

State of Children's Rights

KOSOVO

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for every child

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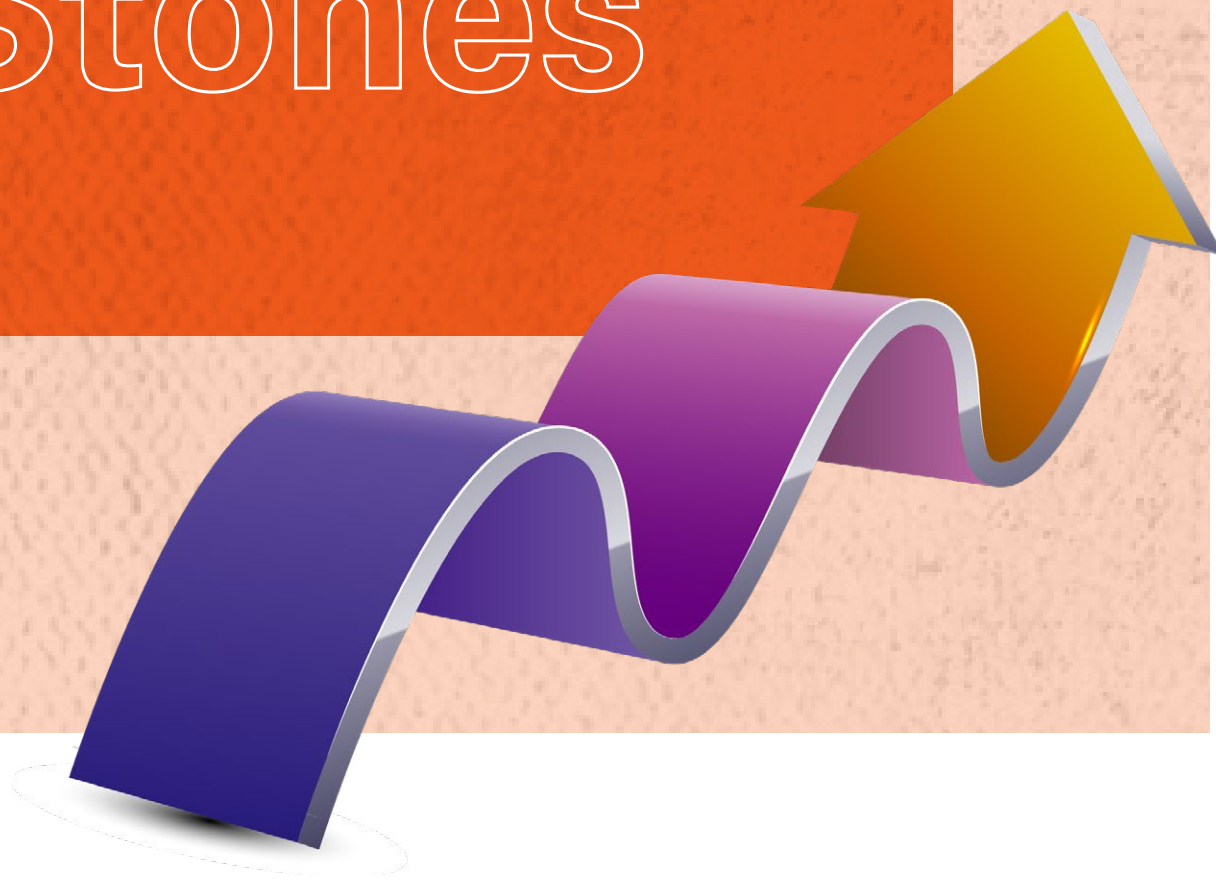


State of Children's Rights KOSOVO*

All references to Kosovo are made in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244.



