CHILDREN GROW IN SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTS

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. To save their lives. To defend their rights. To help them fulfil their potential.

Across 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, every day, to build a better world for everyone. And we never give up.

Stretching from Mongolia in the North to Tonga in the South, the East Asia and the Pacific region covers one of the most diverse and dynamic areas in the world. UNICEF manage and implement programmes supporting the fulfillment of children’s rights in the 28 countries across the region. Country office carry out UNICEF’s mission through a unique programme of cooperation developed with the host government and other key partners.

UNICEF is supported entirely by the voluntary contributions of governments, donations made by foundations, corporations and private individuals.
Girls and boys in the East Asia and the Pacific (EAP) region live in one of the most dynamic parts of the globe, but they are constantly confronted with shocks and stresses that threaten their development. EAP is the most disaster-affected region in the world and the impacts of climate change are taking an added toll on livelihoods of vulnerable families. Rapid rates of urbanization are offering new opportunities while also exacerbating these vulnerabilities, posing new health risks and challenges for delivering adequate infrastructure and basic services; mitigating congestion and air pollution, and promoting social cohesion. UNICEF programmes under this regional headline are guided by the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the UNICEF Strategic Plan.

**Early moments matter**

1.1 Maternal newborn and child health  
1.2 Preventive and curative nutrition services  
1.3 Positive parenting and care practices  
1.4 Early childhood development  
1.5 Quality pre-primary and primary education and learning  
1.6 Multi-dimensional child poverty and social protection

**Children grow in safe and sustainable environments**

**Regional Headline 1**

2.1 Children and urban inequity  
2.2 Water sanitation and hygiene  
2.3 Indoor and ambient air pollution  
2.4 Children’s participation in climate action  
2.5 Disaster risk reduction and social cohesion  
2.6 Access to justice

**Regional Headline 2**

3.1 Adolescents’ education and learning  
3.2 Gender-responsive adolescent health and nutrition  
3.3 Preventing and responding to violence  
3.4 Child marriage and teenage pregnancy  
3.5 Safe spaces for participation, creativity and self-expression  
3.6 Safe and responsible use of information and communications technologies

**Regional Headline 3**

1. Children and urban inequity  
2. Water sanitation and hygiene  
3. Indoor and ambient air pollution  
4. Children’s participation in climate action  
5. Disaster risk reduction and social cohesion  
6. Access to justice

**Adolescents’ potential unleashed**

1.1 Maternal newborn and child health  
1.2 Preventive and curative nutrition services  
1.3 Positive parenting and care practices  
1.4 Early childhood development  
1.5 Quality pre-primary and primary education and learning  
1.6 Multi-dimensional child poverty and social protection

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3. Indoor and ambient air pollution  
4. Children’s participation in climate action  
5. Disaster risk reduction and social cohesion  
6. Access to justice
2.1 Children and Urban Inequity

Key issues in East Asia and the Pacific

In Asia, cities generate roughly 75 per cent of a country’s Gross Domestic Product, and urban areas are 5.5 times more productive than the rural economy.1 It has been projected that more than half of the total East Asia and the Pacific population would be living in urban areas by 2018.2 Of the estimated 1.2 billion people living in urban areas, the World Bank calculates that more than 250 million live in slums and 75 million live below the poverty line of US$3.10/day.3 Although there are pockets of concentrated poverty in some large cities, urban poverty is higher in small- and medium-sized cities. In Viet Nam, for example, small cities and towns host 43 per cent of the country’s total urban population and more than 70 per cent of the total urban poor. Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, which host 32 per cent of the country’s total urban population, only have 11 per cent of the total urban poor population. Higher costs of living, social barriers and exclusion prevent many in the region from accessing services and opportunities.

