GOAL AREA 2

Every child learns

Global Annual Results Report 2020
Children learn on tablets in a new classroom in Tamantay, a village in Kassala State, Sudan, on their first day of e-learning through the Can’t Wait to Learn programme.

Expression of thanks: © UNICEF/UN073783/Al-Issa
Somar, 8 years old from Syria, living with Down’s syndrome, dreams of becoming a violinist and a professional swimmer.
The year 2020 was truly unprecedented for children around the world. The commitment of UNICEF’s resource partners allowed millions of children to continue to learn, grow and develop with the support of UNICEF programming. UNICEF funds come entirely from voluntary contributions. We take this opportunity to thank the millions of people, including our government partners, civil society and the private sector, who contributed to UNICEF’s funds this year. Without your support, our work would not have been possible. Your contributions have a wide impact and allow us to deliver on our mandate to advocate for the protection of children’s rights, to help meet their basic needs, and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

We also extend special and warm thanks to our partners who contributed to UNICEF’s thematic funding. Thematic funding was critical this year and will continue to be an essential tool that allows UNICEF the flexibility and predictability to deliver technical, operational and programming support to children across the world. By entrusting us with this funding, you have made many of the results in this report possible and have furthered our mandate to reach the most vulnerable children. We warmly acknowledge our partner Norway, which has continued to champion education and work with us to reach every child with quality education. We are grateful for its support to thematic funding.
“Never before has it been as urgent to invest in delivering the promise of SDG 4 on education. Finding solutions to the global learning crisis – by reimagining education – is a necessity. We need to harness the potential of digital learning as part of building back better, in a manner benefitting those furthest behind.

Supporting inclusive digital transformation in education systems requires a comprehensive approach. We need inclusive and relevant digital learning content and solutions to reach every child, including girls and children with disabilities. We also need to invest more in teachers and their capacity.

With UNICEF, we share the same human rights-based approach to education. We also share the willingness to push the boundaries in innovating for and with children. UNICEF’s work to improve school connectivity, explore digital technologies in support of teaching and learning, and transform education systems is highly appreciated by Finland. We hope to strengthen our partnership in this field, to nurture a culture that is accustomed to experiment and innovate, values learning and truly respects the rights of the child.”

Ville Skinnari, Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

“Our valued partnership with UNICEF transforms the lives of the most vulnerable children through education, ensuring that every child around the world receives a quality education. UNICEF pioneers and leads new solutions and programmes that focus on learning.”

Julian Hargood, Global Head of Corporate Affairs, C. & J. Clark International Limited

“Education has long been one of the key pillars of Luxembourg’s general development cooperation strategy; it lies at the heart of many of our efforts to support the successful implementation of the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Every SDG requires education to empower children and youth with the knowledge, skills and values to live in dignity, build their lives, and contribute to their societies. The outbreak of COVID-19 has proved this more than ever. Luxembourg has been a long-time supporter of UNICEF’s efforts aimed at safeguarding opportunities for children around the world and will continue to promote equal access to quality education for all. Particularly vulnerable populations as well as women and girls will continue to be at the centre of our efforts.”

Franz Fayot, Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs, Luxembourg

“UNICEF is one of Norway’s most important development partners in education. In the midst of an education crisis exacerbated by COVID-19, there is a pressing need to use current resources more efficiently to reach the ones that are left behind. By supporting UNICEF’s global Thematic Fund for Education, we provide flexible funding for the goals set in UNICEF’s Strategic Plan, in which marginalized children, including girls, children with disabilities and refugees, are given priority.”

Dag-Inge Ulstein, Minister of International Development, Norway
“In 2018, UNICEF and Microsoft embarked on a global partnership focused on empowering, educating and protecting displaced young people around the world. Our goal was to increase access to the digital skills needed to thrive in an increasingly digital world. We leveraged UNICEF’s extensive experience building and delivering solutions for young people and Microsoft’s technical expertise to co-create Learning Passport, a learning platform that has both online and offline capabilities. The idea of Learning Passport is that if young people are on the move, their education should be on the move with them.

When COVID-19 hit and so many schools suddenly had to operate remotely, we quickly expanded the programme so that countries with a national digital curriculum could facilitate online learning for students with devices at home, to help ensure the continuity of their education during the pandemic.

Learning Passport is an excellent example of how technology can be a bridge in the most challenging scenarios, and we have seen real value in communities that have very limited infrastructure and connectivity. In 2020, Learning Passport helped provide students and teachers with access to education and with critical skills needed to support their futures.”

Kate Behncken, Vice President and Lead of Microsoft Philanthropies, United States of America
Seventy-four years after UNICEF was established and thirty-one years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the organization’s mission to promote the full attainment of the rights of all children is as urgent as ever.

The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, is anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and charts a course towards attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the realization of a future in which every child has a fair chance in life. It sets out measurable results for children, especially the most disadvantaged, including in humanitarian situations, and defines the change strategies and enablers that support their achievement.

Working together with governments, United Nations partners, the private sector and civil society, and with the full participation of children, UNICEF remains steadfast in its commitment to realize the rights of all children everywhere and to achieve the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a world in which no child is left behind.

The following report summarizes how UNICEF and its partners contributed to Goal Area 2, ‘Every child learns’, in 2020 and reviews the impact of these accomplishments on children and the communities where they live. This is one of seven reports on the results of efforts during the past year, encompassing gender equality and humanitarian action as well as each of the five Strategic Plan goal areas: ‘Every child survives and thrives’, ‘Every child learns’, ‘Every child is protected from violence and exploitation’, ‘Every child lives in a safe and clean environment’ and ‘Every child has an equitable chance in life’. It supplements the 2020 Executive Director Annual Report (EDAR), UNICEF’s official accountability document for the past year.
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Executive summary

Two girls back in their school for the first time after school closures, in Toumodi-Sakassou, in the center of Côte d’Ivoire.
The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic disrupted the lives of children in 2020 at a scale never seen before. At one point, more than 9 out of 10 students (1.6 billion) lost access to school. The inequities that have long kept millions of children from accessing quality education, were further exposed as millions more missed out on services often provided through schools such as nutrition, immunization, mental health and psychosocial support and protection. As schools in many countries switched away from in-person classes, at least 463 million students were unable to access remote learning modalities and almost all teachers and learners found it challenging to adapt to the new realities. Driven by the scale of the challenge, UNICEF’s education programmes reached far more children in 2020 than at any other time in the organization’s history. UNICEF mobilized its on-the-ground capacity and broad range of partnerships to provide educational materials to more than 43 million children, compared with 12 million in 2019. UNICEF helped 32.6 million children in humanitarian settings (68 per cent of the target) to remain protected and continue learning, up from 7.4 million in 2019. UNICEF supported 48 million out-of-school children (49 per cent girls) with access to education, and 301 million children (49 per cent girls) were reached with distance and home-based learning opportunities. The flexibility needed to make such a quick pivot during travel restrictions and lockdowns was only possible because of UNICEF’s deep in-country networks and partnerships with service providers, practitioners, advocates, NGOs and others. By the end of 2020, UNICEF and its local partners had also helped more than 400,000 schools across 89 countries to implement school safety protocols to protect against COVID-19.

