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Cover Photo: Children in the village of Gorou Kyrie, a suburban of Niamey, the capital of Niger. For every child, friendship. 5 June 2019
Executive Summary

Children in West and Central Africa are disproportionately deprived of their rights. In 2019, trends in the region rendered the situation of children more fragile, though opportunities also emerged. Economic growth improved slightly year-on-year, though the region lagged behind others in the continent. Public expenditure on social services remained below global targets, a trend reinforced by high levels of debt and increased spending on military with the spread of insecurity, particularly in the Central Sahel. Digital technologies and the digital economy offered the promise of unlocking transformative change in favor of development, especially for adolescents and young people. Political tensions threatened stability, in the context of elections and governance challenges, though peaceful transfers of power became more entrenched as the norm, notably in West Africa. Humanitarian needs expanded with over 23 million children in need (more than half of people in need), while climate change compounded existing vulnerabilities. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of 2019 threatened to reverse hard-earned development gains of the past decades. The pace of population growth in the region continued to exceed that in Africa, combined with rapid urbanization, with the number of children expected to double to 500 million by 2063, when the region will be home to 1 in 5 of the world’s children. Gender discrimination remained acute, circumscribing the opportunities for girls to realize their potential.

UNICEF offices in West and Central Africa collectively pursued the Key Results for Children (KRC), as their strategic contribution to the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 as part of the Decade of Action towards the SDGs by 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063. Seven KRCs were on-track to meet 2021 targets, while one required acceleration. The region contributed significantly to UNICEF’s global results. In particular:

- 12.8 million girls and boys under one year were vaccinated with DTP3 (20% of global result), protecting them from vaccine-preventable diseases, helping to strengthen Primary Health Care
- 75 million girls and boys 6-59 months were reached with 2 doses of vitamin A supplements for the prevention of stunting (30% of global result), promoting their full physical and cognitive development
- 1.7 million out-of-school girls and boys participated in early learning, primary or secondary education services through UNICEF-supported programmes (10% of global result), extending enjoyment of the right to education with an equity focus, and equipping future cohorts of youth to become productive and engaged members of their societies
- 2 million girls and boys were provided with individual education and early learning materials through UNICEF-supported programmes (16% of global result), leading to improved learning outcomes
- 451,000 girls and boys having experienced violence were reached by health, social work or justice/law enforcement services through UNICEF-supported programmes (17% of global result), strengthening the capacity of governments, communities and households to protect children from violence
- 700,000 adolescent girls received prevention and care interventions to address child marriage through UNICEF-supported programmes (12% of global result), enabling girls to realize their potential
- 8.7 million girls and boys under one year had their births registered (47% of children under one year in the region, up from 44% in 2017), securing their right to a legal identity
- 6.2 million people were reached in open-defecation free certified communities via UNICEF-supported programmes (40% of global result), allowing children to grow up in a safe and clean environment

The UNICEF West and Central Regional Office (RO) played an instrumental role in enabling Country Offices, governments and partners to achieve these results, through a mix of change strategies focused on scale and sustainability, which are illustrated by the following achievements.
To secure **public finance for children**, the RO supported six countries to develop immunization investment cases to support Ministries of Health to secure additional funds for immunization from national budgets. Fostering **political commitment** to invest in children, the RO worked with partners to support two countries to organize high-level political forums on the revitalization of immunization, following which the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo re-committed to the co-payment with Gavi of its share of the annual acquisition of new vaccines valued at over US$ 15 million, averting the consequences of a default.

Working through strategic **partnerships** to scale-up results based on comparative advantages and pooling of resources and expertise, including with the private sector, the RO was instrumental in revitalizing the regional technical working group on nutrition, emphasized civil registration in emergencies with UNHCR, contributed to the participation of 18 countries in the fifth annual AfricaSan conference and led the regional cholera platform which contributed to a reduction in cases for the third consecutive year. As co-lead, alongside UNESCO, the RO shaped the priorities, plans and change strategies of the Regional Coordination Group on SDG4-Education 2030, bringing together regional organizations, UN agencies, civil society, research centers and international financial institutions.

Through **advocacy and policy dialogue**, the RO shaped and influenced strategies, plans and resource allocation notably at the regional level. Working with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the RO supported the biennial nutrition forum positioning adolescent nutrition in national priorities, secured commitment of ECOWAS Member States to increase budget allocations towards child protection by 3% and secured the adoption of a roadmap and plan of action on child marriage by 15 Member States. The RO elevated the attention to birth registration within the African Union’s civil registration and vital statistics initiative and through the Network of Francophone Parliamentarians.

Addressing the **social and cultural drivers** of deprivations, the RO supported countries to promote research and programming on behaviors and social norms, community engagement and demand generation for essential child-centered social services. Thus, the RO contributed to the Stronger with Breastmilk Only campaign, to the generation of demand for routine vaccines and as part of vaccination campaigns, and to an accelerated response to outbreaks of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus.

To support the generation and use of **data and evidence**, including through technological innovations, the RO supported the roll-out of the Child Friendly Communities and Real Time Monitoring approach in five countries, empowering communities to access and use accurate and timely data on the situation of children. One additional country completed an out-of-school study with RO support (total 21 countries), while three countries which had already produced such a study worked with the RO to enable national authorities to translate this robust evidence base into country-specific actions. With RO support and quality assurance, 28 evaluations were conducted in the region including four multi-country, providing critical evidence and recommendations to steer the selection and application of programme strategies beyond national borders.

To amplify results through **multi-sector approaches**, the RO supported countries to link birth registration services with health platforms such as maternities and immunization, and contributed to integrating water, sanitation and hygiene services in schools in nine additional countries bringing the total countries supported on this approach to 20 by the end of 2019.

Through **emergency coordination**, the RO supported UNICEF’s humanitarian response across the region with linkages to development cooperation, in line with its Core Commitment for Children, involving 12
Humanitarian Action for Children appeals, alongside efforts to shore-up preparedness of at-risk countries, particularly the coastal countries at-risk of spillover of conflict from the Central Sahel.

Lessons learned emerged during 2019 as the RO initiated the mid-term review of its RO Management Plan 2018-2021, in conjunction with the mid-term reviews of the KRCs and the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021. These involved: transforming localized successes into results at scale; revisiting the level of ambition and narrowing the framing of results; systematizing evidence generation and use; well-being of personnel; emergency preparedness; and fraud prevention and risk mitigation. Through the application of these lessons, the RO is well positioned to optimize its contribution towards accelerating the KRCs in 2020.