Rural-urban migration, natural population increase and the reclassification of administrative boundaries contribute to urbanization in the region. Incomplete decentralization reforms have left cities administratively and fiscally incapable of providing adequate services, leading to an increase in inequality, risk and exclusion for the most marginalized and disadvantaged urban dwellers.4 Many cities are well-equipped to respond better to children’s needs from their own resources, by mobilizing private contributions and learning from effective existing initiatives. However, due to a lack of demand by marginalized communities and inadequate participatory surveillance and accountability systems in place, awareness of services and identification of solutions is stifled. Marginalized urban communities, such as migrant women and children, face multiple deprivations and prohibitive and exclusionary registration policies, lack basic services, and are highly vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination and insecurity. Rapid urbanization also impacts upon family structures, with young adults leaving children and other family members behind as they seek economic opportunities. In China, for example, both migrant children and those left behind by migrant parents engage in significantly fewer interactions and demonstrate lower competence (functioning) than other Chinese children.5

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1 ADB 2016.
Driving results for children

The rural-urban continuum poses challenges for both source (rural) and destination (urban) areas that must be considered in planning interventions to address inequality in cities. By fostering community networks and protective factors such as traditional care systems, children living in cities will be able to access support when they experience violence, abuse or neglect. Reducing child and household poverty will help prevent children in cities being forced into exploitative situations. It is essential that governments, the private sector and development partners take pre-emptive and proactive action to equip children and families with the knowledge, skills and resources they need to access services and be protected from risks.

In line with Sustainable Development Goal 11, UNICEF prioritizes support to: (1) improving urban governance, and ensuring meaningful participation by children and adolescents in identifying challenges and opportunities, and gaining insight into the factors that determine child well-being; (2) developing and implementing inclusive and innovative policies and interventions, with a particular focus on interventions in the first 1,000 days of life, and for adolescents; (3) reinforcing central and local public finance management processes to secure adequate resources for integrated and comprehensive services for all children; and (4) promoting child-friendly infrastructure and services.

Key programme strategies

**Systems and capacity**
- Strengthen urban governance, particularly in small- to medium-sized cities, and urban centres where new growth is taking place, through increased knowledge exchange and advocacy for improved urban design and social services.
- Building on the 2018 *Growing Up Urban* conference in Surabaya, create opportunities to: share experience across cities; exchange data, research and analysis; and allow replication of good urban governance on delivering services and understanding emerging urban risks for children and adolescents.
- Nurture the child-friendly cities initiative by tapping into lessons learned from the experience of other countries, for example Brazil and Colombia.
- Collaborate on the Child Health Initiative that integrates the climate change, air pollution and urban planning agenda.
- Strengthen urban social protection systems and interventions.

**Data, evidence and knowledge**
- Strengthen mapping and analysis of: informal settlements and communities, existing urban activities and case studies of area-based strategies.
- Sector-specific studies including: nutrition in cities; water, sanitation and hygiene for the urban poor; and migration challenges.
- Support to improve sampling and inclusion of the urban poor and marginalized communities in multiple indicator cluster surveys and data collection exercises; and improve disaggregated data collection, analysis and dissemination.
- Map urban stakeholders, identifying roles, capacities and interventions.
- Conduct analysis of public finance management in and for cities.
- Support efforts to engage children and adolescents in monitoring child well-being in cities, and the challenges they face.
- Literature review of slum and informal settlement studies.
- Define data collection and research methodology to conduct further data collection and analysis of urban areas and slums.

**Partnerships and alliances**
- Engage with city authorities, mayoral and non-traditional national-level agencies to promote innovative action and resource allocation to improve children’s outcomes.
- Set up a Children and Youth Committee and organize a networking session within the United Cities and Local Governance organization.
- Expand partnerships with international organizations, civil society, the private sector, academia, local governments and targeted communities to foster information sharing, joint action, monitoring and data collection, evidence generation and advocacy.
- Collaborate with UN agencies, particularly UN-Habitat, as part of the Regional Task Team on Sustainable Urbanization and Urbanization Programming.

**Governance, policy and budget**
- Advocate in relation to emerging urban risks and opportunities for marginalized and impoverished children and adolescents, including through public financial management systems and public-private partnerships.
- Support efforts to strengthen public finance management for essential services for poor and marginalized children in urban centres.

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6 Wang and Mesman. 2015. The paper discussed three types of functioning of children: emotional functioning means children’s feelings about themselves; social functioning refers to children’s interactions with peers and includes positive and negative outcomes; school functioning refers generally to school grade and sense of belonging to school.

