

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General
15 April 2019

Original: English

For information**United Nations Children's Fund**

Executive Board

Annual session 2019

11–13 June 2019

Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

**Annual report on the implementation of the
UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021***Summary*

The UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021, the organization's road map for promoting gender equality throughout its work, is closely aligned with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. The present document is the first annual report on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan and includes an update on progress on the Plan's priorities, indicators and performance benchmarks.

* [E/ICEF/2019/9](#).*Note:* The present document was processed in its entirety by UNICEF.

I. Introduction

1. The UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021, which is closely aligned with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and the 2010 gender policy, is the organization’s road map for promoting gender equality throughout its work. It guides UNICEF contributions towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the gender results identified in the common chapter of the strategic plans of the funds and programmes. This report builds on the successes and lessons learned from the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017. It highlights the achievements made during the first year of the implementation period of the new plan for 2018–2021, as well as the challenges and emerging trends.

2. The first year of the implementation of the plan reflected the theory of change’s focus on organizational consolidation and scale-up of gender programming. Efforts to support countries to accelerate quality gender programming showed noteworthy results in several priority areas. The emphasis on consolidation and scale-up of gender programming was also reflected in how UNICEF mainstreams gender equality institutionally. The previous Gender Action Plan highlighted some challenges in mainstreaming gender in country programmes, particularly in terms of resource allocation, expertise and capacity to design and implement gender-responsive interventions. Addressing these gaps is fundamental to UNICEF institutional capabilities to integrate gender equality throughout its work. Important groundwork was advanced in 2018 in these areas, including through the issuance of comprehensive guidance on systematically mainstreaming gender analysis in programme planning cycles, and expanding gender capacity in-country through GenderPro, the UNICEF gender capacity development and credentialing programme. A corporate-level evaluation of implementation of the Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017 is currently under way. This evaluation will help to guide the ongoing efforts and acceleration needed to better align institutional commitments and accountability systems with the requisite capacity and resources, to continue scale-up and to achieve transformative gender equality.

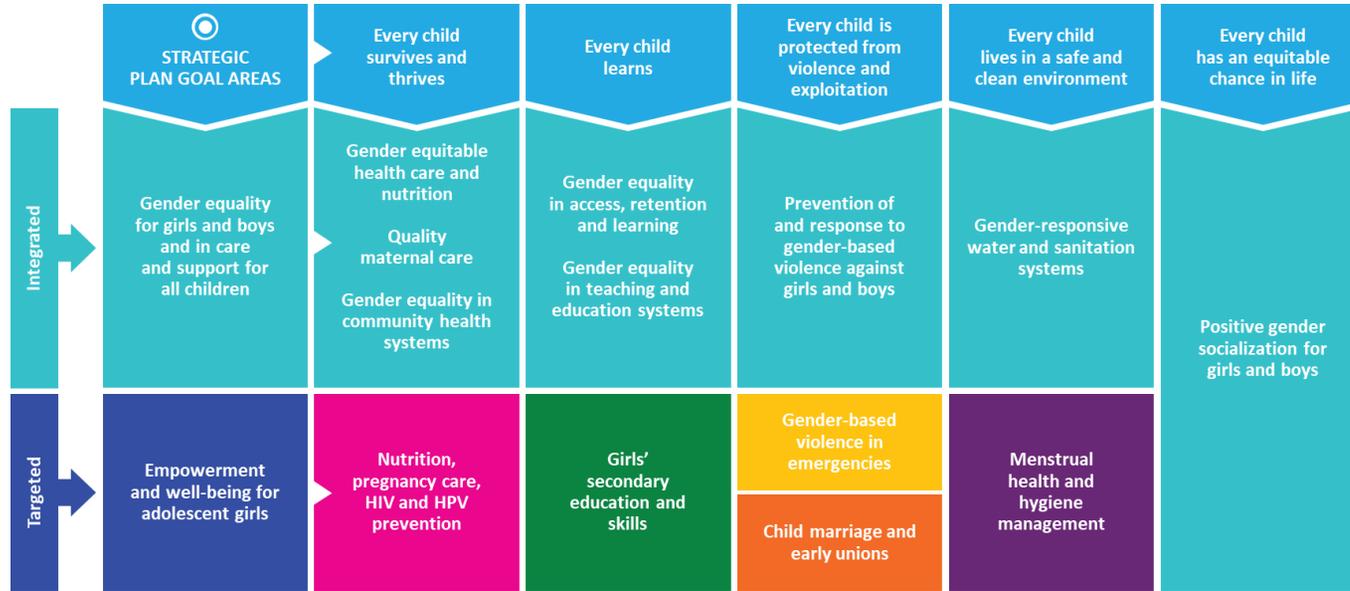
II. Programmatic results

3. The Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 programmatic framework includes 13 gender results integrated across the five Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan and focuses on five targeted priorities around adolescent girls’ empowerment. Similar to the previous Gender Action Plan, it follows a twin-track approach to gender programming:

(a) **Integrated gender results** – Gender is embedded across all of UNICEF programming sectors along two themes: (i) achieving equal outcomes for girls and boys; and (ii) improving gender equality in care work among adults;

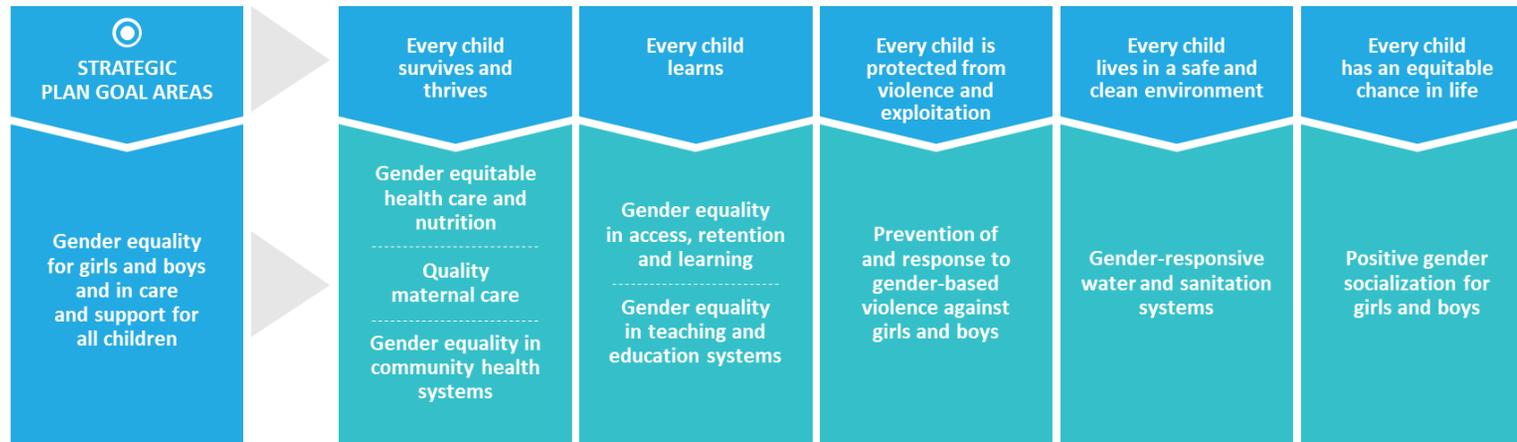
(b) **Targeted priorities on empowering adolescent girls** – To address the specific and interconnected challenges faced by adolescent girls, UNICEF has identified five targeted results that focus on their empowerment and well-being.