The year 2020 was one when the normal distinctions between ‘humanitarian’ and ‘development’ did not apply. The top six countries in terms of UNICEF education expenditures reflect the extent to which children’s access to learning continues to be severely affected by ongoing conflict and crisis – Lebanon, Yemen, Turkey, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria, all of which housed refugee camps supported by UNICEF or were themselves the sites of extensive internal displacement due to conflict. Yet the pandemic meant that for the first time ever, virtually all countries worldwide were simultaneously dealing with an education emergency. UNICEF and its partners responded with the urgency usually seen after conflicts or natural disasters such as hurricanes or floods. This urgent response, sustained throughout the year, could not entirely prevent damage to education systems or loss of learning for many children, but it did open pathways to recovery. The percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective education systems for learning declined, with the drop-off greatest in low-income countries. Yet efforts to keep education progressing provided a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine education, to remove long-standing barriers to access and learning, through innovation, and to leapfrog to the future with stronger partnerships. The share of UNICEF-supported countries with equitable education planning showed a significant gain despite the pandemic, with gains greatest for low-income countries. There were also gains in the share of countries with improved education data, those mainstreaming skills development and those with access to gender-responsive education systems. The year led to a deeper respect for the critical role of teachers working side by side with their students, and a greater understanding of how to harness new technologies to support teaching and learning processes.

UNICEF’s global leadership for the education response to the pandemic was achieved through diverse partnerships, at a scale unprecedented in its history. UNICEF worked with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank to mount a coordinated global response. Along with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), UNICEF developed the Interim Guidance for Prevention and Control of COVID-19 In Schools. The global Framework for Reopening Schools was issued in April 2020 with UNESCO, the World Bank, World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Through funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), UNICEF provided US$8.1 million to 87 eligible countries to accelerate emergency planning and response. And, thanks to global thematic funding provided by partners such as Norway, Denmark and Sweden, UNICEF allocated an additional US$4.4 million for this purpose to the remaining 66 UNICEF programme countries and territories.

UNICEF also co-developed Building Back Equal: Girls back to school guide with UNESCO, the Malala Fund, Plan International and the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI). As a member of the Global Education Coalition’s Gender Flagship, UNICEF helped to develop the guidance Inclusive School Reopening: Supporting the most marginalized children to go to school. Support for school reopening helped to strengthen intersectoral provision of critical services to children, including school meals, vaccinations, water and sanitation facilities, protection, and mental health support.

These efforts were undertaken as nearly 900 UNICEF education staff were forced to shift gear without warning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to find new ways to work while pushing to achieve the same goals of equitable access, learning and skills. UNICEF was an early advocate for continuity of learning during school closures. The focus remained on children, including the marginalized, girls, refugees, children on the move, children with disabilities, those living in poverty, and minority communities. UNICEF worked throughout 2020 to place a spotlight on education, to mobilize global solidarity and commitment and, at the same time, to find innovative approaches to solve otherwise inusable challenges. UNICEF launched the global Reimagine Education initiative to reach every child everywhere with digital learning solutions, by bringing together the expertise and resources of a broad range of partners from the public and private sectors. The Giga Initiative, seeking to connect every child, every school and subsequently every community to the Internet, accelerated...
its country reach in response to the pandemic to connect over 86,000 schools and more than 25.8 million students and teachers.

Schools provide more than education. Millions of children receive essential life-saving services such as health services, immunization, nutrition, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and psychosocial support through schools. The longer schools remain closed, the greater the risk to children, particularly the marginalized such as girls and those living in humanitarian settings.

As societies started reopening, UNICEF continued to promote that return to school be prioritized. UNICEF advocated with governments and partners to ensure all children get back to school with measures in place for them to catch up with the lost learning and resources to empower teachers. Then, guided by the hard-earned lessons of 2020, UNICEF advocated for accelerating and scaling up digital learning solutions to ensure continuity of learning for learners and the resilience of education systems to future shocks.

The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, specifies: (1) stronger education systems for gender-equitable access to quality education from early childhood to adolescence, including children with disabilities and minorities; (2) stronger education systems for gender-equitable learning outcomes; and (3) improved access for children to skills for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and employability. The Strategic Plan also assumes “no worsening of the economic, political and social environment”; but 2020 was the year this assumption no longer held. There were setbacks. Direct support for children with disabilities declined from US$21 million in 2019 to US$11 million in 2020. UNICEF’s support for early childhood education (ECE) declined to 4.5 per cent of its total expenditure on education, down from 6 per cent in 2019, as preschools were among the most affected by the pandemic, and distance learning modalities proved especially challenging for younger learners. UNICEF remains committed to providing 10 per cent of its education resources to ECE, ensuring that all children have access to at least one year of quality pre-primary and giving priority to the most marginalized children.

In 2020, UNICEF spent just under US$1.2 billion on education, of which US$146 million was drawn from regular resources (the most flexible), and US$1.021 million from funds earmarked for specific programmes (other resources). About US$90 million from other resources was drawn from education thematic funds, which provided the flexibility to address the global challenge.

In January 2022, UNICEF will begin to implement its next Strategic Plan. As always, the plan will have the most marginalized children and youth at its centre – those whose vulnerability and need for support has been made clear by the events of the past year, but whose resilience in the face of adversity has also been demonstrated. The new plan will further ramp up support for inclusive education, and for those affected by emergencies. It will provide more service delivery indicators and more transparent tracking of trends over time to ensure that the most vulnerable children are visible and given strong support.

UNICEF’s efforts to address the global learning crisis will also focus on the most marginalized children, ensuring children gain a range of skills, including foundational literacy and numeracy and transferable skills. Work will also prioritize expansion of digital learning to reach all children with connectivity and digital learning solutions that are interactive, adaptive, playful, inclusive, market-relevant and nimble. UNICEF will continue to ensure that learning opportunities are gender-transformative and responsive to the specific needs of girls and boys, and that assessment of learning is strengthened and embedded in policies, plans and practices to improve learning outcomes.