7 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.”
Key issues in East Asia and the Pacific

Despite the considerable progress in improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation over recent decades in East Asia and the Pacific, around 519 million people in 2017 were still without access to at least basic sanitation, and more than 75 million people, mostly poor, still practiced open defecation. Indonesia has the third highest number of people defecating in the open in the world (32 million). Other countries in the region with more than 5 million people practicing open defecation are China (21 million), Cambodia (6 million) and the Philippines (6 million). With regards to access to safe water supplies, 727 million people do not have access to piped water supplies and in 6 of the 12 East Asia countries, the urban-rural gap for access is higher than the global average of 15 per cent. In the Pacific sub-region, the gap (51 per cent) is higher than in any other UNICEF region and the situation has been stagnant over recent decades. Access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools is also a cause for concern, with sanitation coverage in the region lagging 8 percentage points behind the global average. Misconceptions and inadequate information about menstrual hygiene management negatively impacts upon the lives of many girls. Similarly, neonatal deaths, which are mostly preventable, are attributed to poor access to WASH in healthcare facilities.

Critical issues affecting the poorest and most vulnerable families across the region include: significant disparity in WASH coverage between and within countries; inequity between rich and poor, and rural and urban households in access to sustainable and safely managed water and sanitation in households, schools and healthcare facilities; and emerging issues related to water quality and the detrimental impact of climate change.

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Driving results for children

Progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 requires the implementation of WASH-specific and context-specific interventions. UNICEF prioritizes support to: (1) achieving sustainable open defecation-free status and changes in social norms and behaviour regarding sanitation and hygiene; (2) increased prioritization of WASH in schools, in healthcare facilities and for the urban poor; and (3) sustainable and climate-resilient WASH services, including in emergencies.

Key programme strategies

**Systems and capacity**
- Strengthen WASH systems and programmes, including innovative approaches and establishing standards for WASH in schools, healthcare facilities and urban settings.
- Support development and testing of equitable and sustainable WASH services for ending open defecation at scale and improving the quality of sanitation services.
- Strengthen national WASH monitoring systems and data analysis, including support for improved regional platforms for tracking country progress, and contribute to regional and global results SDG 6 results.
- Support joint nutrition-WASH action contributing to addressing stunting.
- Adopt and roll-out Climate Resilient WASH Framework and risk-informed programming, and support child- and climate-resilient risk approaches.
- Strengthen emergency preparedness and response capacity and resilience for safe management of WASH services.

**Data, evidence and knowledge**
- Conduct assessment of WASH in healthcare facilities and assess the key drivers of access to sustainable WASH services for the urban poor.
- Systematically document and use evidence-based case studies of equitable WASH approaches and innovation.
- Facilitate South-South learning exchange and knowledge management, particularly around innovative approaches to WASH challenges.
- Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of key WASH programmes and multi-sectoral approaches.

**Governance, policy and budget**
- Provide technical support to strengthen the enabling environment including joint sector reviews, evidence-based national WASH strategies and policies reflecting community needs and priorities, promoting prioritization of WASH in schools, in healthcare facilities and in workplaces.
- Advocate for access to WASH for the poorest households is considered in social protection systems, particularly in emergency response.
- Provide technical support to budget analysis and promote increased public and innovative WASH financing.
- Strengthen cross-sectoral coordination with education, health, nutrition, emergency and public finance management for synergy and integration.

**Partnerships and alliances**
- Extend advocacy and technical support to global/regional inter-governmental institutions, including the Sanitation and Water for All Political Forum and ASEAN, to increase political focus on and prioritisation of WASH.
- Collaborate with Singapore Water Academy for quality training and capacity building initiatives in WASH.
- Engage with international financial institutions to advocate for and promote increased external and domestic financing for WASH, including exploring joint climate-resilient WASH action and WASH for the urban poor and vulnerable.
- Coordinate joint action with UN agencies for policy advocacy, standard setting, technical support and strengthening SDG WASH monitoring.
- Establish partnerships with private sector and non-governmental organizations to identify and test innovative WASH approaches and models.

**Behaviour change**
- Promote hygiene and sanitation behaviour change as part of the Community-Led Total Sanitation and comprehensive joint nutrition-WASH behaviour and care practices strategy for promoting family care and hygiene practices.
- Support national behaviour change strategies and campaigns such as Global Handwashing Day and World Toilet Day to encourage change in social norms.
- Integrate behaviour change for health, nutrition, early childhood, sanitation and hygiene to challenge existing social norms around water safety, menstrual hygiene management and other key sanitation and hygiene behaviours and practices in the development and humanitarian contexts.