Stepping Stones



THE LAW ON CHILD PROTECTION

entered into force in 2020, providing a milestone achievement in the protection of children's rights by establishing a comprehensive, legal framework for guaranteeing and protecting children from all forms of abuse, exploitation, neglect, physical and mental violence, or other that could endanger children's life, safety, health, education, or development. The law also formalized the home visiting programme which creates mandate for health sector to deliver home visits to all pregnant women and children age 0-3 years and be used as a means of risk identification and referral to other relevant sectors. The Law was supported by UNICEF, the European Union, the Parliamentary Committee on Child Rights, the Advisory Office on Good Governance, the Ombudsperson Institution, the Coalition of NGOs for Child Protection - KOMF and Save the Children.



Since 2010, Kosovo has been at the forefront in developing **UNICEF skills-building programmes** for youth and adolescents - UPSHIFT, PONDER and PODIUM. The three programmes have now been **accredited by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency** and are in the process of being integrated in the Kosovo secondary education curriculum. Upshift is a social innovation initiative which supports youth and adolescents to become a force for positive social change, building transferable skills and creating opportunities for reaching community members with various interventions in the form of products or services. Ponder is an informal education programme, aiming improvement of critical thinking skills, especially with regard to information and messages that adolescents and youth receive from social and traditional media. Podium is a social advocacy workshop that teaches youth and adolescents how to advocate for the needs and rights of their community. All three programmes work at the nexus of technology and innovation to empower adolescents and youth and explore avenues to transfer 21st century skills to young people.



podium

ponder

In April 2020, at the height of the novel coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry for Education and Science, with support of UNICEF and Save the Children, launched the **first ever online Early Childhood Development (ECD) platform in Kosovo** to support and promote parental involvement in early developmental and learning activities and to ensure continuity of such activities for children in the age group 0-6 years. The platform reached an impressive 2.5 million views and about 200,000 unique visitors by August. It provides just one example of the quick adjustment across programmes to the reality of the pandemic in 2020 and onwards. Link to ECD platform: <https://edukimihershem.rks-gov.net/>



Overview

Kosovo is in the midst of a long transition from a legacy of conflict and major population displacements. The population is estimated at **1.8 million** and is composed of Kosovo Albanian (**92%**), Kosovo Serbs (**4%**), and other minorities such as Bosnians, Gorani, Turks, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians (in total **4%**). De facto segregation along ethnic lines and mother tongue education persist.

Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe (average of **29.5 years**; **31%** are children (**0-18**)). The full potential of youth is tempered by the poor governance, lack of employment opportunities, limited participation in social and political life, inadequate support services and an education system not yet fit for the purpose. In combination, these lead to the loss of hope and a lack of trust in governing institutions and each other, resulting in the outflow of around **30,000** young people every year.

Kosovo is categorized as lower middle-income with a GDP per capita estimated at **US\$3,877** (2017). The robust growth over the past decade has not resulted in significant reduction of unemployment, while the growth potential remains constrained by weak external competitiveness, high informality, low labour force participation, and a large infrastructure gap.

While the legal and policy framework on child rights remains broadly consistent with international norms and standards, there are substantial gaps between policy, planning and implementation. The process of decentralization is contributing to the discrepancies in the achievement of full and equitable child rights, with a clear need to increase public budgets for child-relevant services and to strengthen capacities, particularly of municipal authorities, to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate programmes for children. Across all areas difficulties include systems for the generation, reporting and use of data, a focus on facilities rather than people, and limited budgets for investment in achieving the rights of children.




Poverty levels remain high, with estimated **23%** of children living in poverty (**7%** in extreme poverty). Poverty negatively affects fulfilment of child rights, including leads to child labour, child marriage, lower access to services and poorer social outcomes. There are striking disparities based on ethnic or socio-economic background, geographic location and parental education level for most health, nutrition and early childhood development and education (ECD/ECE) indicators. Persistent gender discrimination is hindering women's access to economic, political and social opportunities, while violence against women and children remains widespread.



What is the situation of children's rights and wellbeing in Kosovo?