Figure I
Gender equality outcomes across the Goal Areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021



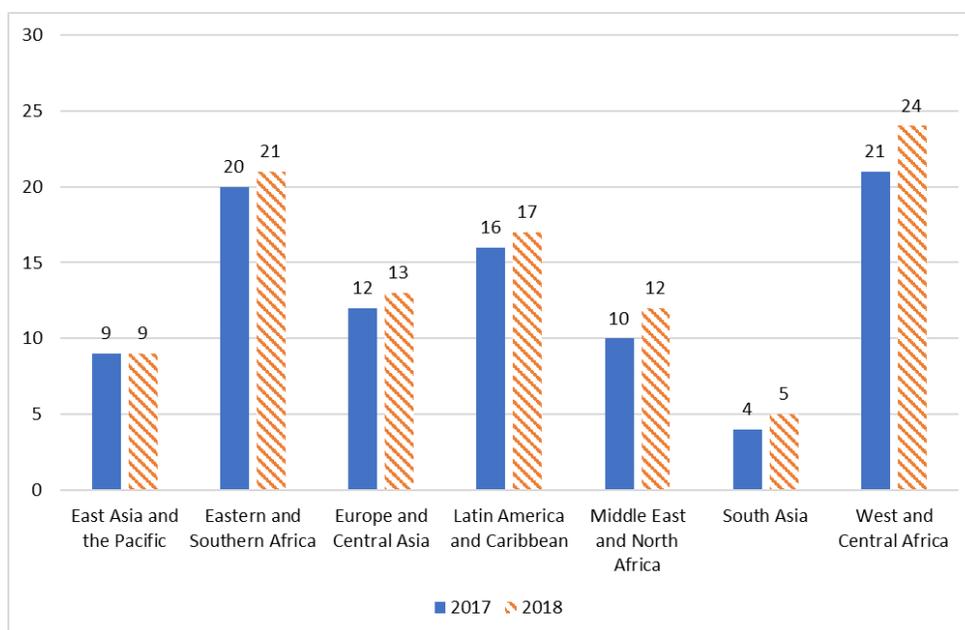
A. Integrated Gender Results

Figure II
Integrated gender results



4. The UNICEF approach to gender integration focuses on incorporating gender analysis, processes and results across all five Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan. Compared to targeted priorities that have a specific focus on adolescent girls, gender integration necessitates that gender analysis is incorporated into all programming priorities across all age groups, in development and humanitarian settings. Gender results are embedded across all of UNICEF programming sectors along two themes: First, UNICEF is improving solutions around the nature and extent of gender inequality in key life outcomes for girls and boys, while also, more broadly, tackling harmful gender-differentiated roles and socialization at various stages of childhood. Second, recognizing the vast gender inequities in care work performed by women within households and in childcare-related occupations (such as health; education; and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)), UNICEF seeks to promote gender equality in the support of children. This is done by motivating men to be more engaged and take on more responsibilities in caregiving, and by formalizing women's work in the care professions, such as health workers and teachers. In 2018, 101 countries included at least one or more integrated gender results in their programming, an increase of 9 countries since 2017, continuing the consolidation and scale-up of gender integration across all UNICEF programmatic areas.

Figure III
Country programmes including integrated gender results, 2017 and 2018



5. Innovation, as a means to accelerate achievement of gender results, is a central cross-cutting principle of the Gender Action Plan. It is increasingly being embraced by UNICEF offices in all regions to catalyse innovative ideas to address the most stubborn gender challenges. Innovative gender projects received a boost in 2018 thanks to contributions to gender thematic funds. Artificial-intelligence-powered chatbots based on human-centred design involving youth offer solutions designed and tested by adolescents in 2018. Examples of innovative programming are integrated throughout this report.

Equal health care and nutrition for girls and boys

6. Increasing numbers of adolescent girls and boys are testing for HIV – in 2018, 13.4 million girls and 9.2 million boys (against the UNICEF 2018 targets of 11.5 million and 8.2 million, respectively) received their test results through UNICEF supported programmes. Globally, the percentage of children (aged 0–14) living with HIV who receive antiretroviral therapy (ART) progressed more slowly, increasing by just three percentage points in 2018 from the baseline¹. The success of prevention of mother-to-child-transmission (PMTCT) of HIV programming is one reason for the stagnation, which has resulted in fewer case identification through the routine testing of infants born to HIV-positive mothers. UNICEF is strengthening family-based index case HIV testing, determining the status of all children and adolescents with parents who are living with HIV and who are already enrolled in UNICEF treatment programmes. UNICEF and partners supported scale-up of PMTCT of HIV efforts in 2018. In Guinea, 721 HIV sites for integrated PMTCT were strengthened, providing access to ART to 98 per cent of pregnant and breastfeeding women who sought treatment. All pregnant women in Sao Tome and Principe were tested for HIV in 2018, with support from UNICEF to update the national HIV/AIDS guidelines, train health staff and procure testing and treatment supplies. Increases in ART coverage have put the country on track to eliminate mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of HIV. In 2018, Malaysia was validated by the World Health Organization for eliminating MTCT of HIV as a public health problem. Despite global successes to reduce MTCT of HIV, much more needs to be done by UNICEF and partners to promote comprehensive testing, counselling and treatment and reduce the gender inequality and violence that women and girls at risk of HIV continue to face.

7. Nutritional outcomes also showed some promising developments in 2018. Fifty-seven countries supported by UNICEF integrated nutrition counselling in their pregnancy care programmes, exceeding the 2018 target of 55. Some 34.6 per cent of pregnant women in programmes supported by UNICEF received iron and folic acid supplementation to prevent anaemia, against the 2018 benchmark of 32 per cent. UNICEF reached 58.4 million girls and boys, including in humanitarian contexts, with services to prevent anaemia and other forms of malnutrition. Of those reached with treatment, 82 per cent fully recovered, in line with global standards.

Quality and dignified maternal care

8. The work of UNICEF in maternal care goes beyond antenatal care and skilled delivery to systematically address the treatment of mothers and the quality of perinatal care, according to the World Health Organization's quality, equity and dignity standards. National plans to strengthen the quality of maternal and newborn primary health care were implemented in 23 countries (out of 52 reporting) supported by UNICEF, far exceeding the 2018 target of 9 countries. The percentage of pregnant women receiving at least four antenatal visits increased from the baseline of 51 per cent to 57 per cent, while the proportion of mothers receiving postnatal care increased to 55 per cent (compared to the baseline of 48 per cent). Between 2016 and 2018, in 52 high-burden maternal mortality countries, 84 million babies were delivered in health facilities supported by UNICEF. In 2018 alone, the number was 27 million live births. Seventy-five per cent of live births were attended by skilled health personnel, a percentage that put UNICEF on track to meet the Gender Action Plan target of 77

¹ SDG+ Database: Global AIDS Monitoring 2018 and UNAIDS 2018 estimates, accessed February 2019.

per cent, contributed to improvements in the quality of maternal health care and reduced the risk of maternal mortality.

9. UNICEF partnered with Governments to strengthen national health systems through upgraded health facilities and improved care standards for mothers. In Bangladesh and the United Republic of Tanzania, UNICEF supported scale-up of round-the-clock emergency obstetric services and gender-responsive childbirth services for pregnant women, taking into account World Health Organization quality maternal care standards. In India, UNICEF and the Ministry of Health developed a model labour room initiative, which resulted in improvements to the care available to women during childbirth. In the Dominican Republic, a comprehensive quality improvement plan defines hospital standards on perinatal care, which include humanizing maternity care taking account of the rights of mothers and eliminating obstetric violence.

10. UNICEF works with public and private sector employers to support women to be able to breastfeed while continuing their professional roles. For example, passage of the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights Act in Nepal now mandates the creation of breastfeeding spaces nationwide and ensures that women receive 98 days of paid maternity leave. In Bangladesh, a UNICEF-International Labour Organization (ILO) partnership helped scale up the Mothers@Work programme from 5 garment factories in 2017 to 80 in 2018 (57 per cent coverage).

