



Mapping of UNICEF's support for making justice systems more inclusive and accessible for children with disabilities

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* Information in this annex was obtained from a number documents, including UNICEF's country programme documents, country office annual reports, programme expenditure reporting and reaching out directly to justice specialists in relevant country offices. The information was compiled by Kristel Jüriloo, then, Programme Officer (Children with Disabilities) | Disability Section, Programme Division, UNICEF

REGION	SUMMARY
Global	<p>In 2019 UNICEF continued to support governments around the world to make justice systems more inclusive and accessible to children. UNICEF supported children's access to justice by strengthening national justice systems to ensure that every child who came in contact with the law – whether as an alleged offender, victim or witness, or as part of civil or administrative matters – can claim their rights. This included strengthening diversion and alternatives to detention, improving support for child survivors or witnesses of crimes, and supporting reform of laws and policies in criminal and civil justice systems. 128 countries reported progress on implementing a range of interventions to improve children's access to justice, reaching around 278,000 children (data from 65 countries) – a marked (44 per cent) increase over previous years. There are 22 UNICEF-supported countries with comprehensive specialized justice systems for children in place.</p>
East Asia and the Pacific	<p>Country: Viet Nam</p> <p>In 2018 UNICEF Viet Nam provided technical support to develop the first-ever undergraduate course on justice for children at Ha Noi Law University. This specialized course aims to build professional knowledge and skills on children's rights among future legal practitioners. The course covers vulnerable groups such as girls and children with disabilities. Rights of children with disabilities are discussed in sections covering non-discrimination and violence against children. More information: https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/child-justice</p>
Europe and Central Asia	<p>ECARO</p> <p>In 2019 the UNICEF Regional Office (ECARO) developed a briefing paper entitled 'Breaking down Barriers: Equitable access to justice for children with disabilities', to be published in 2020. The objective was to provide UNICEF country offices in the region with useful background and context to frame policy dialogue and advocacy initiatives that support equitable access to justice systems for children with disabilities. The briefing paper: i) examines the scope and content of governments' obligations in accordance with international and regional law to guarantee equitable access to justice for children with disabilities; ii) considers some of the challenges and practical implications of implementing these obligations, from the perspective of both age and disability; and iii) provides recommendations for action to create an enabling environment and fully empower children with disabilities to successfully access justice on an equitable basis with their peers.</p> <hr/> <p>ECARO</p> <p>UNICEF ECARO conducted research on children's access to justice in 2015. The final report, "Children's Equitable Access to Justice: Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia", recognizes that children with disabilities face even greater challenges in accessing justice than their peers. The report describes experiences from practitioners and recommends: (i) ensuring that support services are accessible to children with disabilities and (ii) developing institutional guidelines to reach and serve hard-to-reach children, such as those with a disability.</p>

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Europe and Central Asia	<p>ECARO</p> <p>In 2018 the UNICEF Regional Office developed 'Guidelines on Child-Friendly Legal Aid'. The guidelines recommend measures to ensure that communication and information about legal aid includes children with disabilities: "...legal professionals often need to take additional steps to enable their participation. These include: developing a positive and non-discriminatory attitude and encouraging other professionals to do the same, working hard to build trust and rapport and advocating for hearings to be child-friendly and accessible. Legal professionals should ensure that children with physical disabilities, such as blindness or deafness, have access to the communication aids they need to give instructions, give evidence and participate fully in proceedings."</p>
Europe and Central Asia	<p>ECARO</p> <p>ECARO also developed in 2018 several tools to support child-friendly practices at national human rights institutions. The Toolkit for Child-friendly Complaints Mechanisms stresses that communication needs to be adapted to the child's age, stage of development and individual situation (language, gender, disability). It also points out that NHRIs need to pay particular attention to the barriers that may prevent some groups of children from accessing the complaint mechanism, such as: i) Attitudinal barriers: children with disabilities are often not treated with respect and their views are not taken seriously; ii) Physical and geographic barriers: buildings' design and infrastructure may hinder access for children with disabilities (e.g., stairs or narrow doors) and iii) communication barriers are of particular concern for children with sensory impairments who need alternative means of communication to read, hear, see and communicate.</p> <p>The Toolkit for Children's Participation in the Work of NHRIs makes recommendations to ensure the participation of children with disabilities. These draw on the 2013 participation guidance 'Take Us Seriously – Engaging Children with Disabilities in Decisions Affecting their Lives'. For example, the toolkit recommends that meeting places and activity locations be child-friendly and accessible to children with disabilities, and that children have information about how to lodge complaints in age- and disability-appropriate formats, at accessible locations.</p> <p>The Toolkit for Promotion and Outreach with and for Children, recommends that approaches include and involve children in marginalized situations, including children with disabilities.</p>

