

Update on the context and situation of children

In 2019, Ukraine was marked by a change in the political landscape with a new President and Parliament elected by a landslide majority in respectively April and July 2019. Analysts believe that this political change was triggered by Ukrainian people's mistrust in the long serving political elite. Corruption remains endemic and powerful oligarchs still dominate the economy.

The newly elected President, Parliament and resulting Government committed to an ambitious and wide-ranging reform agenda. There are indications that reforms initiated by the previous Government will continue though in adjusted manner. The decentralization reform is further implemented through the creation of consolidated municipalities assigning them with resources and significant responsibilities including in social sectors.

On eastern Ukraine, the new President showed the commitment to find a solution to the six-year long conflict. Recent negotiations resulted in an exchange of prisoners and the re-establishment of the dialog with the Russian Federation. However, the overall situation for children and families living in those two regions remains challenging. Daily ceasefire violations are still occurring on both sides, and in 2019 alone critical infrastructure was targeted with 88 incidents of shelling or small arms reported on WASH infrastructure and 36 related incidents affecting education facilities. Over 430,000 of boys, girls and their families living on both sides still require humanitarian assistance to access basic services, including psychosocial and protection support. On a positive note, the President endorsed the Safe School Declaration on the day of the 30th CRC anniversary.

While the economy showed positive and steady growing trends (GDP grew 4,2% in third quarter of 2019), children remained amongst the poorest population group this year again. According to preliminary results of UNICEF conducted report on child poverty, every third child lives in poverty while every seventh (14%) in extreme poverty. Families with three or more children have the highest poverty rate – 51.8% while families with children under 3 are at high risk of poverty. At the same time, children from rural areas (39.9%) and small towns (38%) are almost two times poorer than those living in big cities (18.3%).

The SDG agenda also remained a priority and was further streamlined through a presidential decree, and three national reports were produced: SDGs for children, SDG 8 and 2019 SDGs progress report [\[1\]](#).

Despite relatively high levels of government spending on social assistance (4.9 per cent of GDP) [\[2\]](#), its performance in reducing poverty and protecting the vulnerable, measured by coverage of the poorest and adequacy of benefits, is limited. In 2019, overall trends of cash based programmes remained without noticeable changes. Thus, the coverage of the poorest through the Guaranteed Minimum Programme is only 4.6%. At the same time, the universal child benefit continued demonstrating good targeting performance even in comparison with some means-tested programmes: 61.4 % of benefit recipients lived in households whose income was below the actual subsistence minimum (111 USD) per person.

Adolescents and young people's agenda were further streamlined in different sectors with the establishment of new national bodies for youth policy implementation. Amendments to the adolescents' age and age of consent to access health services were also proposed to the current law in line with international standards. Simultaneously, meaningful child and youth participation was promoted throughout the CFCIs.

The child protection system failed to address key challenges faced by children and families, in areas of family separation, access to justice for all children and protection from violence, abuse and exploitation. This is true for the 100,000 children placed in residential care. While Ukraine counts with the largest number of those children, MOSP figures indicate that 92% of them have at least one parent and children with disabilities represent a large proportion of them. The current commitment to transform institutions is far from producing tangible results despite larger government and donors' resources allocated.

In the absence of national system for prevention, early identification, registration and response to violence against children remains also a priority addressed through cross-sectoral collaboration among lines ministries. While the newly adopted Law on Domestic Violence tries to respond to some of the challenges, the capacities to implement the legal framework are weak at local level.

The justice system needs further strengthening for the protection of rights of child victims and witnesses, while further advocating for the institutionalization of this restorative justice model.

In education, according to the WB Sectoral Review, although Ukraine took bold steps toward reforming its system, the reform process was uneven, and additional efforts are needed to ensure its success and continuity. Ukraine spends more of

Country Office Annual Report 2019

Ukraine



its GDP on education than most EU and OECD countries, but resources are not used efficiently.

New evidence produced through the PISA report undertaken for the first time in Ukraine revealed lower than OECD average results in all three domains of academic performance (reading, math and sciences). PISA also confirmed a strong link between the socioeconomic status of students and their academic performance with alarming gaps between rural and otherwise underprivileged children and those with high socioeconomic status.