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2 “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.”
Key issues in East Asia and the Pacific

Globally, outdoor and indoor air pollution are directly linked with pneumonia and other respiratory diseases that account for almost 1 in 10 under-5 deaths, making air pollution one of the leading dangers to children's health. Up to one third of deaths from the leading non-communicable diseases (stroke, lung cancer, heart attack and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) are due to air pollution. Air pollution also contributes to child illnesses through its impacts on: fetal growth; pregnancy outcomes; neurodevelopmental disorders; childhood growth and obesity; endocrine function and puberty; allergic diseases; and immune function. Children with pre-existing conditions and the poorest children suffer the most from air pollution-related health and development effects.

About 92 per cent of people in the region are exposed to levels of harmful air pollution. Particulate matter in the atmosphere with a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometers (PM2.5) is the biggest environmental cause of death and illness. South and East Asia contributed 59 per cent of the 4.2 million global deaths attributable to ambient PM2.5 in 2015. Household air pollution is also a key health threat to child and maternal health in Timor-Leste, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Papua New Guinea and Myanmar. While some countries in the region are making progress, most face critical challenges in their fight against air pollution due to the lack of availability and use of quality data on air quality and health impacts, and insufficient technical capacity, financing and cross-sectoral governance mechanisms to develop and implement clean air solutions that meet the needs of children and the most vulnerable populations.

### Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter PM2.5 in urban areas

Source: WHO World Health Statistics

### Death rates attributed to the effects of household and ambient air pollution among children under 5 years of age, 2016

Source: WHO World Health Statistics
Driving results for children

UNICEF will leverage its convening power, its technical expertise in health, education, water and sanitation, its capacity to mobilize grassroots movements, and its engagement with the private sector. UNICEF prioritizes support to: (1) reduce the number of deaths of children and the frequency and severity of diseases of children attributed to air pollution (health benefits); (2) decrease negative effects on child development, including learning outcomes (development benefits); (3) improve air quality, especially where it affects child and maternal health (environmental benefits); and (4) contribute to the decrease in emission of pollutants, including long-lived greenhouse gases and short-lived climate pollutants (climate benefits). This action on air pollution will produce co-benefits that will help countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on health (SDG 3), energy (SDG 7), cities (SDG 11) and climate change (SDG 13).

Key programme strategies

**Systems and capacity**

Support health and environment agencies and cities to:

- Strengthen child-sensitive air quality monitoring, forecasting and assessment systems.
- Develop and implement an integrated indoor air quality management approach for kindergartens, schools and healthcare centres.
- Pilot and expand proven innovative measures for clean transport, clean fuel for cooking and heating, and better waste management, ventilation and urban planning.
- Strengthen healthcare systems to better address the health effects of air pollution on children, and provide better health care to the most vulnerable.
- Promote active engagement by children and youth in monitoring air quality and promoting clean air solutions as a part of the curriculum and formal/information education activities.

**Data, evidence and knowledge**

- Support national and local authorities and youth groups to: (1) review and evaluate current interventions on air pollution; (2) identify the most impactful, cost-effective strategies and options; and (3) develop pilots and expansion of child-focused clean air solutions on the ground, in partnership with private investors and national and local authorities.
- Help national and local health, environment and education authorities to assess current and future children's health and the developmental impacts of air pollution.
- Promote South-South cooperation on research and science-policy on air pollution and children's health, building on the UNICEF publications *Clear the Air for Children* and *Danger in the Air*.
- Strengthen data on integrated management of childhood illness and improve understanding of the impacts of air pollution on children's health and development.

**Partnerships and alliances**

- Engage children in monitoring air quality data around schools and health facilities, finding cost-effective solutions and reducing the exposure of vulnerable children to air pollution.
- Partner with WHO, UN Environment, Climate Clean Air Coalition, Every Breath Counts, Clean Air Asia and regional and local youth networks for a better understanding of children's health and the developmental impacts of air pollution; reducing exposure of children to air pollution and the health effects on children associated with air pollution; and reducing air pollution and improving air quality.