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Europe and Central Asia	<p>Country: Azerbaijan</p> <p>In Azerbaijan UNICEF supported NGOs to undertake a project on access to justice for children. The objective was to target marginalized and vulnerable children, particularly child victims or witnesses of crimes, children in conflict with law, children with disabilities and those in socially disadvantaged situations or in need of legal support. Some 4.3 per cent (146) of the children who benefitted from legal aid and legal representation services provided by the project had disabilities. Children with disabilities were particularly served in the district of Aghjabedy, where the NGO providing the services was also running an inclusive education centre, and thus already had extensive contacts in the area</p>
Europe and Central Asia	<p>Country: Bosnia & Herzegovina</p> <p>Through UNICEF BiH support to the Justice for Every Child project, children with disabilities were reached with legal aid services. The project prioritized equity and considered the needs of girls and boys alike, as well as children with disabilities, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups. As part of the project, UNICEF supported free legal aid centres, such as the Human Rights Centre of Mostar.</p> <p>Some free legal aid centres estimated that out of all requests for legal advice involving children, 5 per cent were from children with disabilities; other centres reported none.</p> <p>The majority of requests for legal services are made by parents/caregivers and are related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children's and family rights, such as social protection, social benefits, cash benefits, transportation costs, employment benefits (for parents), orthopaedic aids, day care centres; ▶ Entitlements related to specialized health care and questions about where to seek health services (formal service providers often do not provide adequate or sufficiently clear information); ▶ Entitlements in education (lack of adequate curricula, personal assistants, especially for children in rural areas); ▶ Support during administrative proceedings; ▶ Divorces and alimony; ▶ Care after reaching 18 years of age. <p>UNICEF BiH also supported the development of a draft action plan for training legal aid service providers on protecting children in contact with the law and their health and social rights, including insurance for children with disabilities.</p> <p>Future activities, such as harmonization of legislation, strengthening referrals, raising awareness and tailoring education for free legal aid service providers will be inclusive of and take into account the specific needs of children with disabilities and other vulnerable children.</p>

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Europe and Central Asia	<p>Country: Bulgaria</p> <p>All of UNICEF Bulgaria's access to justice interventions include measures for children with disabilities.</p> <p>First, all training focused on strengthening the capacity of professionals to work with children involved in legal proceedings includes training on the specific needs of children with disabilities for support and protection measures.</p> <p>Second, efforts to strengthen mechanisms for gathering and analysing disaggregated data on children include ensuring the availability and quality of data on children with disabilities involved in administrative, civil and criminal proceedings.</p> <p>Third, UNICEF Bulgaria supports the provision of specialized legal aid to children. Although their numbers are few, children with disabilities also benefit from these services. UNICEF provides training for lawyers working for implementing partners (e.g., the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee) and supports the legal programme of child advocacy centres.</p> <p>One case helped many other children with disabilities in Bulgaria to access their right to learn in an inclusive environment. Dojchin was denied the opportunity to continue his schooling after the age of 16 because of his intellectual disability. With the support of UNICEF's partner organization (the Mental Disability Advocacy Centre) Dojchin and his family filed a complaint. Dojchin won a landmark case at the European Committee of Social Rights, confirming his right to continue attending school (Mental Disability Advocacy Centre v. Bulgaria (2008)).</p> <p>In 2020 UNICEF Bulgaria will map specialized facilities for child-sensitive hearings and forensic interviewing (blue rooms, adapted court rooms etc.) to gauge whether they are fully accessible and adapted to the needs of children with disabilities. Mapping will also address the availability and training of specialists to support participation by children with disabilities in hearings/forensic interviews and related procedures.</p>
Europe and Central Asia	<p>Country: Croatia</p> <p>UNICEF Croatia supported the development of training curricula for various groups of judicial and non-legal professionals that work in the justice system and are in contact with children. Some of the training included a focus on children with disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, e.g., forensic interviews of children with disabilities and assessment of child victims, witnesses or perpetrators.</p>

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Europe and Central Asia	<p>Country: North Macedonia</p> <p>UNICEF North Macedonia supports the advancement of legislation and practices of the justice for children system, both for children in contact with the law and for vulnerable groups who may seek legal aid and advice, including children with disabilities and Roma.</p> <p>First, UNICEF North Macedonia, in partnership with the local Helsinki Committee, seeks to empower parents, guardians and caregivers through training on how to recognize violations or discrimination and utilize relevant protection mechanisms. Written guidance for future use of the knowledge acquired is also being developed. Direct legal support is also being provided where needed, through drafting submissions, interpretation of legal provisions, accompaniment by a legal counsellor and other legal support, as needed.</p> <p>Informational brochures about free legal aid and access will also be developed and distributed, along with videos and a special toolkit for persons with disabilities, with illustrations and drawings rather than plain text documents.</p> <p>In addition, UNICEF is supporting training for officials from the country's free legal aid departments to ensure timely and effective help and protection for children with disabilities. To provide sustainability, efforts will be made to include regular training of new officials in these departments of the Ministry of Justice. Thus, both existing and new officials will acquire practical knowledge about addressing the needs of children with disabilities and their families within the justice system.</p> <p>Second, UNICEF North Macedonia is part of a working group discussing revisions to the Justice for Children law; the current law is silent on the needs of children with disabilities. Moreover, the country's procedural codes do not guarantee that proceedings will be adapted to address the needs of children with disabilities.</p> <p>In line with the latest CRC Committee General Comment No. 24 on children's rights in the child justice system, UNICEF provides technical support and guidance – emphasizing the importance of early identification of needs and necessary accommodation – to ensure that cases involving children with disabilities proceed with due process and without unnecessary encumbrances. This includes safeguards against discrimination, guarantees for individual assessment, assistance with communication and the reading of documents, procedural adjustments for testimony, support by appropriate adults and the elimination of intimidating legal attire.</p>