Right to survival and health



Issue	1. Child and maternal mortality 		2. Immunization 		3. Child malnutrition 	
Equity	Lower health outcomes among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and those from rural areas, especially the poorest households. Child mortality is almost two times higher among children living in Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.		Gaps and inequities in immunisation coverage, which is particularly low for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children (38% coverage, MICS, 2020). Difference in full coverage among wealth quintiles.		Striking inequalities and lower nutritional outcomes for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children and children from poorest households. IYCF an area of concern. Children from households in the richest wealth index quintile are more likely to receive minimum diet diversity	
Number of children affected	Neonatal, infant, child mortality under-5 mortality rate: 11, 15, 1 and 16 per 1,000 live births; 100% of births were delivered by skilled health attendants (MICS, 2020).		73% of children 24-35 months old are fully immunized (79% in 2014) (MICS, 2020 & 2014).		Stunting: 5% ; wasting: 2% ; underweight: 2% ; overweight: 6% ; excl. breastfeeding: 29% . 1 in 3 children age 6–23 months receive the minimum acceptable diet (MICS, 2020).	
	Bottleneck/Barrier	Strategies	Bottleneck/Barrier	Strategies	Bottleneck/Barrier	Strategies
Enabling Environment (Social norms, legislation, budget, management)	Inadequate financing for PHC, priority for curative and hospital care Limited planning, monitoring and reporting capacity, incomplete HIS Gaps in Health Insurance Law coverage No national strategy on human resources	Increase allocation and the efficiency of health budget Introduce and implement universal health coverage scheme Develop and implement national strategy and NAP on maternal, child and reproductive health Increase the use of technology for telemedicine	Lack of reliable and quality data to track progress on immunisation Lack of effective vaccine management	Assess the vaccine cold chain inventory and strengthen monitoring system to track immunization coverage Affordability assessment for introduction of PCV and Rotavirus vaccine	Inadequate support for IYCF practices for mothers Lack of updated and quality data to address nutrition status of young children	Strengthen monitoring systems and maternal and neonatal health with a strong focus on the first 1,000 days
Supply (Availability of services, access to services)	Poor quality and accessibility of neonatal and maternal care Shortages of staff, equipment, maintenance, supplies, waiting lists in PHC Incomplete and uneven coverage of home visiting programme	Strengthen maternal and neonatal health in the first 1,000 days Develop operational standards, increase scope and coverage of the home visiting programme	Outdated vaccine cold chain system	Extend health services using cost-effective means	Breakdowns in the continuum of care of children Incomplete and uneven coverage of home visiting programme	Scale up home visiting programme Develop and extend a national school feeding programme Enforce administrative instruction for child health and nutrition in pre-university
Demand (Financial access, beliefs & practices)	Insufficient income to cover out of pocket expenses Lack of information on good practices and available services Low rates of health-seeking behaviour Decreasing prestige and bypassing of PHC	Use C4D to raise awareness Increase knowledge and practices among parents on ECD	Lack of awareness on the importance of attending regular immunization schedule	Develop and implement C4D immunization campaigns	Poorer IYCF practices and lack of knowledge on nurturing care practices among parents Lack of early initiation and low level of exclusive breastfeeding High poverty levels	Use C4D to raise awareness and enhance understanding of the situation in households and communities Strengthen parenting skills on infant and young child feeding