Pre-schools enrolment further increased with waiting lists decreasing from 46,898 in 2018 to 33,000 in 2019.

The healthcare reform continued at primary healthcare level providing mainly financial mechanism to cover basic packages of services, as well as free choice of doctors for patients. This aims at restoring trust to state health care system and improving services and quality of medical procedures, including vaccination. Content-wise, the maternal and child healthcare reform still lacks a normative framework and an integrated policy for ECD. Still, there is a strong reliance on hospitalization of children rather than developing ambulatory models of care.

Immunization continues experiencing challenges with coverage and quality of vaccination services, while simultaneously responding to a measles outbreak (over 57,000 cases in 2019 with 20 deaths). However, the EPI coverage [3] is slowly increasing: DTP-3 for children below 1 year old increased from 53.2% (2017) to 66.8% (2019) and is expected to reach 80% by year end. Attitudes of caregivers towards vaccination are improving steadily: in 2019, 88% of parents intend to vaccinate their child according to the national vaccination schedule, compared to 84% in 2018.

In addition to immunization challenges, Ukraine also counts with the highest rates of child obesity and the lowest overall consumption of iodized salt in the ECA region. The lack of updated evidence slowed down advocacy efforts for the adoption of a mandatory Universal Salt Iodisation legislation.

In the area of Mother to Child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis elimination, the Government implemented all required measures including pre-validation reports on human rights of pregnant women and PMTCT country assessment. Despite continuous advocacy efforts of UNICEF and partners to timely procure ARVs for 2019, the country is facing a high risk of stock out in quarter one of 2020.

In 2019, water related issues in eastern Ukraine attracted both Government and development partners' interest with larger recovery projects being planned. At the same, while reforming the energy sector, peculiarities of eastern Ukraine and the unique situation of the Donbass water companies were not considered. Advocacy efforts were required not to jeopardize the provision of uninterrupted water supply to more four million people and avoid water disease outbreak, as the reported diarrheal cases in April 2019. This showcased how fragile the Donbass region remains, even after six years of conflict.

[1] http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/menu/st_rozv/publ/SDGs-MonitoringReport_v08_24.09.2019.pdf

<http://me.gov.ua/Documents/List?lang=uk-UA&id=938d9df1-5e8d-48cc-a007-be5bc60123b8&tag=TSiliStalogoRozvitku>

<http://me.gov.ua/Documents/List?lang=uk-UA&id=938d9df1-5e8d-48cc-a007-be5bc60123b8&tag=TSiliStalogoRozvitku>

[2] Excluding pensions and including social programmes for unemployed.

[3] MOH database for immunization coverage, Ukrvak, 2019.

Major contributions and drivers of results

2019 was used to further consolidate programme results in support of the reform agenda, as well as part of the humanitarian response and recovery efforts in eastern Ukraine. As per the costed evaluation plan, two evaluations were launched, one on the impact of psychosocial services provided for the humanitarian response and another one on UNICEF WASH programme, still on-going. Findings are expected to contribute to planned mid-term review in 2020 and more strategic discussions for the next CPD preparation.

At national level, UNICEF continued to position itself as a reliable technical partner in social sectors with the newly elected Government and Parliament advocating for children and women issues to remain a priority. It is worth mentioning that the '2019 Progress Report SDGs' was presented by the new President at the 2019 UN SDGs Summit. In parallel, two other

Ukraine

reports - the first thematic National Report 'SDGs for Children' and 'SDG8 Decent Work and Economic Growth' with focus on youth - were respectively presented by the Ministries of Economy and Social Policy at UN High Level Political Forum in July. Later the year, as part of the CRC 30th anniversary celebration, UNICEF organized a takeover of the new Parliament with the participation of five children from CFCI municipalities addressing major concerns on inclusive communities, child participation and the importance of quality education.

In response to the humanitarian situation, UNICEF reviewed its emergency preparedness plan and prepared a HAC in line with the inter-agency HRP, highlighting that 430,000 children in eastern Ukraine are still in need of assistance. UNICEF maintained its field offices both in government and non-government-controlled areas, while leading effectively the WASH cluster and Child Protection sub-cluster, as well as providing IM support to the education cluster.