Gender equality in health systems and among the workforce

11. Female community health workers form the backbone for the delivery of several UNICEF interventions. For example, in 2018, scale up of a community-based vaccination approach in Pakistan to all 594 union councils in core polio reservoirs deployed 24,500 frontline workers – 87 per cent women. In humanitarian settings such as Yemen, where only about 50 per cent of all health facilities are fully functional, UNICEF-supported midwives reached more than 634,000 pregnant and lactating women in their homes with perinatal care and birth attendance. Twenty-four of 25 countries with a high burden of childhood illnesses had institutionalized community health workers into the formal health system in 2018, eight more than the baseline.

12. Community health workers benefited from a range of UNICEF-supported skills enhancement programmes to improve their capacity and the delivery of health services. In the 21 high-burden countries that reported data on community health workers between 2016 and 2018, a total of 154,475 workers (60,376 in 2018 alone) enhanced their skills to operationalize community care models, representing a three-fold increase from the baseline, exceeding the 2018 target of 100,000. The 12 countries for which sex-disaggregated data were available reported a total of 40,000 female community health workers.

Equality in education for girls and boys

13. UNICEF continues to prioritize access to education for out-of-school children, including young mothers and other children experiencing disruption in emergency contexts. In 2018, 11,968,424 out-of-school girls and boys participated in early learning, primary or secondary education through UNICEF-supported programmes.² In Mozambique, UNICEF and partners successfully advocated for the repeal of a law

² Sex-disaggregated data are only available as an estimate.

that mandated that pregnant women attend school only at night. In Chad, more than 11,000 young mothers resumed classes thanks to more than 800 community talks organized by parents' and leaders' associations on the importance of keeping girls in school. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, UNICEF implemented integrated interventions to address poor primary and secondary school enrolment and completion rates among girls. In 2018, nearly 1.3 million children (583,774 girls) accessed education with direct UNICEF support. To help to reduce financial barriers, UNICEF delivered cash assistance to 7,732 children (3,789 girls), and 97 per cent of these girls have continued their education.

Gender equality in teaching and education systems

14. In 2018, 36 countries with UNICEF-supported programmes had gender-responsive teaching and learning systems that integrated gender equality principles and practices into education programming, training and measurement activities. This represents 31 per cent of countries reporting, against a baseline of 16 per cent. Thirty-six countries reported gender-responsive education systems for access, up from 34 at baseline. In 2018, 2 million girls and boys³ participated in skills development programmes that provide them with training on their choice of subject, career paths, active citizenship and employability.

15. UNICEF and partners supported systems-strengthening efforts by ministries of education to better tackle gender inequalities in the education system. For example, in Mali, this support contributed to development of an action plan that addressed gender inequities in the existing education sector policy through the introduction of separate budget lines for funding girls' education in the multiyear operational budget plan. In Turkey, UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of National Education to promote a gender-sensitive approach that was implemented in all upper-secondary schools, reaching approximately 1 million students. UNICEF also worked closely with Governments to integrate gender principles in educational programmes, teacher training and monitoring activities. In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF piloted gender-responsive early childhood curricula and teaching methods in community-based kindergartens, promoting positive gender roles and appreciation of diversity among children and parents.

Addressing gender-based violence against girls, boys and women

16. In 2018, in 154 countries, children received UNICEF-supported violence prevention and response services. More than 2 million girls and boys who experienced violence were reached by health, social work or justice and law enforcement services through UNICEF support, although reporting rates are still very low worldwide. To address this gap, in Ghana, training was provided for nearly 3,000 social workers and police officers on sexual and gender-based violence case management and child-friendly policing. In Nicaragua, a government-led national campaign about sexual violence helped to reach 2.8 million people and strengthen response services for victims of violence.

17. Keeping gender-based violence on key policy agendas remained an important focus for UNICEF. Swaziland enacted legislation strengthening the national child protection system, including the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act that strengthens legal support available to victims of violence. In Uzbekistan, UNICEF

³ Sex-disaggregated data are not available.

and other concerned United Nations agencies supported the Government Presidential Resolution on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, which makes it a criminal offence.

18. UNICEF supported efforts in 2018 to engage men and boys in ending gender-based violence by addressing the negative manifestations of masculinity. Such support included a federal-level policy commitment used by provincial assemblies and local government representatives in all seven provinces of Nepal when developing their local plans. In communities experiencing high levels of violence in Jamaica, UNICEF collaborated with partners to train at-risk adolescent boys on building their self-worth and challenging harmful ideas about masculinity.

19. Building on the progress of phase II of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)–UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), efforts to eliminate FGM will be accelerated in phase III, which began in 2018. Through support from the programme, an estimated 99,800 girls and women received prevention and protection services on FGM (achieving 99.8 per cent of the annual target), and nearly 7 million people participated in education, communication and social mobilization platforms to promote the elimination of FGM. In Uganda, 3,600 girls at risk received protection services. In the northern states of Sudan, legislative councils adopted state laws criminalizing FGM and more than 1,000 community declarations called for abandonment of the practice.

20. In 2018, UNICEF became a key implementing partner of the Spotlight Initiative, a joint United Nations-European Union effort focused on ending violence against women and girls as well as a flagship common chapter initiative. Under Spotlight, 13 countries in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa will scale up efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. For example, programming in Argentina and El Salvador will address femicide – a severe manifestation of gender-based violence that is on the rise in some Latin American countries – while in Uganda, interventions will build on global programmes addressing child marriage and FGM.

Gender-responsive water, sanitation and hygiene systems

21. UNICEF prioritizes gender-responsive systems-strengthening and the equal participation of women and girls in WASH systems, especially in emergencies. In 2018, 29 country programmes prioritized this gender result.

22. In 2018, nearly 18.6 million people gained access to a safe drinking water service (2.6 million women and girls in the 37 countries that report sex-disaggregated data), and 10.8 million people gained access to basic sanitation services through UNICEF-supported programmes (5.1 million women and girls in 46 countries). In humanitarian situations, UNICEF provided access to safe water to more than 43 million people in 64 countries and sanitation facilities to 13,387,028 people in 46 countries. An estimated 116 per cent of the UNICEF-targeted population received access to appropriate gender-segregated WASH facilities and hygiene education in schools.

23. In Nigeria, 11,527 WASH committees and committee federations in 13 states received water safety training in 2018. Increasing numbers of women are participating in decision-making in these structures. Women occupy executive positions in 32 per

cent of WASH committees, up from just 9 per cent in 2017. In Sudan, there was a notable increase in women's participation in WASH training.⁴

24. UNICEF supported improved gender-segregated WASH facilities and programmes in 7,710 schools in 70 countries. In Kenya, WASH services reached 73,585 children aged 6–18 (47 per cent girls) in 95 primary and 5 secondary schools, including provision of toilets for children with disabilities, equipment like water tanks and filters, sex-segregated basic sanitation facilities, and menstrual hygiene kits for girls. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan to develop a comprehensive school health policy that mandates all schools to provide safe drinking water and gender-segregated sanitation facilities to all students.

25. In humanitarian situations in 2018, close to 4.4 million children benefited from sex-segregated WASH facilities and hygiene promotion at schools or temporary learning spaces. For instance, WASH services in Libya reached 95,314 people, including 28,000 children and 45,249 women and girls. In Lebanon, 200 gender focal points were appointed to the WASH committees in the informal settlements, playing a key role in community-level decision-making.

Positive gender socialization for girls and boys

26. Positive gender socialization is the UNICEF flagship gender result under the Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 and a stand-alone output in the Strategic Plan, with targeted programming interventions to address discriminatory gender norms, roles and practices to achieve gender equitable outcomes for all girls, boys and adolescents across the life course. In 2018, 25 country programmes identified gender socialization as a priority gender result. Further, 36 countries reported implementation of large-scale programmes addressing gender-discriminatory roles and practices among children, up from 29 countries in 2017.

