

Kazakhstan

Part 1: Situation update in the country

Children's and women's rights in Kazakhstan were supported by a solid enabling environment. The country ratified all major Human and Child Rights Conventions, and national legislation and strategic documents such as the Kazakhstan-2050 Strategy and National Action Plan 2025 were aligned to those conventions. The Government continued to emphasize the importance of youth development, learning and employment. In November 2018, the President announced 2019 as the Year of Youth, to focus on education, employment, critical thinking and life-skills development for young people.

At the beginning of 2018, more than 5.7 million children aged 0-17 years were living in Kazakhstan, of whom 49 per cent were girls, and 54 per cent were living in urban areas.

In less than two decades, Kazakhstan transitioned from lower-middle-income to upper-middle-income country status. Supported by robust oil production, the economy expanded at an annual rate of 4.1 per cent in the first half of 2018. The country's vast hydrocarbon and mineral reserves continued to form the backbone of the country's economy, making Kazakhstan vulnerable to international market volatility.

Kazakhstan ranked high overall in key gender and development indicators, with a cumulative GDI value of 1.007 indicating high equality between women and men. The 2017 Gender Inequality Index, with a value of 0.197, was lower than the 0.279 average for Europe and Central Asian countries. According to the World Bank Human Capital Index, Kazakhstan had a value of 0.75, which was higher than the average for the Central Asia region and for the country's income group. Since 2012, Kazakhstan's performance increased from 0.63 to 0.75. During that same period, the most disadvantaged children and their families continued to face poverty and persistent vulnerabilities.

Kazakhstan maintained consistent levels of social sector investment. The total government expenditure on education was 3.5 per cent of GDP in 2017. State expenditure on health constituted 2.1 per cent of GDP in 2017, lower than the global average allocation for health of 3 per cent in 2015. Budget allocations for social protection increased from 3.7 per cent of GDP in 2012 to 4.3 per cent in 2017. Out-of-pocket expenditure for healthcare services was relatively high, an extra burden for poor households with children.

The Government implemented a range of national programmes to improve access to healthcare and nutrition for women and children. Jointly with UNICEF and the World Health Organization, the Government of Kazakhstan hosted the Global Conference on Primary Health Care in October 2018, resulting in the Astana Declaration, reconfirming the country's commitment to high quality and accessible primary health care.

Kazakhstan made impressive gains in reducing child and infant mortality. The under-five mortality rate fell from 53 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 10 per 1,000 in 2017, but disparities persisted, with higher mortality rates among children living in poor households and in rural areas. The infant mortality rate fell from 45 per 1,000 live births to 9 per 1,000 live births

between 1990 and 2017. The major causes of infant mortality in 2017 included perinatal conditions (50.8 per cent) and congenital abnormalities (23.3 per cent). A survey of perinatal deaths determined that 61 per cent occurred because of inadequate or suboptimal medical care. Early pregnancy was a growing concern, leading to UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) advocacy for reducing the age consent for adolescents seeking mental, reproductive health and legal help.

Despite improvements in breastfeeding rates, only 38 per cent of children under 6 months were exclusively breastfed. Obesity was becoming a more prominent problem, as 9.3 per cent of children were overweight, mostly due to unhealthy eating habits and insufficient physical activity. Among children aged 0-59 months, 8 per cent of children were stunted or too short for their age and 3.1 per cent were wasted or too thin for their height. Anaemia remained a serious public health issue, with 31.8 per cent of pregnant women suffering from anaemia in 2017. Less than 40 per cent of the consumed flour was fortified, even though there is national legislation on mandatory flour fortification.

Caregivers did not have sufficient knowledge and skills to provide essential care for young children at home, or to clearly articulate their demands for quality healthcare. Only 36.7 per cent of women knew at least one of the two danger signs of pneumonia. Strengthening the system of home visits within a well-established health service platform could address these gaps and support caregivers in adopting healthy and positive parenting practices.

Death by suicide remained one of the leading causes of adolescent mortality. Compared to other countries in Central Asia and Central and Eastern Europe, Kazakhstan ranked among the highest in suicide death rates of children. A study on adolescent and youth suicide in Kazakhstan found that many adolescent suicide victims or adolescents at high risk had reported symptoms of depression. More than half of suicide victims had a problem with substance use/abuse: 44.9 per cent of high-risk adolescents reported being drunk, and 21.4 per cent had used drugs, at least once.

Additional efforts are needed to address social norms, especially stigma surrounding mental health and suicide. In UNICEF-supported pilots, up to 11 per cent of caregivers of adolescents identified at high risk of mental health problems or suicide refused their referral to health professionals. Educators, social workers and parents need to be equipped with the necessary tools to promote positive mental health and to notice signs that youth are exhibiting mental health problems or suicidal thoughts, in order to refer them to specialists.

Ongoing implementation of education reforms ensured greater access to quality education for all. In many areas of inclusive education, Kazakhstan's progress was commendable. This progress included a 25 per cent increase in the number of secondary schools providing inclusive environment for children with disabilities (from 30 in 2016 to 55 in 2018); improvement of pre-service teachers' training curriculum; and establishment of resources centres in support of inclusive practices. The literacy rate for young people aged 15–24 years in Kazakhstan was 99.9 per cent. The school (adjusted) net attendance ratio for children aged 7-10 years was 99.5 per cent, and for children aged 11-17 years it was 98.9 per cent. That said, some groups of children, such as migrant children, working children, children with disabilities, children living in difficult family situations and children without parental care, were at risk of being out of school.

