

COUNTRY OFFICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

KAZAKHSTAN | DECEMBER 2023

unicef  | for every child

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Part 1: Situation update in the country | 5 |
| Part 2: Major contributions and drivers of results | 11 |
| Every child thrives..... | 13 |
| Every child learns..... | 16 |
| Every child is protected from violence and exploitation..... | 18 |
| Every child lives in a safe and clean environment..... | 18 |
| Every child has an equitable chance in life..... | 20 |
| Cross-cutting work..... | 20 |
| Part 3: UN collaboration and other partnerships | 24 |
| Part 4: Innovations and lessons learned | 28 |

Cover photograph: Students raising their hands during a lesson. Secondary school №26. Pavlodar, Kazakhstan.

@UNICEF Kazakhstan/2023/GalinaSorokina



2nd grade students play together during break.

Secondary school No26. Pavlodar, Kazakhstan.

@UNICEF Kazakhstan/2023/GalinaSorokina

PART 1

Situation update in the country



Amankhan Aiym, 4 years old.

Zhetysay, Kazakhstan.

@UNICEF Kazakhstan/2024/AizhanBaiskakova

Part 1:

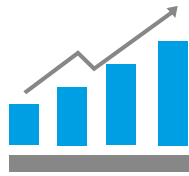
Update on the context and situation of children

In 2023, Kazakhstan's population reached 20 million, encompassing 6.7 million children, with 55.2 per cent living in urban areas. Building on the 2022 Second Voluntary National Review on Sustainable Development Goals, Kazakhstan activated a national plan to accelerate progress towards SDG achievement.

Kazakhstan took tangible actions to safeguard our environment for future generations by ratifying the Paris Agreement, committing to a 2060 carbon neutrality strategy, and revising its Water Code to enhance water protections. These amendments include increasing usage efficiency and quality monitoring by decentralizing water management.

Kazakhstan registered an average economic growth of 4.9 per cent and a GDP per capita increase of 15.9 per cent in 2023.

However, in the context of high inflation, poverty increased to the highest rate since 2020, with 5.6 per cent of the population living under the poverty line by late 2023, women being as vulnerable as men. The Turkestan region was the most affected, with a 9.6 per cent poverty rate.



NATIONWIDE, OVER
1.1 million
 people were under the poverty
 line by late 2023 compared
 to 1.03 million in late 2022.

Over the past decades, Kazakhstan notably enhanced its population's overall standard of living as reflected in its Human Development Index (HDI) progress.

However, the recent UNICEF-supported multidimensional child poverty analysis led by the Bureau of National Statistics (BNS) indicates that 28.5 per cent of children are facing multiple deprivations, including one in three children living in rural areas and one in four in urban areas.

In 2023, Kazakhstan adopted a Social Code that extends the age of eligibility for child benefit payments from twelve to eighteen months and enhances the population's overall social protections. The Government committed to amending the eligibility criteria for Targeted Social Assistance (TSA) from the subsistence minimum level to median income level by 2025. This measure will increase the number of TSA-eligible children.

In November 2023, the President endorsed the 'National Fund for Children,' which allocates 50 per cent of its annual investment income to children's savings accounts until they turn 18.

Kazakhstan also expanded the legal definition of 'youth' to include fourteen to thirty-five-year-olds, permitting an additional 5.7 million people to access government support. Over the year, about 9,000 young people, including youth from vulnerable groups, took advantage of preferential loans or received business grants.

Kazakhstan is improving its e-government systems, streamlining public service provision and citizen interaction. As of August 2023, all newborns now receive an individual identification number (IIN) coinciding with the medical birth registration system. The system also proactively gathers additional information from mothers to issue birth certificates.

In 2023, Kazakhstan introduced the 'Digital Family Card', an information management system covering 19.7 million individuals. It aims to enhance family monitoring, streamline access to social protections, and proactively inform citizens about their entitlements.

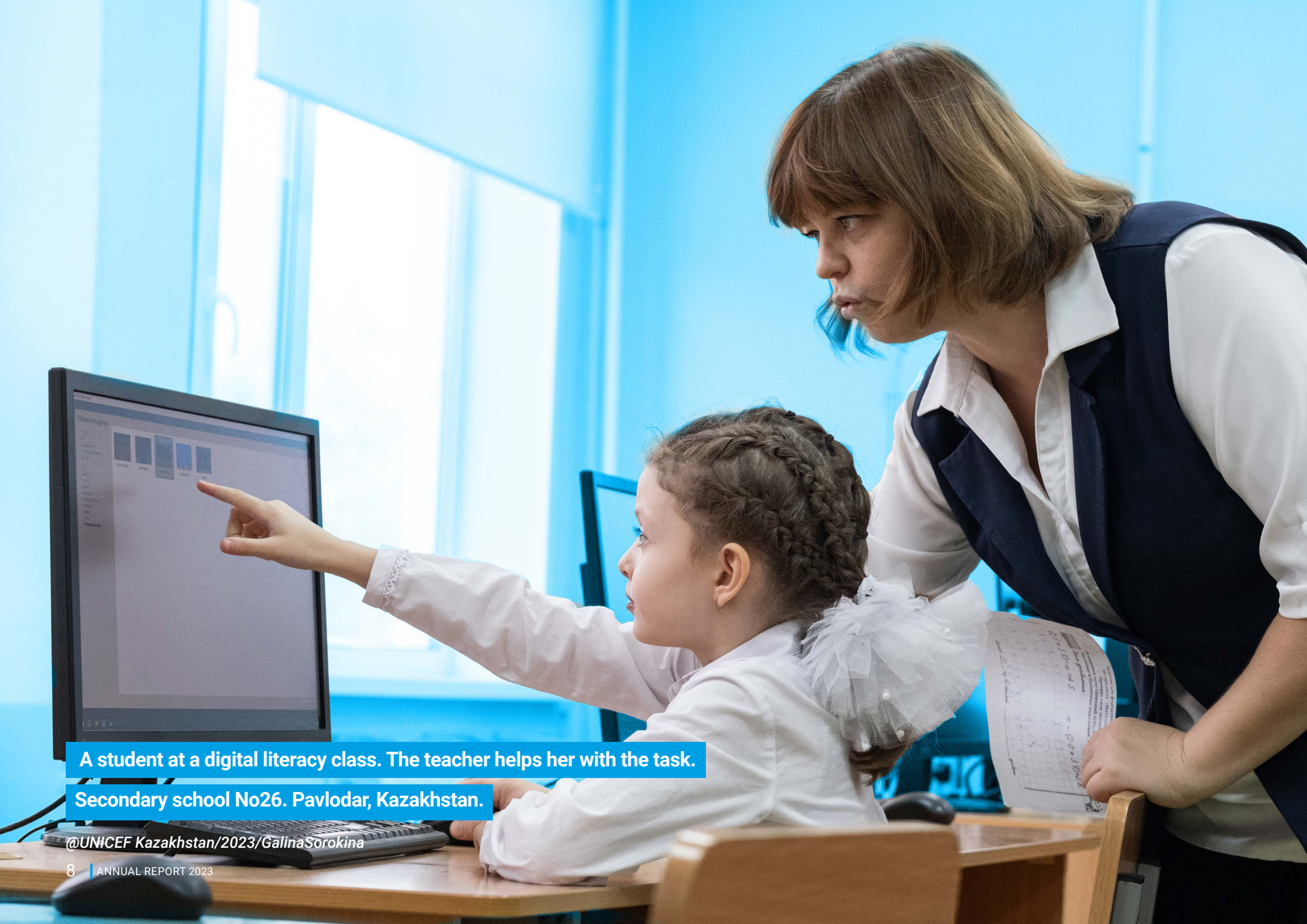
This past year, Kazakhstan also ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure allowing children to seek redress outside the national justice system.

