

# COUNTRY OFFICE ANNUAL REPORT 2020

KAZAKHSTAN

DECEMBER 2020





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**Cover photograph:** 1<sup>st</sup> grade student Artyom with his classmates during a Kazakh lesson, secondary school No. 6 of Batpak village, Karaganda region.

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A UniSat project participant is watching how the just-launched nanosatellite is flying to the stratosphere.

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ҚАЗАҚСТАН  
ТЕМІР  
ЖОЛЫ

# **PART 1**

Situation update in the country



**3<sup>rd</sup> grade student Yuriy poses for a photo before entering the classroom at secondary school No. 6 of Batpak village.**

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## Part 1:

### Situation update in the country

In 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic and global as well as domestic economic developments have strongly impacted the situation of children and their families. The first cases of COVID-19 infection were registered in March 2020, prompting President Tokayev to declare a state of emergency, occurring against the backdrop of a global economic slump and low prices of key commodities such as oil and gas, which continue to drive Kazakhstan's export, economy and revenue mobilisation. External shocks provoked a weakening of the national currency. As a result of the lockdowns imposed to curb the spread of COVID-19, the domestic economy suffered. Many Kazakhstanis lost their livelihoods, which led to a drop in aggregate demand. As part of the anti-crisis package, the Government allocated US\$14.5 billion as a response to the economic recession due to COVID-19 to provide employment and income protection measures for the affected population, support small and medium

enterprises, agroindustry, and infrastructure development. However, the implementation of these measures by the state did not lead to full compensation for the decrease in incomes of citizens. The Government expects that average annual growth of the economy in 2020-2024 will not exceed 3.0%. According to the National Bank of Kazakhstan, 2-2.3% GDP reduction in 2020 was expected mainly due to the slump in oil prices and contraction of the local economy.

To ease households' economic hardship, over 1 million low-income families and socially vulnerable people, including people with disabilities, were provided with food baskets and essential commodities, and over 21.2% of the population received cash transfers amounting to the monthly minimum wage. Already in January 2020 the Government launched reforms targeting families with four and more children. As a result, by December 439,000 large families received universal monthly benefits that were

proportionally linked to the number of children in a household; 184,662 low-income families (936,189 persons, including 496,126 female) were covered by targeted social assistance, and over 550,000 children received in kind support, such as food products and essential commodities, or its cash equivalent.

The COVID-19 lockdown disrupted access to health services, including immunization, counselling on breastfeeding and nutrition of pregnant women and other services. **The rate of maternal deaths increased threefold up to 44.6 per 100,000 live births for 9 months of 2020.**

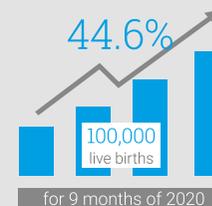
The UN-led assessment of the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on children showed that medical services were not accessible for 56 per cent of those in need, and it was higher for children with disability at 60.3 per cent. **The Ministry of Health temporarily suspended routine immunization at PHC level from 1 April till 11 May 2020. As of December 2020, 73% of children under one received measles containing vaccines - considerably below traditional vaccination coverage rates.**

For the latter part of the 2019-2020 academic year and the beginning of the current academic year, the education system mostly operated on a remote basis from pre-school to tertiary levels. Lack of a unified platform and low speed of internet hindered the effective organization of e-learning. Remote rural schools had lack

of stable connectivity to internet, IT equipment and insufficient digital literacy. **This resulted in substantial learning losses and further worsening of students' functional illiteracy from 64% to 67% for Kazakhstan.**

Due to COVID-19, children of all ages struggled with difficult emotions, such as anxiety, loneliness and disappointment due to school closures and separation from friends and relatives negatively impacting their mental health. The lockdown exacerbated domestic violence and online bullying of children. According to the rapid assessment, 15.3% respondents noted that they had heard of or experienced an increase in cases of domestic violence since the beginning of the spread of COVID-19. The '2020-2023 Roadmap for Strengthening Protection of Children, Addressing Domestic Violence and Preventing Suicides Among Adolescents' was adopted in March 2020.

In 2020, the Commissioner for Child Rights continued independent monitoring of closed residential institutions for children, the findings of which are publicly available at [www.bala-ombudsman.kz](http://www.bala-ombudsman.kz). Grave violations of child rights including physical and sexual abuse, medical ill-treatment, and neglect were identified.