Kazakhstan made significant efforts to improve and enhance early childhood education and

care, including major policy reforms to expand access and increased public spending in that area. As a result, 73.4 per cent of three- to six-year-olds enrolled in an early childhood education and care programme and 90.8 per cent of children attending the first grade of primary school attended preschool the previous year. Geographic, socio-economic and special needs inequities affected access to early childhood education and care.

In total, there were 83,041 children with disabilities in 2017 in Kazakhstan, compared to 69,111 in 2013. The identification system in place functions under the medical model of disability. Children with disabilities still faced major challenges in gaining access to inclusive education, including a need for more trained teachers, improved physical access and more supportive social norms. In total, 71 per cent of children with disabilities did not attend a mainstream school in 2014. Kazakhstan must accelerate its efforts to achieve the objective of 70 per cent of schools with inclusive environment of all children including accessibility.

Kazakhstan had a comprehensive set of social protection policies in place. These included social insurance programmes (e.g. pensions and unemployment benefits), social assistance benefits targeted at 'vulnerable demographic groups', and means-tested assistance, designed to operate as the last resort. Social allowances supported large families, elderly people, those who were ill or disabled and those no longer able to work or who were not employed. Payments included grants on the birth of a child and benefits for young children and children with disabilities.

The absolute poverty rate declined from 3.8 per cent in 2012 to 2.6 per cent in 2017. The share of children aged 0-17 years living below the subsistence minimum decreased from 6.0 per cent in 2011 to 4.4 per cent in 2017. Coverage of social assistance remained an issue, with many poor families facing challenges in accessing means-tested cash transfer. There was limited awareness of existing social assistance programmes in some of the poorest areas of the country. Restrictive rules, low poverty threshold and onerous application requirements further limited access to benefits.

Violence against children remained widespread in Kazakhstan, despite improvements to the legislative framework to prevent domestic violence and adoption of the national 'Standards for Provision of Special Social Services to Victims of Domestic Violence'. Children as young as one year old were subject to physical punishments (17.3 per cent), and almost one in three children aged 3-9 were subject to physical punishments. Social norms that tolerate and accept violence contributed to widespread violence against children. For instance, 75 per cent of adults supported the use of corporal punishment for children. Parents often resorted to violence because they did not know alternative ways of disciplining children, or lacked time to educate children. In schools, children and adolescents were victims of bullying, which took many forms and can have a range of negative impacts on well-being.

In 2018, the number of registered criminal offences of a sexual nature by adults against children under 16 fell to 274 (compared to 738 cases in 2015) following an amendment to the Penal Code in 2014 to increase sentences for sexual offences. Data on sexual abuse of children, child prostitution, child pornography, child trafficking and bride kidnapping and forced marriage of young girls remained scarce, making it difficult to assess the scale of rights violations in that area.

In December 2018, Kazakhstan adopted an Inter-Agency Plan of Joint Actions for Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children for 2019-2021. Developed with UNICEF support, the Plan

was the result of the joint efforts of six ministries, including the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Information and Communication, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, and the Ministry of Public Development. The Plan focuses on revision of the normative framework, building capacity of specialists, awareness raising and education and promoting online safety of children.

Some children lived in circumstances that required special protection from the Government. They were often unable to fully exercise their rights to education, health and protection. Institutional care remained one of the main forms of substitute care for children in need of special protection. The number of orphans and children without parental care decreased from 33,682 in 2013 to 27,274 in 2017, and the number in residential institutions fell from 9,879 in 2013 to 6,223 in 2017. Children in residential care mainly came from poor families, including those parents who were deprived of liberty and parental rights. Social norms (e.g., prejudice against women having children out of wedlock) and limited community-level services for children with disabilities continued to create barriers to the realization of those children's rights.

Children migrating to Kazakhstan run the risk of exploitative labour and sexual exploitation. Those left behind in inadequate parental care are vulnerable to being victims of violence, neglect or exploitation. Children on the move can be detained for immigration control in the country and face difficulties in accessing basic services such as health and education.

The number of juveniles in conflict with the law fell in Kazakhstan, reflecting a decline in the number of children arrested for committing crimes and changing sentencing practices. The number of children who committed crimes in 2017 was 3,156, a 63 per cent decrease from 2005. Of juvenile offenders, 93 per cent were boys. Among children aged 14-17, the number of offences and the number of children in juvenile detention centres continued to decline, as did crimes against children. The number of child victims of crimes was 2,014 in 2017, a 50 per cent decrease from 2015. To some extent, those positive developments can be attributed to reforms to the justice system, including the introduction of juvenile judges. The decrease is also a result of de-criminalization of several crimes, improved data collection and legislative amendments. The legislation enables children to benefit from a wider range of alternative measures to close their cases before conviction, but still needs further alignment with international standards.

Kazakhstan is the world's fourth-most carbon-intensive economy. Environmental degradation threatens human and environmental health. Major problems exist related to contamination of water sources and air caused by unregulated agricultural and industrial activities and the lack of clean energy and alternative technologies. The impacts of climate change were felt in 2018. The extremely dry climate across most of Kazakhstan, coupled with warming temperatures (an increase of 2°C) and high variations in rainfall, affected water availability in many locations. Impaired access to clean water, threats to agricultural productivity, reduced household income and food security and increased energy poverty, together with more frequent natural disasters and environmental degradation affected children's lives. Legislation in Kazakhstan was adequate in terms of establishing levels and limits to pollution; however, compliance remained inconsistent. There was little publicly available evidence linking environmental degradation to negative health and other outcomes for children, limiting state policy responses and public demand for improved environmental protection. [

Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

In 2018, the policy and advocacy agendas in Kazakhstan gave greater priority to health. UNICEF and the World Health Organization supported the Government of Kazakhstan in organizing the Global Conference on Primary Health Care in Astana, which was attended by more than 2,000 participants, including ministers, civil society, academia, youth leaders and health practitioners from around the world. The conference resulted in the adoption of the new Astana Declaration, which emphasizes the critical role of primary health care around the world, and which will inform the UN General Assembly high-level meeting in 2019.