There is a popular saying that when one door closes, a new door opens; 2020 has shown that this is not necessarily true when it is a school door that closes, and when the child left outside is faced with multiple obstacles. In the aftermath of the pandemic, UNICEF is committed to helping education systems around the world build back better – to help all girls and boys develop the foundational and transferable skills that will serve them for a lifetime, opening opportunities and a way forward where the doors of learning are always open.
Strategic context

Children playing in a preschool in Viet Nam.
Impact of COVID-19 on education

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted children's lives at an unprecedented scale and interrupted education for over 1.6 billion learners,¹ of which almost half were girls.² For millions of children across the world, an estimated two thirds of an academic year has been lost on average due to full or partial school closures related to COVID-19.³ By March 2021, schools had remained closed for 168 million children globally for almost an entire year.⁴ An estimated 23.8 million children, including nearly 11.2 million girls (pre-primary to tertiary), are projected to drop out of school because of the pandemic.⁵ The economic impact of the pandemic is expected to restrain domestic and international education investments and to push families further into poverty.⁶

The year 2020 put the spotlight on education and exposed disparities further, including gender inequalities and digital divides.⁷ The pandemic spurred global solidarity: a range of partners from the public and private sector joined forces and maximized their synergies to respond to the crisis at speed and scale. From the onset of the pandemic, UNICEF used its on-the-ground capacity, working with global and local partners to support governments in mobilizing a response across education systems to urgently adopt alternative learning measures and innovative approaches. Much of UNICEF’s traditional support for services within classrooms gave way to support for remote learning.

UNICEF leveraged the diversity, resources and expertise of partners from the public and private sectors in an effort to reach all children, even those out of school before the pandemic, with learning opportunities.

The 2020 education-in-emergencies response was UNICEF’s largest to date. The organization reached every programme country as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and was the largest provider of education-in-emergencies assistance globally. UNICEF also seized the momentum as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to leapfrog into the future by accelerating and scaling up efforts to reach the most marginalized children. Recognizing the impact of the pandemic on children’s learning, UNICEF hastened the implementation of its global Education Strategy, 2019–2030,⁸ and deployed a variety of approaches appropriate to the local context and the unique needs of learners to ensure continuity of learning for all, with a focus on reaching the most marginalized, including girls, children with disabilities, children from ethnolinguistic minority groups, and children living in or fleeing from crisis, among other vulnerable groups.

FIGURE 1: Impact of COVID-19 on children’s education

| 1.6 billion learners’ education disrupted, nearly half of them girls |
| Schools for more than 168 million children closed for almost an entire year |
| 463 million children whose schools closed during the pandemic have no access to remote learning |
| 23.8 million children including 11.2 million girls estimated to drop out of school, as a result of school closures |
| An estimated US$10 trillion loss of earnings for this cohort of students |

This report presents results for the third year of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021,¹³ for each of the result areas identified for Goal Area 2: (1) strengthening education systems for gender-equitable access to quality education from early childhood to adolescence, including children with disabilities and minorities; (2) strengthening education systems for gender-equitable learning outcomes; and (3) improving children’s access to skills for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and employability. The theory of change for Goal Area 2 of the Strategic Plan proposes that carefully targeted support for systemic change, with services to the most vulnerable girls and boys, and investment in global public goods such as better information systems, will result in gender-transformative education, with better access, better learning outcomes, and greater attainment of the fundamental skills needed for success in life. But the theory of change also includes a caveat. It assumes “no worsening of the economic, political and social environment”. In 2020, of course, that environment was worsened dramatically by the COVID-19 pandemic.
Global trends

Globally, there have been modest improvements in pre-primary enrolment in recent years, but little change in primary and secondary school enrolment. According to the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report, the share of children who did not participate in at least one year of pre-primary schooling declined from 42 per cent in 2009 to 36 per cent in 2018.

Reading proficiency has been improving at modest rates globally in recent years – from a very low base, particularly in low- and lower-middle-income countries. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute of Statistics (UIS) estimated the annual rate of improvement between 2015 and 2019 at about 1 per cent for low- and lower-middle-income countries, 0.5 per cent for upper-middle-income countries, and 0.1 per cent for high-income countries. The pandemic appears to have interrupted this growth, abruptly lowering the percentage of children proficient in reading in lower primary and at the end of primary from 59 to 49 per cent globally. Decreases have been highest in upper-middle-income countries and lowest in low-income countries. This latter result is because of a much lower baseline, with the share of children proficient at the end of primary, for instance, declining from 16 per cent to 13 per cent. Recent assessments found that fewer than 3 per cent of 15-year-olds (including out-of-school adolescents) were proficient readers in Cambodia, Senegal and Zambia. Up to 37 per cent of students failed to score above the random guessing threshold on regional assessments in mathematics in Latin America and in southern and eastern Africa.14
Strategic shifts

The devastating impact of the pandemic led to rapid shifts in focus for UNICEF, both at headquarters level and at country level. UNICEF quickly moved to provide guidance on distance education. Recognizing that the most marginalized children were unlikely to benefit from high-tech approaches to distance learning, UNICEF adopted multiple approaches to support implementation of low-tech and no-tech remote learning solutions. Given that schoolchildren were at elevated risk of long-term loss of learning and decline in socio-emotional well-being, and that schools were not a major vector of COVID-19 transmission, UNICEF became an early advocate of reopening of schools.

In its support for girls, UNICEF shifted quickly from its long-time emphasis on accelerating gains in girls’ education to limiting the damage brought about by COVID-19-related school closures which put girls at an increased risk of dropout, gender-based violence (GBV), child marriage, early pregnancy, and paid and unpaid care work. Building on the lessons learned from previous emergencies such as the Ebola outbreak, UNICEF country offices worked to ensure that the most vulnerable girls and boys maintained their connection to schooling, preserving the potential for learning despite school closures.

It is challenging to state with any degree of certainty that shifts in previously observed patterns were the direct result of the pandemic. In future, it will be important to examine these strategic shifts, to consider lessons learned, and to decide which of them should be carried forward after countries emerge from the crisis. The capacity for distance learning, for instance, can help school systems be more resilient to disruptions. Many countries caught a glimpse during the pandemic of the potential for a stronger role for technology in supporting learning. However, the risk that the digital gap will widen the learning gap also became apparent. It is estimated that at least 463 million students around the globe were not reached by remote learning programmes.