As the region addresses and ultimately emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF will uphold the call to reimagine a better, more equitable world for all children, with a focus on the most vulnerable to leave no one behind, through its focus on the Key Results for Children, in particular by strengthening routine immunization for all children, promoting the ‘Learning Unlimited’ initiative to provide quality learning and skills for every child and young person while closing the digital divide, securing clean water with the engagement of the private sector, and supporting mental health and psychosocial programming for children and young people.
Section 1: Update on Context and Trends Affecting the Office’s Work

Children in West and Central Africa region (WCAR) bear a disproportionate share of the global burden of child rights deprivations. Only 11% of the world’s children live in WCAR, yet the region accounts for 35% of the world’s under-five deaths, 42% of maternal deaths, one-third of out-of-school children (primary and lower secondary), 30% of unvaccinated children (DTP3) and 19% of stunted children. WCAR is the only region in which the number of people practicing open defecation has risen over the past decades.

During 2019 major trends affecting children’s enjoyment of their rights indicated that the region became progressively more fragile. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of 2019 threatened to reverse hard-earned development gains of the past decades. The dramatic scale of the disruption to child-centered social services due to the direct and indirect effects of the pandemic was illustrated by the quadrupling of the number of children out-of-school, with 128 million children (pre-primary to upper secondary) joining 41 million children (primary to lower secondary) already deprived from their right to education. The West and Central Africa Regional Office (RO) regularly reviewed these evolving trends and adapted its approaches accordingly.

1) Economic trends

- **Economic growth in WCAR dropped significantly over the past 10 years**, standing at around 3.5% real GDP growth in 2019. West Africa’s growth was driven down by Nigeria, whereas Central Africa consistently lagged behind other regions across the continent. Nevertheless, 2019 witnessed a relative improvement year-on-year, such that West Africa’s growth rose to 3.7% (3.4% in 2018) and Central Africa grew at 3.2% (2.7% in 2018).

- **Public expenditure on child-centered social services remained low as a proportion of total public spending, while efficiency of public spending showed room for improvement**. According to the most recent data published by the World Bank, only 15 countries exceed the target of 15% public spending on education, put forward in the Incheon Declaration 2015, whereas no countries met the target of 15% public spending on health, as agreed in the Abuja Declaration 2001.

- **Debt servicing in many countries in WCAR was unsustainably high**, with the effect of crowding out government expenditure on other sectors, notably the social sectors. Thus, national debt represented over 80% of GDP in several WCAR countries, which, combined with high interest payments, prevented countries from securing further external debt financing.

- Heightened insecurity and emergencies led governments to **increase spending on military and security services**, at the expense of social sectors, notably in the Central Sahel (comprising Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali).

- **Modest public spending on social services in 2019 will be severely undermined in 2020 and beyond** by drops in national output resulting from the direct and indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the onset of COVID-19, real GDP growth forecasts for 2020 were revised downwards from 3.8%

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1 World Bank Development Indicators - education: up to 2018 and earlier for some countries; health: up to 2017.
2 World Bank Development Indicators
3 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI): data up to 2019 and earlier for some countries.
to -1.4% in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and from 3.0% to -1.7% in the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa.

- **Digital technologies and the digital economy offered the promise of unlocking transformative change in favour of development**, however the prospective benefits of this transformation risked being distributed inequitably since only one-third of Africans had access to broadband connectivity.

### 2) Humanitarian trends

- **Deteriorating humanitarian trends accelerated** in WCAR, especially in the Central Sahel (4.3 million children in need), with a risk of spill-over into the neighbouring coastal countries, the Lake Chad basin (5.7 million children in need), the North and South-West of Cameroon (697,000 children in need), Central African Republic (1.5 million children in need) and Democratic Republic of Congo (7.5 million children in need with and the world’s second largest Ebola outbreak in the East, leading to 3,391 cases of which 66% fatalities). The geographic presence of violent non-state armed groups in WCAR has expanded considerably over recent years.

- **40 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance** in WCAR (increase of 6 million over two years). More than half of people in need were children (23 million, 4 million increase over two years), of which one fifth were in the Central Sahel. The COVID-19 pandemic will compound existing vulnerabilities and swell the number of children in need in the region.

- **More than 10,300 schools were closed or non-functional** due to insecurity in the nine countries affected by conflicts in the region, of which 94% (9,700) were in six countries in the Sahel. Among the closed schools in the Sahel, over half were in Cameroon and one-third were in the Central Sahel. Nearly 2.2 million students and 62,800 teachers were affected by school closures, before COVID-19.

### 3) Political Trends

- **In West Africa, elections in recent years often led to the peaceful exercise of and change in power, though significant challenges remain with respect to governance.** Pre- and post-electoral periods continued to be characterized by tensions, antagonistic contests and disputes in some cases.

- **In Central Africa, the political situation in recent years remained volatile and tense** as a result of elections, security concerns and difficulties encountered in relation to human rights.

- Risks linked to elections were expected to become more acute, with over half of WCAR countries expected to undergo a national election for the presidency and/or legislature over the next two years.

- Emerging countries in other regions of the world demonstrated a growing interest in deepening ties with WCAR countries.

### 4) Demographic and social trends

- **Demographic growth in WCAR proceeded at a faster pace than the rest of Africa**, in contrast to declines or stagnation in the child population in the rest of the world.

- By the final year of the African Union Agenda 2063 “The Africa We Want”, **the number of children under 18 years of age in WCAR was set to double** compared to 2015, reaching over 500 million.

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4 IMF Regional Economic Outlook, Sub-Saharan Africa: 2020 GDP growth forecasts from October 2019 and April 2020, respectively.
• As a result of this trend, combined with overall population decline outside of Africa, WCAR was set to gain an increasing share of the world’s child population: **1 in 5 children were expected to be in WCAR by 2063** (up from 1 in 10 children, in 2019).

• **The urbanization rate in WCAR continued to rise**, creating risks as well as opportunities for children. Whereas approximately 41% Africa’s population lived in cities, it was expected that by 2050 this proportion would rise to nearly 60%.

• **Gender discrimination**, restricting women’s and girls’ social, economic and political participation in private and public spheres, *infringed on the rights of women and girls and constituted a major barrier to broader development across the region*. According to the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index, women and girls in 11 out of 16 countries with data experienced ‘very high’ (2) or ‘high’ (9) levels of gender discrimination. Although this data clearly showed the significant challenges facing women and girls in the region, it nevertheless represented an improvement on 2014 when seven countries in the region were assessed as being characterized by ‘very high’ gender discrimination.

5) **Environmental trends**

• **WCAR was one of the most environmentally degraded regions and one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change**, with temperature increases in the Sahel in particular projected to be 1.5 times higher than in the rest of the world.

• **Climate change compounded existing vulnerabilities**, particularly in the Sahel. This was due to high dependence on rainfed agriculture to support food security and livelihoods, combined with rapid population growth and chronic humanitarian crises related to recurrent drought, flooding, epidemics and violent conflict. Water scarcity, longer dry seasons and the effects of higher temperatures were projected to become potential sources of new conflict and forced migration.