Infant and under-five mortality

To achieve key results outlined in the UNICEF Kazakhstan Country Programme Document, in 2018 UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health in the national scale-up of the universal progressive model of home visiting services to families with women who are pregnant and children under five. The pilot programme ran in Kyzylorda and Mangystau regions in 2017, with technical and financial support from UNICEF. The positive results demonstrated by the pilot secured the Ministry of Health's commitment for scale-up. UNICEF contributed to the scale-up process through technical support in preparing standards for the organization of paediatric care that were adopted by the Ministry of Health and shared with regions for implementation. A joint technical working group of UNICEF and the Ministry developed national guidelines for implementation of the universal progressive model of home visiting services in primary health care facilities.

To ensure sustainability, UNICEF advocated for inclusion of home visiting modules into the curricula of medical colleges. Ten medical colleges with specialized programmes in nursing adopted advanced curricula incorporating 16 UNICEF modules into their vocational, bachelors' and masters' degree programmes for nursing studies. More than 500 students began their studies in 10 medical colleges in seven regions following the updated curriculum. A total of 330 young professionals passed courses in the universal progressive model of home visiting services at the Kazakh Medical University through in-service training. Kazakhstan's experience was presented as the country case study in the Global Evaluation of Health Systems Strengthening in 2018 within the area of Quality of Care to families with children.

HIV and AIDS

In 2018, UNICEF Kazakhstan, jointly with the UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, organized workshops for 48 health specialists (paediatricians, infectious disease specialists, psychologists), social workers and NGOs, to improve their knowledge and skills in working with adolescents living with HIV and their parents and to provide them with continuous psycho-social support. After the training, the health specialists developed a national guide on psycho-social support to children and adolescents living with HIV, incorporating best international practices, and submitted it to the Ministry of Health for endorsement. The guide includes a new set of national standards, which extend beyond the medical needs of adolescents and ensure appropriate individual support packages to meet their psychological, educational, cognitive, social and emotional needs. With this new vision, Kazakhstan is looking to address negative societal stigma and build resilience in approximately 500 children and adolescents living with HIV.

Nutrition

In July 2018, a Regional Nutrition Capacity Development and Partnership Platform was

established by the governments of Central Asia. The National Public Health Centre of Kazakhstan was assigned to chair the Secretariat for the first two-year round, with advocacy and support from UNICEF Kazakhstan and the UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office. The platform is a systematic, cross-border partnership-oriented mechanism to enable participating countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) to close capacity gaps in food and nutrition systems. Member states recognized the huge return in investment on nutrition (US\$16 return for every dollar invested) and also the complicated double burden of malnutrition, demanding a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary and scaled-up approach in nutrition governance and capacities.

Mental health and well-being of adolescents

In 2018, the UNICEF-supported pilot programme on adolescent mental health promotion and suicide prevention in Kyzylorda and Mangystau regions contributed to mental health reforms in the country. The programme included the integration of mental health into primary health care, and reforms to respond to increased demand for mental health services and eliminate stigmatizing barriers for adolescents. The positive effects of the pilot interventions were confirmed by an evaluation of the programme in Kyzylorda region and an impact assessment of the results in Mangystau region, which found notable improvements in mental health and well-being of adolescents, especially in those at risk. The pilots contributed to overcoming barriers, including stigma associated with suicide. In Kyzylorda region, the parental refuse from referral of adolescents at risk decreased from 5 per cent in the first year to 1 per cent in the second year of the pilot implementation. Official statistics from local authorities confirmed that the pilots resulted in a sharp decrease in the number of suicides in both regions among adolescents aged 15-17. Those results were demonstrated at the international conference on adolescent mental health promotion and suicide prevention held in Almaty on in January 2018. Organized by UNICEF, the conference attracted significant media attention and resulted in dozens of positive stories, thus increasing the visibility of UNICEF-driven results for children and adolescents. UNICEF secured commitment from other regions to scale-up the programme, and all but one of the 17 regions in the country allocated budget and launched the programme in 2018. The scaling-up process was supported by the Government and non-governmental partners and a pool of national master trainers managed by UNICEF. As of October 2018, the programme had been implemented in 3,252 schools (39 per cent of schools in the country). The Government's prioritization of the programme in Kazakhstan resulted in a decrease in the number of adolescent deaths due to self-harm. In the age group 15-17, the number of suicide cases decreased by 51 per cent (from 212 in 2013 to 104 in 2018).

Procurement of medicines

UNICEF cooperation with the state procurement uniform agent SK-Pharmacy in the procurement of antiretroviral drugs meant that the country achieved significant reduction in costs of medicines. This resulted in US\$12 million in savings in 2017, and increased access to treatment by more than 50 per cent (from 6,000 to 13,000 people). In 2018, a team of Ministry of Health and SK-Pharmacy experts participated in the Regional Vaccine Procurement Practitioners Exchange Forum organized by UNICEF, where they strengthened their knowledge and skills in forecasting, planning and budget mapping in procurement. At the EECA Second Regional Consultation on Expanding Access to Affordable and Quality Assured Medicines and Diagnostic Technologies in Minsk in November 2018, the Ministry of Health highlighted efficiencies and savings achieved in procurement through international mechanisms, including UNICEF. As a result of the partnership, the Ministry of Health expressed interest in developing regional procurement 'hubs' and mechanisms to share

experience, technical knowledge and expertise for enhancing capacity building in procurement in the Europe and Central Asia region.