Intolerance of violence against women and children is growing among society. The President's September 2023 national address and the public

debate on the criminalization of domestic violence demonstrate these cultural changes. In 2023, the country amended legislation to facilitate domestic violence reporting and legal proceedings. As a result, the number of family-based offences registered by the police reached 50,462 October 2023 – a 67.5 per cent increase compared to 2022. However, child victims remain invisible due to a lack of disaggregated administrative data, specialized protection services, and multisectoral case management procedures.

As children increasingly rely on the internet, online safety is a growing concern. The Ministry of Education's 2023 child online safety study, supported by UNICEF, indicates that 11.7 per cent of children viewed sexual images sent to them by friends, 2.4 per cent were propositioned for sexual acts, and 1.8 per cent were threatened or coerced into entering sexual relationships. Girls face cyberbullying almost twice as likely as boys.

In 2023, Kazakhstan adopted the 2024-2025 Human Rights and Rule of Law Plan primarily focusing on children's rights. This plan includes regulating regional child rights ombudspersons' statuses, strengthening protection measures against domestic violence, revising legislation to register children born outside medical facilities, analysing child labour issue, promoting gender equality, and adopting an inclusive policy concept.



A student at a digital literacy class. The teacher helps her with the task.

Secondary school No26. Pavlodar, Kazakhstan.

@UNICEF Kazakhstan/2023/GalinaSorokina

The country also adopted the National Plan on Child Protection Against Violence, Adolescents' Suicide Prevention, and Ensuring their Rights and Well-being, which prioritizes parenting programmes, bullying prevention, child online safety, social-emotional learning skills in schools, necessary legal reforms, and frontline-worker capacity building.

In 2023, infant and child mortality rates returned to pre-pandemic levels (7.68 and 9.88 per 1,000). Despite universal immunization, Kazakhstan experienced a significant measles outbreak, with around 30,000 reported cases by year-end. The outbreak is attributed to past COVID-19 disruptions in routine immunization, vaccine misinformation, and vaccine hesitancy. The Government adopted the 2023-2025 Comprehensive Plan for Immunization System Strengthening Incorporating Communication Measures.

The double burden of malnutrition is a major concern in Kazakhstan, with 20.6 per cent of 6-9-year-old children facing overweight or obesity in 2020.¹ In response, the Ministry of Health revised its macro- and micronutrient intake standards.

The Government also launched a free school meals programme nationwide benefiting 97,000 vulnerable children in preschool institutions and over 1.6 million children in primary schools.

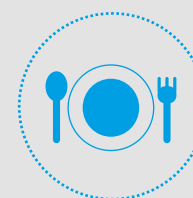
In the 2022 PISA rankings, Kazakhstan improved to 51st place. The country made significant strides in math (46th place, a 26-point increase) and natural science (49th place, a 20-point increase). Reading literacy remains a challenge, with Kazakhstan holding the 61st position with only an 8-point increase. As such, Kazakhstan adopted the 2023-2029 Pre-primary, Secondary and Technical and Vocational Education Development Concept setting priorities for improving inclusive approaches and quality assurance in pre-primary and secondary schools and reducing the number of children in institutions.²

The Ministry of Innovation launched the new phase of the Accessible Internet project to connect schools to fiber optic, 5G, and satellite internet solutions. The initiative includes upgrading schools' connectivity to new 20 Mbps standards, contributing to the regional connectivity agenda, and establishing a digital hub.



In 2023, infant and child mortality rates returned to pre-pandemic levels

7.68 AND
9.88 PER 1,000



The Government also launched a free school meals programme nationwide benefiting

97,000
VULNERABLE CHILDREN
in preschool institutions and
1.6 OVER
MILLION
children in primary schools.

¹ National Center of Public Health, 'Results of Surveillance of Childhood Obesity, Nutrition and Physical Activity', Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021, <https://hls.kz/uploads/publications/ENG_Results%20COSI%20Kazakhstan%202020.pdf>, accessed 17 January 2024.

² The Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 'On approval of the Concept for the development of preschool, secondary, technical and vocational education of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023 – 2029', Institute of Legislation and Legal Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan, 28 March 2023, <<https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P2300000249>>, accessed 16 January 2024.