**Section 2: Key Results Achieved against the Regional Office Management Plan**

During 2019, the second year of the Regional Office Management Plan (ROMP) 2018-2021, the West and Central Africa Regional Office (RO) supported the UNICEF Regional Management Team (RMT) to take forward its vision for contributing to the Goal Areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and therefore to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the African Union Agenda 2063 ‘The Africa We Want’, by focusing on the Key Results for Children (KRC) – the region’s priority results.

This involved positioning the KRCs, through advocacy and policy dialogue at the regional and global levels, as a key transformative approach for the region to respond to the manifold deprivations and challenges facing children. It also involved development of an operational framework for implementation, coordination and learning, as well as measurable commitments and systems to hold Country Offices (CO) to account for their contributions towards country and regional targets.

The Regional Office support to the 24 COs in the region was articulated around providing multi-sector technical assistance, quality assurance and oversight, enabling offices to deliver on their commitments towards the KRCs, as detailed in Country Programmes of Cooperation in support of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF)\(^5\) and national development priorities.

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\(^5\) The UNSDCF was introduced in mid-2019, replacing the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Existing UNDAFs remain valid until the end of their respective programme cycles.
The KRCs were put forward as a common agenda for children in West and Central Africa, in an effort to federate partners and allies around a focused set of results to catalyze a step change in the realization of child rights across the region.

The KRCs align to Goal Areas (GA) 1 through 4 of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, while contributing to the cross-cutting Goal Area 5. They comprise:

- **Immunization** (GA 1) to protect children against vaccine-preventable diseases
- **Prevention of stunting** (GA 1) to promote the full physical and cognitive development of children
- **Equitable and sustainable access to education** (GA 2) focused on reducing out-of-school rates, to enable adolescents and young people to become responsible and productive actors in society
- **Improved learning outcomes** (GA 2) in primary and lower secondary to overcome the learning crisis
- **Protection of children from violence** (GA 3) through provision of services for prevention and response
- **Addressing child marriage** (GA 3) to enable girls to realize their potential
- **Birth registration** (GA 3) to secure the right of children to a legal identity
- **Ending open defecation** (GA 4) to allow children to grow up in a safe and clean environment

These results were supported through three Enabler KRCs:

- **Evidence generation and knowledge management**, involving the generation and use of timely and quality monitoring and evaluation data and derived knowledge for the successful implementation of KRC programme strategies
- **Programme and operations excellence**, in favour of effective and efficient business systems and processes
- **Human resources development**, in favour of skilled and diverse human capacity

Country Offices’ assessment of support received from the RO in 2019 remained highly positive, with over 95% of COs expressing agreement or strong agreement, through the annual Client Satisfaction Survey, with the assertion that the RO delivered quality, consistent and coherent support during the year.

Overall, data indicated that in 2019, seven KRCs met or exceeded the 2019 target of their top-level outcome or output indicator and were thus on-track to meet 2021 targets, while one KRC (immunization) did not meet its 2019 target, indicating that the pace of progress required acceleration to meet the 2021 target. Regarding four of the seven on-track KRCs (education access, learning outcomes, child marriage, open defecation), the trajectory towards 2021 targets for the top-level outcome indicator was expected to be revealed progressively as new national household surveys are conducted. In these cases, it is expected that the promising pace of progress achieved at the subordinate result level in 2019 will influence the top-level outcome indicator. However, the direct and indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to slow or reverse progress, such that all KRCs will require acceleration if the region is to realize its ambitions for children by 2021 as part of the Decade of Action towards 2030.

**Goal Area 1: Every Child Survives and Thrives (KRCs 1 and 2)**

KRC 1 seeks, by 2021, for 80% (15.4 million) of children 0-11 months in WCAR to be protected against vaccine preventable diseases annually. The number of children under one year, who were vaccinated with the third dose of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis containing vaccine (DTP3), rose from 12.4 million in 2016 to 12.8 million in 2018, which represented one-fifth of children reached globally in countries with a UNICEF country programme of cooperation. However, the regional rate of coverage remained unchanged
at 70% due to the effect of population growth\(^6\) – regional DTP3 coverage has stood at this level for the past decade. The number of countries having met the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP) target of 90% national DTP3 coverage was 6 in 2018 (down from 8 in 2017). The number of countries having surpassed the threshold of 80% DTP3 coverage in every district – a key indication of equitable service coverage – rose from 2 in 2017 to 3 in 2018\(^7\). KRC 1 progress towards 2021 targets was constrained.

KRC 2 seeks, by 2021, for 93% (86 million) girls and boys under 5 years in WCAR, especially those marginalized and living in humanitarian situations, to receive high impact nutrition services to prevent stunting, and consequently wasting. The number of children reached with 2 doses of vitamin A supplements – a key intervention to prevent stunting – rose to 75 million in 2018 (83%), up from 56 million (54%) in 2017 and exceeding the annual target of 69 million\(^8\). This represented one-third of children reached globally in countries with a UNICEF country programme of cooperation. KRC 2 progress towards 2021 targets was on-track.

The following achievements illustrate the change strategies and approaches pursued by the Regional Office in favor of KRCs 1 and 2.

Regarding immunization, the Regional Office contributed to securing the political commitment of senior government leadership to scale-up high impact child survival and development interventions. In DRC and Niger, the Regional Office – in its role as leader of the Regional Immunization Working Group (with the World Health Organization (WHO), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the US Center for Disease Control (CDC), the World Bank and others) – supported the organization of high-level national forums on the revitalization of immunization, through the recruitment of external experts who accompanied the entire process associated with the organization of each forum. These forums generated encouraging results: for instance, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo re-committed to the co-payment with Gavi of its share of the annual acquisition of new vaccines valued at over US$ 15 million, averting the consequences of a default, and national and subnational roadmaps were adopted outlining high-priority strategic and programmatic shifts needed to accelerate progress.

The RO supported six additional countries to develop immunization investment cases, which informed successful negotiations with government counterparts to secure additional funds for immunization. The RO supported countries to mobilize resources through engaging in the preparation of four successful Gavi Partner Engagement Framework (PEF) comprehensive applications on health systems strengthening in immunization. To promote equitable immunization coverage, equity assessments were completed in four additional countries with RO guidance.

The RO promoted demand generation for routine vaccination services and through vaccination campaigns, notably in response to six outbreaks of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV), with emphasis on children in hard-to-reach areas such as the Lake Chad Basin. The effectiveness of this approach was apparent in the case of Cameroon, where the proportion of children under five years targeted by preventative polio campaigns that were missed decreased from 3.8% to 1.2% and refusals dropped from 0.5% to 0.1% between March and August 2019.