**Governance, policy and budget**

- Promote child-sensitive government policies, regulations and standards on air quality and children's health, including the associated economic costs and public financial management implications.
- Support the establishment of functioning governance mechanisms to tackle air pollution, including participation of children and adolescents and cross-sectoral mechanisms bringing together the health, environment and industry sectors.
- Advocate for the development of child-sensitive, cross-sectoral air pollution strategies, policies and action plans, including air quality assessment, standards, legislation, child-focused investment needs, urban planning, design of economic incentives and financing options.

**Behaviour change**

- Enhance national and local capacity to provide accurate and user-friendly information about the measures that families, communities, schools and hospitals can take to reduce pregnant women's and children's exposure to air pollution indoors and outdoors, including face masks, air quality monitors, school guidance, teacher training modules, and exposure to second hand smoke.
Key issues in East Asia and the Pacific

The Asia and the Pacific region accounts for 50 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. The East and Northeast Asia sub-regions are the largest emitters, while Pacific Island Countries are responsible for only 3 per cent of emissions.1 While climate change affects everyone, the most affected are children and young people, resulting in increased numbers of deaths due to natural hazards, growth in non-communicable diseases, and damage to habitation and infrastructure. In recent years, the UN Human Rights Council and the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child have reiterated that inaction on climate change violates children’s right to inhabit a safe and sustainable planet. Children will inherit the consequences of climate change, even though they are least responsible for it.

Countries are laying out national priorities for climate mitigation and adaptation action through the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that are a core element of the Paris Agreement on climate change. Some have prioritized water, agriculture and health for climate adaptation. Increased synergy and integrated action between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation have also been highlighted by countries as priorities for building climate resilience. While there are some examples of children taking environmental action at community level to address climate change, environmental pollution and degradation, governments have often undermined the role that can be played by them. The focus on children’s engagement is not only important to achieving Sustainable Development Goals 13,2 163 and 17,4 but also central to the rights of children and adolescents as custodians of the planet, and as such, mobilizing their ideas and voices can lead to better action on the part of governments.

1 In 2012, (source: ESCAP 2017).
2 “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.”
3 “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”
4 “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.”
Driving results for children

As part of the UN development system’s support to help countries develop and accelerate the implementation of the NDCs, UNICEF and its partners focus on promoting child and adolescent participation at country and regional levels, in both policy design and programme implementation. This includes contributing to the following results:

- Improved understanding of the role of children and adolescents in climate action;
- Child and adolescent participation mechanisms established in design, decision-making, planning and implementation of climate action at country and sub-regional levels;
- Increased climate action proposed and implemented through participation of children and adolescents;
- Enhanced transparency, responsiveness, ownership, equity and participation in the development and implementation of NDCs;
- Improved transparency and accountability of country actions in implementing their NDCs.

Key programme strategies

**Systems and capacity**

- Strengthen national and sub-national government capacity to engage children and adolescents in planning and decision making related to climate change.
- Build the capacity of formal and informal institutions to empower children and adolescents with skills related to climate change and environmental sustainability.
- Support innovative solutions developed by children and adolescents to promote climate action.

**Data, evidence and knowledge**

- Identify good practices in child- and adolescent-led climate action across the region for replication and expansion, in the context of UN support for accelerating the NDCs.
- Invest in research on the impacts of climate change on child and adolescent health and well-being (looking at areas such as non-communicable diseases, violence prevention, and learning outcomes).

**Partnerships and alliances**

- Work with community networks (e.g. youth groups, scouts, faith-based organizations) to promote community-level action on climate change.

**Behaviour change**

- National social mobilization campaigns to raise awareness of the roles of children and adolescents in promoting accountability and transparency in national climate action.
Key issues in East Asia and the Pacific

East Asia and the Pacific is the most disaster-stricken region in the world. The most common hazards in the region include typhoons, tsunami, earthquakes and drought. Factors including rapid urbanization, population growth, environmental degradation and climate change further accelerate and exacerbate hazard trends in the region.