27. In 2018 in Burkina Faso, UNICEF assisted national partners in reforming policy frameworks to become more gender responsive. Parliamentarians and line ministry staff were trained to conduct gender-sensitive budgeting across sectoral budgets and to increase resource allocation for girls' education, sanitation and ending child marriage and FGM. UNICEF also supported the Government of Moldova to develop and cost the National Action Plan on Positive Parenting 2018–2022, which includes a special focus on fathers' engagement and accountability in child-rearing. Ongoing monitoring is required to ensure these policy commitments translate into increased fiscal allocations.

28. UNICEF supported various gender-sensitive social protection efforts in 2018. In India, UNICEF worked with state Governments in Jharkhand and West Bengal to link cash transfer programmes with girls' education and decision-making outcomes. In Egypt, UNICEF supported the national social safety network programme, Takaful, that provides income support to the poorest families. The programme has reported positive impacts on women's health and girls' education.

29. Relying significantly on community-based communication for development strategies that included innovative approaches, in 2018, UNICEF supported a range of interventions that emphasized youth empowerment and positive parenting to counter discriminatory gender norms. A television mini-series in Brazil focused on raising awareness among children about consent and respect, diversity and right to

⁴ Disaggregated data are not available.

privacy. In Ukraine, UNICEF assisted in the development of a national youth strategy (2020–2025), and in expanding mobile U-Report usage to 74,000 U-Reporters (with girls the most users). An app rolled out in Cuba engages fathers through an “interactive playground” with games to support father-to-child interactions. In Egypt, the Dominican Republic and Panama, Father’s Day was celebrated through large-scale “super Dads” campaigns that highlighted the role of fathers in early childhood development.

30. The UNICEF approach to gender integration focused on ensuring gender equitable outcomes for girls and boys, and the recognition, reduction and redistribution of women’s care work. The emerging results from the first year of implementation of the Gender Action Plan show that its programming principles – scale and innovation – are being applied in gender-integration efforts. Rather than try to “do gender in everything”, the identification and clearer articulation of mainstreaming themes is helping to sharpen the focus of gender integration. As a result, there were considerable efforts in all regions to accelerate national solutions to gender challenges, which were evident in an uptick in country programmes more deliberately integrating gender considerations into planning. Moving into the second year, areas where gender integration progress has been sluggish, such as achieving gender-equal education outcomes and systems and improving HIV prevention among girls, will require further strengthening and technical contributions from gender experts.

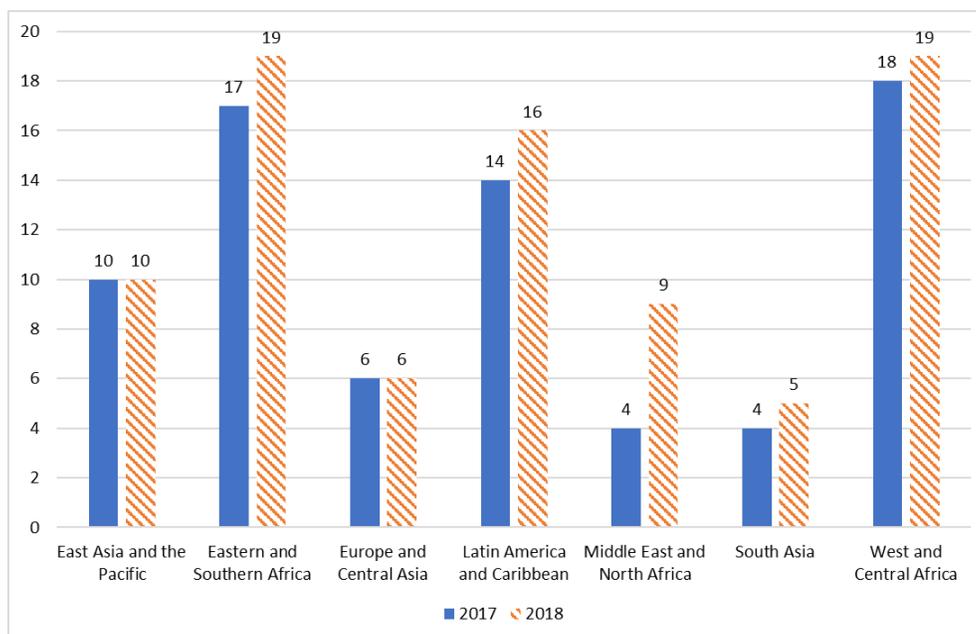
B. Targeted priorities on empowering adolescent girls

Figure IV
Targeted priorities on empowering adolescent girls



31. The five targeted priorities in the Gender Action Plan – which span all the Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan – emphasize disadvantaged adolescent girls for whom investment in multiple, interlinked areas can bring about transformative change. Promoting adolescent girls’ health, advancing girls’ secondary education and skills, ending child marriage and early unions, and preventing and responding to gender-based violence in emergencies are continuing priorities. The fifth priority, on menstrual health and hygiene (MHH), sharpens the focus on programming results that have been gaining momentum. In 2018, 84 UNICEF country programmes included results in one or more of the targeted gender priorities, increasing from 73 countries in 2017.

Figure V
Country programmes including results on adolescent girls' targeted priorities, 2017 and 2018



Girls' nutrition, pregnancy care, and HIV and HPV prevention

32. By the end of 2018, 50 countries (out of 134 reporting) had an inclusive, multisectoral and gender-responsive national plan to achieve the targets for adolescent health, exceeding the 2018 target of 30 countries. Implementation of these plans is under way in 33 countries, with UNICEF supporting 22 of them. The most significant increase took place in the Latin America and Caribbean region, where the number of countries having such a plan increased from 5 to 12.

33. UNICEF supported Every Newborn Action Plan countries to provide quality maternal care for adolescent mothers (aged 15–19). Consequently, 52 per cent of pregnant women received at least four antenatal visits (meeting the 2021 target of 52 per cent); 55 per cent of mothers received postnatal care (up from the baseline of 48 per cent; 75 per cent target in 2021); and 69 per cent of live births to mothers were attended by skilled health personnel (compared to the baseline of 67 per cent).

34. UNICEF-supported national strategies focused on adolescent pregnancy in several countries. In Argentina, UNICEF supported the training of health teams to use a multisectoral approach linking adolescent pregnancy with education, social development and child protection. UNICEF also worked with nine non-governmental organizations to improve HIV prevention among girls through a large-scale campaign on adolescent sexuality that reached 246,400 adolescents. In Thailand, UNICEF continues to support an online health platform used by more than 770,000 adolescents – five times higher than in 2017 – for information on adolescent and reproductive health.

35. UNICEF developed the global HPV (human papillomavirus vaccine) initiative in 2018, to scale up HPV vaccination among adolescent girls aged 9–14. By the end of 2018, five countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania

and Zimbabwe) had been provided with technical assistance to introduce HPV vaccination nationwide into their routine immunization programmes, aiming to reach 3 million girls.

36. To renew the focus on adolescent key populations affected by HIV, in 2018 UNICEF launched a global resource that offers a range of tools to support scaled-up, evidence-based prevention programming for adolescent girls and young women. In the Eastern and Southern Africa region, the joint United Nations initiative 2gether 4 SRHR (together for sexual and reproductive health and rights) was rolled out in five countries. The programme tackles the bottlenecks associated with HIV prevention among young women as well as the prevention of unintended pregnancies among women living with HIV.

37. In the area of nutrition, 58.4 million girls and boys were reached in 2018 with services to prevent anaemia and other forms of malnutrition (against a target of 70 million for 2021). UNICEF is supporting Governments in 30 countries to roll out and scale up nutrition programmes for adolescent girls and boys. For example, in Afghanistan in 2018, weekly iron folic acid supplementation for adolescent schoolgirls reached 1,163,746 girls across 34 provinces.