In promoting the child rights agenda through media, UNICEF significantly expanded its leadership by increasing its media presence and engagement by nearly a third in a year (from 105,000 to 145,000). Despite continuous changes in the social media landscape, UNICEF messages and campaigns reached between 250,000 to 1,000,000 people every week thanks to extensive local multimedia and video content production on UNICEF interventions.

Responding to donor environment changes, UNICEF initiated innovative partnerships with the private sector, repositioning its engagement from an ad hoc and project-type collaboration to a strategic bottom-up approach matching programme needs and progressing towards more co-creation modality. Among others, UNICEF leveraged in 2019 UPSHIFT's strong branding to build partnerships with the Global Compact Ukraine Network, ING bank and other private sector companies, as well as the newly established UNDP accelerator Lab.

Goal Area 5

in 2019, UNICEF commissioned a Child Poverty report which aims at contributing to the knowledge on child poverty, inequalities and informing the set of new policies and strategies, including the new poverty strategy for which consultations are starting early 2020.

As part of advocacy on universal child grant, UNICEF submitted an official statement expressing concerns about proposed legislative amendments proposing to introduce an income conditionality to the Universal Child Grant and transformed it into a targeted program paid only to families whose per capita income is below 15% of the benefit, while simultaneously raising the benefit. Following a quick risk analysis on the proposed policy amendments that - if approved - would jeopardize its single universal child grant programme leaving thousands of families without social support, UNICEF issued a public statement that within 24 hours influenced the Ministry's decision. As a result, the UCG was continued supporting around 1.3m children on a monthly basis.

Based on the data and recommendations stemming from UNICEF commissioned 'Budget brief on Health', UNICEF advocated for a more nuanced budget planning on the role of sub-national governments in primary health care financing. Based on the expenditure data, UNICEF flagged out that newly consolidated municipalities have a long way to become champions of primary health care financing.

In 2019, UNICEF jointly with UNOPS continued the implementation of the universal 'baby box' programme. Since its launch, more than 270 000 new born children and mothers received such box containing essential hygiene, development toys, clothes and UNICEF developed educational materials. As a result of UNICEF programme monitoring, the content was revised/expanded, so as the quality of the purchased items. Immunization and breastfeeding related educational materials included resulted in a positive attitude change of mothers towards vaccination contributing to addressing the low vaccination coverage and on-going measles outbreak: 61% of caregivers replied they increased their awareness about vaccination thanks to educational materials, and 3% change their behavior from negative towards positive attitude. Furthermore, near 10% of mothers increased their knowledge on breastfeeding.

In support to the decentralization reform, in partnership with Oxford Policy Management, UNICEF further strengthened the capacity of municipalities and Government's knowledge on integrated social protection through a package of interventions on social planning, budgeting and monitoring of social services, case management practices and inter-sectoral cooperation.

The CFCI initiative expanded from 22 to 32 various size cities covering cumulatively 10% of Ukrainian population. All participating municipalities benefitted from a tailored technical assistance that helped crafting a quality situation analysis and action plans. This initiative allowed to leverage around USD 41 mln towards various child focused programmes, addressing rights to safe environment, health, education and leisure. In doing so, UNICEF also supported a further group of municipalities - not officially covered by the programme. A specific attention was given to meaningful child and youth participation through a tailored training programme. As a result, the CRC's 30th anniversary was marked by the unprecedented takeover and shadowing actions happening simultaneously in 25 municipalities.

Ukraine

In addition to the in-country CFCI initiative, UNICEF contributed significantly to the global CFCI agenda for the preparation of the first CFCI summit organized in October in Germany. The success of the CFCI in Ukraine was marked by the Inspire Awards in the category of meaningful child participation won by the city of Vinnitsa.

Goal Area 3

UNICEF rendered support to the Government promoting more child-focused welfare reforms, with an increased emphasis on the prevention of separation of children, de-institutionalization and "gatekeeping" through community-based child and family support services (including early intervention).