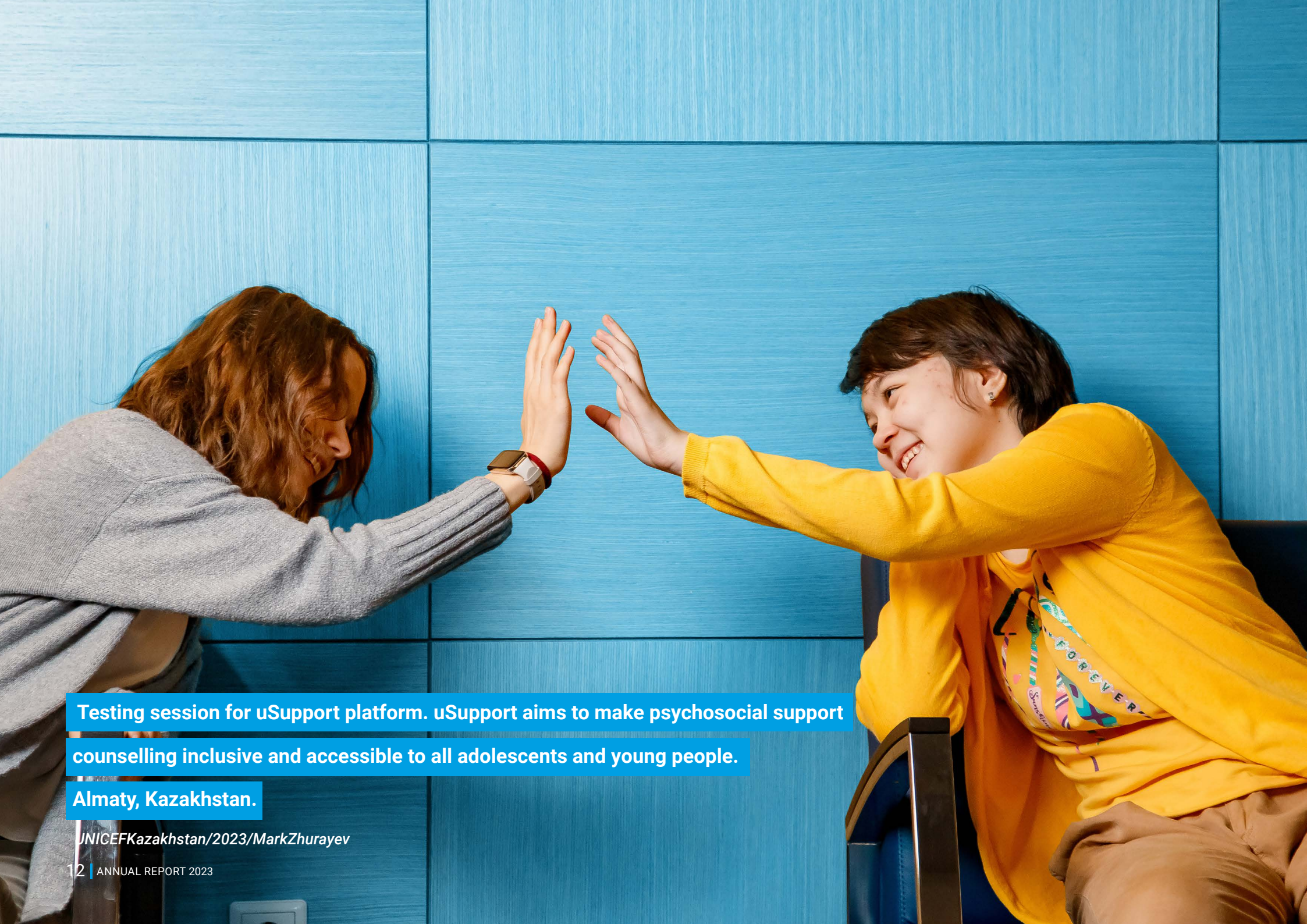
Boy plays a game of assyk during break.

Secondary school №26.

Pavlodar, Kazakhstan.

@UNICEF Kazakhstan/2023/GalinaSorokina

PART 2 | Major contributions and drivers of results



Testing session for uSupport platform. uSupport aims to make psychosocial support counselling inclusive and accessible to all adolescents and young people.

Almaty, Kazakhstan.

UNICEFKazakhstan/2023/MarkZhurayev

Part 2:

Major contributions and drivers of results



Every child thrives

Health

In 2023, the Ministry of Health (MOH) adopted the Comprehensive Plan for Strengthening the National Immunization System for 2023-2025, developed with UNICEF support. The plan emphasizes the importance of generating immunization demand.

UNICEF equipped the MOH with an AI-based social listening dashboard to monitor, detect, and respond to vaccine mis- and disinformation in real-time; support the creation of public health campaigns to counter the infodemic; and build vaccine confidence.

The MOH also endorsed the National Center on Public Health and UNICEF's joint assessment of the universal progressive model of patronage for pregnant women and young children (UPMP). With UNICEF support, the MOH established a group of experts to address the gaps identified by the UPMP related to the 1) continuum of primary health care services for pregnant women and young children, 2) medical information systems and reporting tools,

3) patronage service human resources capacity, and 4) role of Primary Health Care and UPMP in responding to emerging and zoonotic infections and climate change (heat waves).

Nutrition

In 2023, the MOH endorsed the UNICEF-supported school meals assessment undertaken by the National Center on Healthy Nutrition (NCHN). UNICEF also supported the MOH's revision of national guidelines on macro- and micronutrient intake standards based on gender and age.

Building on this, the municipality of Astana successfully piloted a new school meals programme aiming to ensure that children receive balanced, varied, and nutritious meals. Astana developed and implemented this pilot programme in close collaboration with the NCHN and UNICEF using an inclusive approach mobilizing and obtaining input from education administrators, teachers, parents, and 8,300 pupils at pilot schools. Pilot programme findings will help the scale-up of necessary changes countrywide.

UNICEF further supported the development of a web application that estimates the macro- and micronutrient contents of school meals, allowing everyone to determine whether a school meal is balanced and nutritious.