Between 2000 and 2016, the region lost over 153,000 lives to natural disasters, which affected 1.67 billion people in East Asia and 1.2 million in the Pacific, around half from floods. In 2015/2016, erratic monsoons and El Niño-induced droughts affected most countries. For instance, in 2015, Viet Nam had its worst drought in 90 years, affecting over 2 million people (including 520,000 children) in 52 of its 63 provinces, with a state of emergency being declared in 18 provinces. In 2017, internal armed conflict and ethnic strife, particularly in Myanmar and the Philippines, generated the internal and cross-border displacement and mass migration of more than 1 million people, more than 50 per cent of whom were children. These disasters have devastating consequences for children and their families across the region, causing death, displacement and disruption of basic services for child survival and development. In multiple risk contexts, these disasters interfere with social cohesion, widening gender inequality, increasing violence against women and girls and creating tensions in the context of emerging disparity.

While acknowledging that many countries in the region have invested substantially in national capacity and allocated dedicated resources for disaster risk reduction interventions, uneven distribution of support and adherence to international standards remains a concern. While several global and regional frameworks and platforms for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation highlight increased focus on the engagement of children, national policies and laws rarely emphasize child rights.

Source: UNISDR, WHO Estimates

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1 GFDRR and the World Bank. 2017
2 UNESCAP. 2017. Asia Pacific Disaster Report
3 Ibid.
4 UNICEF Viet Nam. 2016.
5 UNICEF East Asia Pacific. 2017.
Driving results for children

The ‘Grand Bargain’ (an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers on humanitarian funding) emphasizes the need to place humanitarian action within a broader development and resilience framework. In line with the 25 disaster risk-related targets across 10 Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and building on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, UNICEF prioritizes support to: (1) ensuring that development programmes are risk-informed, address underlying drivers of inequity, deprivation and fragility, and contribute to strengthening the resilience of children, households, institutions and systems; (2) strengthening the linkage between social protection systems and humanitarian action, preparing social protection systems in advance to help families recover from disasters (e.g., through emergency procedures and cash transfers); and (3) enhancing coherence between humanitarian and development programmes.

Key programme strategies

**Systems and capacity**
- Facilitate capacity building for inclusive, multi-hazard risk assessments.
- Strengthen systems and capacity to develop and implement risk-informed programming, including in fragile and conflict contexts.
- Consolidate emergency preparedness and response capacity in line with global standards.
- Strengthen monitoring systems in humanitarian contexts.
- Increase capacity and foster the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in emergencies, including biometrics to register identity of refugees, ICTs for cash transfer systems, and ‘big data’ and digital technologies.

**Data, evidence and knowledge**
- Analyse disaster data and impacts on children, conduct risk assessments and evaluate their usability.
- Conduct research and studies on preparedness and risk reduction, including in fragile contexts.
- Document good practices and lessons learned from the disaster risk reduction and social cohesion, emergency preparedness and humanitarian response.

**Partnerships and alliances**
- Partner with the ASEAN Secretariat in contributing to policy framework and system strengthening.
- Collaborate with Inter-Agency Standing Committees on regional capacity building, standard setting and advocacy.
- Engage with UN Children and the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, a group formed of children and young people collaborating with the UN, on regional advocacy and evidence generation.
- Partner with the private sector in standard setting and capacity building.

**Behavior change**
- Strengthen the implementation of Accountability to Affected Populations and Communication for Development in emergencies.
- Raise awareness of children and families of disaster risk and promote practicing preparedness and preventive measures.
- Explore the use of innovation and technology to engage children, youth and communities in advancing humanitarian response, preparedness and disaster risk reduction.
Key issues in East Asia and the Pacific

Effective access to justice for children is essential for the realization of all children's rights, and these rights must be enshrined in legislation. All countries in the region have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and many have enshrined key children's rights in national laws. However, few have mechanisms that allow violations of children's rights, including economic, social, cultural and civil and political rights, to be addressed. Only three countries (Thailand, Mongolia and Samoa) have ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure (2011), which allows children to seek recourse to the CRC Committee if domestic remedies are exhausted.

Effective access to justice is also fundamental to preventing and responding to violence against children. The justice system must: enable child victims to secure justice; hold perpetrators accountable; and safeguard children from further harm. Children who come into contact with the justice system as victims or witnesses, because they are in conflict with the law, or during custody or protection hearings must have their rights protected and benefit from specialized approaches. However, many countries in the region do not have specialized procedures, agencies, institutions or environments for children (e.g., child-friendly courts). The social service workforce, which plays an essential role in supporting children in contact with the justice system, is nascent. The health sector is often ill-equipped to provide support for child victims of violence or to collect robust forensic evidence. The provision of diversion and non-custodial measures is limited, resulting in unnecessary detention of children.

