

STATE OF

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Bosnia and Herzegovina

2020



Children's rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina

While there has been progress concerning several areas of children's rights in recent years, significant disparities persist, particularly for children from the Roma community and other vulnerable children because of age, gender, disability, and place of residence. There is still a lack of up-to-date representative data at country level to comprehensively monitor the realization of children's rights.

Maternal and infant mortality rates have significantly improved in recent decades. Infant mortality fell from 7.5 per 1,000 live births in 2006 to 5.1 per 1,000 live births in 2016, though many deaths still occur in the first 28 days after birth. Services for young children, including early detection of developmental delays and early intervention, have not been fully institutionalized. Immunization rates have been declining, and measles outbreaks are frequent across the country. Obesity is increasing among kindergarten and school-aged children, especially in urban areas.

Preschool enrolment for children aged 3 to 6 years is the lowest in Europe (25%) with clear gaps between urban and rural areas and between employed and unemployed parents. Access to primary education (98%) and secondary education (85%) is high, but inclusive quality education

remains limited as there are serious learning and equity gaps in the country's education systems.

In recent years Bosnia and Herzegovina made progress on child protection, including by adopting and implementing Laws on Protection and Treatment of Children and Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings. Significant progress has also been made in establishing a sound system of foster care, certification of foster parents and the professionalization of the social services workforce. However, not all children are protected from violent discipline, physical and sexual abuse, neglect and child online sexual abuse; access to justice should be made more equitable, particularly for Roma and other vulnerable children; and the high rate of children in institutional care should be addressed.

Social exclusion of vulnerable families is multi-dimensional. Children consistently have higher poverty rates than the general population, with absolute poverty for children at 30.6% in 2011. Most social assistance benefits are paid to war veterans and their families. Social and child protection legislative reforms improving the adequacy and coverage of child cash benefits have advanced in both entities (Republika Srpska and Federation of BiH), but much more remains to be done.



Issues	 Child and maternal mortality	 Immunization	 Child malnutrition			
 Equity	The poor, rural residents, adolescent girls and ethnic minorities still have lower access to health services. Under-five mortality for Roma children is estimated at 27 per 1,000 live births.	MICS data from 2011-2012 showed that the rate of full immunization for BCG, DTP, polio and MMR was only 4% for Roma children.	Roma children are twice as prone to stunting. Research shows that in certain areas of the country up to 50% of school-aged children are obese.			
 Number of children affected	Under-five mortality: 6/1,000 (2018) Maternal mortality 13.2/100,000 (2015)	32% of all children are not fully immunized	Stunting: 10% Overweight: 17%			
	Bottlenecks	Strategies	Bottlenecks	Strategies	Bottlenecks	Strategies
Enabling Environment Social norms, legislation, budget, management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No defined basic package of health rights Fragmented service delivery Inefficiencies in insurance and hospital systems Lack of up-to-date data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure sufficient allocation and efficient utilization of allocated resources to implement existing strategies relating to child health, including for preventive health care ✓ Enhance data collection, analysis and use of data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate and inefficient governance of immunization service provision Inadequate data quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Support governments to develop strategies and action plans for immunization. ✓ Increase commitment of decision makers and professionals to improve immunization services and data collection ✓ Increase funding for replacement of cold-chain equipment, communication and social mobilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of adequate regulation to address obesity Lack of up-to-date data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislate on healthy schools, baby-friendly standards, regulation of marketing of breast milk substitutes. ✓ Include nutrition literacy in school curricula and reduce access to sweetened beverages and high-fat snacks
Supply Availability of services, access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low spending on preventive healthcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Develop capacity of health providers to provide equity-based and quality health services to all children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills of some health professionals are not adequate Vaccine stock-outs Limited number of paediatricians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Train health staff in vaccinology, interpersonal communication for immunization and other areas where gaps detected ✓ Strengthen vaccine planning and forecasting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of mainstreaming of breastfeeding support in maternal and child health programmes and scaling up exclusive breastfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Train health professionals on the importance of breastfeeding and provision of support to new mothers/families
Demand Financial access, beliefs & practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of documentation and/or information about health insurance rights (e.g. for Roma), leading to low uptake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Equip children, parents, adolescents and communities with information, knowledge and skills to demand quality and evidence-based child health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of knowledge among 'new generation' of parents about the importance of immunization Influence of anti-vaccine movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Engage with communities through social mobilization and communication to increase demand ✓ Engage with non-traditional partners such as religious communities, the private sector and others to promote immunization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low breastfeeding rates Lack of knowledge of healthy food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Empower communities, parents/caregivers, children and adolescents, and convince them that improved nutrition for children leads to better health and contributes to childhood educational achievement