Girls' secondary education and skills-building

38. Globally, the number of children and adolescents not participating in education remains alarming: an estimated 264 million children and adolescents are not in school; 62 million of lower secondary school age and 141 million of upper secondary school age. UNICEF is scaling up efforts to support adolescent girls to access and complete primary and secondary school and improve their skills, including in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Working closely with key partners, including the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, the Global Partnership for Education and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNICEF is supporting national efforts to make education systems gender-responsive. The organization is also a leading member of Generation Unlimited, a new global partnership launched in 2018 that is committed to getting every young person into education, learning, training or age-appropriate employment by 2030.

39. The percentage of countries showing an improvement in learning outcomes for adolescent girls increased slightly to 67 per cent, from a baseline of 62 per cent and against a target of 79 per cent in 2021. Among the poorest children, the net attendance rates at lower and upper secondary levels showed a larger increase. For the poorest boys and girls at lower secondary level, the increase was 9 percentage points higher than the baseline of 36 per cent. Further, 27 per cent of the poorest girls accessed upper secondary education, compared to the poorest boys at 31 per cent (against the baselines of 19 and 21 per cent, respectively). In Malawi, UNICEF supported the roll-out of an integrated functional literacy and numeracy curriculum, which equipped 18,500 out-of-school adolescent girls with basic skills. In Nepal, the UNICEF-supported Girls' Access to Education programme provided 500 non-formal education classes in one province, reaching 12,243 out-of-school adolescent girls. The programme had a 95 per cent completion rate, and 88 per cent of the girls were able to rejoin the formal education system.

40. The UNICEF-ILO publication, *GirlForce: Skills, Education and Training for Girls Now*, released in 2018 showed that female adolescents and youth (aged 15–29) are three times more likely than males to be outside the labour force and not participating in education. Despite overall progress in educational achievement

among young women globally, in many countries this has not translated into formal employment due to barriers to skills development opportunities. To begin addressing this challenge, 16 countries with UNICEF-supported programmes implemented systems that institutionalize gender-equitable skills for earning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and/or employability. This far exceeds the 2018 Gender Action Plan target of 6 countries, and is a sign that skills acquisition, both through formal and non-formal routes, is recognized as essential.

41. Several countries carried out targeted skills development for adolescents, including activities focused on adolescent girls. Overall, 2 million girls and boys, including children in humanitarian situations (of which 1,009,442 are girls, based on 68 countries reporting sex-disaggregated data, out of a total of 86 countries), received UNICEF-supported skills development, personal empowerment and employability training in 2018. These programmes are breaking gender barriers that impede girls' access to training and the labour market. For instance, in Egypt, the Meshwary programme, supported as part of Generation Unlimited, is empowering adolescents and youth through skills development and career guidance, with an emphasis on girls' empowerment. In 2018, a Hilton-UNICEF partnership began providing internships to 750 Meshwary graduates (70 per cent of them female) over five years. In 2018, UNICEF and partners have also supported social innovation training in Jordan for 70,533 young people (56 per cent girls) in robotics, coding and filmmaking.

Gender-based violence in emergencies

42. UNICEF employs a three-pronged programming approach to gender-based violence in emergencies: services for survivors; community-based prevention; and integration of gender-based violence risk mitigation across interventions in other sectors, which spans a range of activities including, but not limited to, gender-based violence case management, clinical health services, women- and girls-friendly spaces, distribution of dignity kits, community safety planning, and community-based interventions to address the harmful gender norms that perpetuate gender-based violence. Forty-seven country offices provided support on addressing gender-based violence in emergencies. In 37 of these countries, 1.3 million women, girls and boys were provided with risk mitigation, prevention or response interventions to address gender-based violence through UNICEF-supported programmes, reaching 103 per cent of the estimated target population.

43. UNICEF continues to make consistent and high-impact contributions to the gender-based violence in emergencies community of practice. For example, UNICEF leads the inter-agency roll-out of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action; is a member of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies steering committee and co-coordinator of the international organizations working group; co-coordinates the gender-based violence minimum standards task team; and is a steering committee member of the Gender-based Violence Information Management System. A gender-based violence in emergencies help desk was successfully piloted within UNICEF in 2018 and officially handed over to the gender-based violence area of responsibility for use by the broader community.

44. UNICEF provided capacity-building support to institutionalize gender-based violence in emergencies prevention, risk mitigation and response in several countries dealing with emergency situations, including Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Iraq, Lebanon, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan, as well as multiple countries that are part of the

refugee and migrant crisis in Europe. For example, women and child-friendly spaces were expanded in Greece, and more than 500 frontline workers received training on violence identification, care and use of referral protocols. In Bulgaria and Serbia, UNICEF developed a pocket guide on the safety and resilience of adolescent girls, for use by frontline workers implementing programmes for at-risk adolescent girls. UNICEF Iraq is supporting scaled-up nationwide roll-out of an adolescent girls' tool kit, which was developed jointly with UNFPA.

45. In South Sudan, UNICEF adapted its assessment procedures for identifying girls associated with armed groups and, as a result, girls made up 28 per cent of the children officially released in 2018. These girls were referred to specialized case management services and support was provided to their children who were born during their time with the armed groups.

46. In Lebanon, in partnership with the Ministry of Public Health, UNICEF developed and is rolling out an app that provides health workers with step-by-step guidance on clinical care and applying gender and cultural sensitivity when interacting with survivors of sexual violence.

Child marriage and early unions

47. Programming to address child marriage was prioritized in 46 countries in which UNICEF operates. The Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage is on track to support targeted countries to develop and implement national action plans, and to influence other countries to tackle the issue globally through policies, legislation and sectoral response to child marriage, including through education system strengthening. A regional programme to end child marriage was launched in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico.

48. Thirty-three countries have approved national action plans to end child marriage (among them 10 countries within the Global Programme). Increased prevalence in Belize led to development of the first national strategy to end child marriage. Fifteen countries have costed national frameworks to operationalize the national action plans to end child marriage. In Ghana, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection allocated 3 per cent of its annual budget for national plan implementation. In Sierra Leone in 2018, the global programme assisted in the finalization of the National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage (2018–2022), which explicitly recognizes the interlinkages. There is need for continued advocacy and support to implement the national plans and harness dedicated resources for girls' protection and health.

49. In 2018, child marriage-related cross-sectoral programming helped to strengthen national systems to improve adolescent girl interventions in other sectors, especially in education, by keeping more girls in schools. Nearly 5 million adolescent girls received prevention and care interventions through UNICEF programming on child marriage, including through life skills initiatives, far exceeding the target of 670,000.

50. Media and community-based dialogues are core and complementary strategies in child marriage prevention and response, and they contribute to national, subnational and community-level change. Between 2016–2018, UNICEF-supported large-scale media and advocacy campaigns have reached an estimated 11.5 million people across 12 programme countries.

Dignified menstrual health and hygiene

51. Access to dignified MHH is a separate targeted priority in the Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021. Additionally, 51 countries included MHH targets within their WASH in Schools strategies; in 46 of these countries, new strategies were developed with UNICEF support. Almost 18,000 schools in 50 countries obtained MHH services with UNICEF support (far exceeding the 2018 target of 2,000 schools⁵). Global guidance on empowering adolescent girls through MHH was developed by UNICEF and disseminated in 2018, leading to uptake of the priority at the regional and country levels.

52. Almost 1.3 million women and girls in emergency situations were reached with MHH services in 2018. In seven countries dealing with emergency situations, 33,740 girls and women with disabilities were provided with MHH services.

53. A number of countries improved integration of MHH into their national health and education systems. In India, 7,465 schools across 14 UNICEF-supported states gained access to MHH through training of students and teachers, technical support for sanitation equipment, and distribution of supplies. In Timor-Leste, the Ministry of Education developed a costed WASH in Schools Action Plan that included MHH provisions.