Goal area 2: Every child learns

Out-of-school children

In Kazakhstan, 7.9 per cent of school-age children (7–17 years old) were not in any form of education in the 2016–2017 academic year. Some 11.8 per cent of children with special educational needs were officially reported as being educated at home. UNICEF collected evidence in two regions on the gaps in identification and response to cases of children dropping out of school, and those at risk of dropping out. No major gender difference in dropout rates was identified. The evidence highlighted ways to improve the school-based case management systems. As a result, in 2018, UNICEF supported the MOES in launching a pilot for a school-based early warning system in primary, lower and upper secondary schools in Astana and Karaganda regions, covering 7,000 students. The early warning system aims to reduce the number of cases of dropout that are not followed up by schools and improve the effectiveness of prevention, identification and response methods for school dropout, especially among children with disabilities and children with emotional and behavioural needs. Capacity building for schools participating in early warning system pilot included school level planning, supportive learning and communication per the guide developed by Cambridge University in consultation with UNICEF.

Disaster risk reduction programme in schools

Disaster risk reduction was firmly embedded in primary and secondary education standards and curricula. In 2018, UNICEF policy advocacy and expert support, in partnership with the National Education Academy, resulted in the integration of disaster risk reduction components into several subjects and extra-curricular activities at primary and secondary level. A safe learning environment monitoring system that includes physical and psychological safety was developed by the Academy and tested through interviews in 240 schools in eight regions. The Academy and UNICEF facilitated national-level workshops, technical discussions, and exchange of experience between eight regions, in order to strengthen the capacity of school methodologists on disaster risk reduction. The MOES and the Ministry of Justice endorsed a disaster risk reduction course for teachers' in-service training, developed by UNICEF in partnership with the Teachers' In-Service Training Institute. This course equipped teachers with interactive methods for teaching disaster risk reduction and provided a platform for professional dialogue with the Almaty-based regional Centre on Emergencies and disaster risk reduction experts.

Violence prevention in schools

In 2018, UNICEF continued to provide support to the MOES for the phased scale-up of the school-based violence prevention programme, in partnership with the National Education Academy. The guidance note developed by UNICEF and the Academy equipped 30 methodologists from 17 regional education departments with tools for mainstreaming the programme into the curriculum and extra-curricular activities for grades 3-7. UNICEF supported capacity development for the National Education Academy (the main body responsible for methodological support to schools) to guide schools in reporting violence against children cases; engagement of school safety teams in review and analysis of reported incidents; assessment of students' behaviours and identification of at-risk and high-risk children; and development of secondary and tertiary prevention programmes. The initiative will be used as the basis for further scale-up of the programme in Kazakhstan.

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

In December 2018, Kazakhstan adopted an Inter-Agency Plan of Joint Actions for Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children for 2019-2021 by Inter-Ministerial Commission. Developed with UNICEF support, the Plan is the result of the joint efforts of six ministries including the MOES, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Information and Communication, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, and the Ministry of Public Development. Each contributed financial resources. UNICEF also supported a communication for social change campaign, development of protocols for identification and processing of violence against children cases and enhancing capacity of specialists in addressing violence against children cases.

Legislation in Kazakhstan does not explicitly prohibit corporal punishment of children in families, alternative care settings or in day-care facilities. In response to the most recent Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2015, responding to Kazakhstan's fourth periodic report), the dialogue platforms established by the Ombudsperson for Child Rights recommended revision of the national legislation to ensure explicit prohibition of corporal punishment of children in all settings. Suggested legislative revisions were developed by the Ombudsperson for Child Rights with UNICEF's support. It is envisaged that those revisions will be integrated into a draft law and be adopted in 2019.

UNICEF secured commitment from the National Public Health Centre under the Ministry of Health to develop protocols for the health sector on identification, referral and follow-up of violence against children cases. The algorithms will identify cases of trauma and injuries, including those resulting from violence against children. Protocols will contribute to implementation of the Inter-Agency Plan, which aims to establish such protocols in all sectors working with children. The school-based violence prevention programme was scaled up with UNICEF support and will be closely linked with piloting the algorithms for violence against children cases. Preventing and addressing violence against children in families was integrated into the scale-up of the universal progressive model of home visiting supported by UNICEF. In 2018, out of 2,201 children aged 0-36 months who were screened for neglect, violent discipline and abuse in pilot facilities in Kyzylorda, 39 were identified as at-risk and received support.

UNICEF initiated a multi-year campaign to raise awareness of decision-makers and the public at large on negative consequences of violence against children and trigger support from the Government and local authorities to establish positive parenting programmes. UNICEF advocacy efforts contributed to mainstreaming positive parenting in the 2019-2024 roadmap for development and support to families at the national level. In addition to building the capacity of national stakeholders, media and civil society, the campaign had a potential reach of more than 3.6 million people through traditional media and 1.2 million people through social media. The campaign used a range of communication channels, including mobile messaging applications such as WhatsApp. UNICEF fuelled public discourse and expanded outreach by engaging more than 30 influencers to support the campaign. In 2019, UNICEF and national partners will continue the campaign and prioritise development of positive parenting skills.