On the positive side, the number of children who were helped through UNICEF programmes reached an all-time high: in 2020, UNICEF supported 48 million out-of-school children (49 per cent girls). This number is not strictly comparable with previous years since it includes children in some countries who were already enrolled in school and whose education was interrupted by school closures, but it shows a rapid increase in the number of vulnerable children supported, as UNICEF helped them to continue learning with distance learning solutions (including radio, television and e-learning). The number of children receiving individual educational materials went from 12 million in 2019 to 43 million in 2020, of whom 22.4 million were in humanitarian settings. The number of adolescents supported through skills-development programmes almost doubled, from 4 million to just under 8 million.

On the negative side, some important programmes received less funding. Direct support for children with disabilities declined from US$21 million in 2019 to US$11 million in 2020, linked to delays in receiving donor funding. Overall thematic funding received by UNICEF declined from US$106 million in 2019 to US$90.3 million in 2020.

Arif, 12 years old, taking his telephone lesson with his teacher who takes turns calling students to provide guidance on weekly learning material while schools in Bangladesh were closed due to the pandemic. Arif is enrolled in the UNICEF-supported Ability Based Accelerated Learning centre that aims to reach out-of-school children from urban slums in Bangladesh with a second chance at education.
Key achievements

UNICEF’s global leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic set a new precedent, with an education emergency response that reached 153 of UNICEF’s programme countries and territories. The response was aligned with UNICEF’s overall emergency response strategy and with the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which make continuity of learning a central pillar.

As nationwide school closures began to disrupt education for students worldwide, UNICEF immediately worked with the World Health Organization (WHO) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to develop interim guidance on COVID-19 prevention and control in schools. UNICEF, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank strengthened their partnership to mount a coordinated global response. By the end of 2020, UNICEF along with local partners across 89 countries had supported 405,017 schools to implement school safety protocols; over 301 million children (49 per cent girls) had been supported with distance and home-based learning solutions.

Initiated by UNICEF, the global Framework for Reopening Schools was issued in April 2020 with UNESCO, the World Bank, World Food Programme (WFP) and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The framework informs the decision-making process on why, when and how to reopen schools. It supports national preparations and guides the reopening under six key dimensions: safe operations, learning, reaching the most marginalized, and well-being/protection, with finance and policy integrated throughout.

UNICEF also developed the guidance Inclusive School Reopening: Supporting the most marginalized children to go to school, and as a member of the Global Education Coalition’s Gender Flagship, UNICEF co-developed the Building Back Equal: Girls back to school guide with UNESCO, the Malala Fund, Plan International, and the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI). The guide, which is a companion to the global Framework for Reopening Schools, promotes the development of gender-transformative education systems and targeted actions to ensure girls’ continuity of learning and return to school.

Subsequently, UNICEF led the development of a supplement to the Framework for Reopening Schools, based on best practices emerging from the evidence on reopening schools. UNICEF co-chaired the Technical Advisory Group of Experts on Educational Institutions and COVID-19, with WHO and UNESCO. With UNESCO, UNICEF led the writing of a joint evidence brief on the link between school reopening and the risk of increased incidence of COVID-19, which many countries used to guide advocacy discussions with their governments on school reopening. Eighteen case studies from 2020 focused on school reopening in a wide range of countries; these knowledge management pieces contributed to UNICEF’s largest knowledge management strategy to share best practices and emerging lessons learned globally. Furthermore, UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank designed a 10-part webinar series which focused on providing support to national governments for reopening schools, highlighting the latest evidence from the field. Each episode featured key educational issues such as curriculum prioritization, focusing on marginalized children, remote assessment, and technological platforms for reimagining learning.
In Costa Rica, UNICEF and the National Childcare and Development Network (REDCUDI) developed and implemented a certification and quality recognition system in 1,344 childcare centres serving 56,945 children.

UNICEF Senegal supported 409,000 out-of-school adolescents and youth (approximately 49 per cent girls) with skills development programmes that fostered learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and/or employability.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, approximately 8.5 million children from 7,185 schools benefited from comprehensive COVID-19 awareness protocols and gender-sensitive support packages provided by UNICEF.

In South Sudan, UNICEF supported in-person or distance learning opportunities for 1.5 million students (630,000 girls) during the pandemic and trained 26,000 adolescent girls and young women to serve as role models and advocate for girls’ education.

UNICEF’s technical support to 17 state governments in the Philippines reached 200,000 adolescents (approximately 44 per cent girls) in the Alternative Learning System through the ICT4ALS online platform, a repository of non-formal education learning materials and COVID-19 resources. ICT4ALS also has low-tech learning materials for learners without internet access.

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In India, UNICEF supported the Ministry of National Education to launch a mobile application for learners with disabilities. The application allows 350,000 children with disabilities to continue learning during school closures.

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Systems-strengthening

A young girl holding her tablet at the public school in Melen-Yaounde, Cameroon. Supported by UNICEF, the Connect my School initiative in Cameroon aims to connect schools to the Internet and provide students with access to online and offline learning material.
In a year when education systems around the world were weakened, it may seem paradoxical to speak of results in terms of systems-strengthening. The usual mechanisms to improve how education systems function were disrupted in 2020. Training programmes were severely curtailed. Travel was suspended. Planning processes had to take place virtually rather than face to face. Spending was diverted to make up for more immediate challenges. Yet, counterintuitively, 2020 was also a year that saw significant developments in systems-strengthening.

An important goal of education systems-strengthening is to help countries gain more impact from scarce resources. Since most of its financing is from domestic sources, UNICEF aligns its support with national systems: it aims to help ministries of education ensure that different components – for example, the curriculum, teaching and assessment – work together productively, and also to ensure that ministries of education are accountable for learning outcomes. In this way, the millions of dollars that UNICEF spends on education systems-strengthening (US$312 million in 2020) can have a sustainable impact on the estimated more than US$1 trillion overall that low- and middle-income countries spend each year on education.19

To monitor the rapidly evolving global education response to the pandemic in 2020, UNICEF implemented multiple rounds of a rapid survey from late March to August. The first several rounds focused on tracking countries’ national responses and UNICEF country offices’ support to ensure safe school operations, continuity of learning, child health and well-being, and the reopening of schools. A particular focus was on understanding which strategies countries were implementing to support marginalized populations and girls. Later rounds of the survey focused in more depth on tracking country strategies and on preparedness for and progress in reopening schools.