54. UNICEF continues to support government and community efforts to dispel misconceptions surrounding menstruation and puberty. In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF provided education materials on MHH and puberty to 300 girls with hearing and visual impairments and their parents. In Indonesia and Mongolia, UNICEF engaged 560 adolescent girls to co-create a mobile phone period tracker app. In Indonesia, advocacy for Menstrual Hygiene Day led to a government commitment to mainstream MHH in the national school health programme.

55. Overall, there was notable consolidation and expansion of gender-responsive programming in adolescent girl-focused areas that continued as a Gender Action Plan priority. For example, UNICEF achieved scale in programmatic interventions and deepened partnerships to end child marriage. As the Global Programme enters its second phase in 2020, there are valuable lessons to build on. Progress was also promising in MHH interventions where the sharpened focus provided by the Gender Action Plan led to greater uptake and clearer results in providing dignified MHH. Similarly, skills development and vocational training for girls as a pathway to economic empowerment gained momentum, spurred by Generation Unlimited and its emphasis on adolescent girls. However, for adolescent girls' empowerment programming to reach scale and be sustainable, greater attention is needed in coordination of service delivery across sectors such as MHH, education, addressing violence and child marriage. Areas of adolescent girls' targeted programming that need special attention are the roll-out of HPV programming; the continued focus on girls' skills and employability; and further sharpening of the adolescent girls' health pillar. In response, UNICEF is investing in programming tools and demonstrable models of multisectoral adolescent girls' programming models and enhancing data collection to better measure girls' empowerment as a result of coordinated programmatic interventions.

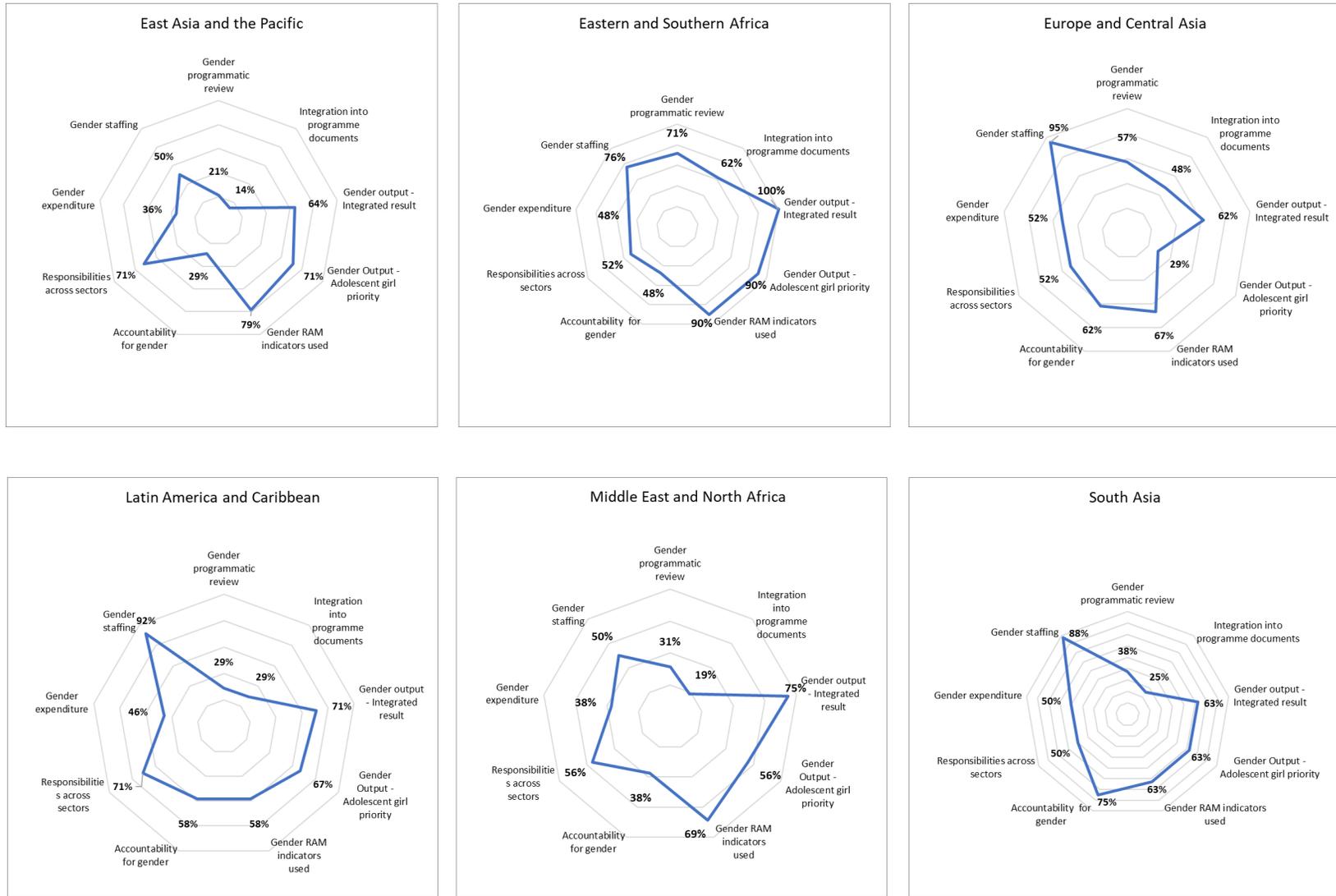
⁵ The target for schools reached through MHH services will be assessed during the mid-term review in 2020.

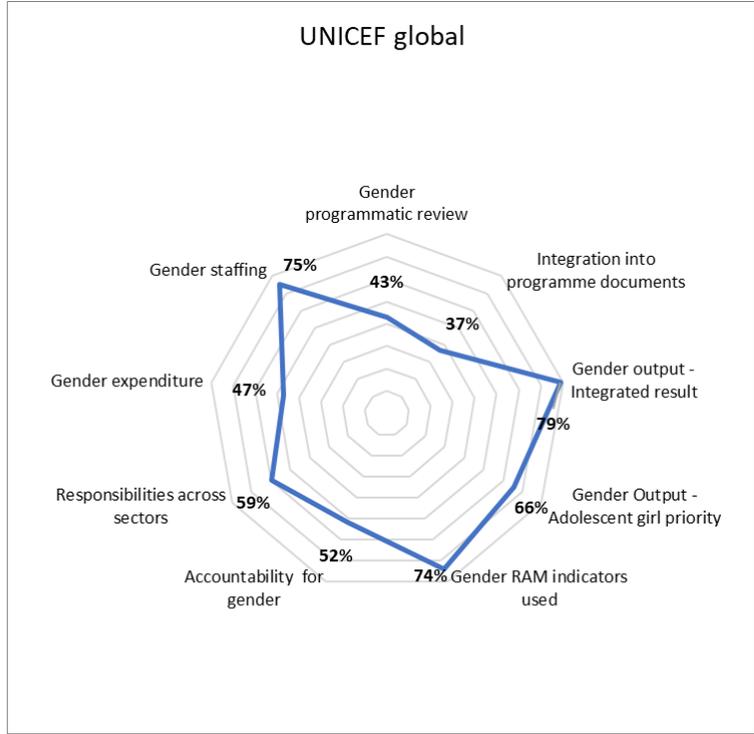
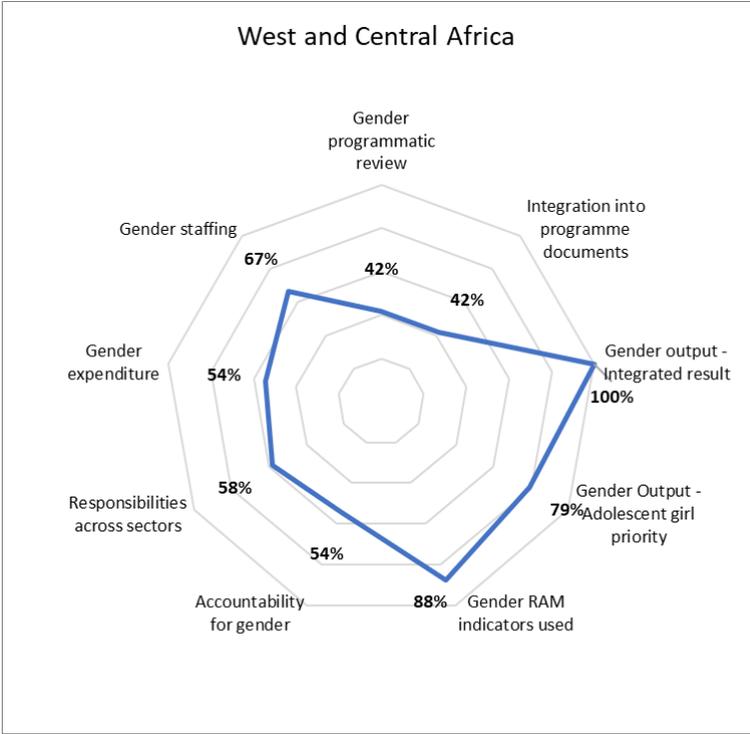
III. Institutional strengthening