Protective services for children on the move

UNICEF Kazakhstan joined the sub-regional EU-UNICEF co-funded programme to respond to the needs of children affected by migration, with a focus on unaccompanied and separated children. The programme focuses on establishment of protective migration procedures, social

case management, improvement of training programmes for social workers, law enforcement and immigration services, strengthening legislation and data management. UNICEF signed workplans with the Human Rights Ombudsperson and four other ministries for implementation of the programme in three regions of Kazakhstan (Almaty, Astana and Shymkent). UNICEF, the International Organization on Migration, UNHCR and the Government of Kazakhstan jointly organized five forums for state agencies to raise awareness on the risks faced by children affected by migration. In 2018, UNICEF Kazakhstan commenced a comprehensive study on unaccompanied and separated children and legislation revision that will generate recommendations to improve child protection laws and programming.

Preventing injuries to children

UNICEF, in partnership with the Information Computing Centre, under the Statistics Committee of Kazakhstan, completed a study examining child safety in 3,000 households. The study measured the knowledge, attitudes and practices of parents and caregivers of children aged 0-14 years in eight regions of Kazakhstan with regard to unintentional injuries to children. The study found that 96 per cent of caregivers took action to avoid unintentional injuries to their children. It also found that 73 per cent largely agreed and 23 per cent tended to agree that injuries involving children could be avoided. Although awareness of safety measures among parents in Kazakhstan was high, preventative measures were less frequently reported. UNICEF and the Information Computing Centre made recommendations to the Government to strengthen coordination, increase awareness on safety measures, strengthen law enforcement measures and prioritize the safety of child-related products. In 2019, in partnership with the National Centre for Public Health under the Ministry of Health, UNICEF plans to: develop a strategic policy document on preventing injuries to children; increase awareness among the general public and specialists; and leverage resources for child-injury prevention in the country.

Transformation of residential institutions

The draft law on the development of Alternative Social Services and Transformation of Schools for Children with Offending Behaviour was reviewed by the Parliament in 2018. The law is expected to extend the mandate of the National Preventive Mechanism to monitor all children's institutions. It also transforms role of the centres of adaptation of adolescents to provide community-based services for children in contact with the law, street children, and children on the move. The law was not yet adopted at year end and it does not clarify the transformation actions at sub-national level. UNICEF continued to support statutory and alternative services to perform gatekeeping and family support functions. UNICEF also developed one transformation plan for the school for children with offending behaviour to become a small community-based unit for the provision of professional programmes.

Justice for children

UNICEF supported the Government of Kazakhstan in reforms and establishing a child-friendly justice system aligned to international standards. According to an evaluation of the impact of reforms in the area of justice during 2009-2017, there was a decrease of 53 per cent in the number of child offenders, a decrease of 65 per cent in the number of children detained at pre-trial stage, a decrease of 66 per cent in the number of children convicted for criminal offences, and nine times fewer children were detained in penal facilities (down from 449 in 2009 to 49 in 2017). Children in conflict with the law and child victims and witnesses of crimes began to receive support and services as a result of improved legislation, involvement of specialists and creation of child-friendly environments in courts and police stations. Specialized courts and probation offices were introduced to support a child-friendly justice system. UNICEF enhanced

the capacity of more than 1,000 specialists working with children in contact with the law. UNICEF will continue advocacy and cooperation with key stakeholders to further improve the child-friendly justice system.

Goal area 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

Climate change

In 2018, UNICEF Kazakhstan, together with the UNICEF Headquarters Division for Data Research and Policy, supported the Climate Landscape Analysis for Children. This analysis provided essential baseline information on climate, environment and energy issues affecting children and recommendations on stepping up work and opportunities in this area. The analysis contributed to establishing a new partnership with the Ministry of Energy, responsible for climate change issues and coordinating climate-related SDG agenda implementation. The partnership with the National Education Academy allowed the development of climate, environment and energy educational resources for teachers, caregivers and children. UNICEF advocated for integration of child-focused disaster risk analysis methodology into the planning system at the national level to increase the effectiveness of disaster risk management and to reduce children's vulnerabilities. UNICEF also supported local authorities in testing the methods and tools, as well as integration of child-related activities into current district-level workplans.

Child-friendly city initiative

In partnership with the Urban Forum Kazakhstan NGO, in February 2018, UNICEF facilitated an educational programme on child-participatory urban planning for local authorities, urban planners, architects and NGOs. UNICEF also undertook a study to analyse the physical infrastructure and to assess the availability of services and the degree of participation of children and adolescents in the life of their city. The study found that 58 per cent of surveyed children believed that playgrounds were only interesting for children under 5. It also found that 52 per cent of parents of adolescents aged 11-17 reported cars and traffic as the main source of danger, and 77 per cent of parents of children aged 0-10 years and 55 per cent of adolescents in a difficult situation in the city relied only on themselves and their family. One in every three parents reported that they never took their child to a theatre or museum, and one in five children had not been to the green, mountainous areas around Almaty and did not go to parks. Based on the findings of the study, the Almaty Centre for Urban Planning proposed several follow-up initiatives, including a city-level forum on children and adolescents to facilitate dialogue about children's rights and influence discussions of budget distribution to address issues children face.

The experience of Almaty was shared by UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia Regional Office Director with 200 Mayors from Asia, Europe and Africa at the Healthy Cities Summit of Mayors in October 2018.

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

Children living in poverty

UNICEF continued its policy analysis engagement in ongoing reform of social assistance programmes, with a focus on increased coverage of poor children. In 2018, the Government-led reform resulted in consolidation of means-tested programmes into a single cash benefit with an increased poverty threshold of 50 per cent subsistence minimum (40 per cent prior to the reform) and 10 per cent increase of nominal value of subsistence minimum.

