment, legislative and policy reform is moving at a very slow pace as this is a very controversial and politically charged issue which faces strong opposition from several religious groups and the general public. A similar situation is faced by the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MoHW) with their intentions to increase the provision of adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services. This expansion remains challenged by ongoing legal restrictions in service delivery for girls and boys below age 16 without parental consent.

To expedite legislation and policy reform in those areas, it is clear that UNICEF needs to step up its advocacy at all levels, continue to engage in evidence generation and legislative analysis, increase the outreach of social mobilization campaigns and continue to provide technical capacity to MoEYI and MoHW to drive those necessary changes.

### **Sharpening the Gender Focus of UNICEF’s Programme**

UNICEF Jamaica initiated a process to sharpen the gender focus of programme interventions with the implementation of a Gender Programme Review (GPR). The review provided necessary support to assess, identify and prioritize strategic areas in which to introduce or strengthen gender responsive programming in alignment with the UNICEF Strategic Plan and the Gender Action Plan (GAP II) 2018-2022. The results of the GPR are helping the programme team to shift towards a more integrated, holistic and gender transformative approach in the implementation of the country programme across the different programmatic areas. The results also lay a solid foundation for a more gender sensitive consideration of strategies as the office approaches a new programme cycle. The report highlighted key areas of alignment with the GAP II and indicated areas for improved focus including advocacy and C4D aimed at changing harmful social norms that put girls and boys at risk and ensuring learning opportunities for a greater understanding of the implications of gender on programming. For interventions to be gender responsive and/or gender transformative, it is not enough to focus on the reproductive roles of women and girls. Gender sensitive interventions must reflect an understanding of the social and cultural factors involved in gender-based exclusion and discrimination and take these into account.

In this vein, during the year, UNICEF consulted with 30 key stakeholders – including adolescent girls – to better understand the national response to high levels of sexual abuse of girls and gaps in prevention and service delivery. Stakeholders from health, education, child protection and gender discussed the issue and proposed solutions aimed at prevention, which include school and community-based initiatives, service delivery activities and changes in social norms which would also focus on engagement of men and boys as part of the solution. These proposed solutions were taken into account as UNICEF joined the rest of the UN in Jamaica to draft a successful proposal to the European Union and leveraged some 8 million euro to address family violence in Jamaica, including sexual abuse of girls. The Spotlight Initiative will seek to stem family violence and its impact on women and girls. UNICEF is the UN recipient organization in charge of the Prevention and Social Norms Pillar of the Spotlight Jamaica Country programme.

### **Review of the UN MSDF Approach for UNICEF Offices in the English-Dutch Caribbean**

In this third year of implementation of the current country programme, UNICEF Jamaica went through a series of mid-term

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reflection meetings with partners, one per each of the programmatic outcomes of Jamaica's Country Programme Document (CPD). The objective of this process was to take stock of the progress made on the implementation of the CPD and the programme strategic notes and identify new potential areas of engagement for the future based on the latest evidence. These exercises demonstrated the validity of the current theory of changes and also served to identify several emerging priorities on which to keep a close eye for the rest of the cycle. These include climate change and disaster risk reduction, adolescent mental health, gender-based violence, online violence and de-institutionalization of children in state care. This process also informed the joint Strategic Moment of Reflection for English and Dutch Caribbean Country Offices conducted in October in collaboration with UNICEF's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

One of the findings of this common review was that despite UNICEF's engagement with the Multi Country Sustainable Development Framework (UN MSDF) and the existence of a common results framework among UNICEF offices in the Caribbean, UNICEF and the UN system as a whole are still not maximizing the opportunities that the framework provides for more integrated programming, fundraising and aggregation of results. With UNICEF moving soon into the planning of the next programme cycle, it is necessary to undertake a strategic review of the MSDF among UN agencies in the near future – within the context of ongoing Multi Country Offices review –to respond to the request from many Small Island Developing States (SIDS) for a more tailored engagement from the UN.