Right to Education



Issue	1. Insufficient access to early childhood education and care 		2. Gaps in access to school education 		3. Quality of education 	
Equity	Lower attendance in ECE among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, children with disabilities, children living in rural areas, poorest households and mothers with lower education.		Children with disabilities are largely excluded from the education system. Significant disparities at upper secondary and tertiary levels – based on ethnic, geographic, gender and income. High dropout rates for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, particularly in upper secondary school.		Variations in quality between municipalities, as well as urban and rural areas. Lower literacy and numeracy Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. Household wealth is positively associated with both foundational reading and numeracy skills.	
Number of children affected	15% of children age 36-59 months attending any early childhood programmes (8% of children living in Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities) (MICS, 2020).		Primary, secondary, upper secondary school net attendance ratio: 96%, 94%, 87% and 84%, 64%, 31% for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children (MICS, 2020).		Low PISA scores and high unemployment among higher education graduates (26.7% in Q3 2017 / EU, 2018). 41% and 42% of children with a foundational level of literacy and numeracy skills; 18% and 13 % among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. (MICS, 2014).	
	Bottleneck/Barrier	Strategies	Bottleneck/Barrier	Strategies	Bottleneck/Barrier	Strategies
Enabling Environment (Social norms, legislation, budget, management)	<p>Low investment and priority for ECD and ECE</p> <p>Lack of a policy for systematic and equitable expansion of ECE</p> <p>Weak monitoring, quality assurance and enforcement of standards</p> <p>Priority given to the children of employed parents</p> <p>Insufficient integration of private sector</p>	<p>Develop and implement guidelines for early detection and intervention</p> <p>Increase investment and develop alternative funding models, including from non-traditional donors</p> <p>Strengthen the capacities at the municipality level to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate programmes for children</p>	<p>Low priority and investments in inclusive education</p> <p>Gaps in EMIS, erratic reporting on newly developed models</p> <p>Lack of standardized approach to identification and assessment of disability</p> <p>Social norms, stigma and discrimination</p>	<p>A shift from construction towards improving quality, relevance and accessibility of education</p> <p>Test models for cost-effective methods of implementing inclusive education</p> <p>Develop municipal action plans for inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools</p> <p>Design a strategy for retention in municipalities with high dropout rates</p> <p>Ensure completeness of data within EMIS</p>	<p>Low spending on education, dominated by the wage bill and infrastructure</p> <p>Gaps in EMIS (reliability, limited disaggregation, no data at the student level)</p> <p>Failure to adopt curriculum to market demands</p> <p>Weak quality assurance mechanisms</p> <p>Insufficient preparation and support for teachers in implementation of the new curriculum requirements</p>	<p>Increase expenditure efficiency of education budget</p> <p>Strengthen data collection and reporting systems</p> <p>Ensure evidence-based planning and programming in line with the demographic changes and labour market needs</p> <p>Improve the school environment, including extending Child-Friendly Schools</p> <p>Integrate competency-based curriculum and experiential learning (i.e., UPSHIFT)</p>
Supply (Availability of services, access to services)	<p>A limited supply of quality accessible preschool education</p> <p>Insufficient emphasis on parenting programmes to fill the gap</p>	<p>Improve the recruitment and training of additional teachers</p> <p>Test, evaluate and scale up ECD, ECI and home visiting models</p>	<p>Lack of accessible and inclusive learning spaces, including accessible infrastructure (toilets, stairs, ramps) and access to assistive devices</p> <p>Limited availability of adequately trained teachers and assistants</p> <p>Limited transport</p> <p>Insufficient support for learning centers for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians</p>	<p>Allocate adequate resources for teacher assistants, transportation, accessible infrastructure and assistive technology to support inclusion of children with disabilities</p> <p>Strengthen life skills, civic education and the promotion of clubs in primary and secondary schools</p>	<p>Surplus of primary school capacity in rural areas and lack in urban</p> <p>Inadequate use of student-centred teaching</p> <p>Low quality of facilities</p> <p>Sub-optimal usage of digital tools and distance-education</p>	<p>Strengthen the professional development of teachers, broaden the application of child-centred teaching and learning, use of computer-aided teaching</p> <p>Ensure adequate supply of teaching and learning material</p>
Demand (Financial access, beliefs & practices)	<p>Hindered access for children from poor households - limited supply driving up the price of private pre-school education & preference for children with two working parents</p> <p>Lack of knowledge and understanding on the importance and benefits of early education</p>	<p>C4D activities to address the importance and benefits of early education for children at early age</p>	<p>Poor economic conditions</p> <p>Preference for girls to stay home, early marriages</p> <p>Low education and lack of parental awareness on the importance of schooling</p> <p>Social norms, discrimination stigma, violence and bullying</p> <p>Low school readiness due to low enrolment in quality ECD</p>	<p>Increase awareness among on the importance of inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools</p>	<p>Socioeconomic status, parents' educational status, limited availability of ECE poor family practices and nutrition affecting school performance</p>	<p>Increase engagement of students and parents in education</p> <p>Raise awareness of children of the importance and benefits of education</p>