Findings from each round of the rapid survey helped guide technical support for the COVID-19 response for country offices at the global and regional level and contributed to knowledge management and reporting. Survey findings were included, for example, within 10 education-led COVID-19 updates, 4 reopening bulletins, and the overarching headquarters-led bi-weekly COVID-19 bulletin. Findings were also shared with external stakeholders in webinars on the COVID-19 response and with partners such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to help inform their response.

The rapid survey also contributed to the development of a subsequent joint UNICEF–UNESCO–World Bank survey of countries’ national responses to COVID-19. Two rounds of surveys were completed by ministries of education (118 countries in July, and 149 countries in October) to monitor national education responses to COVID-19 school closures. Almost every country that responded to the survey reported including remote learning in its education response to COVID-19: online platforms, television/radio programmes and/or take-home packages. Most countries (89 per cent) have introduced at least one measure to increase access to the devices and connectivity needed for online learning. Also, most surveyed countries (91 per cent) have taken measures to support populations at risk of being excluded from distance learning platforms, most commonly learners with disabilities.

In 2020, UNICEF employed 893 education staff members (51 per cent women) to implement education programmes across the globe (see Figure 3). Of these, 842 (94 per cent of all education staff) were deployed at the country level, often in fragile and conflict-affected countries or remote locations where needs are greatest. This strong country presence helps UNICEF take a more participative approach, working closely with stakeholders on the ground and developing a deeper understanding of the day-to-day challenges faced by education systems.

UNICEF’s seven regional offices provide staff development, sharing of evidence around good practice, and contributions to the education sector policy dialogue. The regional offices also help to develop global and regional partnerships for increased alignment and productivity. Education staff collaborate with colleagues working on health, nutrition, child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), social policy, disability, gender, adolescent development and Communication for Development (C4D, also referred to as social and behaviour change, SBC). This includes using schools as centres to deliver a range of interventions and outcomes for children in development and humanitarian settings.

UNICEF’s support to education systems-strengthening is facilitated by education thematic funding, which allows impact for sustainable results in different thematic areas (as opposed to earmarked funding of specific projects).
Thematic funding for education

During 2020, thematic funds again proved their value – this time, in the response to challenges created by the pandemic. Thematic funding received at the global level is allocated across country offices using a needs-based approach, which has helped to address the deep inequities that emerged as many of the most vulnerable children were unable to access distance learning.

Unfortunately, perhaps partly as a consequence of the global economic downturn, thematic funding declined sharply in 2020, just when it was most needed. In 2020, US$90.3 million in thematic funding was used by headquarters, regional offices and country offices. UNICEF country offices used 79 per cent (US$71.5 million) of the thematic funding.

Education systems-strengthening accounted for 44 per cent of thematic funding, compared with 25 per cent for non-thematic education expenditure. The use of thematic funding by UNICEF to ensure that all children access education and learning is also reflected in the 32 per cent share of thematic funding allocated to improving learning outcomes, compared with a 23 per cent share of non-thematic expenditure.

Overall, in 2020, the largest share of thematic funds was spent on service delivery activities. This is a reversal from previous years, when systems-strengthening activities represented the biggest share of thematic fund spending, and reflects the urgency and challenge of maintaining services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Boxes titled ‘Spotlight on thematic funds’ in this report highlight results achieved using thematic funds. The flexibility of thematic funds has enabled concrete results to be obtained for country programmes. For instance, to ensure a strategic and rapid global response to the pandemic, UNICEF allocated US$4.4 million to the 66 UNICEF programme countries and territories that did not receive GPE COVID-19 planning grants for this purpose. Thematic funding in 2020 also supported UNGEI to pivot to meet the enormous challenge of ensuring equitable access, including for girls and marginalized groups, during COVID-related school closures and remote learning.

Figures 4 and 5 highlight the expenses for education in 2020 by activity and by results area respectively.
FIGURE 4: Expenses for education by activity, 2020

**Education thematic funding utilization by activity**
- System strengthening: 44%
- Service delivery: 56%
- **TOTAL US$90 M**

**Education non-thematic funding utilization by activity**
- System strengthening: 25%
- Service delivery: 75%
- **TOTAL US$1,077 M**

FIGURE 5: Expenses for education by result area, 2020

**Education thematic funding utilization by result area**
- Equitable access: 64%
- Learning outcomes: 32%
- Skills development: 4%
- **TOTAL US$90 M**

**Education non-thematic funding utilization by result area**
- Equitable access: 72%
- Learning outcomes: 23%
- Skills development: 5%
- **TOTAL US$1,077 M**
Results

Children use their tablet and work with each other at the UNICEF supported Debate e-Learning Centre in a village on the outskirts of Kassala, the capital of the state of Kassala in Eastern Sudan.
More children lost access to school in 2020 than in any other year in history. The situation was made worse by conflicts and other emergencies, including unprecedented crises due to climate change. Many governments instituted remote learning programmes but UNICEF analysis reveals that at least 463 million students around the globe were completely cut off from education. Three out of four students who could not be reached were from rural areas; in lower-income countries, the percentage was even higher. Students from the poorest 40 per cent of families accounted for a disproportionately high percentage of these children.

A backdrop of growing inequality existed even before 2020. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital divide, poverty gap and gender gap widened further. UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring Report for 2020, Inclusion and Education: All Means All, notes that children from poor families were more than five times less likely to complete secondary school than children from wealthy families.

In response to these challenges, UNICEF rapidly shifted gear, early in 2020, to focus on maintaining or restoring children’s access to learning, thus helping countries push back against the heartbreaking growth in inequality. In 2020, UNICEF spent US$838 million (US$58 million from thematic and US$780 million from non-thematic funds) on equitable access to education. Of this amount, 80 per cent was spent on service delivery, and 20 per cent on systems-strengthening.