The rate of maternal deaths increased threefold



ONLY  
**73%**

of children under one received vaccinations against measles



Students' functional illiteracy grew from

**64% to 67%**



In collaboration with the European Union,  
UNICEF brought a shipment of over 300,000  
ampoules of dexamethasone and 2,000 pulse  
oximeters to Kazakhstan, to supply healthcare  
facilities in all 17 regions of the country.

Due to lockdowns, many migrants lost their jobs as a result of the economic slump and closure of Kazakhstan's borders made it hard for them to return to their countries of origin. As a result, approximately 3,000 migrants of Tajik and Uzbek nationalities were stranded at the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan border in early July, 25 per cent of this group were women and children. Migrants' average stay at the border has varied from a few days to several weeks with bad conditions and limited access to water and sanitation facilities.



**3,000** MIGRANTS

were stranded at the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan border

A National roadmap on provision of services to Children with Disabilities for 2020-2023 was adopted by the Government.

The President signed a new Health Code for 2020-2025 decreasing the minimum age at which adolescents can seek confidential medical, psychosocial and reproductive health

services from 18 to 16 and raised the minimum age of legal access to tobacco products from 18 to 21. It also prohibited advertisement of breastmilk substitutes, and ensured conditions for breastfeeding mothers at the workplace, adequate maternity leave and breastfeeding hours. According to the new Code, a child born to an HIV-infected mother with an unspecified diagnosis can have continuous monitoring and provision of free ARV medicines. The Code also stipulated mandatory flour fortification and salt iodization.

To reinforce policy reforms, the Supreme Presidential Council for Reforms and Agency on Strategic Planning and Reforms were established in September and the UNICEF Representative became a member of the Expert Committee of the Council.

With UNICEF support, the Government started the development of the Social Code, which has to include new social policy approaches: proactive and integrated social services, and improvement of social workforce status.

The President of Kazakhstan requested Government to develop and implement the Child Well-Being Index, as a national monitoring mechanism to track the effectiveness of the national policy on improving the situation of children at both national and sub-national levels.



**A student of Kozhakeldy Batyr School,  
Aksuat village, East-Kazakhstan region,  
disinfects his hands with sanitizer.**

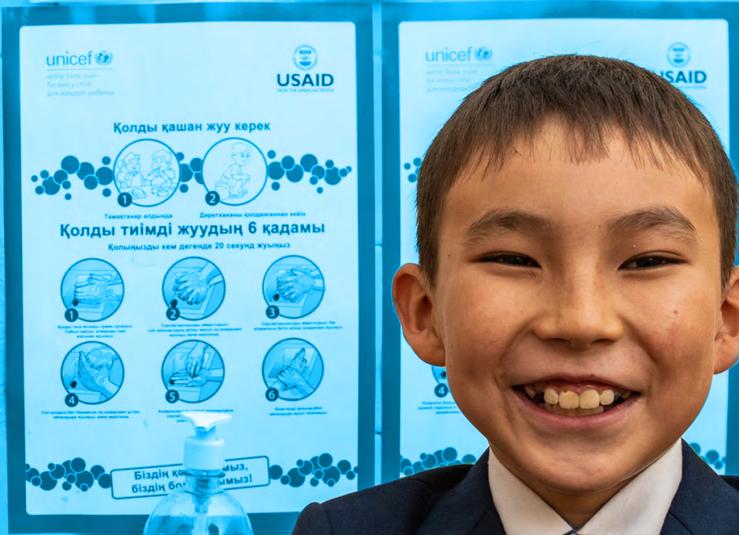
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Zhaniya, 14, after the launch of a nanosatellite  
to the stratosphere, Almaty region.

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## **PART 2** | Major results



4<sup>th</sup> grade students, Diana and Nurbolat,  
secondary school No. 6 of Batpak village,  
wash their hands.

## Part 2:

### Major results



#### Every child thrives and survives

UNICEF supported the Government in development of the new Health Code for 2020-2025, validation of eMTCT status, the National Nutrition Strategy to address child overweight, as well as strengthening routine immunization. To improve infection prevention and control and WASH in health facilities, UNICEF conducted an assessment in selected regions and capacitated local health service providers. With ECHO support, UNICEF procured 2,000 pulse oximeters and over 300,000 ampules of dexamethasone to support the Government's COVID-19 response.