Issues	 Insufficient access to early childhood education		 Gaps in access to school education		 Inadequate quality of education	
 Equity	<p>0.5% of children from rural areas and 2% of children from families with unemployed parents attend preschool. Less than 2% of Roma children and 2% of children with disabilities are enrolled in preschool.</p>		<p>Of the Roma population: 69% attend primary and 23% secondary education, with higher enrolment for Roma boys than girls. Children with disabilities and children on the move also experience significant challenges accessing education.</p>		<p>Socio-economically advantaged students outperformed disadvantaged students by 58 points in reading according to PISA 2018. Children with disabilities in mainstream education are not supported well.</p>	
 Number of children affected	<p>Preschool enrolment for children 3 to 6 years is the lowest in Europe 25%</p>		<p>Overall 97.6% of children attend primary and 84.6% attend secondary education (2013/14)</p>		<p>15-year-old children performing at PISA Level 2 (minimum level): Reading: 46%; Mathematics: 42%; Science: 43% (2018)</p>	
Enabling Environment Social norms, legislation, budget, management	Bottlenecks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of appropriate funding mechanisms for preschool education Limited understanding of policy makers of the importance of pre-school education Discriminatory attitudes towards children with disabilities and Roma children Lack of up-to-date data 	Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in early childhood education and early childhood development Increase viability of pre-school institutions Raise societal awareness of the importance of quality ECEC Reduce stigma and discrimination Data 	Bottlenecks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decentralisation as an obstacle to the realization of the right to education Enrollment policies in secondary education not harmonised with labour market needs Statutory definition of disability missing from anti-discrimination legislation Stigma and discrimination of children with disabilities, Roma and children on the move Pupils and teachers experience ethnic and religious segregation, intolerance and division 	Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen efficiency and coordination of public expenditure for education Advocate for compulsory secondary education Support to governments in development of inclusive education models 	Bottlenecks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislative framework, standards, and strategic directions not fully implemented Inefficient funding for education Common core curricula developed but not implemented Lack of reliable and comprehensive statistics on education No standardisation of teacher training Inadequate system for career orientation and professional development 	Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for full implementation of legislative framework Support implementation of common core curricula based on learning outcomes Strengthen education statistics Strengthen pre-service and in-service teacher training Support the change of syllabi to reflect 21st century skills and learning
Supply Availability of services, access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient provision of pre-school and early intervention services Lack of free-of-charge preschool programmes Insufficient equipment and well-trained staff 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient supply of equipment and well-trained staff No free textbooks and transport for primary school children in some parts of the country 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher training not linked to needs of students Insufficient links between education curricula and labour market needs 	
Demand Financial access, beliefs & practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value of early childhood education not fully appreciated by society 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of financial assistance to low-income families affects access to school Low awareness of the importance of education among Roma families 			



Issues	 Children without parental care		 Violence against children		 Access to justice	
 Equity	Poor children, children with disabilities, Roma children, and children on the move are disproportionately affected by separation from their families.		Roma children, children with disabilities, and children on the move are disproportionately affected by all forms of violence.		All children, especially children from poor families, children with disabilities, Roma children and children on the move do not benefit equally from access to justice.	
 Number of children affected	1,818 children without parental care are in institutional care		55% of children aged 2-14 experienced a violent method of discipline		More than 3,300 children (21% girls, 50% boys, 29% gender not recorded) found themselves before the courts in 2018 in various roles	
Enabling Environment Social norms, legislation, budget, management	Bottlenecks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of an overall roadmap that outlines strategies and milestones to further ensure deinstitutionalization of all children Limited availability and poor use of data 	Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reallocate government resources from institutional to family and community-based care ✓ Analyse gaps in service provision along continuum of care, to prevent family separation ✓ Improve quality of all forms of alternative care, and reduce the number of children in institutional care ✓ Routinely collect and analyse data on children in alternative care 	Bottlenecks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remaining gaps in and inadequate harmonization of legislation on domestic violence, sexual exploitation and abuse of children and corporal punishment Cultural norms reinforce the belief that violent disciplinary measures are an acceptable part of child-rearing Limited availability and poor use of data 	Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Prioritize prevention of violence/child maltreatment ✓ Improve quantity and quality of professional social work ✓ Address harmful social norms and behaviours around violent discipline ✓ Ensure full legal prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings in FBiH and Brčko District ✓ Routinely collect and analyse data on all forms of violence against children 	Bottlenecks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and practical barriers impede children's access to justice Official court case management system does not provide data on child vulnerability, even if prescribed by law Insufficient child-friendly legislation provisions and practices in civil justice and administrative procedures 	Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Further enhance child-friendly justice, especially for child victims and witnesses ✓ Enhance justice sector's ability to manage protection and promotion of children's rights in civil procedures and family law ✓ Advocate for replication of best practices on diversion, reintegration and holistic approach during all stages of proceedings ✓ Harmonise legal aid legislation ✓ Support community-based, multi-disciplinary information and services to help children and their families' access information, legal aid/ advice and referral to support services
Supply Availability of services, access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate case management and gatekeeping mechanisms Scattered and inequitable availability of quality family- and community-based family and alternative care services for children 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate capacities of centres for social welfare to identify, report and address cases of violence against children Limited availability of and access to specialized support for child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, such as psychosocial support and rehabilitation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inequitable access to legal aid and child-friendly judiciary proceedings Limited multi-disciplinary, holistic approach to the provision of support and assistance in legal proceedings Insufficient use of diversion and alternative measures and limited access to reintegration measures to children upon release from detention 	
Demand Financial access, beliefs & practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement of children in institutional case because of poverty 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate information among children and caregivers on where and how to seek child protection support Parents' limited understanding of positive parenting 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and their families are not sufficiently aware of their rights, how to access justice and seek redress 	