A child's right to a legal identity and nationality, as well as the protection and realization of children's rights and legal guarantees, and access to services can be enhanced by an effective birth registration system. While birth registration of the under-5s (84 per cent) is relatively high in the region, significant effort will be required to reach 100 per cent coverage by 2030 and ensure that no child – regardless of ethnicity and other status – is left behind.

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1 Access to justice for children refers to the right to obtain a fair, timely and effective remedy for violation of rights, through processes that take into consideration children's specific needs, vulnerabilities and evolving capacity, and protect their dignity.
Driving results for children

Justice must be accessible to all children, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity, and to the most vulnerable children, such as those with disabilities, indigenous and migrant children, and those in humanitarian settings, especially considering the heightened risk of rights violations and violence. To contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16, UNICEF prioritizes support to: (1) enhancing access to justice to challenge child rights violations and obtain remedies; (2) ensuring child victims of violence, abuse and exploitation can secure justice and are protected from revictimization, including through the establishment of child-sensitive procedures in line with international standards; (3) reducing the use of all forms of deprivation of liberty of children, promoting diversionary measures and alternatives to detention, enhancing protection of children deprived of their liberty, and safeguarding the due process guarantees of children; and (4) enhancing civil registration and vital statistics systems, with a focus on achieving 100 per cent coverage for birth registration.

Key programme strategies

Systems and capacity

- Strengthen the mandate and capacity of national human rights institutions and mechanisms to protect and enforce children’s rights.
- Establish/enhance specialized procedures, institutions and environments for children in criminal, civil, administrative and family proceedings.
- Strengthen the mandate and capacity of law enforcement and the judiciary to effectively handle children’s cases, protect their rights and meet the specific needs of vulnerable groups.
- Strengthen inter-agency case management processes and the capacity of the social services and health sectors to support access to justice for children.
- Ensure adequate provision for diversion and alternatives to detention in legislation, policy and practice.
- Increase the number of trained registrars and birth registration points, including through mobile registration units and collaboration with the health and education sectors for routine registration and catch-up campaigns.

Data, evidence and knowledge

- Enhance the information management system across justice system institutions to more effectively collect disaggregated data on cases of boys and girls in contact and conflict with the law.
- Generate evidence on effective prevention and response interventions to offending by under-18s, including in relation to serious crimes and children below the age of criminal responsibility, building on the recommendations of the forthcoming Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty.
- Assess how ‘the best interests of the child’ principle is applied by courts in their interpretation of laws.

Governance, policy and budget

- Promote reform to align domestic legislation with the CRC and other international standards.
- Promote the ratification and operationalization of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure.
- Support the development of laws and policies that strengthen birth registration systems, including integrated systems of civil registration and identity management.
- Ensure adequate budget allocations, policies and institutional mechanisms are in place to operationalize laws on child rights, access to justice, juvenile justice and civil registration, with a focus on birth registration.

Partnerships and alliances

- Engage regional bodies (e.g., ASEAN, Pacific Islands Forum, Human Rights Commissions, Child Rights Coalition of NGOs) in advocating for legislative reform, monitor compliance with the CRC and other international human rights treaties and support treaty body reporting processes.
- Collaborate with associations of judges, law enforcers, lawyers and social workers to enhance specialized procedures and approaches for cases involving children, and promote alternatives to detention.
- Engage with the private sector, especially Information and Communications Technology providers, to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics systems (with a focus on birth registration), and to build awareness of children’s rights and access to justice.
- Collaborate with UN agencies and other bilateral/multilateral agencies involved in access to justice, migration, civil registration and vital statistics and identity management.

Behavior change

- Provide children and their families with accessible information on their rights and the remedies available, promote trust in and use of the justice system, and address social norms that create barriers to children accessing justice.
- Develop strategies to address social norms that drive offending and support harsh treatment of children in conflict with the law.
- Develop strategies to increase demand for birth registration, including awareness of how to register children and the importance of obtaining a birth certificate.

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2 “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” SDG 16 comprises specific targets on access to justice (16.3), protecting children from violence (16.2), legal identity, including birth registration (16.9) and national human rights institutions (16.a).
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