#### Nutrition

With UNICEF support, the National Public Health Center (NPHC) under the Ministry of Health (MoH) developed a gender-responsive national nutrition strategy to address child obesity and overweight and introduced NUTRIDASH into the national monitoring system. The standard operation

procedures and educational modules for medical staff on nutrition and physical screening of young children were developed as well as a recipe book on complementary feeding of children aged 0-2.

#### HIV

UNICEF jointly with UNAIDS supported the Government in development of the National eMTCT Validation Report confirming that Kazakhstan met the elimination MTCT of HIV impact targets. The Report has been submitted to WHO Global Validation Committee. **UNICEF trained 200 PHC workers, AIDS centers specialists, social workers, social pedagogues, staff of medical universities, and resource centers, NGOs on provision of psycho-social support to children and adolescents living with chronic disease (HIV, Hepatitis A, B, TB, diabetes)** based on the national standard in partnership with Eurasian National University and the National Alliance of Social Workers. Specialists strengthened knowledge and practical skills on adherence, case management, supportive supervision and prevention of discrimination.

#### Immunization

With USAID support, UNICEF started a new programme to support MoH in strengthening immunisation system at the national and local levels. The CO facilitated communication between Kazakhstani regions through the

monthly meetings of regional healthcare managers responsible for vaccination; trained nurses, GPs, pediatricians, healthcare managers in immunisation catch-up after COVID-19 lockdown, vaccine safety, and interpersonal communication; and analyzed the medical curriculum on immunization and provided recommendations on improving it. A root cause analysis is being finalized to provide recommendations on addressing the increased number of measles cases. According to the ten-month report, 70% vaccination coverage was achieved in Kazakhstan.

#### Mental health of adolescents

UNICEF partnered with MOH, MOES and the National Centre for Mental Health to provide mental health and psychosocial support to children and families through launching online counselling <https://covid-19.mentalcenter.kz> from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. From April to December, 43,962 users (94.3% from Kazakhstan) visited this website. A team of 58 specialists consulted over 500 (391 individual online and 124 written) on distress, emotional disorders, family relations with prevailing number of requests coming from female users (82.1%). Out of those, 35% were directly related to children, youth, family issues and domestic violence. With CitiBank Foundation support, UNICEF and partners capacitated **over 7,000 school and kindergarten psychologists**



School personnel at secondary school No. 6 in Batpak village receive sanitizer, non-contact thermometers and educational materials procured by UNICEF with USAID support.

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from all regions with skills on provision of remote psychological support to families and adolescents, promoting mental health and psychological resilience, preventing violence and cyberbullying during distance learning. Over 117 webinars were conducted for psychologists and mental health workers involved in provision of remote psychological counselling and support with over 23,000 online participants registered. During the World Mental Health Day alone over 340,000 adolescents and parents received community-based mental health and psychosocial support and information on referral opportunities.



## Every child learns

### Early childhood education

BPreschools were among the first to be considered for re-opening, while governments extended schooling online due to COVID-19 for older children. UNICEF in collaboration with MoES and MoH conducted four webinars on safe re-opening of kindergartens, reaching 1,605 administrators, educators and medical staff. Also, the e-versions of the Special Guidance for Re-Opening of Preschools and Kindergartens during and post-COVID19 in Russian and Kazakh were made available at UNICEF and the National Pre-school Childhood Center's websites.

### Primary/secondary education

In response to COVID-19, private and state schools except for rural multi-graded schools operated on-line since April 2020. In providing an actionable guidance for rural multi-graded schools on prevention and control of COVID-19, UNICEF jointly with UNESCO, MOH, MOES **reached over 3,900 school administrators, teachers and medical staff from 2,944 multi-graded schools through the delivery of eight on-line webinars explaining key facts about COVID-19, epidemiological control regulations, safe school operations.**

UNICEF also procured termo-canners, sanitizers and provided information and education materials on WASH & COVID prevention for these rural schools potentially reaching over 194,000 children in 15 regions of the country.

### Dropout prevention

UNICEF continued its partnership with the Cambridge and Nazarbayev Universities and Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools(NIS) in strengthening an early warning system (EWS) in the selected schools of Nur-Sultan, Karaganda, Kokshetau and Aqmola regions for preventing, identifying and responding to school dropouts (no major gender differences observed among out of school children). Over 500 teachers were capacitated in supportive learning, retention techniques, and working with families. Pilot



# 7,000

school and kindergarten psychologists were trained to provide remote psychological support



# 3,900

education providers from 2,944 multi-graded schools acquired knowledge on how to protect children and prevent 'the spread of COVID-19



Ildan, 14, from Nur-Sultan, receives a laptop procured by UNICEF with support from Citibank, to help him access online learning.