In 2023, 9,548 school frontline workers enhanced their knowledge and competencies on healthy nutrition; overweight, obesity, and anaemia prevention; nutrition counselling services; and school meal planning through an online training programme designed and implemented by the National Center of Public Health with UNICEF support



OVER
429,000 PEOPLE
used social media to access the healthy recipe book 'Menu for Superheroes', developed in collaboration with the NCHN and a Business Advisory Council's member



Despite type 1 diabetes,

Yerasyl (16) is ready to get vaccinated against diphtheria and tetanus.

Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan.

@UNICEF Kazakhstan/2023/MariyaDjafsiaTara

This book contains healthy and affordable family recipes while encouraging both fathers and mothers to take responsibility for their children's nutrition.

HIV

With UNICEF support, the MOH officially endorsed the results of the 2023 UNICEF HIV/AIDS response integration into PHC assessment and developed a national road map to integrate HIV/AIDS services into PHC. The road map includes plans to revise regulatory acts; develop new standards, clinical recommendations, and algorithms; and review financing approaches and resource provision.

UNICEF supported the MOH's continued scale-up of online treatment, care, and support services for adolescents and young people, which expanded to 30 Youth Health Centers (YHC) in five regions. The MOH also revised the YHC's regulatory framework to increase service quality and coverage for adolescents and young people by providing access to online services.

Mental health

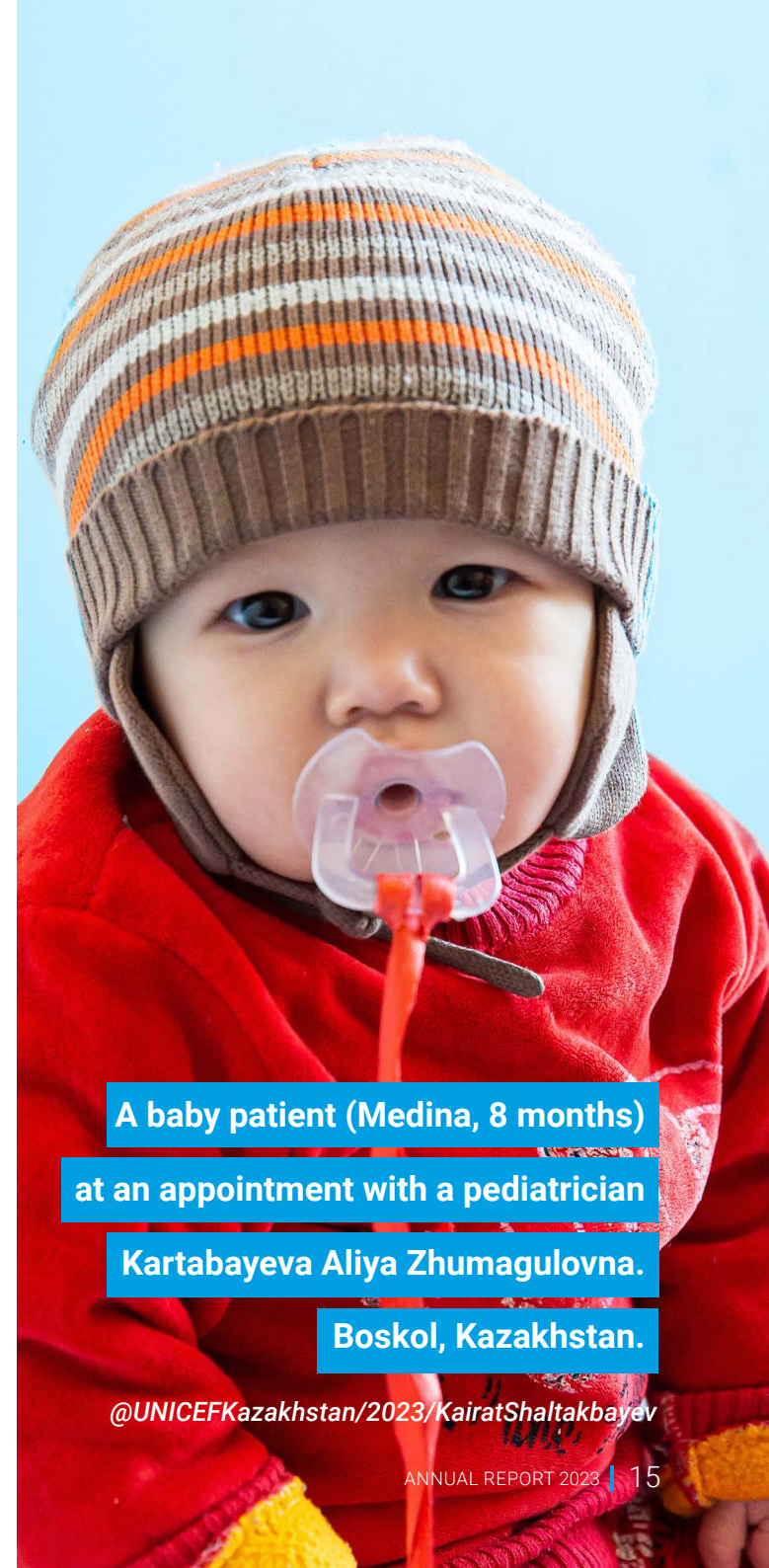
The Ministry of Education (MOE) built on the successful WHO-UNICEF Helping Adolescents Thrive initiative for social and emotional learning,

which was adapted and rolled out in schools. With UNICEF advocacy and support, the MOE integrated a socio-emotional life skills learning programme for pupils in grades 5-7 (10-13 years old) into the 2023-2025 National Plan on Child Protection Against Violence, Adolescents' Suicide Prevention, and Ensuring their Rights and Well-being.

The Ministry of Health also developed, with UNICEF support, standards for providing online health services, including mental health and psychosocial support services, through YHCs. These online services contribute to overcoming barriers adolescents and youth, especially those living in rural areas, face in accessing quality services tailored to their needs.

UNICEF-successfully developed and tested the uSupport platform for online mental health services with young people and mental health providers, receiving positive feedback from participants. The MOH plans to pilot the platform in 2024 with backing from a UNICEF-supported communications campaign.

In collaboration with National Edinburgh University, UNICEF initiated the development of an instrument for real-time monitoring of youth mental health and psychosocial well-being using big data.