The ongoing monitoring of alternative child care system jointly with the Office of Ombudsman, Ministry of Social Policy and the Ukrainian Child Rights Network, helped to collect evidence on violations of child rights in 51 child care institutions and advocate with 7 regional and national authorities for the enhancement of gender sensitive child and family-centered social protection system focusing on prevention and "gatekeeping" at local level. The monitoring targeted more than 2,000 children, including those living on the contact line and/or left without parental care. It is noteworthy that recommendations resulted in immediate follow-up/decisions response from regional authorities, e.g. per capita funding for food and supply was increased. The monitoring also helped identifying inconsistencies in legislation; unclear distribution of responsibilities as well as lack of control over the implementation of policies.

Earlier in 2019, UNICEF's advocacy resulted in transforming the Early Intervention (EI) Platform into the National Council for EI under the Vice-Prime Minister. However, with the change of the Government, the structure was reviewed slowing down the work of the Council. Thus, UNICEF and partners continued advocating with the new Government on the need to finalize the EI Plan of Action and the drafting of standards.

In eastern Ukraine, UNICEF initiated a programme on integrated social services in twelve communities also aiming at preventing the institutionalization of children through creation of local social services. It is anticipated that, with the support of UNICEF, the tools and practices developed, as well as applied integrated models will be documented and inform the Government for further scale up creating the links between the ongoing DI and decentralization reforms. The UNICEF commissioned alternative care system assessment will also inform the on-going DI reform from 2020 on.

The restorative justice interventions for juveniles in conflict with the law implemented with a wide range of stakeholders informed UNICEF advocacy for child-friendly and gender sensitive judicial procedures. To facilitate the dialogue and enhance inter-sectoral cooperation around J4C, UNICEF facilitated the interagency coordination platform on Justice for Children (J4C), bringing together Ministries of Justice, Social Policy, Health, Education, Police, Office of the General Prosecutor and other sub-national, development and CSO partners.

UNICEF continued advancing the Ending Violence Against Children agenda promoting new programmes aiming to prevent and address violence against children in all settings (family, school, community, online). The first national inter-sectoral conference on violence was organized uniting different stakeholders to discuss gender sensitive response mechanisms and policies. A joint draft roadmap was developed with the objective of Ukraine joining the Global Partnership on Ending Violence Against Children. In eastern Ukraine, recognizing the increased evidence of conflict impact on attitudes and behavior of adolescents, UNICEF expanded its programme on positive parenting.

In response to the humanitarian situation, UNICEF continued enhancing capacities of stakeholders at regional and local levels and strengthening child-centered services. In 2019, child protection programme covered more than 45,000 girls (51%) and boys (49%) and their caregivers with psycho-social first aid and other protection activities. In partnership with Danish Refugee Council-Danish Demining Group, UNICEF published a needs assessment report on child mine victims laying building blocks for a comprehensive mine action programmatic approach in the country. Furthermore 500,000 children were reached with mine safety messages via online comic cartoons, and 30,354 children participated in direct training sessions on mine safety rules.

In responding to a long-lasting birth registration issues of children born in NGCA, UNICEF joined efforts with other UN agencies in advocating for social cohesion using the updated paper on challenges and recommendations with the new Government.

Goal Area 2

In 2019, the Ministry of Education (MOES) continued the implementation of the "New Ukrainian School" reform aimed at setting out the values and principles of a child-centered model of education and pedagogy of partnership that addressed gender norms and stereotypes. UNICEF supported the Ministry's efforts to advance key elements and improve access to quality, inclusive, competency-based and violence-free education, including in eastern Ukraine, where UNICEF humanitarian interventions reached the most vulnerable school and preschool children on both sides.

Ukraine

For evidence-based policy making, UNICEF contributed to PISA through the development of National Implementation Roadmap and associated National Communication Strategy, as well as dedicated PISA website. Identified gaps will be addressed in coming years.

UNICEF also contributed to the formulation of the "Concept of preschool development" as well as in generation and analysis of data to inform policies and programmes, through ECERS, a tool designed to assess quality of preschool education. For the reform's national scaling, UNICEF contributed to the identification of best practices, lessons learned and production of capacity building materials.

To enhance inclusive education, UNICEF advocated for and build capacities on ICF implementation through a ToT course and an innovative on-line training simulator for use in primary schools, while providing technical support to MoES in reviewing the draft National Strategy of Inclusive Education 2020-2030.