\(^7\) Country-specific Joint Reporting Format (JRF) 2018

\(^8\) UNICEF Nutridash; UNDESA World Population Prospects 2018
Regarding stunting prevention, the RO continued to support governments and partners to mainstream their commitments on nutrition into policies as well as national and subnational plans. This approach focused on the key interventions of improving exclusive breastfeeding practices, dietary diversity for young children and preventing and treating wasting. Adolescent nutrition was positioned on national agendas through RO involvement in the biennial nutrition forum of ECOWAS, through which evidence and advocacy led Member States to recommend increased data, public awareness, investment and attention by health services for adolescent health.

RO contributions to data and evidence generation around stunting and wasting enabled COs to advise national authorities to design policies, strategies and interventions tailored to the country context. The RO supported 16 nutrition-focused surveys in the region and accompanied 15 countries in documenting and disseminating good practices around stunting prevention. This work provided countries with enhanced knowledge and skills to address data gaps, to perform more robust analysis and thus to better provide context-sensitive advice to policy- and decision-makers. Furthermore, the RO supported nine countries to generate evidence on innovative and simplified approaches for the treatment of wasting. Additional resources were mobilized with RO support for operational research and impact evaluations in four countries on the prevention of wasting. This positioned the RO as a leader on innovative approaches for the prevention and treatment of wasting, helping to shape the global renewed narrative in this area. This narrative focuses on an integrated approach to the prevention and treatment of wasting, as opposed to centering on treatment, in the expectation that lower prevalence of wasting will lead to lower prevalence of stunting.

Through its evidence-based advocacy, the RO was instrumental in revitalizing the regional technical working group on nutrition – an important forum for partnerships and policy dialogue – including subgroups focused on topics that are critical to reaching global and regional nutrition goals, comprising infant and young child feeding, data, nutrition in emergencies, prevention and treatment of wasting and adolescent and maternal nutrition.

Key partners supporting UNICEF action in favor of stunting and wasting prevention at the regional level included the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the European Union Commission and the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany.

Underpinning efforts on immunization and stunting prevention, the RO supported 18 countries to increase access to HIV prevention, testing and treatment and to reduce HIV incidence among infants and adolescents, particularly girls, through promoting strategic partnerships, use of evidence and innovation. To secure political commitment for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission and for universal coverage for pediatric HIV testing and treatment, the RO co-convened with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and WHO a high-level meeting at which ministers of health from 24 countries issued a declaration on these imperatives, known as the ‘Dakar Call to Action’. In addition, the RO fostered the uptake and scale-up of point-of-care early infant diagnosis (EID) services using technology in 10 countries. These efforts helped six countries to reach 50% EID coverage and five countries to reach 90% coverage of anti-retroviral treatment (ART) for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

The RO supported the roll-out of the Child Friendly Communities and Real Time Monitoring approach in five countries, with financial support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the French Muskoka Fund and Germany. Through an integrated community-based model, the approach seeks to empower communities to access and utilize accurate and timely information on the situation of children and
women, in order to accelerate improved access to quality child survival and development interventions. The package of interventions delivered through this approach includes immunization, vitamin A supplementation, early detection and treatment of wasting, deworming, birth registration and the promotion of optimal infant and young child feeding practices. In 2019, standardized community registers were developed and promoted in all five countries for real time data collection and use at community-level. Of these, three countries migrated paper-based community registers to electronic platforms.

**Goal Area 2: Every Child Learns (KRCs 3 and 4)**

KRC 3 seeks, by 2021, for the proportion of out-of-school children (OOSC) of primary and lower secondary school age in WCAR to be reduced from 34% (41 million) to 20% (29 million). During the reporting year, UNICEF-supported programmes contributed directly to the participation of 1.7 million out-of-school children in early learning, primary or secondary education services, more than twice the annual target set for the region. This represented 10% of children reached globally in countries with a UNICEF country programme of cooperation. According to this measurement, KRC 3 progress towards 2021 targets at output level appeared on-track. It is expected that the extension of the coverage of services such as this will have an effect on the proportion of children out-of-school, which will be revealed progressively as new household surveys are conducted. New surveys conducted in five countries suggested a positive trajectory for the region, showing a significant reduction in the OOSC rate in three countries (Sierra Leone -34%, The Gambia -25%, Côte d’Ivoire -22%), a modest reduction in one country (Senegal -4%) and increase in one country (Benin +26%).

KRC 4 seeks, by 2021, for 100% (76 million) of pupils from pre-primary to lower secondary education in WCAR, both boys and girls, to be reached with interventions targeting improvement of learning outcomes and skills. As a contribution towards this goal, UNICEF-supported programmes provided 2 million children with individual education/early learning materials in 2019, exceeding the regional target of 1.8 million. This represented one-sixth of children reached globally in countries with a UNICEF country programme of cooperation. According to this measurement, KRC 4 progress towards 2021 targets appeared on-track. In 2019 an assessment of learning outcomes for students in grades 2 and 6 was being conducted in 13 countries9 by the Education Systems Analysis Programme (PASEC) of the Conference of Ministers of Education. This will provide an indication of the trajectory of the region on learning outcomes, the previous such assessment having been conducted in 2014.

The following achievements illustrate the change strategies and approaches pursued by the Regional Office in favor of KRCs 3 and 4.

Since 2012, the RO has supported countries to conduct out-of-school studies, providing a robust evidence base to enable national authorities to design and implement effective actions - tailored to the country context - to reduce the out-of-school rate. In 2019, Equatorial Guinea completed a new OOSC study, bringing the total number of countries having completed OOSC studies to 21. Further, the RO worked with three countries to translate the results of OOSC studies into country-specific actions.

The RO spearheaded approaches on alternative education opportunities, notably by convening ‘strategic moments of reflection’ for sharing experiences, innovations and assessments on the integration of Koranic education into the formal education system, involving national education authorities from 14 countries. While the number of children in Koranic education is not precisely known, some estimates show that the

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9 Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, DRC, Côte d’Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo
The Regional Office continued to place special emphasis on addressing barriers to education that are specific to girls. The RO supported five countries to re-orient their girls’ education responses. This involved notably organizing a training module to implement a toolkit on gender-responsive pedagogy, which was developed jointly with the UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, the Federation of African Women Educators and the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa.

The RO promoted strategic partnerships for education. In 2019, the RO served as co-lead, alongside UNESCO, of the Regional Coordination Group on SDG4-Education 2030 in West and Central Africa, bringing together regional organizations, UN agencies, civil society, research centers and international financial institutions. Through its role in the group’s steering committee and technical working groups, UNICEF shaped the priorities, plans and change strategies of this body, elevating partners’ attention to equity and inclusion, quality of learning, the data crisis in education as well as education financing and governance. The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and Education Cannot Wait increased their support for education of girls and children in conflict-affected countries. With support from Norway, the RO supported the modelling of an integrated pre-school and nutrition approach in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger that could potentially serve as a model in other Sahel countries.