UNICEF engaged in assessment and monitoring of the reform to mitigate potential negative impact on children due to abolishment of the child allowance for low income families (below 60 per cent) and introduction of means-testing into the cash transfer programme for families with four or more children. As a result of UNICEF advocacy on improved targeting and increased take up of families with children, the reformed TSA incorporated child-focused measures, including unconditional access for children and mothers caring for children up to age 7, and transitional support measures for families with four or more children.

In 2018, the increased poverty line and cash transfer threshold led to increased take up of extreme poor children by the TSA programme. There was a decline in the overall number of child beneficiaries, from 555,498 in 2017 (15,895 TSA and 539,594 low income child benefit) to 333,699 (consolidated TSA). Many low-income families who were eligible for the abolished child benefit (below 60 per cent) failed to enter the reformed TSA schemes in 2018. UNICEF continued to work with MLSP to ensure that planned coverage of approximately 1 million beneficiaries will be met, with further child-focused adjustments to programme design and implementation.

Integrated social services

In 2018, MLSP, with UNICEF support, started to build the institutional framework for a strengthened social services workforce by establishing a social work resource centre. In addition to professional development and training of social workers and paraprofessionals, the resource centre will promote inter-sectoral approaches to development of social work systems across social protection, health, education and internal affairs.

To enhance linkages between poverty reduction cash transfer and social services, UNICEF initiated introduction of 'cash plus services' approaches into the TSA programmes to be rolled out in 10 pilot regions of the country by the end of 2020. The pilot aims to enhance the impact of cash transfer programmes on child poverty and other child-related outcomes by strengthening the role of newly established community-based social workers in the promotion of social inclusion.

Social service workforce

UNICEF documented Kazakhstan's experience in developing social work and social services across different sectors, including services focused on prevention, complex assistance to meet specialized needs of children and adults. UNICEF also documented services focused on continuous professional development training for social service staff at training institutions subordinated to each sectoral ministry and mechanisms for monitoring quality of services and sectoral data-management systems. Challenges remained with defining the social services workforce and with social workers' case loads. The absence of national strategy and a single coordinating agency also posed a challenge. In 2018, UNICEF-supported pilots incorporated international standards on social work at primary health level. Unified tools for case management were established. Based on the pilot experience, the Ministry of Health continued to revise regulations guiding social work in health with case management tools.

Adolescent participation

UNICEF analysed the first year of implementation of the national Youth Resource Centre standards, which were developed with UNICEF support and endorsed by the Government in September 2017. The results and recommendations of the review will be used to revise the training package on youth work for Youth Resource Centre staff that was developed and

piloted with support from UNICEF in 2015-2017. The findings of the analysis also will be used to develop an action plan for implementation of youth policy in 2019, which was announced as the Year of Youth by the President of Kazakhstan. The training package on youth work also includes an adapted module on enhancing the skills of young people for learning, employability and decent work, in accordance with the solutions developed by the Generation Unlimited Global Initiative. The module can be used by both Youth Resource Centres and NGOs.

To ensure that the voices of adolescents were heard, UNICEF supported the participation of five adolescents (aged 14 to 18) from Kazakhstan in the Global Primary Health Care Conference and Youth Pre-Conference workshop, attended by 150 young people from all over the world. The participants from Kazakhstan represented the views of vulnerable adolescents living with HIV, disability and mental health issues and brought attention to adolescents' needs and challenges in getting quality and timely support and services.

UNICEF supported Kazakhstan's first TEDxYouth event, which provided a platform for young people to voice issues of concern, discuss emerging opportunities and ways to affect positive change in society. More than 160 people attended the event and participated in UNICEF-organized on-site activities about the elimination of violence against children campaign and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The platform fostered creation of an online community concerned with child rights and youth empowerment.

Cross-cutting work

Innovation

A robust infrastructure for UNICEF Kazakhstan's ongoing collaboration on smart contracts, blockchain and other financial technology was established, comprised of a network of technical universities, business incubators, national venture funds, tech startups and UNICEF. Partnerships with the International IT University to host the UNICEF Kazakhstan Innovations Lab and with the MOST Business Incubator, Kazakhstan's leading acceleration programme, were renewed in 2018. Those partnerships bolster UNICEF's interaction with business, academia and technology startups to find solutions for children.

UNICEF, in partnership with the International IT University, the Ministry of Health and the Akimat of Almaty, supported two hackathons on digitalizing the healthcare system. A total of 140 young researchers participated and 35 projects were developed and taken up by UNICEF and other partners for acceleration.

UNICEF organized a five-week summer residency for 20 students and young entrepreneurs from five regions that enabled participants to strengthen their knowledge and skills in the application of blockchain for good technology, critical thinking, project management, and entrepreneurship. As a result of the initiative, five projects on blockchain were accelerated for further development and a project on 'Smart Green Houses' received external financing through the National Venture Fund.

Ten blockchain master classes were organized by the UNICEF Innovation Lab in 2018 for 200 startups. More than 3,000 young people benefitted from the blockchain and data science hackathons, and a 12-week acceleration programme with partners, including the Ministry of Health, National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, Supreme Court, KazPochta and local authorities.

In partnership with the Kazakhstan British Technical University, Narxoz University and the

International IT University, a Data Science Hub was established in Kazakhstan to find data science solutions to better understand the most urgent issues faced by children worldwide. Through the partnership, 70 students gained new knowledge on how to collect and analyse new sources of data on child-wellbeing around SDG indicators and make recommendations for policy making.