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schools created EWS teams, identified children with special educational needs and explored external resources for supporting families with a range of social services.



## Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

### Violence prevention

UNICEF continued supporting national authorities in addressing negative social norms to prevent violence against boys and girls as well as strengthening parenting skills, including fathers' engagement. The communication campaign has potentially reached 11 million persons via social media. The #LearningAtHome Challenge contributed to the potential reach through the engagement of 13 Kazakhstani opinion makers who motivated parents through their personal example to spend more quality time with children during the COVID-19 quarantine. The challenge contributed to the sharp increase in the number of followers on CO various social media channels from 18K to 34K on Instagram (110% growth) and Facebook (30% growth) from April to May.

A dedicated parenting webpage was developed to help parents with recommendations on raising

children of different age, including brochures 'Learning to be good parents' for children 7-12 and 12-17 years old.

In 2020, UNICEF and the Commissioner for Human Rights launched a follow-up Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Survey on VAC in the families to measure potential change since the baseline survey in 2016.

The Scientific Council of NPHC approved the gender-sensitive SOP on VAC cases for health specialists, including pediatricians, nurses, traumatologists, staff working in ambulances, in-patient facilities and residential institutions.

UNICEF jointly with national authorities assessed administrative data on VAC, including disaggregation by age, gender, social status, perpetrator relationships. The overall national score on development and maturity of administrative data on VAC was ranked as medium, also lacking national indicators to measure the performance of ministries and service providers to protect children from violence and provide child victims with support.

226 UNICEF volunteers (179 female and 47 male) reached 40,283 children (19,562 female and 20,721 male) in 304 schools of the country through 863 online "BeKind" lessons on prevention of bullying in schools.

### Deinstitutionalization

UNICEF conducted testing of a standard protocol to collect data disaggregated by gender/age on children in residential institutions and tested childcare indicators. The testing of both instruments informed government policy and practice in support of deinstitutionalization about the availability of accurate data on children living in institutions, providing clear information on the characteristics of children placed in formal alternative care settings and their needs, and identified shortcomings in data systems.

### Children affected by migration

With EU support and in collaboration with the Child Protection Committee and Human Rights Ombudsperson, three regions of Kazakhstan rolled out protective services for children on the move. UNICEF supported the design of the testing model and operational framework for the provision of protective services. To sustain the model, UNICEF capacitated local authorities in implementation of guides/SOPs. Over the reporting period, 90 migrant children (45 boys and 45 girls) received community-based services by selected NGOs.

As part of humanitarian response, **UNICEF supported 200 women and children stranded on the border of Kazakhstan due to COVID-19 with PPE, including menstrual hygiene management**



Two UNICEF volunteers after a volunteering workshop, organized before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kazakhstan.

© UNICEF Kazakhstan/2020/Sula Anarbekov

**(hygienic tissues), water, hygiene supplies, psychosocial support, and referrals to mother and child health care.**

### Access to Justice

With UK Government support, UNICEF contributed to setting up the mechanism for implementation of the newly adopted legislation on children. The Report on Development of the Medical Social Registry in Kazakhstan shaped the policy and recommendations for introduction of the case management and legislative changes for protection of children in difficult life situations and in contact with the law. As a result of continued advocacy, the Parliament working group agreed to introduce new changes on child protection.



**Every child lives in a safe and clean environment**

### Disaster risk reduction

UNICEF jointly with the Ministry of Emergencies (MoE) and the regional Center on Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction (CESDRR) facilitated a virtual experience sharing with the Government of China on integrated disaster mitigation, pre-deployed UAVs used for disaster monitoring, public private partnership in

emergency preparedness and response as well as the outcomes of the UAVs testing for search and rescue, early fire identification and flood risk assessments in Kazakhstan.

UNICEF also invested in increasing capacities of CESDRR via the procurement of a quadcopter for trainings and potential use in disaster risks assessment. Over 50 specialists of local Emergency Departments were trained on the use of UAVs and post-flight data analysis. Moreover, UNICEF jointly with CESDRR organized a regional workshop with participation of 40 emergency practitioners from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and China in Bishkek on the use of UAVs and cooperation with the business sector.