**Goal Area 3: Every Child is Protected from Violence and Exploitation (KRCs 5, 6 and 7)**

KRC 5 seeks, by 2021, for at least 50% more children affected by violence in WCAR to be provided with protective services to prevent and respond to violence in both humanitarian and non-humanitarian settings (initially targeting 182,000 children annually, raised to 629,801 through the KRC mid-term review). During 2019, 451,199 children having experienced violence were reached by UNICEF-supported health, social work/social services or justice/law enforcement services, nearly four times the annual target for the region, and on-track towards meeting the 2021 target. This represented one-sixth of children reached globally in countries with a UNICEF country programme of cooperation. With substantial investments underway, 4 additional countries (10 countries total) had an information management system that supports and tracks case management, incident monitoring and programme monitoring, approaching the 14 countries targeted for 2019.

KRC 6 seeks, by 2021, for the percentage of girls in WCAR aged 20-24, married before the age of 18, to be reduced from 41% to 37% (additional 3 million girls not married before 18). It is expected that the extension of the coverage of services addressing child marriage will have an effect on prevalence, which will be revealed progressively as new household surveys are conducted. Thus, during 2019, 699,971 adolescent girls actively participated in at least one targeted intervention to address child marriage, exceeding the annual target of 500,000. This represented 12% of the girls reached with child marriage services globally in countries with a UNICEF country programme of cooperation. Five additional countries (11 total) were implementing a costed national action plan or strategy to end child marriage – key tool to catalyze efforts across sectors at national level – meeting the annual target. KRC 6 progress towards 2021 targets was on-track.
KRC 7 seeks, by 2021, for the percentage of children under one year of age whose birth is registered at the civil registry, to be raised from 44% in 2017 to 68% (well above the initial target of 53%, revised through the KRC mid-term review). During 2019, the most recent national household surveys indicated that regional coverage was 47%, meeting the annual target and on-track to achieve the 2021 target. This amounted to 8.7 million children under one year registered during the reporting year, nearly 1 million more than the number registered in 2017. Five additional countries (17 total) rendered civil registry services interoperable with health services – a key strategy for the acceleration of birth registration coverage – though this fell short of the annual target of 19 countries.

The following achievements illustrate the change strategies and approaches pursued by the Regional Office in favor of KRCs 5, 6 and 7.

Strengthening child protection systems remained a key strategy for violence prevention and care. Thus, the RO worked with 11 countries to train 656 social workers and 804 justice professionals to improve the availability and quality of child protection services. It supported 16 countries to align their national case management systems with international standards. The RO further assisted 11 countries to certify nearly 8,000 justice professionals to work with children in conflict with the law. This contributed to the provision of child friendly justice services to 88,516 children in contact with justice and administrative bodies, of which 56,159 benefitted from alternatives to detention and 1,511 from diversion from judicial processes.

The RO placed special emphasis on sexual violence. As part of an inter-regional effort together with the Middle East and North Africa and Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Offices, the RO began a regional initiative in collaboration with Senegal CO to begin to identify and measure behavioral drivers and social norms related to sexual violence, and to develop a baseline survey module, and with Sierra Leone CO to measure behavioral drivers and social norms related to child marriage.

In response to the highly dynamic and deteriorating crisis in the Central Sahel, the RO facilitated the development of a Central Sahel Child Protection Strategy and Operational Plan with representatives from the protection and education sectors of the three affected countries. The RO advocated towards governments affected by the crises in the Central Sahel and Lake Chad Basin to develop handover protocols for the swift transferral of children exiting armed groups from military to civilian authorities.

Through its advocacy and policy dialogue efforts, the RO contributed toward securing the commitment of ECOWAS Member States to increase budget allocations towards child protection by 3%. In addition, the RO supported the adoption of a roadmap and plan of action on child marriage by 15 ECOWAS Member States, including a mechanism to ensure accountability. This recognized keeping girls in school as an effective means of preventing child marriage.

In addition, the RO launched a multi-country evaluation of community engagement initiatives to reduce child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), in Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria. The evaluation is expected to yield important evidence and recommendations to steer countries towards effective approaches for the reduction of child marriage and FGM, since community engagement is recognized as a key strategy to address the critical social norms aspects of child marriage and FGM.

The RO provided instrumental support to birth registration as an integral component of national civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems, a key element of the African Union’s CRVS initiative, which involves close collaboration with other regional institutions and UN agencies including WHO and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). UNICEF’s partnership with UNHCR in the region was strengthened with emphasis on civil registration in emergencies, given the context of fragile
states and protracted emergencies in countries with very low registration rates. The RO contributed to
the mobilization of a Network of Francophone Parliamentarians to elevate the profile of birth registration
on the agenda of legislators that led to the drafting of a model law on birth registration.

Goal Area 4: Every Child Lives in a Safe and Clean Environment (KRC 8)
KRC 8 seeks, by 2021, for the proportion of the WCAR population practicing open defecation, to be
reduced from 25.4% (122 million) to 15.5% (88 million). As a contribution towards this result, UNICEF
supported community approaches to total sanitation (CATS), resulting in an additional 6.2 million people
living in ‘open defecation free’ certified communities, exceeding the annual target of 4.3 million. This
represented 40% of people reached globally in countries with a UNICEF country programme of
cooperation. Further, nearly 2,780 schools were recognized as having separate sanitation facilities for girls
and boys that meet quality standards, exceeding the annual target of 1,764, thereby a addressing gender-
specific bottleneck. According to these measurements, KRC 8 progress towards 2021 targets appeared
on-track. These UNICEF contributions are expected to have accelerated progress in reducing the already
decreasing prevalence of open defecation in WCAR. Indeed, data released in 2019 showed that the
number of people practicing open defecation in the region dropped by 6 million to 116 million in 2017\(^{10}\),
though this fell short of the regional target even for 2018 (113 million).

The following achievements illustrate the change strategies and approaches pursued by the Regional
Office in favor of KRC 8.

To foster heightened political commitment to ending open defecation, the RO strengthened UNICEF’s
partnership with the African Ministers’ Council on Water and contributed to the participation of 18
countries in the fifth annual AfricaSan conference, providing a platform for learning and exchange of
knowledge around sanitation.

Through capacity strengthening support and technical guidance, the RO has enabled nine countries to
adopt and implement roadmaps for eliminating open defecation since 2015 (three additional countries in
2019), with three further countries in the process of developing a roadmap.

The RO initiated the preparation of an advocacy toolkit in 2019, drawing from UNICEF’s Global Urban
WASH Framework, to promote increased engagement of key actors in urban WASH with the elimination
of open defecation positioned as the entry point.

To promote a multisector approach to sanitation, in 2019 the RO supported regional capacity
development on WASH programming in schools (WinS) across nine countries. The RO also supported three
Country Offices on formative research and the design of menstrual health and hygiene programmes.