56. Gender-responsive institutional strategies and systems are critical for achieving programmatic results, and necessary for UNICEF to meet its organizational commitments to gender equality. The Gender Action Plan specifies strategic areas for investment, with an emphasis on (a) gender equality in programming at scale; and (b) capacity and accountability in institutional systems.

57. UNICEF uses a series of institutional accountability benchmarks to track country-level gender mainstreaming, including gender analysis in country programme design, implementation of gender priority results, monitoring, resourcing, capacity and accountability. Integration of gender priorities in country programme documents and monitoring indicators are areas of positive performance where between 66 and 85 per cent of country offices meet the benchmark. Using the 2018 institutional benchmarks as baseline, moving forward, UNICEF will develop a composite measure to track improvements in country-level gender mainstreaming.

Figure VI
Gender Action Plan institutional benchmarks across UNICEF regions and globally for 2018





A. Gender equality in quality programming at scale

Gender-responsive programming

58. A series of new tools is informing gender analysis and tracking gender integration at the country level. The gender integration in country programming tools, which are integrated in the organization's overall programming guidance, offer a step-by-step guide on how to conduct gender analysis and programmatic review and to integrate gender-responsive approaches in country programming, in alignment with the Gender Action Plan. Every country office is required to implement at least one priority from the Plan. The key tools include: (a) a gender programmatic review tool kit and management and operations guide; and (b) quality assurance checklists for gender in situation analysis, country programme documents and programme strategy notes. Programme area-specific tools and technical notes were also developed to support programming on specific Gender Action Plan priorities including MHH, adolescent girls' nutrition and quality maternal care. UNICEF regional offices also launched resources, including a tool kit on gender programming in South Asia and a practitioners' guide to articulating gender in results in East Asia and the Pacific. Together, this set of comprehensive guidance provides concrete examples of what gender-responsive programming entails, highlighting the importance of using gender analysis to identify bottlenecks and barriers to effective programme implementation.

59. By the end of 2018, 55 country offices had completed a gender analysis during their country programme cycle, of which 47 had integrated recommendations from the analysis into their programme documents and strategies. The year marked a shift to using gender-analysis tools more consistently and uniformly to provide technical support, including to improve the quality of gender reviews, and strengthen the capacity to mainstream gender within programming. For example, in 2018, Belarus, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone, Tunisia and Turkmenistan all clearly articulated gender results in their programme planning.

60. A well-funded gender architecture at headquarters and in the regional offices has powered the mainstreaming of quality gender analysis and gender-responsive programming at UNICEF, and a growing number of country offices are receiving technical gender support from headquarters and regional offices. In 2018, 77 countries received direct support from gender experts from headquarters and regional offices, including through gender reviews, data collection/analysis, training, partnerships and communications.

Gender data and evidence

61. In 2018, UNICEF continued to strengthen the evidence base for gender-informed policy and programming through use of cutting-edge methodologies and gender analyses, technical support and gender data dissemination. For example, UNICEF also produced a series of multiple indicator cluster survey round 6 (MICS6) statistical snapshot templates, including on gender equality, child marriage and FGM, and a list of MICS6 sex-disaggregated and gender-specific indicators to facilitate country analysis of MICS6 gender data.

62. In West and Central Africa, country-level and regional analyses of the well-being of adolescent girls and the intergenerational effects of adolescent childbearing were undertaken for a series of data-driven knowledge products on investing in adolescent girls. In East Asia and the Pacific, UNICEF and partners conducted a regional data review that led to a series of four subregional reports being produced.

63. While the reporting of sex-disaggregated monitoring data from UNICEF-supported programmes was a major step forward, it needs further strengthening to ensure sex-disaggregated data are available for all indicators. Less than 50 per cent of UNICEF country offices were able to provide sex-disaggregated data for indicators that required disaggregated reporting. UNICEF will continue to work with its sister United Nations agencies and national statistics offices to collect and produce disaggregated data.

Strategic partnerships and communications

64. The close collaboration between UNICEF and other United Nations agencies, global organizations, national partners, the private sector and civil society are integral to the organization's ability to fulfil its mandate on gender equality, meet the Sustainable Development Goals and advance the United Nations reform agenda.

65. UNICEF is a joint implementer of the common chapter of the strategic plans of the funds and programmes, which identifies gender equality as one of six areas of collaboration. In 2018, UNICEF took on a lead technical role with the Spotlight Initiative as a key implementing partner at headquarters, regional and country levels. UNICEF is also a member of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality; participates in the United Nations Development Group Task Team on Gender Equality; United Nations Task Force on Violence Against Women; and Programme Advisory Committee for the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. Further, UNICEF co-leads a subgroup on gender and innovation for the Inter-Agency Innovation group, participates in working groups of the High-Level Taskforce on Financing for Gender Equality, and in the Women in the United Nations System group. UNICEF is also on the steering committee of the UN-Women (the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) Making Every Woman and Girl Count programme.

66. UNICEF joined UN-Women and private sector partners in the Unstereotype Alliance to use the power of advertising to challenge harmful gender norms and promote positive portrayals of women and men. UNICEF is also a founding member of the International Development Innovation Alliance, a platform for the world's leading innovation agencies for collaboration and learning around innovation.

67. In 2018, UNICEF continued to increase knowledge-sharing, communication and visibility around gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, both for internal and external audiences. Gender issues were systematically included in messaging and public advocacy efforts such as International Day of the Girl and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign. Several public events in 2018 – including high-profile events during the United Nations General Assembly – generated visibility on gender issues, reaching global and national audiences. For the International Day of the Girl 2018, which highlighted skills development for girls, UNICEF advocacy and communication content reached an estimated 505.6 million people and engaged more than 650,000 social media users.