Result Area 1: Equitable access to education

Igihozo Kevin, 11 years old, listens to radio lessons at home in Rwanda during school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
FIGURE 6: Results chain for equitable access to education

**SPENDING IN MILLIONS OF US($)**

- **Education provision**: 531
- **Other activities for access (e.g. school feeding, school grants)**: 93
- **EMIS, systems, sector plan/strategy and analysis**: 69
- **Education humanitarian cluster/humanitarian sector coordination**: 45
- **Risk-informed programming and peacebuilding education**: 73
- **Inclusive education for children with disabilities**: 14
- **Gender-responsive systems for access**: 12

**OUTCOMES**

- **Countries with gender parity**
  - 49% in primary
  - 42% in lower secondary
  - 24% in upper secondary

- **Children from the poorest quintile who attended education**
  - 74% in primary
  - 45% in lower secondary
  - 29% in upper secondary

- **60% of children were enrolled in pre-primary**

- **Out-of-school children represented**
  - 11% of children of primary school age
  - 20% of children of lower secondary school age

**OUTCOMES**

- **48 million out-of-school children accessed education**
- **43% of countries have equitable education systems for access**
- **42% of countries have gender-responsive education systems for access**
- **42% of all children targeted for education in emergencies were targeted by UNICEF**
- **68% of UNICEF-targeted children in emergencies accessed education**

**Total spending for ACCESS is**

- **US$838 million** of which
  - **80%** (US$670 million) service delivery
  - **20%** (US$168 million) system strengthening
  - **84%** (US$703 million) was focused on adolescents
  - **65%** (US$546 million) was focused on humanitarian
  - **12%** (US$103 million) was focused on gender
FIGURE 7: System-strengthening indicators for equitable education systems for access

**Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with equitable education systems for access**

- **Actual**
- **Target**

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<tr>
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**Regional progress**

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**Four dimensions of equitable education systems for access**

- **Sector plan/strategy**
- **EMIS and data systems**
- **Resilience and emergency preparedness**
- **Inclusive education**

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In Mongolia, UNICEF helped 19,000 children (9,689 girls) from ethnic minorities at pre-primary to secondary level to continue their education through television programmes in Kazakh, Tuvan and sign language.

In Kazakhstan, UNICEF supported capacity building for over 7,000 school psychologists to provide remote psychological support to families and adolescents, promoting mental health and psychological resilience during distance learning, and preventing violence and cyberbullying.

UNICEF Uganda enabled distance learning via the Kolibri platform and home learning packs for 2.5 million children including 368,048 refugees.

In Yemen, UNICEF provided monthly incentives and salary allowances to 111,550 teachers and school-based staff and to 2,086 women teaching in rural schools to attract more girls to enrol and remain in school.

In Mali, 51,747 out-of-school primary-school-aged children (26,185 girls), including 33,133 children affected by emergencies, were reached through reintegration into formal schools and provision of non-formal and alternative education opportunities.

In Yemen, UNICEF enabled distance learning via the Kolibri platform and home learning packs for 2.5 million children including 368,048 refugees.

FIGURE 8: Illustrative results for equitable access to education
Reaching the most disadvantaged children

For children with disabilities, children from ethnolinguistic minorities, and migrant and displaced children, school closures meant additional challenges in accessing remote learning. UNICEF focused on ensuring that these groups of learners, and those who were out of school before the pandemic, had equitable opportunities to learn.

Inclusive education for children with disabilities

An estimated 93 million children worldwide live with disabilities. Nearly half of them are not in school. Inclusive education is the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to learn and to develop the skills they need to thrive. When schools closed due to the pandemic, children with disabilities faced additional barriers to accessing remote learning opportunities, such as limited access to equipment, electricity or the internet, and inaccessible learning content for learners with visual or hearing impairments.

UNICEF developed global technical guidance to support remote learning and a return to school for all marginalized learners, with specific strategies for children with disabilities. In the East Asia and Pacific region, UNICEF led the development of technical guidance on ensuring an inclusive return to school for children with disabilities.

UNICEF hosted virtual events in collaboration with the World Bank and UNESCO on inclusive remote learning and school reopening for marginalized children, including strategies to address the needs of children with disabilities. With support from GPE, UNICEF developed a resource catalogue and a practitioner’s guide to support inclusive remote learning, as well as an accessible digital learning portal for curriculum and content developers to help children with disabilities access content.

The UNICEF and UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) provided training on the foundations for inclusive education sector planning to government and non-government actors in the Eastern and Southern Africa region (72 participants) and South Asia region (63 participants). Through the Inclusive Education Initiative partnership, UNICEF continued to support government and non-government actors to scale up screening, assessment and referral systems for children with disabilities.
UNICEF spent approximately US$14 million directly on inclusive education for children with disabilities in 2020. Of this amount, US$10 million (71 per cent) was spent on systems-strengthening activities such as inclusive Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), and laws and policies, and US$4 million was spent on inclusive teacher training and accessible learning materials.

In 2020, some 54 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries reported having in place an effective inclusive system for children with disabilities. Expenditure was far below the 2019 total of US$21 million, largely due to delayed release of funding from key donors and shifts to support remote learning for children while schools were closed. This highlights the barriers that children with disabilities experience when core funding is not assured. UNICEF also spent almost US$75 million in 2020 on activities that indirectly or partially address support for the education of children with disabilities.

An encouraging number of countries provided learning content in sign language through television and online programmes. These included Angola, Ukraine, Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Viet Nam, Côte d’Ivoire, Mexico, Morocco, Rwanda and Uganda.

In Nepal, UNICEF continued to support 327 schools to model inclusive learning and mother-tongue education in primary schools, adopting innovative approaches such as the creation of community learning circles and training events for teachers using virtual platforms or small groups with social distancing. New systems were introduced to prepare and apply individual education plans for children with disabilities and functional limitations.

In late April 2020, the Ministry of National Education in Turkey launched a mobile application for learners with disabilities – available through the Ministry’s official website – aimed at ensuring continued learning opportunities for children with disabilities. By September 2020, a total of
350,000 users had downloaded the mobile application, and more than 100,000 were active users.

UNICEF’s inclusive education programme in Egypt reached 348,000 children (47 per cent girls) in 290 inclusive public primary schools, including 5,000 children (33 per cent girls) with disabilities and 3,700 teachers and school managers.

In Morocco, UNICEF provided advocacy support for the adoption of inclusive education models. Subsequently, the number of children with disabilities accessing primary school doubled from 10,200 in 2019 to 22,240 (9,453 girls) in 2020.

In Madagascar, at least 823 out-of-school children with disabilities were re-enrolled in inclusive schools after attending national catch-up programmes supported by UNICEF. Additionally, a joint programme funded by the Government of Norway in drought-affected areas in the south benefited more than 12,300 out-of-school children (52 per cent girls) through catch-up classes and children’s reintegration into primary school. The programme reached more than 1,500 schools with essential teaching and learning supplies.

In Nicaragua, 700 teachers completed a course on Nicaraguan sign language. The Ministry of Education received training on the technical and pedagogical skills to elaborate audiovisual didactic materials in the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) format, which led to the production of 10 video books of Nicaraguan literary works.

Case Study 1: Peru: Inclusive education for children with disabilities

Over the past 15 years, UNICEF Peru has supported the Ministry of Education to improve inclusive access to education. Despite the efforts, an estimated 45 per cent of children with disabilities aged 3–18 years do not have access to education.