CO's Emergency, Gender focal points and CESDRR experts benefitted from the joint UNICEF/IFRC training on gender in emergencies for front-line responders and UNICEF technical teams from Central Asia (funded by USAID).

### Injuries prevention

In 2020, UNICEF and the NPHC continued to advocate for prevention of child injuries, conducted a legislative review, and issued the recommendations on the construction standards

aiming at strengthening the child injury prevention mechanism. UNICEF facilitated development and testing of the school-based child injury monitoring tool, training modules and capacitated over 40 teachers. Based on the international experience, the NPHC proposed the concept of a resource center on child injury prevention for service providers and parents.

### Environmental health

In 2020, UNICEF initiated the Blood Lead Level (BLL) study among 1,000 children in four cities of Kazakhstan, aimed at assessment of the causes for the potential higher lead level in children living in urban areas with the industrial and other relevant risks. The BLL study analysis and recommendations will be presented next year to help the Government in identifying the target groups and areas for further health screening clinical studies.



**Every child has an equitable chance in life**

### Children in poverty

In 2020, UNICEF supported the Government to make appropriate policy choices and improve effectiveness of social protection measures taken as a response to COVID-19. The Government

implemented a complex package of measures in response to COVID-19 amounting to 5.7 percent of GDP, including indexation of state social benefits, introduction of a special allowance of KZT 42,500 (US\$ 101) for those who have lost wages, free grocery packages for vulnerable groups. However, implementation of the above-mentioned measures revealed many gaps in the social protection system.

UNICEF is conducting an evaluation of the social protection system for children and their families in Kazakhstan. It centers around targeted social assistance, a flagship cash transfer program for the poorest families with children. Since TSA procedures have gone through three significant revisions over the last 3 years, the ultimate impact of the policy adjustments remains uncertain. The evaluation findings will shed further light on this question when released in 2021.

## Social work

With support of UNICEF, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP) continued coordination of cross-sectoral social work, drafting new social protection laws and policies and conducted a social service workforce assessment aiming to reach over 11,000 employees to define the level of competencies of staff including specialists, social workers in home-based care and residential institutions.

Also, UNICEF trained 1,847 specialists of institutional organizations, including development of the training course curriculum. UNICEF supported development of an interactive training module based on a mobile application (skillcup.ru) and a course of 10 video lectures on Youtube (Onege channel) on basics of social work and case management.

To promote an enabling environment for reforming social services, MLSP and UNICEF conducted the annual forum of social service workforce for over 300 practitioners and international experts. The forum focused on improving the status of social workers through the development of the new legislation on the social service workforce, addressing their needs in training and well-being. UNICEF brought expertise from Georgia and Bulgaria in establishing alternative care services for children with disability and shared UNICEF's view on de-institutionalisation during the annual forum.

UNICEF provided support in review of existing legislation, standards and training programmes to equip the system with a modern approach to delivery of care services, case management and supervision. The Government declared in 2020 its plan on development of a Social Code, the main Law framing the state social protection policy, and National plan for further development of social work in Kazakhstan until 2025, which can

be considered as a roadmap for implementation of key provisions of the Code. Based on the Government's request, UNICEF is providing technical assistance and expertise to the MLSP in drafting both documents.

UNICEF conducted a series of trainings for 250 social workers on the basic skills of social work and case management for local social protection staff from three regions involved in piloting the "Cash plus" model with over 30 services available to families.



## Cross-cutting work

### Procurement services

In 2020, UNICEF continued supporting the Government of Kazakhstan in procurement of essential medicines and vaccines and supplied 4 types of vaccines and 11 ARV drugs for a total amount of US\$9 million. For the first time UNICEF supported procurement of HIV tests. To enhance procurement capacity of the government, UNICEF conducted in-country assessment on quantification, forecasting of, and budgeting for ARVs and provided recommendations on improving the ARVs procurement process.

## Data for children and evaluations

In 2020, the CO continued the evaluation of the social protection system for children and their families in Kazakhstan and started the evaluation of the national reforms in prevention of violence against children.

The government completed the nationalization process of SDG indicators covering all child-related indicators with the continued UNICEF support to the National Statistics Bureau.

The Child Protection Committee under MoE started the development of Child Wellbeing Index with UNICEF Innocenti and the CO support.