Right to Protective Environment



Issue	1. Children without parental care 		2. Violence against children 		3. Children with disabilities 	
Equity	Children in foster care mainly abandoned infants, with a few older children, usually sibling groups.		Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children and children with disabilities, particularly girls, are at high risk of violence, abuse or neglect.		Multiple challenges for children with disabilities from poor households, particularly living in a remote areas or belonging to Roma, Ashkali or Egyptian communities.	
Number of children affected	611 children without parental care (74 in residential care, 479 in kinship care and 58 in foster care) (MLSW, 2020).		72% of children age 1–14 years experienced any violent discipline; 30% physical punishment and 24% non-violent methods of discipline (MICS, 2014).		3,645 students with disabilities enrolled in regular schools (MEST 2018/19). Only 10% of children with disabilities benefit from health, education and social services (KOMF, 2017). 8% of children reported functional difficulty in at least one domain (MICS, 2020).	
	Bottleneck/Barrier	Strategies	Bottleneck/Barrier	Strategies	Bottleneck/Barrier	Strategies
Enabling Environment (Social norms, legislation, budget, management)	Decentralisation without adequate financing and capacities for social services Limited disaggregated data, weak planning and implementation at municipality level Lack of national training programme for foster parents and social workers Gaps in legislation for care-leavers (18 yrs old)	Create sustainable earmarked financing for social services at the local level and ensure adequate capacity building and support Develop policy framework for respite and short-break care services, particularly for families with children with disabilities Develop specialisation of CSW social workers and allied professionals in child protection and foster care/adoption Establish national mechanisms for protecting young single mothers at high risk to abandoning their children after the birth	Low priority and investments in prevention Insufficient disaggregated data for planning, monitoring and evaluation Scattered responsibilities for child protection and limited coordination between line ministries Decentralisation of social services without proper financing mechanisms and human capacities Strong social norms, social expectations and factors encouraging violent practices	Ensure budget and institutional ownership for implementation of the Law on Child Protection Create sustainable earmarked finances and strengthen capacities for social services at the local level Develop monitoring and reporting framework for child protection based on key indicators Activate inter-sectoral cooperation and coordination mechanisms for child protection	Limited visibility, insufficient investment, lack of policy priority and supportive programming Fragmented legal framework No wide-ranging data available on disability, multiple definitions in use Medical model dominating the perceptions of disability Stigma and discrimination fueled by traditional beliefs	Adopt a social model of disability Utilise findings of upcoming MICS survey and census to facilitate planning and programming
Supply (Availability of services, access to services)	Failure to extend and ensure stability of foster care system - categorization of payments, no social or health benefits and lack of recruitment of foster families, weak monitoring and oversight	Invest in foster care, provide further training and health and social entitlements to foster parents	Major gap between laws, policies and implementation Low quality of social services, poor linkages with other sectors, shortage of social workers	Invest resources in preventative activities Capacitate personnel from all sectors on child-sensitive approaches to VAC	Gaps in services throughout the life cycle Absence of specialized staff, assistants and equipment, personalized plans, barrier free access to public services Reliance on NGOs, with limited government support, quality control or ownership	Ensure more qualified teachers and assistants, specialized equipment and facilities in health and education, financial support to daycare rehabilitation centres, accessible infrastructure Develop and implement guidelines, and pilot early detection and intervention models using ICF methodology
Demand (Financial access, beliefs & practices)	Social norms and stigma related to young single mothers having a child out of wedlock	Utilize C4D activities to address the social norms and stigma around single mothers having children out of wedlock	Under-reporting of domestic (seen as private matter, stigmatization, embarrassment, retaliation, economic dependence and lack of trust in institutions, fear of losing a child) Limited awareness of rights, laws and policies and where to seek help	Initiate dialogue and increase awareness of the negative effects of VAC on all levels Address long-standing and deep-rooted cultural norms perpetuating violence	Social norms, stigma, discrimination, violence and bullying Low mother's education and engagement in ECE and poor family practices with respect to an enabling cognitive environment Limited awareness of the rights of children with disabilities	Utilize C4D activities for increased awareness around inclusion of children with disabilities