A baby patient (Medina, 8 months)

at an appointment with a pediatrician

Kartabayeva Aliya Zhumagulovna.

Boskol, Kazakhstan.

@UNICEFKazakhstan/2023/KairatShaltakbayev



Every child learns

Early childhood education

In 2023, the Ministry of Education, with UNICEF support, integrated Early Childhood Education (ECE) scorecard instruments and monitoring tools into its quality assurance system to assess the performance of public and private preschools.

In partnership with UNICEF, the Ministry of Information created a multisectoral working group that developed and adopted an evidence-based social behaviour change strategy and action plan. This plan aims to address the capacity-building needs of frontline workers in early childhood developmental monitoring (ECDM) and early interventions and raise parental awareness and competencies.

UNICEF supported the training of 300 frontline professionals (patronage nurses, social workers, teachers, and psychologists) in ECDM and interpersonal communication skills with parents and caregivers, especially those caring for children with developmental difficulties and disabilities.

Through a UNICEF social media campaign, 46,423 parents accessed information and advice on ECD/ ECDM, nurturing better care environments for 0-6-year-old children and promoting positive social norms surrounding fathers' engagement in ECD.

Primary and secondary education

In 2023, the Ministry of Education conducted a UNICEF-supported evaluation of education programmes' inclusive approach to all children's needs. Findings showed progress on inclusive education for children with special education needs but limited attention paid to migrant children, children in conflict with the law, and gender-equality monitoring and promotion. The Ministry incorporated evaluation findings and recommendations into a response plan to influence future education initiatives.

UNICEF and Giga, the global initiative on school internet connectivity, supported the Ministries of Education and Digital Development in rolling out the 'Daily Check' application aimed at monitoring schools' internet speed connections. More than 70 per cent of schools (5,100) are actively monitoring internet speed and transmitting data to Giga's Project Connect. To help address connectivity and low-speed gaps, especially in rural or remote areas, UNICEF initiated a market assessment of satellite-based solutions.

Aiming to strengthen child online safety in this increasingly digital country, UNICEF and International IT University developed an online



Through a UNICEF social media campaign,

46,423 PARENTS

accessed information and advice on ECD/ ECDM, nurturing better care environments for 0-6-year-old children and promoting positive social norms surrounding fathers' engagement in ECD.



MORE THAN

70 PER CENT OF SCHOOLS

(5,100) are actively monitoring internet speed and transmitting data to Giga's Project Connect.



UNICEF supported the empowerment and upskilling of

15,329 YOUNG PEOPLE

(53 per cent girls) in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Maths (STEAM); civic engagement; and employability.

course and mobile app for parents and teachers to improve their digital literacy and help them better protect children against online risks.

With UNICEF backing, 8,852 children benefitted from remedial education programmes, including student mentorships and peer-to-peer support initiatives. In addition, 918 children participated in the Akelius literacy programme targeting migrant children and those requiring remedial support in Russian or English.

Skills

UNICEF supported the empowerment and upskilling of 15,329 young people (53 per cent girls) in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Maths (STEAM); civic engagement; and employability. 'Learning Passport' users on the Samgau digital platform increased by 45 per cent from last year, reaching 5,643 youth.

The Samgau skills development programme's newly integrated climate, environment, energy, and disaster risk reduction topics benefited 3,600 adolescents. Trained school staff actively involved adolescents in identifying climate problems and disaster risks and developing sustainable solutions for schools and communities.

In 2023, UNICEF supported youth participation in developing the Regional Strategy on Promoting Sustainable Development, Culture, and Children



Rufina Rasimova speaking at the UNICEF Talks Youth Conference.

Astana, Kazakhstan.

@UNICEF Kazakhstan/2023/DiasMeirmanov

and Youth Engagement in Climate Change Agenda, which calls for action on youth environmental initiatives and stronger inclusion efforts.

The UniSat+ programme provided over 860 adolescent girls with the opportunity to explore careers in game development through an online course jointly developed by gaming companies and Kazakh British Technical University.

Following this course, the girls participated in a summer programme that included mentorships by women in STEAM and a hackathon. Over 80 per cent of participants reported they were considering future careers in the information and communications technology, game development, and aerospace industries.



Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

In 2023, UNICEF played a key advocacy and technical role in Kazakhstan's development and adoption of (1) the National Plan on Child Protection Against Violence, Adolescents' Suicide Prevention, and Ensuring their Rights and Well-being and (2) the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child's Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure.



To tackle social norms and behaviours contributing to violence against children and promote positive parenting, UNICEF supported a digital information campaign reaching

1,362,924
PEOPLE.

In 2023, the MOE responded to growing concerns surrounding child online safety by conducting, with UNICEF support, a landmark study on children's lives

Aiming to improve child protection monitoring, the Ministry of Education, with UNICEF support, developed national indicators on violence in schools using the VAC international classification. Further, the Child Rights Protection Committee (KOPD) developed an action plan to strengthen administrative data systems on children in alternative care settings, including a gender-sensitive lens.

UNICEF supported Kazakhstan's review of the role and function of Family Support Centers to include gatekeeping, case management, and professional family-support services. UNICEF additionally supported transformative training for more than 90 residential care institution managers to help them improve their family assistance and support work, including gender equal parenting practices.

online using the Global Kids online methodology. The study informs on children's access to the internet and digital proficiency skills and practices while measuring the risks of cyberbullying, exposure to inappropriate content, and sexual harassment and abuse. It also confirmed that child victims have limited access to support. Building on this evidence, UNICEF designed a comprehensive social behaviour change communications campaign to enhance parents and children's online safety knowledge and skills.

UNICEF and TikTok jointly developed a Family Guide on creating a positive and safe online environment, and they also organized a cyberbullying prevention campaign that reached 2.4 million unique viewers via live online sessions and 12.5 million people via TikTok.



Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

Thanks to UNICEF-generated evidence and continued advocacy, the Government adopted new national standards on WASH in schools, aligning Kazakhstan with international standards as of 2024. These changes will result in upcoming reforms in school construction and maintenance, with particular attention paid to gender equality and water management.