With support from thematic funding, UNICEF promoted training on education inclusion and Universal Design for Learning tools – building on a pilot project, +Inclusion – which reached 9,900 primary school children and their families. The training also reached 30 per cent of teaching officials, including principals and teachers (100) at the national level and 570 others from subnational levels.

UNICEF continued to collaborate with civil society organizations in Peru that work with people with disabilities, to increase demand for more-inclusive education. Three online webinars were run, and an agenda for inclusive education developed, giving a voice to families, school principals and teachers advocating for better education services.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Education also produced guides, videos and advocacy material for ‘Aprendo en Casa’ (Learning at Home), a national distance learning programme. The programme contributed to inclusive education policies for 723,540 students (49 per cent girls).
Support for education for out-of-school children

The COVID-19 pandemic posed a major setback for efforts to reach out-of-school children. As global attention shifted to the millions of learners who could no longer attend school, the 258 million children, including 130 million girls, who had already been out of school before the pandemic, were at risk. UNICEF advocated for more-inclusive remote learning and school reopening and collaborated with GPE, UNESCO and the World Bank to host webinars and events on scaling up remote learning approaches for children out of school pre COVID-19.

In Mali, 51,747 out-of-school children of primary school age (26,185 girls), including 33,133 children affected by emergencies, were reached through efforts including (re-)integration into formal schools and provision of non-formal and alternative education opportunities, including through community learning centres and temporary learning spaces.

In Côte d’Ivoire, 8,651 out-of-school children participated in early learning, primary or secondary education through UNICEF-supported programmes: 3,391 children (50 per cent girls) were enrolled in community preschool centres, and 5,260 (47 per cent girls) in primary school, through alternative pathways (bridging classes). An accelerated curriculum provided a second chance for out-of-school children to enter the formal system.

UNICEF supported the revision of the global Out-of-School Children Initiative Operational Manual, the related theory of change, and the profiling of children out of school globally, while continuing to document good practices in linking data and evidence to policy and financing. The global Out-of-School Children Initiative website was updated with new content and the user experience was improved.

UNICEF continued to provide strategic support to countries to produce data and evidence on out-of-school children and to advocate for policy shifts to increase these children’s access to education.

Support for mother-tongue/multilingual education

In 2020, UNICEF spent US$12 million on activities related to mother-tongue, or multilingual, education – an increase of US$3 million compared with the amount spend in 2019. The expenditure went to systems-strengthening activities such as policy reform, materials development, teacher training and community engagement. The number of countries supported rose to 58 compared with 55 in 2019, of which 29 were considered to have effective mother-tongue/multilingual education. These programmes will be particularly important as schools reopen: the best opportunity for rapid learning gains will be through remedial classes delivered in a language that children speak well.

In the East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, UNICEF developed technical guidance targeted at COVID-19 challenges for ensuring inclusive education for ethnonlinguistic minority children. The guidance addresses the unique challenges facing children from marginalized ethnonlinguistic communities as they re-enter school or continue with distance learning. During school closures in Mongolia, UNICEF-supported programmes helped children continue their education through lessons on television. Teachers delivered lessons from pre-primary through to secondary level, with translations into Kazakh, Tuvan and sign language. The lessons reached 19,000 pre-primary and primary school children (9,689 girls) from ethnic minorities.

UNICEF continued to advocate for policies supporting multilingual education. In Thailand, UNICEF supported over 1,200 children on the move from Myanmar to attend schools in Chiang Mai and Ranong. An ongoing school programme in Mae Hong Son District ensured enrolment and participation of over 600 ethnic minority children from 27 remote highlander communities. In Montenegro, 965 Roma students (461 girls) received learning support, including through paper-based materials, to ensure continuity of education during school closures and to prevent dropout.
Case Study 2: Viet Nam: Reimagining skills for young children, using educational technology

In Viet Nam, UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Education and Training’s Early Childhood Education Research Center, the Institute of Education and Science, and the National College of Education to empower teachers with technology-based approaches to personalizing learning.

In collaboration with a Singapore-based educational technology social enterprise, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Training to develop a digital literacy curriculum called ‘School of Fish’ to cultivate the computational thinking skills of pre-primary students. The curriculum used gamification, videos and augmented virtual reality.

With support from thematic funds, School of Fish was piloted in selected preschools in Ha Noi and Lào Cai Province. Young children received tablets loaded with virtual and augmented reality content, including stories in both Vietnamese and the students’ own mother tongues. The programme includes ‘reading out loud’ functionality that helps illiterate parents read a book at home with their children.

Sixty pre-primary teachers from selected schools received training on this programme and hands-on experience in designing an education plan to facilitate computational thinking.
Voices from the field: Partnering to spread the joy of reading for children in Maharashtra, India

‘Pratham Books’ StoryWeaver offers thousands of openly licensed storybooks in multiple languages that are free to read, download, print and share. StoryWeaver has been recognized by the Digital Public Goods Alliance (incubated by UNICEF and the Government of Norway) as the first Digital Public Good from India for foundational literacy and early-grade reading.

Our association with UNICEF Maharashtra goes back five years to when we launched StoryWeaver. We conducted a workshop in rural Maharashtra, training teachers to create, translate and use stories in their classrooms. The commitment of teachers to help children experience the joy of reading in their mother tongue was palpable and motivating.

It has been our pleasure to partner with UNICEF Maharashtra to spread the joy of reading to children during school closures. We look forward to working closely with UNICEF to deliver impactful, content-led programmes that will help make progress in foundational literacy, prioritized by the National Education Policy 2020.

Suzanne Singh, Chairperson, Pratham Books
Gender-responsive access to education

Gender equality in education

Prior to the pandemic, the number of girls out of school decreased from 203.5 million in 2000 to 129.2 million in 2018. While more girls are in school today than ever before, many are still left behind, particularly girls living in poor and remote communities, girls with disabilities, girls living in conflict- and crisis-affected contexts, and pregnant girls and young mothers. The COVID-19 crisis threatens to undo two decades of progress in girls’ education worldwide. Before the crisis struck, nearly 1 in 4 girls aged 15–19 globally was not in education, employment or training, compared with 1 in 10 boys; nearly 1 in 3 adolescent girls from the poorest households around the world had never been to school.