The RO continued to lead the regional cholera platform in 2019, mobilizing partners and resources and
providing technical guidance and support to affected countries, in part through evidence-gathering and
consolidation. This work contributed to a reduction in case numbers for the third consecutive year (34,957
in 2019, down from 63,605 in 2018), and was undertaken in partnership with the Global WASH Cluster,
the CDC, Bioforce Institute and the International Institute for Water and the Environment.

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\(^{10}\) WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme
Enabler Key Results for Children

Alongside the eight Key Results for Children centered on priority child rights deprivations, UNICEF also pursued three cross-cutting key results in the region that played an enabling role in favor of the KRCs.

KRC 9 seeks, by 2021, the generation and use of timely and quality monitoring and evaluation data and derived knowledge for the successful implementation of KRC programme strategies. In 2019, the Regional Office coordinated the preparation and issuance of the first WCAR Good Practice Briefs. This publication aimed to enable UNICEF offices in the region to accelerate progress towards the KRCs, by making full use of the learning and knowledge that they have collectively acquired both through positive outcomes and challenges encountered.

With support from the RO, 28 evaluations were completed during the reporting year, including 4 multi-country evaluations, providing critical evidence and recommendations to steer the selection and application of programme approaches and strategies. To enhance quality and build country capacity, each office commissioning an evaluation received close and timely support from the RO throughout the evaluation process: from the development of the terms of reference and the provision of quality assurance during the recruitment of team members and consultants, to the review of inception, draft and final reports, as well as the follow-up of the implementation of evaluation management response actions.

The RO led the design and launch of an internal KRC Dashboard, drawing progress data directly from UNICEF reporting systems. All 24 COs, the RO and the Regional Management Team used the Dashboard to monitor and report on KRC progress and to inform programme planning. This tool strengthened WCAR offices’ accountability for results for children that they have committed to achieve within the framework of country programmes of cooperation.

Data Landscape Diagnostic studies were undertaken and completed in three countries and at the regional level. These will enable UNICEF to improve the targeting of its support directed at national data systems.

KRC 10 seeks, by 2021, to support the pursuit of the KRCs through effective and efficient business systems and processes. In 2019, a regional fraud prevention framework was developed, which will strengthen Country Offices’ existing efforts to prevent the misuse of UNICEF resources.

The RO supported COs to upgrade to business grade connectivity, leading to gains in terms of speed of connectivity, efficiency of office performance as well as cost savings. By the end of 2019, 70% of the region’s COs achieved business grade connectivity, up from 43% in 2018. Additionally, 50% of Zone Offices achieved business grade connectivity.

By the end of 2019, 8 countries in the Sahel were implementing end-user monitoring of nutrition supplies with RO support. This enabled UNICEF offices to verify that nutrition supplies such as ready-to-use therapeutic food reached the beneficiaries for whom they were intended and to address any deviances.

Leveraging its global knowledge, purchasing capacity and logistics experience, partners in WCAR continued to express strong demand for UNICEF procurement services (PS), which enabled them to acquire essential supplies and supply-related services through UNICEF. Not only did UNICEF PS deliver timely, quality and cost-effective supplies to partners, but also they served as an entry point for strengthening of partners’ procurement management capacity, especially governments. In 2019, UNICEF PS delivered supplies to partners worth over US$ 558 million – over US$ 120 million more than the value of its PS in 2018. Nearly 70% of the value of PS were delivered to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, 15% to governments and nearly 10% to development banks. Vaccines accounted for 84% of the value of PS,
followed by mosquito nets (9%) and cold chain equipment (4%). The RO played an instrumental role through: supporting financing and planning efforts by governments with focus on select commodities (vaccines, RUTF, education); assisting COs to establish partnership frameworks to provide PS including risk assessment and mitigation; identifying pre-financing needs and liaising with UNICEF’s Supply Division develop viable solutions, both internal and external; supporting COs to detect and address system and capacity gaps in the supply chain (e.g. planning and supply financing); and providing technical advice, guidance and training to COs on contracting procedures, systems and best practices.

To enable UNICEF personnel to stay and deliver in increasingly insecure environments while adhering to UNICEF security standards, the RO placed security expertise at the disposal of COs. Using this expertise, the RO: fostered a coherent culture of security through promotion and delivery of training, both general and specialized; contributed to the recruitment of qualified security professionals in nine COs with all key positions filled at year’s end; facilitated surge missions to four COs through the use of both internal and external resources; produced regular security information and analyses tailored to specific audiences, including office management; and sustained efforts to consolidate security coordination throughout the region through regular coordination and consultation meetings, security advisors’ workshops and the development of regional standards and procedures applicable.

KRC 11 seeks, by 2021, to support the pursuit of the KRCs through skilled and diverse human capacity. In 2019, the RO prioritized the implementation of learning priorities identified by the region as being critical for the delivery of the KRCs. Of the ten regional learning priorities, nine were fully implemented. The learning priorities involved four broad areas: career development, ethics, leadership and management; results-based management, monitoring and reporting, and the harmonized approach to cash transfers framework; public finance, social norms, communication and advocacy; and private sector partnerships.

Regional Orientation Guidelines for the onboarding of newly appointed and reassigned UNICEF personnel were adopted in 2019. This will enable the swift and effective integration of new and reassigned personnel into their teams with a clear and uniform understanding of UNICEF values, procedures and guidance.

The RO equally engaged in a number of initiatives that were underway during the reporting year and will come to fruition subsequently, including the design of a learning programme tailored to national staff and the establishment of a system of coaching and mentoring in the region.

**Humanitarian Situations**

Faced with a deteriorating humanitarian situation across the region, UNICEF launched a Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal in ten countries in 2019, plus one regional appeal and an appeal focused on Ebola preparedness and response for three eastern provinces of DRC and neighboring countries.

The contribution of the Regional Office to emergency coordination in the region involved strengthening preparedness; coordination and support of humanitarian response to the Central Sahel crisis, epidemics (including Ebola and cholera) and population displacement due to conflicts and natural disasters; and the development of strategic partnerships.

Five countries received dedicated capacity strengthening missions organized by the RO, to enhance COs’ emergency preparedness efforts, while four additional countries received RO support to meet UNICEF preparedness standards through UNICEF’s emergency preparedness platform. Special attention was accorded to the four coastal countries (Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Togo) at risk of spill-over of conflict from the Central Sahel. Overall, 75% of programme-related missions undertaken by RO staff during the
reporting year were in countries with a HAC appeal and countries at-risk of conflict spill-over, while 83% of days spent on such missions were in the same categories of countries (Figure 1).

The RO raised the profile of humanitarian emergencies in WCAR and UNICEF’s response, through robust advocacy strategies and advocacy briefs, in particular around the Cameroon North-West and South-West crisis and the Central Sahel. The RO placed a global spotlight on the toll that emergencies took on education in eight severely affected countries, through its “Child Alert: Education Under Threat in West and Central Africa”.