## Communications

**The CO further prioritized the digital first approach, increasing 3.6 times the number of social media followers (from 20,000 in 2019 to 72,376 in 2020).** The growth is primarily attributable to engaging social media influencers and policy makers through #LearningAtHomeChallenge, WCD #KidsTakeover, creating relevant content with a focus on the fastest growing Instagram account, mobilisation of online volunteers and dissemination of life saving information to prevent COVID-19. Also, the CO promoted children's rights agenda in traditional media and achieved 38% share of voice on all stories related to children's issues (against 30% target).



**Kalamkas, 16, UNICEF volunteer,  
with her family at Aksuat village  
in East-Kazakhstan region.**

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**With USAID support, UNICEF procured sanitizer and non-contact thermometers for multi-graded schools, benefiting an estimated 194,000 children in 15 regions of the country.**

## **PART 3** | Partnerships

## Part 3:

### Partnerships

**In 2020, the CO leveraged partnerships across all programme outcomes to maximize results for children and actively engaged in UN collaborative mechanisms (finalization of the UNSDCF, joint advocacy, research and programming).** UNICEF joined the UN-wide efforts in supporting the Government COVID-19 response and led the UN group on Risk Communication, contributed to the health (led by WHO) and socio-economic groups (led by UNDP).

UNICEF, jointly with UNESCO, the World Bank and WHO advocated on safe school reopening and supported the Ministries of Education and Health in introducing new guidelines for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19 and capacitating over 900 education/health professionals on safe school re-openings, building resilient school systems, ensuring inclusion in a blended learning context.

UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCAP have started the implementation of a joint programme on aligning policy and financing towards an Integrated National Financing Framework

including child budget initiative to ensure a holistic SDG financing strategy benefitting children.

In partnership with UNDP, UNICEF conducted a Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on children in Kazakhstan designed to assess access to social assistance, health care and educational services, leisure and other needs for preschool, school age children and students.

UNICEF participates in the newly established IOM-led UN migration network in Kazakhstan aimed at facilitating migration actions and contributing to effective migration management.

UNICEF closely collaborated with the National Commission on Women, Family and Demographic Affairs under the President, UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP to strengthen women's and girl's empowerment and prevent gender-based violence.

Along with UNICEF, OHCHR also advocated for continued monitoring of closed institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To address challenges faced by children due to COVID-19, UNICEF Kazakhstan expanded partnerships with multilateral

donors and the private sector. UNICEF and ECHO procured medical supplies (pulse oximeters, dexamethasone). In partnership with Citibank, UNICEF supported better access to quality distance learning, including the procurement of IT equipment for 60 vulnerable children, and building capacity of school psychologists to provide psychosocial support to children during COVID-19.

With USAID support, UNICEF intensified risk communication, provided life-saving COVID-19 messaging, critical supplies (sanitizers, antiseptic, thermo scanners) to over 2,000 remote rural schools, contributed to improved infection prevention and control in health facilities, and evidence generation. Moreover, UNICEF, USAID and CDC cooperated to strengthen immunization system.

In partnership with business organizations Samruk Kazyna Trust, Kazpost, and Beeline, UNICEF expanded its programme to equip over 2,000 employees of these companies with positive parenting skills. Kazpost arranged pro-bono placement of educational materials for prevention of violence against boys and girls through the post offices in all regions, including in remote rural areas. Citibank of Kazakhstan

co-funded UNICEF programme in support of uninterrupted access to online quality education by equipping vulnerable children with computers for their studies. Citi Foundation with support of UNICEF USAA corporate partnership division contributed to the multistakeholder project on providing psychological and mental health support to children and adolescents coping with stress during quarantine.

UNICEF Kazakhstan thanks all its partners including the European Union, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Healthcare, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Committee for Children Rights Protection of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, National Commission for Women Affairs, Family and Demographic Policy under the President of Kazakhstan, Commissioner for Human Rights in the Republic of Kazakhstan, Commissioner for Child Rights in the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Citi Foundation.



**Sandugash Kudaibergenova, psychologist**

**in Kazakhstan, provided online psychological**

**first aid to the population during the pandemic.**

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The UniSat project participants after the launch of a nanosatellite to the stratosphere, Almaty region.