Through the UNICEF-supported **#BeSafe** and **#Volunteers4Climate** programmes, more than

3 MILLION PEOPLE

accessed information on DRR and Climate Action (CA). Additionally, **28,000 children and 3,600 teachers** enhanced their DRR and CA capacities.

With UNICEF support, the Ministry of Health started enhancing its sanitary and epidemiological surveillance system to better monitor and identify children's diseases and conditions associated with ecological risks. The goal is to better understand pollution and climate change's impact on children's health and strengthen frontline health service capacities and parental awareness accordingly. UNICEF also supported the MOE's review of its information management system to better track the impact of pollutants and climate change on schools' environmental quality.

The Center on Emergencies and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) reviewed, with UNICEF support, the national and regional plans for emergency preparedness and response using a children's rights and gender lens. Over 500 emergency, health, education, and social welfare workers; representatives of civil society organizations; and academics enhanced their knowledge on children's rights protection in emergencies.



Home-visiting patronage nurse Shyndauylova Aizharkyn during the family visit.

Aizharkyn evaluates family's living environment equipping the family members with the essential knowledge and skills required to navigate through emergency

situations successfully. Zhetysay, Kazakhstan.

@UNICEF/2023/AizhanBaiskakova

This year, Kazakhstan and four other Central Asian countries signed the Regional Strategy on Promoting Sustainable Development, Culture, and Children and Youth Engagement in Climate Change Agenda – a strategy developed by youth, including UNICEF-supported youth from Kazakhstan – during the ‘Central Asian Forum on Children and Youth in Action – Climate Change’.



Every child has an equitable chance in life

In 2023, UNICEF supported the Government to transition Targeted Social Assistance (TSA) eligibility criteria from subsistence minimum level to median income level. This change will expand the programme’s coverage to more vulnerable individuals and families. Together with the Bureau of National Statistics (BNS), UNICEF completed an assessment of the national methodology for determining median income in compliance with international standards. UNICEF also made median income, poverty line, and budgetary estimates to support TSA reform.

With UNICEF support, the BNS also designed a Multidimensional Child Poverty Index (MCPI). The MCPI, which aligns with the EU Child Deprivation Index, supplements the monetary poverty analysis, offering key insights for policy planning

and implementation by providing a nuanced understanding of child deprivations, including disparities across regions and demographics.

Considering 75 per cent of Kazakhstan is exposed to natural hazards, with the poorest regions in the south and east at the highest risk of flooding and drought, UNICEF conducted a Shock-Responsive Social Protection (SRSP) readiness assessment in 2023. Findings enabled it to identify options for bolstering system readiness during emergencies, including strengthening the regular social protection system, expanding TSA, and introducing an emergency social protection programme.



Cross-cutting work

Evidence generation, knowledge management and evaluation

In 2023, with UNICEF support, Kazakhstan further advanced its child rights monitoring commitments to support child-focused policy development and implementation strategies. The Government allocated resources to implement the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), which collects data on children and women, allowing stakeholders to measure the progress made on children’s rights since 2015 and monitor progress towards achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Kazakhstan will be the first country in the world

to collect MICS data on children’s mental health. This information will be instrumental in shaping national programmes to tackle the priority issue of adolescent suicide in the country.

UNICEF supported the Bureau of National Statistics’ (BNS) accelerated work to strengthen administrative data systems for child-rights monitoring purposes. As part of the jointly led intergovernmental working group on data for children, UNICEF and the BNS reviewed and strengthened monitoring and administrative data collection on children in alternative care and on violence against children in the education, health, and child-protection sectors. The annual statistical yearbook ‘Children of Kazakhstan’, based on recently published census results, provides the status of children’s rights progress for each of Kazakhstan’s 20 regions.

In 2023, the BNS and the Child Rights Protection Committee under the Ministry of Education and Information developed an online dashboard to make the Child Well-Being (CWB) Index and its disaggregated data more visually accessible to users. CWB index data served as the basis for the state report on children’s rights in Kazakhstan submitted for the President’s attention.

Kazakhstan released national data on child functioning for children over the age of 5 as part of the 2021 census, aligning with the United Nation’s Washington Group on Disability Statistics’



National UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors in Kazakhstan, musical band

NINETY ONE, headlined the UNICEF Talks Youth Conference.

Astana, Kazakhstan.

@UNICEF Kazakhstan/2023/DiasMeirmanov

recommendations. The report informed on the progress made regarding child disabilities since 2015 and continues informing the Government's decision-making process for enhancing early identification and intervention policies for children with disabilities.

UNICEF partnered with local businesses and academia to champion innovation by using big data and artificial intelligence (AI) to strengthen the real-time monitoring and in-depth analysis of children's rights.

The Ministry of Education's UNICEF-supported evaluation on inclusive education integrated a big data AI-based analysis from social media platforms resulting in valuable insights, especially on girls' participation, while demonstrating the relevance of AI-supported social listening in evaluations.

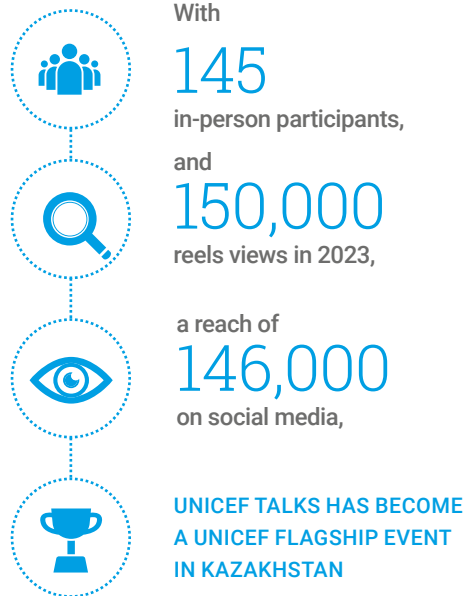
Communication and youth engagement

In 2023, UNICEF further strengthened its public position as a leading voice on children's rights in Kazakhstan. Through its social media channels, UNICEF reached 106,872 followers, a 26 per cent increase compared to 2022. Around 1.3 million people visited the UNICEF website, and despite a competitive media agenda, UNICEF occupied a 24 per cent voice share on children's rights in traditional media, with 1,799 mentions.