UNICEF and MoES completed the modelling of "Safe school concept" in 14 education facilities in eastern Ukraine to create safe, protective and inclusive school environment. Following the review of the results, MoES integrated this model to all 25 in-service teacher training centres to scale it up. In addition, an LSE training curriculum for primary teachers supported by UNICEF was developed and incorporated in in-service teacher training. The first SCORE report jointly launched with MOES provided further evidence on the impact of risk exposure on adolescent development. The protective role of the education system was assessed by SCORE through the concept of 'School Connectedness', the acquisition of life skills as well as that of parenting dimensions.

After several years of high-level advocacy, technical support and capacity building by UNICEF, the education cluster and partners, the Government endorsed the Safe School Declaration, a significant step in ensuring safe access to education in conflict-affected areas. It is expected that UNICEF and partners will provide technical assistance and capacity building for its implementation.

Education in emergency response was provided to conflict affected regions reaching 37,400 vulnerable school and preschool age children through the provision of education supplies, school furniture, sports equipment, rehabilitating most critically damaged schools. 680 teachers benefited from capacity building efforts on identified priority topics (Life Skills Education (LSE), including issues on inclusivity, tolerance and diversity.

In 2019, UNICEF contributed to the drafting of the National Youth Strategy 2020-2025. U-Report further consolidated its position as a platform for young people's engagement with an annual increase of 25% with over 90,000 subscribers, while an innovative approach supporting local engagement of young people in civic matters was launched. To strengthen civic participation demand and skills UNICEF engaged 24,000 young people through a series of activities aimed at increasing resilience and civic engagement while also building active citizenship skills of 35,000 adolescents (45% boys, 55% girls) through extracurricular skills-building gender responsive program.

UPSHIFT saw an extensive expansion to six additional cities and contributed to building 21st century skills for over 4,700 young people. With a focus on youth with disabilities, it contributed to advocacy for inclusion, resulting in an Ukrainian UPSHIFTer addressing the Parliament, the UN General Assembly and taking over UNICEF ED Fore's twitter's account on Children' Day.

Goal Area 1

This year, UNICEF contributed to the health reform at primary health care level providing opportunities for restoring trust to state health care system and improving the quality of services, including vaccination. Public dialogues were promoted through a School of Public Health with 220 participants from all regions and other events.

Upon the request of MOH, UNICEF conducted a screening of suitable candidates for managerial positions among the health workforce. Subsequently, professionals were appointed to key decision-making positions at the Ministry. To improve the performance of health professionals, UNICEF also initiated a dialog with the National Healthcare Service to include immunization into functional indicators at primary healthcare level. This year again, up to 13,000 students (26% more than in 2018) passed the revised KROK-2 licensing exam which includes immunization questions.

On the procurement side, UNICEF ensured uninterrupted supply of vaccines and ARVs and provided technical assistance on the procurement reform of drugs, while building staff capacity of the recently established Central Procurement Agency.

In immunization, a blended approach was used to address low vaccination coverage, while responding to the on-going measles outbreak, combining policy support, capacity development and communication messages. Overall compliance with the national vaccination schedule among parents with children 0-3 y.o rose from 63% in 2017 to 65% in 2019, and among

Ukraine

parents with children 0-6 y.o from 84% in 2017 to 86% in 2019.

Changes to the routine immunization calendar were introduced with UNICEF support and adopted to increase the efficiency of measles vaccines for the youngest children. In addition, a new list of vaccines' contraindications was adopted, reducing unnecessary checkups before vaccination as well as reducing missed opportunities for vaccination. UNICEF also advocated for health workers and staff in kindergartens to get vaccinated against measles.

UNICEF, together with partners, helped the Government to effectively respond to the measles outbreak through regular data collection, analysis and through technical assistance for catch-up campaigns in five selected regions focusing on at risk population. Up to 27,000 school-aged children were vaccinated against measles in one region raising the vaccination coverage up to 90%. In another region, up to 176,000 children were vaccinated against measles corresponding to 96.5% of children attending kindergartens and schools. In order to make immunization efforts more targeted, causality analysis of low immunization coverage at sub-national level in some relevant regions were performed, along with the development of improvement plans.