Based on experience from drone testing corridors in Malawi and Vanuatu, UNICEF supported the Emergency Situations Committee and the Civil Aviation Committee to establish two drone testing corridors in Kazakhstan. UNICEF worked closely with the local Kazakhstani unmanned aerial vehicle/drone producers to raise their capabilities in hardware design, production and software development. UNICEF facilitated participation of local companies at the emergency simulation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization countries, as well as at the exhibition of the Caspian countries in Aktau city. Plans are to begin testing of the unmanned aerial vehicle technologies (drone flights) in 2019.

Child rights monitoring systems

UNICEF continued to invest in national data, evaluation and research systems to generate information and analysis on realisation of children's rights. In 2018, UNICEF continued to support the inter-sectoral working group on data for children, leading to expansion of measurement approaches and data availability in key areas of child well-being. Since 2017, the National Statistics Committee has produced the Annual Statistical Yearbook on Children. The 2018 edition introduces several additional indicators on migration and children in contact with law, and a new section on children and the SDGs. This work is generating further demand from national and sub-national authorities for more disaggregated data on children that meets international standards. At sub-national level, UNICEF supported improved data collection on objective and subjective child well-being in order to set up a comprehensive monitoring system. The tools developed for this system were tested in 2018, and child well-being monitoring software was certified by the designated state body.

Evaluations

In 2018, UNICEF Kazakhstan achieved 92 per cent implementation of the plan for research, impact monitoring and evaluation, with one study and three major evaluations completed. Those included the Justice for Children sector reform, the Justice for Children UNICEF models, and the Adolescent Mental Health and Suicide Prevention programme in Kyzylorda region. All evaluations were rated as satisfactory by the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System, and the evaluation of the Adolescent Mental Health and Suicide Prevention programme was recognized among the top eight most Influential UNICEF evaluations in 2018. UNICEF Kazakhstan hosted the Europe and Central Asia regional TransMonEE database meeting on Access to Justice and Violence Against Children indicators. UNICEF also presented its experience in the area of Justice for Children and Child Well-being monitoring systems at local level. UNICEF Kazakhstan participated in the global evaluation of UNICEF's approach to health systems strengthening, contributing a case study on the universal progressive home visiting model in the quality of care area. The UNICEF Evaluation Management Committee and external Evaluation Review Boards were established to ensure that joint evaluations were accountable and effectively realized. They include stakeholders from the relevant ministries as well as the Human Rights Ombudsperson, the National Centre for Mental Health, local governments, academia, civil society organizations and the Parliament.

Horizontal cooperation and official development assistance

UNICEF Kazakhstan continued to facilitate successful beyond-border exchange of

Kazakhstan's experience in areas where it has achieved significant results for children. Highlights included exchange of experience in primary health care and adolescent mental health. In January, UNICEF and national authorities hosted the first international conference on adolescent mental health, attended by officials from seven countries in Europe and Asia, to learn about Kazakhstan's experience for potential scale-up in other countries. In October, Kazakhstan gathered countries from around the world to reaffirm the historic 1978 Alma-Ata Declaration on primary health care. The new Astana Declaration was signed by all participating countries and confirmed a desire to strengthen primary health care systems as an important step toward achieving universal health coverage.

In November, UNICEF organized an international study tour on maternal and child health for health specialists and officials from Sukhumi (UNICEF Georgia), Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The purpose of the study trip, which took place in Kyzylorda region, was to share Kazakhstan's innovative approach to improving the universal progressive model of home visits to pregnant women and families with children under five.

Horizontal exchange facilitated sharing of knowledge by national authorities to authorities from more than 20 countries on Kazakhstan's experience in child well-being monitoring and justice for children. UNICEF shared experiences in implementation of the Child-Friendly Cities initiative with Kyrgyzstan, Belarus and the Child in the City Network. UNICEF also supported Kazakhstan's Child Rights Ombudsperson to exchange experience with her counterpart from Tajikistan during the latter's visit to Almaty. UNICEF Kazakhstan's experience with integrated provision of social services to children and families at risk was shared during a study visit to Romania.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began to collaborate on establishing a methodology for distribution and monitoring of Official Development Assistance that adheres to the principle of the best interests of the child. As a result, two important strategic documents were developed and shared with the Ministry. The first document, which relied on the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, identified health care, education and rights of minority groups as potential areas for Kazakhstan's Official Development Assistance to other countries in Central Asia. The document recommends that the issue of supporting Kazakh minority populations in Central Asia and their children's access to education in their native language without any restrictions should be considered as part of Kazakhstan's Official Development Assistance. The second document analysed international experience in child-friendly Official Development Assistance programmes (in Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom) and provided insights on how Kazakhstan could establish and develop child-friendly Official Development Assistance. In 2019, UNICEF anticipates that this work in establishing child-friendly Official Development Assistance and monitoring its effectiveness will benefit from a new partnership with the Institute of Diplomacy under the Public Administration Academy.

Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

In 2018, the partnership between the Government of Kazakhstan and UNICEF continued to support the country's efforts to further advance progress toward the sustained realization of children's rights, with particular attention to the rights of the most vulnerable children and their families. The partnership focused on enhancing the protective environment for children and adolescents, reducing societal tolerance toward violence and improving related monitoring and enforcement systems. Insights were gained on what has worked and where further

improvements are needed. The following lessons learned, covering all sectors in which UNICEF is engaged, will help strengthen UNICEF's support to the country on the path to more sustainable development.

The evaluations of UNICEF Kazakhstan's models and programmes provided lessons on juvenile justice and adolescent mental health, among other areas. By and large, those lessons revolve around the need for stronger monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks, more effective gender sensitivity, and increased engagement of local stakeholders to ensure sustainability.