Through its strategic joint communication partnership with TikTok, UNICEF amplified its youth communications platform to reach more than 10 million unique users with information about children's rights.

UNICEF firmly stands behind its commitment that nothing for children should be done without children. Online and offline platforms allow UNICEF to engage with youth on issues that matter to them and better echo their voices to support youth initiatives and contributions to their country's development.

Launched in 2022, UNICEF Talks, which promotes youth voices in a public talk format, has become an important platform for young people to share their experiences and empower their peers.



By joining UNICEF as National Goodwill Ambassadors, Q-pop band NINETY-ONE garnered support from Kazakh-speaking youth. With their passionate commitment to young people's freedom of thought and mental well-being, they supported open dialogue on sensitive national issues, such as mental health and online safety, by sharing their personal stories of dealing with bullying and encouraging young people to speak out and seek support.

In 2023, UNICEF launched the 'Stay True to Your Dreams' campaign in partnership with the Kazakhstan Football Federation (KFF); the National Commission on Women's Rights, Family and Population Policy; and the National Volunteer Network to encourage young girls to pursue their career dreams regardless of gender stereotypes. Women from different professions spoke about their work and why they decided to be bold and build their careers.

UNICEF also continued empowering and engaging young people to take environmental and climate change action in 2023.

UNICEF youth volunteers mobilized to raise awareness and advocate for disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness, and climate change action, reaching more than 2.5 million people on social media.

PART 3 | UN collaboration
and other partnerships



unicef

әрбір бала
for every child
для каждого

UNICEF volunteer Shalabayeva Dilnaz (16).

Astana, Kazakhstan.

@UNICEF Kazakhstan/2023/RuslanKarsamov

Part 3:

UN collaboration and other partnerships

This year, UNICEF Kazakhstan worked closely with the following partners to advance the country's child-rights agenda: (1) the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Health, Education, Labour and Social Protection, Culture and Information, and Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace; (2) the Office of the Prime-Minister; (3) the Agency of Strategic Planning and Reforms; (4) the Bureau of National Statistics; (5) the Child Rights Protection Committee; and (6) the Center on Emergencies and Disaster Risks Reduction.

UNICEF closely collaborated with Kazakhstan's Human Rights Commissioner, Child Rights Commissioner, and Parliament on child protection from violence, childcare reform, early childhood development, child-focused SDG monitoring, and public financing for children.

UNICEF engaged in United Nations collaborative mechanisms to operationalize the UNSDCF 2021–2025 through joint advocacy, technical coordination, and programming initiatives. UNICEF

worked with UN-Women on family support centre reforms, gender-based violence prevention, and the reintegration of returnees from conflict zones; UNFPA on gender-sensitive family policies; WHO on health, mental health, and early childhood development policies; ITU on child online safety; and UNHCR on reintegrating and supporting refugees and migrant children.

The Kazakhstani Agency for International Development (KazAID) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia to systematize collaboration towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, especially in the areas of child protection; education; health and nutrition; social protection; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); and environmental safety.

UNICEF strengthened its partnership with USAID to further build national health systems within the framework of the global health security agenda, particularly focusing on risk communication and

community engagement to strengthen emergency preparedness, including shock-responsive social protection systems. The Center for Disease Control's (CDC) support was instrumental in developing an innovative AI-supported social listening dashboard to address immunization misinformation and vaccine hesitancy.

The European Union (EU) played a critical role in supporting UNICEF's joint work with the Government to protect and reintegrate returnees and children affected by migration by strengthening child protection and inclusive education systems. The EU delegation also engaged with UNICEF to promote child online safety. UNICEF closely collaborated with the World Bank to support social policy and system reforms by assessing gaps in social protection and poverty measurement methodologies.

UNICEF continued leveraging its strong corporate partnerships in Kazakhstan, unlocking private businesses' potential to build a better society for

children. Through the Business Advisory Council for UNICEF, businesses co-created solutions to promote healthy nutrition with equal parenting, monitor children's rights using big data, and enhance child online safety. The Atameken National Chamber for Commerce played a pivotal role in supporting UNICEF's family-friendly policy assessment and mobilizing hundreds of companies, paving the way for further growth in this area. The innovative partnership with TikTok helped UNICEF amplify its public outreach efforts and access to young people to promote children's rights, particularly through joint campaigns addressing cyberbullying and child online safety.

To support girls in STEAM, UNICEF collaborated with influencers, game developers, and businesswomen to create mentorship programs and educational courses, foster a nurturing environment for gender equality, and encourage and empower girls to embrace careers in sectors still dominated by men.

Partnerships with civil society organizations and academia contributed to accelerated evidence building, expanded volunteer and youth skills programmes, enhanced frontline worker capacity building, and expanded policy and system reform efforts.

UNICEF worked closely with international and national universities such as the University of Edinburgh, Cambridge University, International IT University, Kazakh-British Technical University, Nazarbayev University, Kazakh National University (KazNU), National Eurasian University, and NARHOZ University. UNICEF's university partners championed innovative approaches to help accelerate results for children across health, education, child protection, and social protection sectors. UNICEF worked with the Nazarbayev University Accelerator and Business Incubator (NURIS) to promote 'Digital Public Goods' standards and encourage and support Youth to develop sustainable, accessible, and publicly available solutions for social well-being, especially children's well-being.

The Alliance of Professional Social Workers of Kazakhstan and the Association of Schools of Social Work played an important role in supporting UNICEF's advocacy work for social welfare and childcare system reforms.

UNICEF further established a contingency partnership agreement with the Red Crescent Society allowing for their rapid response activation in all national regions potentially affected by emergencies.

Overall, civil society organizations and universities helped accelerate, jointly with UNICEF, progress towards achieving results for children in the following areas: nutrition, immunization, school connectivity, learning loss, girls in STEAM, early childhood development, early and inclusive education, child online safety, child protection against violence, and gender equality.