Messages on immunization reached more than 550,000 adults through motivational videos, while reaching 407,000 people worldwide during the World Immunization week. In the five targeted regions, over 110,000 children with parents participated in community mobilization edutainment events for routine vaccination. 87,000 people were also reached with the online video stream of the radio show on vaccination.

Around 1,500 primary health care workers, including in conflict affected regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, staff from Public Health Centre and Immunization managers were trained on planning, forecasting and managing vaccines' supply.

In partnership with different stakeholders, UNICEF engaged in high level advocacy pushing for the adoption for a mandatory Universal Salt Iodisation legislation, while preparing a national survey of iodine status among women of reproductive age.

On adolescent's health, UNICEF contributed to the draft legislation on the definition of adolescent age and age of consent to received health services and promoted the integration of youth friendly and gender sensitive services into primary and secondary health care levels. The on-line course on adolescent health for primary health doctors was developed.

As part of the elimination of Mother to Child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis agenda, all the required measures, including pre-validation reports on human rights of pregnant women and PMTCT country assessment for the pre-validation exercise were supported. In addition, UNICEF also developed EMTCT database in all 25 regions and supported the implementation of the e-MTCT roadmap.

In NGCA, UNICEF provided life-savings support on immunization. This included the procurement of 110,000 IPV doses and syringes, as well as 357 cold chain equipment. In addition, health care workers benefited from tailored made trainings. The IPV catch up campaign in NGCA is an important step in closing polio gaps in Ukraine. UNICEF also supported HIV and TB exposed children in NGCA via multidisciplinary clinical teams and free medicine e-vouchers for children with HIV and TB or whose parents have HIV or TB.

Goal Area 4

As WASH facilities continued to be targeted by both sides, putting at risk the life of millions of people in Donbass, the advocacy and communication work on WASH remains a priority this year. Public advocacy events, such as the World Water Day, was a renewed occasion to convey the message that "water is not a target" and showcase Ukraine in the UNICEF Global Report "Water Under Fire".

To contribute to achieving the two SDG targets (targets 6.3 & 6.5), UNICEF engaged in the River Basin Management Plan development in close partnership with the Ministry of Energy and Environmental Protection, while increasing the capacity of laboratories with the provision of specialized equipment. UNICEF further implemented WASH humanitarian and recovery activities given the limited number of players engaged in this sector.

Recognizing the critical role of centralized water systems, UNICEF contributed to the functioning of the two main water companies in Donbass region through the provision of equipment (pumps, fittings, electromechanical equipment) and heavy machinery (loader-diggers/excavators, cranes), as well as capacitating them to undertake the repairs on their own.

To reduce the number of leakages, UNICEF focused on priority pipelines and rehabilitated parts of the networks, e.g. 530 meters of DN 1400 pipe replaced benefiting 500,000 people and pump-motors/transformers benefiting over 3.2 million people. Additionally, capacity of local service providers was strengthened through a software supporting Mariupol Vodakanal water system management, as well as risk assessments conducted in 9 vodakanals evaluating their strength

Ukraine

and weakness to develop water safety plans.

On water quality, UNICEF provided water treatment chemical to the water companies benefiting around 1.5 million people. Complementarily to the water treatment, UNICEF also conducted two thorough assessments for both main water companies aiming at setting up action plans to mitigate risks. In parallel, UNICEF identified alternative and less hazardous technologies and procured hypochlorite production units installed on-site to replace chlorine gas.

Educational and health facilities were supported through the improvement of water and heating networks necessary to create a favorable learning environment for students, or better conditions for patients. In settlements and villages, support was provided through the drilling of new boreholes and/or rehabilitation of existing ones, installation of water towers, and rehabilitation of small piped networks. This led to improving the situation for 161,000 children (15%) and families and triggered the return of fewer families.

Despite a major focus on water supply systems, activities related to sanitation were undertaken with sewage pumps and fittings as well as treatment equipment provided to waste water treatment plants. UNICEF supported the rehabilitation of water networks acting on water safety, heating systems, sewage networks and toilets in 94 educational and 19 health facilities, on both sides. Special attention was given to UNICEF's standards for gender-sensitive and disability friendly toilets in schools.

In NGCA and along the contact line (0-5 km) in GCA, UNICEF organized and assisted 90,000 people with the distribution of water trucking and bottled water during water supply disruptions resulting from hostilities.