Right to participation, civil rights and freedom

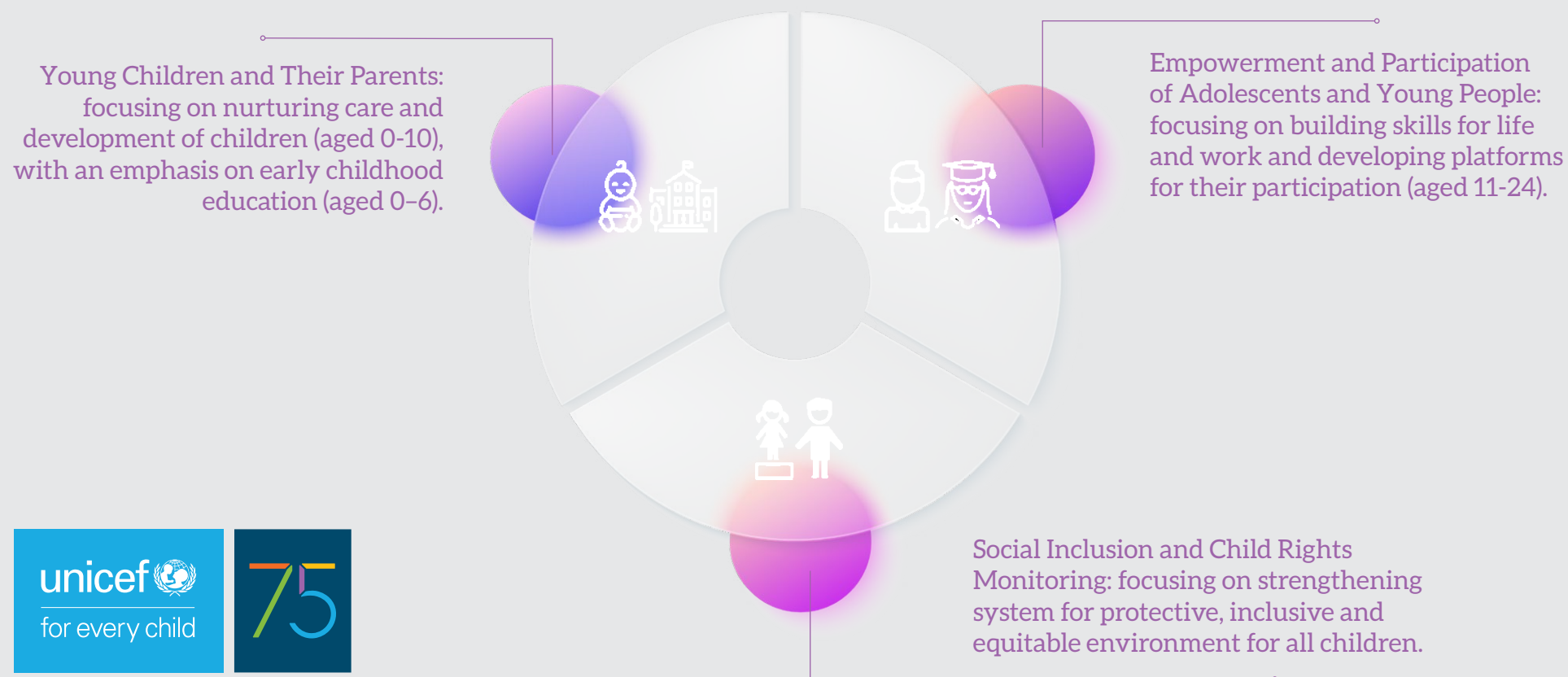


Issue	1. Inadequate social protection system 		2. Poor planning system for children 	
Equity	Poverty disproportionately affects women, children, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and rural populations. Increasing inequality in urban areas (Gini coefficient 27.8% / UNICEF, 2015).		Young people with disabilities and those from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities with even more constrained opportunities for participation in all areas. Young women are more exposed to become NEETs.	
Number of children affected	Poverty rate in 2015: 17.6% (23% children); extreme poverty in 2015: 5.2% (7% children) (UNICEF, 2015). 26,000 households were receiving SAS in 2017 (WB, 2019).		Unemployment among 15-24 years olds in 2018: 55.3% (LFS, 2019). NEETs (15-24 yrs old) in 2017 32.7% . 10% of young Kosovars are of the opinion that their interests are “well” represented in national politics (FES, 2019).	
	Bottleneck/Barrier	Strategies	Bottleneck/Barrier	Strategies
Enabling Environment (Social norms, legislation, budget, management)	<p>Spending on social protection well below regional level Declining spending on Social Assistance Scheme (SAS), lack of regular price indexation Corruption affecting the availability of resources</p> <p>Gender discrimination hindering women's access to economic, political and social opportunities</p>	<p>Increase allocation for social protection</p> <p>Improve effectiveness and efficiency of SAS and its contribution to poverty reduction, introduce universal child benefits</p> <p>Reform the system of maternity and parental leave Cost the impact of corruption on social services</p>	<p>Challenges with quality of education and human capital formation</p> <p>Mismatch between education and labour market needs</p> <p>Social norms limiting child participation in decision-making at all levels</p>	<p>Support amendment of the Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation</p> <p>Strengthen cross-sectorial coordination and partnership with key line ministries</p> <p>Increase efforts on programmes for children out of school, notably NEETs</p> <p>Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of youth programmes and document its qualitative aspects</p>