Right to equitable chances in life



Issues	 Inadequate social protection system	 Inadequate planning system for children
 Equity	Particularly the poorest children, those in rural areas and those who have a disability or belong to an ethnic minority, such as Roma.	Particularly the poorest children, those in rural areas and those who have a disability or belong to an ethnic minority, such as Roma.
 Number of children affected	Absolute child poverty: 30.6% (2011); high levels of multi-dimensional deprivation	All children, especially the most vulnerable groups
Enabling Environment Social norms, legislation, budget, management	Bottlenecks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited budgets for social assistance Weak coordination at country-wide level Low awareness on the importance of social protection of children Investment in children not perceived as a priority Absence of social protection policies and long-term costed strategies Lack of up-to-date data on multi-dimensional child poverty and social exclusion 	Bottlenecks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of costed, credible and comprehensive medium to long-term policy planning Non-use of results-based budgeting in budget planning No systematic measurement and analysis of child poverty and exclusion No common definition or standardized methodology for the assessment of disability according to the social model
Supply Availability of services, access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to social assistance benefits and social protection services Size of benefits too small to make a meaningful difference to household poverty Low capacities of Centres for Social Welfare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No systematic measurement and analysis of multi-dimensional child poverty and exclusion Municipalities lack capacity to transform strategic priorities into implementable action
Demand Financial access, beliefs & practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited information on social assistance benefits for vulnerable groups, especially Roma 	Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess child cash benefits and other social protection schemes Policy advocacy around child poverty and deprivations Policy advocacy and technical support for social protection, inclusion policy and legislation
		Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build capacity to measure child deprivations, produce evidence on child poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion Promote behaviour change, increase demand for quality social services and support change of social norms Support children and young people as agents of change, creating platforms and opportunities for them to participate in decision-making

What are UNICEF's priorities in the country?

UNICEF's Country Office focuses on systems strengthening in health, education, child protection and social protection. UNICEF will facilitate further capacity development of policy-makers and professionals, so that they can make the best decisions for children, and will advocate for changing the perceptions and behaviour of service providers, caregivers as well as children, including adolescents, themselves, so as to improve the demand for and the quality of services accessed by children and adolescents. UNICEF will concurrently provide support to a range of partners to further develop the capacity for systematically monitoring the rights of children.

UNICEF's country programme also includes various cross-sectoral programmatic components that address children's rights throughout the life cycle.

The 2021-2025 UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Programme will focus on the following priorities and expected outcomes:



Children and their families benefit from improved and adequately funded social protection and inclusion systems and enhanced child rights monitoring.

- Enhancing evidence-based child rights monitoring and policy advocacy
- Strengthening social protection systems
- Promoting child and youth friendly cities



Children benefit from quality, evidence-based and integrated health, nutrition and early childhood development systems.

- Increasing immunization
- Improving early childhood development coverage and quality
- Reducing malnutrition



Children and youth benefit from quality and inclusive education and skills development.

- Increasing early childhood education and care coverage and quality
- Promoting quality and inclusive education
- Creating opportunities for adolescents' 21st century skills development and participation



Children benefit from enhanced access to social welfare, care and justice systems to ensure their right to protection from violence, abuse and exploitation.

- Accelerating deinstitutionalization
- Addressing violence against children
- Enhancing justice for children



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