On hygiene, the e-voucher programme continued providing 10,368 vulnerable households and 235 social institutions with hygiene products. Additionally, hygiene kits were distributed to vulnerable households and institutions located on both sides reaching over 14,500 people. These kits are tailored to the needs of the most vulnerable: children under 5, pregnant woman and elderly people. Hygiene promotion edutainment sessions were conducted in educational facilities. Lastly, following a U-report polling session results, UNICEF launched a menstrual hygiene campaign, to address stigma around the topic. Initiated in Donbass region, the campaign will be scaled up to the national level in 2020-2021.

Ukraine

Lessons Learned and Innovations

Presidential and parliamentary elections in 2019 resulted in a significant change in the political course, with national economic and sectoral reforms often overshadowing the child rights agenda in public discourse. The institutional memory was lost in many ministries in addition to structural changes, all affecting the programme implementation: e.g. inter-ministerial coordination structures were dismantled, or the position of the chair no longer existed. Ministries were also reprofiled, and the lack of knowledge and experience of many of the new appointees resulted in delays in prioritizing the child rights agenda. Thus, it became critical to take immediate risk mitigation measures and strengthen the cooperation with local and regional authorities who have all the means and ways to implement the policies under the recent decentralization reform.

In such a volatile and fast-moving political environment, UNICEF needed to apply a new course of action as the guardian of child rights. Continuous monitoring and an agile response mechanism were especially important in view of the speedy policy and decision-making process that often excludes opportunity for consultations with civic society and other partners. For example, UNICEF was forced to make a statement and prevent the Government from dismantling its well-functioning universal child grant. Efforts will be further required to keep the situation of children at the core of the national agenda and to highlight that as Ukraine moves towards its economic and political goals the situation of children should not be neglected.

Providing evidence continued to be key for influencing national policies and strategies. Among others, UNICEF supported project on mediation for juveniles in conflict with the law helped to gain evidence and knowledge on the criticality of pre-trial diversion. It resulted in influencing the overall national policy on alternatives to imprisonment bringing the necessary evidence for change of the attitude and knowledge among key decision makers.

Combined incentives (without direct investment), recognition and technical support can boost public spending on children, establish effective cooperation with municipalities, and ensure meaningful implementation of the CRC at the local level. This is true for the CFCI, the new UNICEF supported programme on decentralized integrated social services in eastern Ukraine, as well as small scale WASH rehabilitation works done at community level. For example, in 2019, 17 CFCI municipalities with approved Action Plans already budgeted UAH 994 million (USD 41 million) for children. Thus, for every USD\$1 UNICEF spent on the CFCI, USD\$276 was leveraged for children in the country.

Despite positive signs from the new Government towards resolving the conflict, the situation in eastern Ukraine remained volatile and with challenging operational environment. The peculiarities of eastern Ukraine are not always reflected adequately in the national reform agenda: for example, the unique situation of Donbass water companies was not taken into consideration within the energy sector reform. Daily ceasefire violations further impeded the access to certain territories, in addition to posing security risks to the personnel, while the economic blockage of non-government-controlled areas further narrowed the scope of implementation modalities. Effective and regular coordination with local authorities on both sides were maintained helping to avoid any major gaps in implementation.

In future, UNICEF will need a more tailored approach to keep the attention of the impact of the conflict on children high with the media, donor community and Government.

On the innovation front, and related to the CFCI, IT technology and digital solutions were explored and used by UNICEF to address bottlenecks related to data collection and data storage but also for boosting scalability. As such, UNICEF organized its first hackathon in blockchain solutions for municipalities resulting in innovative ideas by and for young people: Waiting list for student dormitories; Streamlining emergency care provision to patients, from ambulance to hospital admission and Charity donations management system.

Another innovative idea was suggested by UNICEF Ukraine to develop the first ever Cyrillic type font for people with dyslexia aiming to support learning outcomes for children with dyslexia. The concept was tested and validated for ease with a substantial test group of 74 children with dyslexia. The font, "Inclusion_UKR" is currently open for non-commercial public access and has a potential to be used in educational materials, children's books and other printed resources. The font has also a scale potential for use by other countries using Cyrillic alphabet in the region.