Supply (Availability of services, access to services)	<p>Social protection programmes with limited focus on poverty reduction or enhancing equity (low value of grants and restrictive eligibility criteria)</p> <p>Children are not yet directly addressed in social programs (i.e., through universal child benefits)</p>	<p>Extend access by using innovative means and expertise from the private sector</p> <p>Ensure part of remittances focus on or contribute to social services and alleviation of poverty</p>	<p>Limited efforts to amplify young people's voices and to ensure their opinions are heard and acted upon</p> <p>Limited opportunities for participation of youth in sport, political life and decision making</p>	<p>Contribute to “Leave no Adolescent Behind” by reaching 100% of 10th grade students in selected municipalities through local innovation hubs</p> <p>Increase the capacities of the existing youth centres and councils to deploy existing ADAP programmes (UPSHIFT, PODIUM, PONDER)</p>
Demand (Financial access, beliefs & practices)	Lack of birth registration limits access to SAS	Increase awareness on the importance of registration of births	<p>Distrust and apathy towards political institutions, scepticism regarding CSOs and media</p> <p>Dramatic decrease in young people's interest in political events</p> <p>Poverty, lack of opportunity and inequality drive the desire for out-migration among youth and loss of high-quality human capital</p>	Use the opportunity to develop a new generation of IT-savvy youth, with special focus on girls



What are UNICEF's priorities in Kosovo?

UNICEF in Kosovo contributes to Kosovo's development efforts, to enable all children, adolescents and young people, especially the most marginalized, to have their rights progressively fulfilled and to develop to their full potential in a protective and inclusive society. The guiding principles underpinning the work in Kosovo are: leave no child behind, deal with the unfinished business, translate laws and policies into results for children and increase visibility and awareness of and accountability for child rights. The Kosovo programme focuses on the significant challenges facing children, adolescents and youth at different stages of their growth and development, and aims to achieve, by 2025, that more marginalized children, adolescents and young people realize their rights in a protective, inclusive and equitable environment. It convenes multiple stakeholders and sectors to advance child rights within three priority programmes:





UNICEF Kosovo

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