## **PART 4** | Innovations and lessons learned

## Part 4:

### Innovations and lessons learned

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on the programme implementation in Kazakhstan requiring revision of the workplan, development of a Humanitarian Action for Children appeal jointly with ECARO to address emerging needs of children and families due to COVID-19, changing the modalities of programme delivery (i.e. digital first programming during the lockdown), and applying simplification procedures enabled by UNICEF HQ. The main lesson learnt was that adjustment of the programming in a drastically changing environment created numerous challenges to deliver the results for children on the ground, for example, shifting Government's priorities away from children's agenda due to COVID-19 and stretched capacity to provide services; conducting remotely UNICEF programmatic and financial assurance activities, restricted travel and offline events. However, COVID-19 also created many opportunities, for example, budget savings, expanding the coverage of our capacity building activities due to online format - both the number of beneficiaries

and geographical coverage, simplification and digitalization of many UNICEF procedures. COVID-19 has also significantly affected the working modality with implementing partners, so the COVID-19 IP management guide issued by HQs proved very useful throughout the year.

The digital first programme and communication approach proved to be successful during the quarantine. The total number of UNICEF social media followers increased by 3.6 times in comparison with the last year (from 20,000 in 2019 to 72,376 in 2020). The Country Office's reach on social media has significantly exceeded the target set – over 11 million reached against 5 million planned. This was mainly due to engaging social media influencers and policy makers in the #LearningAtHomeChallenge and World Children's Day #KidsTakeover campaigns. In total, for the last two years over 80 influencers amplified UNICEF messaging. UNICEF's account has been promoted by Instagram as an official source for COVID-19 pandemic information.

Among other positive lessons learned was successful application of volunteers' engagement in supporting UNICEF programme delivery as well as advocacy and communication outreach to the public at large. **Since the start of the UNICEF volunteering programme in March 2020, about 7,500 young volunteers have been taking part in it. They conducted online lessons for more than 36,000 schoolchildren and 1,500 parents as well as created over 3,300 social media posts and reached out over 750,000 online users.**

In 2020 the volunteering program covered 6 themes: disseminating life-saving messages to prevent COVID-19 and address myths; prevention of bullying online and in schools; plastic use reduction by children; enhancing disaster risk reduction knowledge; promoting children's rights and inclusive society. Over 3,000 posts published by the UNICEF-led network of young volunteers ensured outstanding online reach during COVID-19 with child rights messages and further promotion and engagement on UNICEF social media accounts.

# UNICEF Volunteering Programme in 2020



7,500  
young volunteers



36,000  
schoolchildren

&



1,500  
parents  
reached through  
online lessons



750,000  
online users reached  
through



3,300  
social media posts

In 2020, UNICEF Kazakhstan team continued to invest in innovative solutions to improve transparency and efficiency of our practices on managing partnerships with IPs. In particular, with support from Innovations Office, the CO has been finalizing a smart contract using blockchain technology to increase accountability in transferring resources to UNICEF partners and decrease paperwork. The prototype is planned to be finalized in January 2021 and presented to ICTD and other HQ divisions for the scale up.

Another innovation piloted in Kazakhstan aimed to promote the importance of technical and soft skills for girls in STEM, in particular the space industry. UNICEF Kazakhstan jointly with the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University launched an educational project for girls on development of UniSat nanosatellites. The participants of the UniSat programme - girls aged between 14-35 – designed, programmed, assembled, and tested a nanosatellite

prototype, which was successfully launched into the stratosphere. Currently, the CO is planning the scale up of the programme to showcase a pioneering approach to skills programming with and for girls for their empowerment and success in the future as well as share learnings to other UNICEF country offices for possible replication.

The pandemic gave additional relevance to the GIGA initiative for which Kazakhstan stepped forward as a regional convener and the COVID-19 experience highlighted last mile connectivity issues in Kazakhstan as well. The business case for Kazakhstan has been finalized and received additional funding to expand and strengthen the initiative in-country and in the region. A needs assessment on Digital Public Goods and financial model design are planned for Q1 of 2021.

To strategize business engagement for accelerating results for children and to strengthen capacity of staff in building relevant and

meaningful partnership with business, the office conducted a study on business impact on child rights in Kazakhstan and arranged the training on Business for Results for all programme staff. Following the results of the research and B4R training, the office intends to integrate partnership with business as one of the key stakeholders of the programme of cooperation in the workplans and programme strategies to leverage the power and resources of business in addressing the critical areas of child rights violation as a result for enhancing positive business practices and advocating for child rights



2<sup>nd</sup> grade students of secondary school  
No. 6 of Batpak village, Ramina (in white)  
and Yasmina (in pink).



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