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Europe and Central Asia	<p>Country: Montenegro</p> <p>With UNICEF advocacy and technical support, in recent years the justice agenda advanced beyond a focus on juvenile justice to promote access to child-friendly justice for children participating in all justice processes (criminal, civil and administrative). By building on this momentum and thanks to the important financial assistance received by the Government of Norway, Montenegro joined the sub-regional initiative on 'Equitable Access to Justice for Children in Albania and Montenegro', implemented with UNICEF technical assistance during 2019–2020.</p> <p>One of the objectives is to increase children's knowledge and awareness of their rights and enable them to access justice and seek redress for rights violations. UNICEF supported local civil society organizations active in child rights and access to justice to conduct outreach activities.</p> <p>Some of these NGOs focus specifically on reaching out to children with disabilities. In 2019 the Centre for Children's Rights of Montenegro conducted in-depth 90-minute workshops in five municipalities, targeting the most vulnerable children, including those with a disability. In total 279 children (160 girls and 119 boys) participated in the workshops, of whom 21 were children with disabilities (10 girls and 11 boys). Children became more familiar with their rights; of the need to know and talk about their rights and to speak out about problems and seek help from relevant institutions. They also learned about the obligations of their parents and government institutions.</p> <p>The Centre also organized informational workshops for parents, who were given detailed information about protection mechanisms: when, how and to whom they could turn for help in case of child rights violations.</p> <p>In 2019 the Institute for Social Research conducted an overall analysis of the situation of children's access to justice, including children with disabilities. Based on the findings, the Institute plans to develop training materials for professionals to ensure children's access to justice.</p> <p>In 2020 the civil society group Juventas will focus on outreach to children in five institutions, including children with disabilities who attend three resource centres in Montenegro, and will develop child-friendly material on children's access to justice.</p>

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East and Southern Africa	<p>Country: Ethiopia</p> <p>UNICEF Ethiopia supported the Federal Supreme Court to strengthen inclusiveness within the justice system. Children with disabilities benefited through legal aid, psychosocial support and medical care. Support to children with disabilities was facilitated through social workers embedded in the court structure. Specifically, support included assessment and best interests determinations for civil and criminal proceedings involving children with disabilities as alleged offenders or as the subject of child custody or adoption cases.</p> <p>The assessment process relied on techniques that respond to the specific nature of disabilities, including through the engagement of specialized professionals. In addition, processes of investigation, assessment and interviewing of children with disabilities are often conducted at the child's residence, exempting them from the normal requirement to appear physically at a police unit, court or social workers office. The application of these adaptive approaches was reported to have helped maintain the dignity and best interests of the child.</p>
East and Southern Africa	<p>Country: Burundi</p> <p>In 2018 UNICEF Burundi supported legal assistance to seven children with disabilities, including three deaf girls who were victims of gender-based violence and four boys with reduced mobility who were accused of offences.</p>
East and Southern Africa	<p>Country: Uganda</p> <p>In 2019 UNICEF Uganda supported the provision of legal services to 76 children with disabilities, including: 33 with physical disabilities, 12 with hearing impairments, 11 with psychosocial (mental) disabilities, 13 with visual impairments and seven injured in traffic accidents. In five of these cases, children were victims of sexual violence; 71 were child neglect cases. In some of the child neglect cases children were denied education because of their disability. UNICEF and partners supported children through case management (counselling, investigation and referral). Cases were referred and attended to by social workers, police and local councils at the village level. Neglect cases were settled through mediation, the court system and community-based organizations.</p>
Middle East and North Africa	<p>Country: Egypt</p> <p>Under the leadership of Ministry of Justice and in collaboration with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, in 2019 UNICEF Egypt conducted a roundtable on the rights of children with disabilities in the justice system. Recommendations developed were embedded in the Ministry's action plan and are currently being implemented. In March 2020 the Ministry of Justice opened the first model child court in Cairo, in compliance with international standards and ensuring accessibility for children with disabilities and the provision of inclusive services. The Ministry plans to establish four other new child courts in different governorates.</p>

REGION	SUMMARY
South Asia	<p data-bbox="475 396 746 432">Country: Bangladesh</p> <p data-bbox="475 456 1401 624">UNICEF Bangladesh provided training for law enforcement agency members and probation officers on the Children's Act of 2013, which refers to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of children with disabilities. The objective was to ensure that police, justices and probation officers take specific measures into consideration when they come in contact with children with disabilities.</p> <p data-bbox="475 663 1430 792">UNICEF Bangladesh also supported the renovation of 16 child courts throughout the country to make them accessible to children with disabilities, including separate waiting rooms for children and parents with accessible toilet facilities, drinking water and books.</p>



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