The office played a key role in the scale-up of the emergency response to the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Central Sahel, through supporting the establishment of two Zone Offices in Burkina Faso, field missions, surge deployments, resource mobilization, emergency trainings, response strategies and planning. In response to the continuing Ebola outbreak in eastern DRC, the RO provided coordination support and technical guidance, and deployed staff focusing on WASH, social mobilization, community engagement, supplies and logistics. The RO continued to coordinate the regional cholera platform, which has contributed to reducing cholera cases in recent years, so much so that in 2019, 11 countries were declared cholera-free. Through these efforts, offices were supported to link humanitarian response to the return to long-term development pathways in affected countries.

The RO emphasized third party monitoring as a promising approach to collect data and to verify the accuracy of data reported by UNICEF’s implementing partners in hard-to-reach areas. Two countries (CAR, Mali) launched third party monitoring as a result of this support and a third country (Cameroon) enhanced its existing approach. A regional study on third party monitoring was initiated toward the end of the reporting year, which was expected to generate valuable lessons to inform regional guidance on applying this approach in other country contexts across the region.
Through RO leadership, a major partnership of UNICEF with BMZ was deepened, focused on resilience in three Sahel countries, and UNICEF and WFP articulated a joint commitment to deepen collaboration around nutrition, education and resilience.

These contributions of the RO enabled UNICEF offices across the 10 countries with a HAC appeal, working through humanitarian clusters, to provide timely, quality humanitarian assistance directly to children, including: over 5.7 million children vaccinated against measles (139% of target); over 2.7 million people accessing a sufficient quantity of safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene (96% of target); over 1.7 million people accessing appropriate sanitation facilities (182% of target); over 1.5 million children with severe-acute malnutrition admitted into therapeutic feeding programmes (70% of target); over 950,000 children affected by crisis accessing education (33% of target); over 1.1 million children reached with psychosocial support through child-friendly spaces or other safe spaces (107% of target)\(^{11}\).

Section 3: Lessons Learned and Constraints

In 2019, the Regional Office initiated a mid-term review of its Regional Office Management Plan (ROMP) 2018-2021 while supporting the Regional Management Team to conduct a mid-term review of the Key Results for Children. These took place in conjunction with the mid-term review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and continued into early 2020. The mid-term review served as an opportunity to take stock of and explain constraints and progress towards the KRCs and the ROMP results contributing to the KRCs; to interrogate the continued responsiveness of the ROMP to the regional context; to surface lessons learned, good practices and required adjustments to results, targets, strategies and resources to optimize the Regional Office’s contribution towards accelerating the KRCs.

Constraints

During 2019, insecurity persisted and worsened in a number of countries in the region, especially the Central Sahel. This necessitated additional capacity at the Regional Office to provide support to Country Offices in the field of security, in light of increased demand. It imposed limits on the mobility of UNICEF personnel in-country and impelled offices to resort to innovative approaches to verify programme implementation on the ground (e.g. third-party monitoring) and to reach and receive feedback from target populations (e.g. mobile phone applications such as RapidPro and U-Report).

Attracting and retaining qualified, diverse human capacity to lead and guide Country Offices across the region remained challenging due to the elevated hardship classification of many duty stations and the requirement of proficiency in French across Francophone countries in the region. This narrowed the pool of qualified, available and willing candidates for key specialized positions, leading to prolonged vacancies.

Lesson 1: Transforming localized successes into results at national scale

Although UNICEF has contributed to significant results for children at the district level, it has not systematically succeeded in translating these successes into a lever to influence sustainable change for children at national scale. This gap reveals key bottlenecks and calls for a re-focus on evidence-based change strategies capable of inducing the desired leap to scale.

Four such ‘Accelerator Strategies’ were identified by the Regional Management Team to be prioritized over the remaining two years of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and ROMP 2018-2021:

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\(^{11}\) Data reported as at 31 December 2019.
• Public finance for children, seeking to unlock massive resources, promote efficient spending, use evidence and data to inform investment, support sector/district development plans and empower civic engagement among adolescents.

• Partnerships, seeking to expand ties with the private sector, harness innovative financing mechanisms, nurture shared value partnerships including with UN agencies in the spirit of UN reform (e.g. WFP, IOM, UNHCR, BMGF, BMZ) as well as regional entities (AU, ECOWAS, ECCAS), tighten alliances with youth networks and create a fertile space to nurture the innovative ideas of adolescents and young people to address social issues affecting children.

• Advocacy, seeking to build political momentum, foster political leadership, give impetus to reforms of legislation and policy including via norm-setting through regional institutions, amplify UNICEF messages and asks for children through common voice with allies, and capitalize on key events to position child rights issues on the political agenda (e.g. 30th anniversary of AU Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children in 2020).

• Social and cultural drivers, seeking to address key bottlenecks that explain the limited adoption of crucial practices, the persistence of discriminatory social norms (including gender-related) and the reluctance of communities to claim their rights and demand services to which they are entitled; and to enhance investment and partnerships around social research to refine our understanding of bottlenecks and to tailor interventions.

Lesson 2: Revisiting the level of ambition for at-scale change

Although seven KRCs were rated as on-track towards the achievement of 2021 targets, the UNICEF team in the region agreed to accelerate progress and raise targets to reach the needed change at-scale in favor of child rights.

Thus, in line with the RMT’s resolve to heighten the region’s ambition on protection of children from violence (KRC 5) and to shift towards the SDG vision for the universalization of birth registration (KRC 7) on the African continent, the Regional Office facilitated the upward revision of 2021 targets of these KRCs with Country Offices’ commitment. As a result, the regional target for KRC 5 was more than tripled, while the target for KRC 7 was elevated from half to more than two-thirds of the target population.

Lesson 3: Narrowing the framing of results to center on specific deprivations and deprived populations for transformative change

In order for the modest contribution of UNICEF to catalyze tangible change for children at-scale, it is appropriate that the focus of certain KRCs be narrowed to specific deprived age groups and geographical areas, and that they be centered on the most acute deprivations faced by children. Applying this principle, the following measures were endorsed by the RMT with Regional Office support:

• Education access (KRC 3) will focus on adolescents in and out-of-school (10-19 years), including in emergency contexts

• Improved learning outcomes (KRC 4) will focus on quality foundational learning (0-8/9 years), involving literacy, numeracy and social/emotional learning, including in emergency contexts

• Protection from violence (KRC 5) will focus on prevention and response to sexual violence specifically.

Additionally, given the very high prevalence of child rights deprivations in the Sahel, its longstanding fragility and the acceleration of conflict in this area with manifold humanitarian consequences, it was
agreed that the RO will give increased attention to reaching children in this geographic area during the remainder of the ROMP 2018-2021. In particular, the three Central Sahel countries, as well as the neighboring countries at-risk of conflict spillover, will be supported with a more coordinated sub-regional approach from UNICEF and its partners with resilience strengthening as its centerpiece.