PART 4 | Innovations and lessons learned



The winners of the first gamification hackathon with Naza Alakija, a humanitarian and the Founder and CEO of Evoca Foundation, UNICEF NextGen Global Principal and UNICEF International Council member.

Almaty, Kazakhstan.

@UNICEF Kazakhstan/2023/RuslanKostyrkin

Part 4:

Innovations and lessons learned

Catalysing system-wide education improvements through quality assurance

UNICEF's finalization of quality assurance self-assessment tools for preschools catalysed transformative change within the Ministry of Education (MOE). This accomplishment prompted the MOE to adapt and integrate approaches to quality assurance for both primary and secondary educational institutions. It also significantly enhanced the Ministry's capabilities in planning and seamlessly integrating quality assurance indicators into its Education Management Information System (EMIS). Further, EMIS data leveraging should allow the MOE to monitor disparities in Early Childhood Education (ECE) service provision across various regions, areas, and provider types. This would help identify system gaps and ECE providers requiring additional investments and improvements to guarantee equitable access to education.

However, notable limitations deeply ingrained in both the system and community attitudes continue to hinder the equitable and quality delivery of Early Childhood Development (ECD) services and effective monitoring. Coordination mechanisms

and interagency collaborations across health, education, and social protection sectors lack necessary integrated policy and programme frameworks, impeding the holistic advancement of ECD/ECE initiatives.

The 2023 intersectoral working group led by the Ministry of Culture and Information made a positive step towards coordinated development of informational and educational materials. From this group, a valuable insight emerged: creating a state-run 'Project Office' under a higher-level administrative body would provide the necessary impetus to quickly adopt a comprehensive multi-sectoral ECD strategy and policy. This office could facilitate creating and updating legal and regulatory frameworks in Kazakhstan by addressing persistent challenges and fostering a more cohesive and effective ECE system.

Harnessing the power of artificial intelligence to better track children's well-being and accelerate progress towards results

Kazakhstan harnesses AI and digitalization power for progressive development by recognizing its importance in bolstering the economy, improving

systems governance, increasing access to efficient and quality services, enhancing information, and shaping social norms and behaviours. The Government recently began establishing comprehensive AI regulations to guide the nation's technological advancement.

Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic underscore the crucial role social media plays in shaping public opinion and behaviour, emphasizing the need for proactive measures to tackle vaccine hesitancy and misinformation. UNICEF supported the use of an AI-based social listening dashboard that equipped the MOH with a real-time monitoring tool to conduct in-depth public opinion and trends analyses and make informed decisions about communication campaigns.

The evaluation on inclusive education, using also big data, highlighted the lack of attention to girls compared to boys in social media discussions around the topic (25% mentions referring to girls against 75% to boys). In parallel, the evaluated state education programmes did not include gender sensitive indicators or targets. The Ministry of Education committed to address the gap.

With the constantly changing geopolitical and economic situation worldwide, including high food inflation and living costs, early warning systems are needed to better track poverty and child well-being. While surveys and studies are carried out over long intervals, retail chain data can provide a better real-time look at variations in the consumption of essential products and child-related goods allowing UNICEF to correlate identified changes with ground surveys on population conditions. Such monitoring would help decision makers provide children and families with more tailored and timely social protection measures.

UNICEF's collaboration with a national retail chain and the National University of Edinburgh enabled it to leverage AI to analyse retail datasets to monitor trends in household consumption impacting children's well-being. UNICEF and its partners created pivotal dashboards focusing on price monitoring and purchasing behaviours, offering insights on fluctuating prices and customer purchasing habits related to children's products.

The process required strong collaborative work between experts and required the parties to adapt monitoring ambitions to extractable retail chain data. However, it confirmed the readiness of retail chain datasets to support child-rights monitoring. As an outcome of the tripartite co-creation process, the retail chain envisions introducing changes to its data system to enhance

monitoring of and tailor marketing strategies to children's healthy nutrition. This is a mutually beneficial scenario. Academics obtain access to a major research database, businesses improve their knowledge of customer behaviours to inform overall marketing strategies, and UNICEF obtains evidence to support advocacy initiatives. UNICEF must address initial information disclosure and privacy concerns with its business partners but taking the time to agree on evidence dissemination and build trust will better secure overall investment returns.

Safeguarding children online and advocating for holistic child protection

Evidence from the 2023 Kazakhstan Kids Online study carried out with UNICEF's support enabled the Government to better understand the risks, opportunities, and responses needed as children's online access increases.



While **21 PER CENT OF CHILDREN** aged 9-17 reported experiencing or witnessing cyberbullying, one in four did not tell anyone.

And when they did speak out, it was to a friend. This shows children's limited access to the appropriate services. Girls are almost twice as likely as boys to be exposed to cyberbullying.

Children need safe space and psycho-social support mechanisms to both report and talk openly about their online experiences. It is also important to identify the root causes of the observed gender-based bullying patterns and ensure gender-responsive social behaviour change communication campaigns and programmes.

Despite high levels of internet use among youth, the law does not sufficiently regulate cybercrimes against children. The legal framework does not adequately address detection, reporting, and case management accountabilities for online child sexual abuse and exploitation (OCSEA). The country's specialized cyber police units only deal with economic crimes and are not mandated nor trained to address child online safety (COS).

Addressing child online safety requires a robust child protection system covering online and offline risks. While UNICEF is working with the Government to strengthen that system, whilst also promoting protective social norms and behaviours, study evidence generated and attention surrounding COS created a sense of urgency. This presented UNICEF with the opportunity to strengthen government dialogue and accelerate joint efforts to advance the overall child protection against violence agenda.





Saule, a mother of two, made her way back from Syria as part of operations "Zhusan" and "Rusafa," and started a new life in Kazakhstan.



UNICEF Kazakhstan

Address:

-  Block 1, 10 Beibitshilik Street
Astana, Z10K8H4
Kazakhstan
-  +7 (7172) 32-28-78

Follow us:

-  UNICEFKazakhstan
-  @unicefkaz
-  @unicefkazakhstan
-  @unicefkazakhstan
-  <https://www.unicef.org/kazakhstan/>