Resources

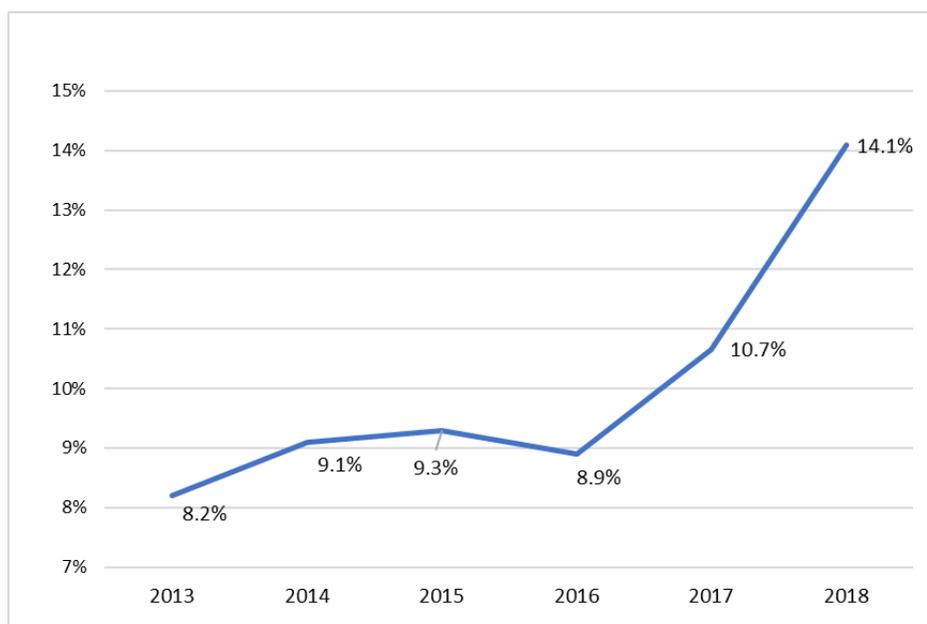
68. UNICEF introduced a “gender tag” in 2018 for a more nuanced tracking of gender expenditures, in addition to the gender equality marker (GEM) to track gender-related allocations and expenditures. The GEM and the gender tag are applied to programme expenditures supported by both regular resources and other resources and include development and humanitarian programmes. Using the GEM, UNICEF can

both report on expenses used for gender transformative programming and those used for gender-mainstreaming activities.

69. Gender-transformative expenditure is calculated by weighting the gender-tagged activities that fall under outputs where gender equality is the principal or significant objective. Based on this formula, UNICEF expenditure on gender-transformative results in 2018 was 14.1 per cent, which is significantly higher than 10.7 per cent reported in 2017, and on-track to meet the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women benchmark. Further, it is estimated that 63 per cent of total expenditure (approximately \$3.3 billion) contributes to gender mainstreaming as measured by outputs where gender equality is either a significant or marginal objective.

Figure VII

Programme expenditures on gender transformative results, 2013–2018



B. Capacity and accountability on gender results

Gender capacity and gender parity

70. UNICEF has achieved gender parity among international professional staff globally since 2016. Further, female staff members represented 48 per cent of all General Service staff members. Globally, for positions at the P-4 level and above, female staff members represented 48 per cent of all staff. Unfortunately, gender parity continues to be a challenge in relation to senior management positions. For posts P-5 and above, and particularly at D1 to D2 levels, there has been a continued decline in gender parity. In 2017, women staffed 45 per cent of all posts at the P-5 level and above; in 2018, this dropped to 44 per cent. UNICEF has undertaken several steps to address this problem, including introducing flexible working arrangements and prioritizing gender parity during the 2018 Senior Staff Rotation Exercise. For the first time, parity has been achieved in the new appointments for 2019.

71. Recognizing the need for increased internal capacity on gender mainstreaming and programming, UNICEF is also building a cadre of gender specialists who can undertake robust gender analysis and applied programming. There has been notable expansion of gender expertise at all levels. A base gender architecture is solidly in place – all regional offices now have gender advisers, and 27 gender specialists are in place in country offices, an increase of 7 since 2017. Twelve sectoral gender specialists are in place, and gender focal points have been appointed in 117 country offices, compared to 86 in 2017 and 10 in 2014. Gender expertise was bolstered by the roll-out of GenderPro in 2018. To date, 37 countries have gender focal points who have completed GenderPro training, representing 32 per cent of the cohort, which is close to the 2018 benchmark of 40 per cent. GenderPro was also made available through the Agora learning system to all UNICEF staff and implementing partners seeking a core gender competency.

72. Other capacity-development efforts include training on gender equality for all new UNICEF senior managers during their orientation, and a newly-launched Management Masterclass – an initiative to strengthen personal leadership and managerial capacity of staff at the P-3 to P-5 levels, which has a strong focus on inclusion, diversity and gender equality.

Organizational leadership and accountability

73. The institutional implementation of the Gender Action Plan is rooted in specific accountability processes involving UNICEF senior leadership. The Gender Action Plan steering committee, chaired by the Deputy Executive Director (Programmes), issued guidance for field-level implementation of the Plan focusing on gender mainstreaming tools and staffing. UNICEF is committed to implementing the United Nations System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity, including supporting an enabling environment for women in the workplace. In response to staff surveys and other workplace forums where consistent gender differences in workplace satisfaction and issues surrounding women’s experience of sexual harassment have repeatedly surfaced, UNICEF undertook several proactive measures. An independent task force was established in 2018 to review and provide recommendations for UNICEF to effectively and systematically prevent and redress workplace gender-related discrimination, harassment and abuse of power.

74. In June 2018, UNICEF earned the second-highest level of the Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE) Certification, the leading certification standard for gender equality. A key outcome of the EDGE assessment is an action plan for providing more flexible working arrangements, conducting yearly gender pay-gap assessments, and improving communication around the recruitment and promotion process. The application by UNICEF to earn EDGE certification was advocated for by the Gender Push group, an informal community of UNICEF staff established in 2017 to create dialogue and share best practices for making UNICEF a more gender- and family-friendly organization.

IV. Lessons learned and the way forward

75. During the first Gender Action Plan period, 2014–2017, UNICEF articulated concrete programmatic results, reinforced its partnerships and made institutional investments to increase resources, leadership, expertise and accountability on gender equality. Progress, while uneven, was tangible, marking a clear path forward for UNICEF to strengthen its role in support of countries and the global community to

accelerate gender equality results, and to deepen its own capabilities and accountability in gender programming.

76. In 2018, the first year of implementation of the Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021, progress is already evident in several areas, mainly due to the creation of global frameworks that have propelled country offices to prioritize gender results. Work around MHH, positive gender socialization and the prevention of violence against women and girls are all areas with a renewed focus and momentum. Girls' skills development has emerged as an important programming area, and innovation and partnerships with the private sector and philanthropic foundations are proving a promising strategy to increase girls' access to information and opportunities. These developments contain important lessons to guide progress in emerging priority areas, such as women's paid and unpaid care work.

77. The establishment of a basic gender architecture during the last Gender Action Plan was fundamental to moving the needle on gender integration in field-level programming. Gender expertise and capacity, particularly at headquarters and regional levels, has made significant inroads in shifting institutional thinking from the "why" of doing gender programming to the "how" of doing it effectively. However, efforts during the current Gender Action Plan must be accelerated to cement this progress and to address persistent capacity gaps at the country level. Here, capabilities to conduct effective gender analysis require special attention, as does the staffing of gender specialist and gender focal point positions. For example, the ongoing lack of gender specialists in many country offices means that UNICEF remains well short of the target set in the previous Gender Action Plan, of 50 country-level specialists. In addition, while there have been improved efforts overall on gender data-generation and sex-disaggregation, there are still numerous gaps and monitoring remains weak.

78. Ultimately, however, investments in capacity and tools to improve gender-responsive programming are reliant on the requisite leadership support at all levels of the organization. The particular challenge of integrating gender into country accountability systems will be a critical focus for UNICEF in 2019.

79. In 2018, UNICEF saw increased organizational momentum to empower female staff, achieve gender parity in the appointment of new senior leaders in 2019 and implement activities to foster a more gender-responsive workplace culture. Gender parity, gender-based discrimination and workplace policies have all come under greater scrutiny thanks to formal and informal processes that are stirring change in the status quo. The support of the Executive Director has been invaluable in this respect; her leadership sending a clear signal that UNICEF is committed to proactively strengthening the organization's accountability to embedding gender equality throughout its institutional structures.

80. This has allowed UNICEF to move into the next year with an increased awareness across the organization of gender issues – both as they affect UNICEF staff as professionals and in the work of UNICEF. Armed with the right tools, UNICEF will continue to focus on capacity, consolidation and strengthening at-scale gender programming in the coming years.