**Lesson 4: Systematizing the generation, capturing, dissemination and application of evidence and learning**

Adopting a proactive and systematic approach to documenting, understanding and learning from what works and what does not, and seeking to replicate good practices, are an integral part of KRC strategies. Evaluation, research and knowledge management are key functions to support this effort, whereas quality data and monitoring are among the essential conditions for UNICEF to be a learning organization.

In 2020, the RO will build on the success of the first compendium of KRC Good Practice Briefs, by refining the methodology underpinning the selection and classification of country practices capable of accelerating progress towards the KRCs, with reference to the robustness of the evidential base and replicability.

**Lesson 5: Well-being of personnel as a key enabler of results for children**

During the first two years of implementation and through the MTR, the well-being of personnel, which is the second key dimension of the WCAR overall strategy, has proved to be a key enabler of results for children. This recognition builds on recent and ongoing efforts to transform the environment and culture of the workplace at UNICEF, with a strong commitment to zero tolerance towards sexual harassment and abuse of authority and sexual exploitation and abuse. The region’s ambition has been to fully discharge UNICEF’s duty of care towards its personnel – especially the most vulnerable and those in the most insecure and remote locations. This has involved periodic surveys of personnel, which have informed office action plans on improving living and working conditions, security, access to information and communications technology, use of human resources flexible work arrangements and a speak up culture, under the supervision of the RMT. It has also involved progressively expanding staff counselling services and expertise across the region. This ambition will remain at the forefront of the RO’s priorities in 2020.

**Lesson 6: Prevention and preparedness efforts as a necessary condition for effective response and recovery**

Strengthening coherence and coordination of UNICEF engagement in volatile and risk-prone sub-regions (e.g. the Central Sahel and neighboring coastal countries and the Lake Chad Basin), in collaboration with partners, is necessary to prevent and prepare for crises. Such efforts mitigate the disruption of services and impact on children in emergency situations while protecting development gains, foster community acceptance of humanitarian action, and promote the return to sustainable development pathways. Upscaling humanitarian support in such contexts should be matched by increased investments in community resilience, complemented by investment in risk-informed and adaptive programming.

**Lesson 7: Prevention and mitigation of the risk of fraud**

Regional Office support towards CO fraud prevention during the first two years of implementation of the ROMP has proven increasingly important in light of the volatility of the operating environment across the region. This has involved supporting COs to identify and execute risk-informed actions aimed at fraud prevention and to follow-up the implementation of agreed actions and mitigation measures. A regional anti-fraud strategy has been launched, involving the conduct of country-specific fraud risk vulnerability
analysis and ensuing planning and implementation of necessary mitigating measures. These efforts need to be sustained and intensified during the forthcoming two years, with the full support of the Country Office Staff Associations to create a culture of zero tolerance for fraud.

**Looking forward to 2020**

In 2020, the West and Central Africa Regional Office will take forward the lessons set out in this report as it finalizes its mid-term review, in order to optimize its contribution to accelerating progress towards the region’s collective commitment to achieve Key Results for Children, aligned to the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021, the SDGs and the African Union Agenda 2063. It will do so through a mixture of technical assistance, quality assurance, and oversight of 24 Country Offices, combined with high-level leadership, policy advice, advocacy and representation to convene and leverage a wide range of partners around the KRCs in the regional and global ecosystem. The 30th anniversary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 2020 offers a unique opportunity to do this.

In the midst of severe disruptions to social services and economic activities brought about by the direct and indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and compounded by expanding insecurity and shrinking public and private resources in the region, UNICEF is well-positioned to capitalize on its voice as a trusted, impartial partner, to advocate for all actors to preserve and reinforce investments in children, with a clear focus on equity, both as a moral and ethical imperative and as a long-term strategy to foster a sustainable recovery. UNICEF will seize the possibilities offered by the crisis by contributing towards a child- and adolescent-focused response and recovery, with equity and gender equality as guiding principles, and with a clear pathway towards KRC acceleration.

UNICEF’s unfailing commitment to results for children will continue unabated in the forthcoming years. This speaks to some of the organization’s defining characteristics on display in the region – its resolve to bring about tangible change in children’s enjoyment of their rights at the scale of the countries in which it works, to achieve equity in the realization of rights so that no child is left behind and to deliver results that will be sustained over time by duty bearers and rights holders.
Annex: Summary Table on KRC Progress in 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KRC and Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Status Update</th>
<th>2019 Target WCAR</th>
<th>2021 Target WCAR</th>
<th>2021 Target Strategic Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-Immunization DTP3 coverage children &lt;1 (SP #1.6 (b-i))</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70% (WUENIC)</td>
<td>72.5% (2018)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.4 M (2016)</td>
<td>12.8 M (2018)</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.4 M</td>
<td>70.5 M (estimated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.3 M unvacc’d)</td>
<td>(5.5 M unvacc’d)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(WCAR=22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach of 2-dose vitamin A supplementation, children 6-59 months, annually (SP #1.16 (a))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(WCAR=29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Equitable and sustainable access to education</td>
<td>687,725 (2017)</td>
<td>1.7 M (2019, RAM)</td>
<td>808,193</td>
<td>814,936</td>
<td>10 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OOSC having participated in education, UNICEF-supported prgrms, annually (output) (SP #2.a.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(WCAR=17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Improved learning outcomes</td>
<td>1.1 M (2017)</td>
<td>2 M (2019, RAM)</td>
<td>1.8 M</td>
<td>1.5 M</td>
<td>15 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach of learning materials, UNICEF-supported programmes, annually (output) (SP #2.b.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(WCAR=13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Protection of children from violence</td>
<td>121,117 (2017)</td>
<td>451,199 (2019, RAM)</td>
<td>121,381</td>
<td>629,801</td>
<td>4 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach of violence response services, annually (SP #3.3 (b))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(WCAR=16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Child marriage</td>
<td>367,722 (2017)</td>
<td>699,971 (2019, RAM)</td>
<td>499,500</td>
<td>866,890</td>
<td>7.5 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach prevention/care services, UNICEF-supported prgrms, adolescent girls, annually (SP #3.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(WCAR=12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Birth registration</td>
<td>44% &lt;1 (2017)</td>
<td>47% &lt;1 (2019, MICS/DHS)</td>
<td>47% &lt;1</td>
<td>68% &lt;1</td>
<td>66% &lt;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage children &lt;1 (SP #3.7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8-Ending open defecation</td>
<td>3.2 M (2017)</td>
<td>6.2 M (2019, RAM)</td>
<td>4.3 M</td>
<td>3.5 M</td>
<td>15 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People reached, newly ODF certified communities, UNICEF-supported prgrms, annually (output) (SP #4.4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(WCAR=41%)</td>
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