The major lesson learned during the evaluation activities in 2018 concerned strengthening monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks in all of UNICEF's models. Independent assessments revealed that lack of strong monitoring systems was a barrier to feedback on the intervention practices and hampered the capture of outcomes and impacts. Stronger monitoring tools should be developed and implemented from the start of activities, jointly with implementing partners. The development of a comprehensive M&E framework also would lead to greater accountability with regard to results. A well-developed M&E framework also will present an opportunity to build implementing partners' skills in tracking programme effectiveness and give them stronger ownership of delivery at local level.

The authorities' limited capacity in data analysis makes it difficult for them to make decisions that are evidence-based. Building analytical capacity, evidence-based policy and managerial decision-making capacity at national and local levels is an area that requires government attention. This is particularly so at subnational level in relation to evidence-based planning, budgeting and monitoring. Systematically conducting rigorous research about children's development should become the basis of child and social policy planning. UNICEF will advocate with national and local stakeholders for such research.

During 2015-2017, the Government of Kazakhstan, with UNICEF support, piloted the 'Adolescent Mental Health and Suicide Prevention programme' in Kyzylorda Oblast. A key lesson from the programme evaluation was that the issue of adolescent mental health and suicide is incredibly sensitive in Kazakhstan. Opposition to the programme was mostly stigma-related. UNICEF recognized the stigma associated with suicide, so the programme also emphasized mental health and well-being and life skills, rather than suicide prevention alone. The evaluation also highlighted the importance of using a gender and equity focus, which, if ignored, can mean programmes do not address factors that may contribute to self-harm and may stigmatize some groups (particularly males) and preventing them from accessing services and support.

The evaluation found that a key aspect of the success of the Adolescent Mental Health and Suicide Prevention pilot was the political will, ownership and leadership demonstrated at all levels of government, which resulted in an effective multi-sectoral approach. UNICEF Kazakhstan will continue to use such an approach for all its programme work.

In 2018, UNICEF also finalized two evaluations on juvenile justice reform, one of the key areas of UNICEF's involvement in 2014-2017. This experience provided UNICEF Kazakhstan with valuable lessons and understanding for reforms in the area of justice for children, given the country context of many regions with diverse practices on the ground. A key lesson learned was the importance of accurate and disaggregated quantitative data. Lack of such data posed an obstacle to the in-depth analysis of the programme's impact. UNICEF has begun to pay

specific attention to statistics in relation to justice for children, but confusion remains around the terminology employed. Another remaining gap was the lack of gender-disaggregated data on children involved in criminal proceedings. This implies that in any reform, specific consideration should be paid, as early as possible, to the quality and disaggregation of quantitative data, so as to ensure the existence of clear baselines and the analysis of the impact on different groups.

An evaluation of early childhood development practices provided a lesson pertaining to private sector involvement. The Government recognized the importance of public private partnership in preschool education and has advanced this approach. The introduction of public private partnership in the early education sector has rapidly increased preschool enrolment rates in Kazakhstan. But the evaluation showed that implementation of such partnership in early childhood education requires a more robust analysis of all partnership models and their impact on learning outcomes in order to be able to inform corrective measures that ensure value for money. The evaluation also indicated that national policy should consider alternative mechanisms for private sector involvement in preschool education delivery in rural areas. UNICEF will continue to use these lessons in its advocacy with the Government.

UNICEF Kazakhstan's technical assistance also included supporting transformation of residential care facilities in two regions of Kazakhstan. A change in the focus of the national government from transformation of residential institutions to prevention of institutionalisation, gatekeeping and establishment of child support centres left local authorities without any instructions from the Ministry of Education, meaning that they were not proactive in developing transformation plans. Subsequently, local level authorities in two regions were considering closing two residential institutions, without having made any plans for transition or for the establishment of alternative services. Family support services are outsourced to the non-government sector, and a lack of standards, clear targets and referral systems means that these services are of low quality. As a result, work with central and local authorities should be continued to strengthen their capacity to develop plans and standards for transformed/alternative services.

The transition to international classification on functioning, disability and health was constrained due to the low awareness of specialists and a lack of practical guides about its application. To realize its commitments under UNCRPD, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection began to develop a new National Plan on the rights and quality of life of persons with disability for 2019-2023. The plan is scheduled to be adopted in 2019. UNICEF, through its participation in a high level government working group on disability, continued raising awareness about the social model of disability and inclusion of home-schooled children with disabilities in mainstream education.

UNICEF Kazakhstan worked to ensure the longevity and sustainability of its programmes. As their implementation unfolds, programmes can encounter obstacles in their sustainability. For example, when diversion measures and probation programmes were introduced, a number of local partner institutions lacked ownership of the pilot programmes. In one region, this resulted in a lack of feedback from the NGOs, and stakeholders considered that the project was not successful. From the start, the pilots were intended to be implemented by NGOs, without any funding from local government authorities. Although short-term funding was secured, the lack of financial contribution is believed to have lessened the sustainability of the intervention as far as permanent funding is concerned. The absence of legislative provisions and clearly prescribed mechanisms for these models in national and local bylaws also hurt sustainability prospects. UNICEF will put greater focus on this area and work to ensure the operational and

financial participation of government stakeholders involved in the programme from the start and continuing throughout the implementation phase.

UNICEF Kazakhstan will shift its role more to advocacy and to that of lead technical expert. UNICEF has knowledge that could be used to support the scaling up of interventions. This is especially relevant as UNICEF continues to put significant efforts into facilitating beyond-border exchange of Kazakhstan's knowledge and experience in areas where it has achieved significant results for children.