In 2020, more than 14 million girls in humanitarian contexts participated in early learning, primary or secondary education through UNICEF-supported programmes, putting the total number since the beginning of the Strategic Plan in 2018 at 20 million girls. The number of girls who received UNICEF support to access skills-development programmes, including personal empowerment, active citizenship and/or employability in emergency contexts, reached 3 million in 2020, compared with 342 thousand in 2018.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF had to shift its focus from accelerating gains in girls’ education to limiting the damage brought about by school closures and by an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) during those closures. Distance education did not replace classroom-based learning, but it did support continuity of learning; it also helped to cement the value of girls’ education, even if that learning occurred out of school. UNICEF support often had to combine high-tech, low-tech and no-tech approaches.

In Ethiopia, UNICEF supported programmes to enhance adolescents’ life skills for active citizenship and personal empowerment, and worked with the Ministry of Education to conduct a curriculum review. UNICEF also supported building the capacity of government partners to deliver life-skills education in schools. Over the period of the last Country Document Programme, between 2016 and 2020, a total of 154,000 adolescent girls were trained in skills development. UNICEF also supported the translation of the national Gender Club guidelines for life-skills education into Amharic and eight other local languages.

In South Sudan, UNICEF supported in-person or distance learning opportunities for 1.5 million students (630,000 girls) during the pandemic and trained 26,000 students – adolescent girls and young women – to serve as role models and advocate for girls’ education.

FIGURE 9: Systems-strengthening indicators for gender-responsive education systems

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Case Study 3: Côte d’Ivoire: Opening schools up better for girls

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in Côte d’Ivoire to prioritize girls’ return to school during the COVID-19 pandemic.28 Before the pandemic, girls represented 55 per cent of out-of-school children aged 6–16 years. During the pandemic, girls faced pressure to earn money, get married, stop school and look after their siblings. While out of school, girls became increasingly vulnerable, especially to violence at home and in their communities, and to early pregnancy, making it even more important to support their transition back to school.

UNICEF helped the Ministry of Education to implement a real-time monitoring system to ensure girls were learning and to monitor their protection. Communities and young people provided feedback on school reopening and the challenges that girls faced as they returned to school. These communities were critical partners: teachers, mothers, community health workers and community leaders all participated. With partner Caritas, UNICEF used thematic funding to ensure the monitoring system was active in regions where girls are most vulnerable. The system reached more than 3,500 girls and will remain in place to track their attendance as schools reopen.

Addressing school-related gender-based violence

Extended lockdowns and movement restrictions in 2020 led to spikes in GBV, sexual abuse and teenage pregnancies, affecting the opportunities of girls and women to learn from home. With widespread school closures, UNICEF worked to adapt its school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) programming to the realities of the pandemic. Psychosocial and mental health support became part of education strategies to prevent GBV and help girls continue learning, and to support boys to be neither bystanders nor perpetrators of GBV.
UNICEF continued its work to address SRGBV through advocacy, policy development, teacher capacity-building, the strengthening of referral and reporting mechanisms, and curricular approaches. The percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective SRGBV prevention and response mechanisms increased from 49 per cent in 2019 to 53 per cent in 2020.

In Kazakhstan, with support from the CitiBank Foundation, UNICEF and partners built the capacity of over 7,000 school and preschool psychologists from all regions to provide remote psychological support to families and adolescents. Support promoting mental health and psychological resilience during distance learning, and preventing violence and cyberbullying, was provided. As part of the BeKind communication campaign aimed at reducing violence against children in Kazakhstan, 226 UNICEF volunteers (179 of them women) reached 40,283 children (19,562 girls) in 304 schools through 863 online lessons on the prevention of bullying in schools.

In Malawi, a positive-discipline manual for primary education was developed and more than 472,000 learners were trained on violence prevention, reporting and referral.

In the context of preventing and responding to SRGBV and violence against children during school closures, UNICEF contributed to recommendations developed by the Global Working Group to End SRGBV as well as the recommendations of Safe to Learn, an initiative dedicated to prevention of and response to violence against children in all learning environments. UNICEF contributed to the development of Supporting Schools to Provide a Safe Online Learning Experience through the Safe to Learn initiative. The Safe to Learn programme in Georgia, which was launched by the Ministry of Education and Science with support from UNICEF, supported teachers with training toolkits and learners with a series of educational videos; it has been piloted in 460 schools. In Sierra Leone, the government, with support from UNICEF, established a Sexual and Reproductive Health Taskforce to advise on inclusion of adolescent girls and other vulnerable groups in the education system, and on integration of comprehensive sexuality education into the basic education curriculum.

United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI)

UNICEF works closely with the UNGEI to support girls’ education and gender equality in education around the world. UNGEI’s key results in 2020 include:

- A series of events, led by young feminist activists, and policy briefs produced for use by all education actors, to amplify agreed messaging on advocating for girls’ education during and post-pandemic
- Baseline reports on the status of girls’ education and gender equality in education in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, the Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone (as part of the Gender at the Centre Initiative, led by UNGEI and IIEP-UNESCO.)
- Gender-responsive education sector planning tools for crisis situations, joint sector reviews, assessment in Global Partnership for Education (GPE) countries, and a dialogue guide
- Local results from Transform Education, a network of young feminist activists incubated by UNGEI, including gender-based violence (GBV) hotlines, inclusion of young people at national back-to-school planning discussions, and new communities of support for out-of-school children
- Monitoring tools to test and measure results of a whole-of-school SRGBV pilot in Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe
- A new website, which includes a knowledge hub dedicated to gender equality and education, and specialized resource centres on SRGBV and gender in education in emergencies.

In 2020, UNGEI also applied creative ways to advocate for gender-responsive remote learning and back-to-school policy, including slam poetry, feminist playlists and vlogs on girls’ education. UNGEI marked its 20-year celebration with the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, and launched a successful whole-school pilot programme to address SRGBV in Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone. UNGEI supported eight governments in Western and Central Africa region to consider gender in their education sector plans. UNGEI also continued to support GPE, Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), Safe to Learn, the Global Campaign for Education, and others to fulfil their own commitments to gender equality in education.
In the future, UNGEI will implement national gender-responsive education sector action plans in the eight Gender at the Centre Initiative countries. It will advocate with partners at key events including Generation Equality forums, the G7 Summit, the United Nations General Assembly and the GPE replenishment. Support will also be provided to: GPE on its new gender-responsive strategy; INEE and ECW to continue to build capacity for gender-responsive education in emergencies; and Transform Education on new pilot approaches with Plan International and Feminist School. UNGEI will strengthen its existing partnerships, seek support to better institutionalize its capacity, establish greater clarity for its global advisory committee and steering committee members, and develop new partnerships to achieve its mandate.

Voices from the field: Knowledge as a tool for empowerment for Rohingya refugee women and girls, in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh

Sofira, a 17-year-old girl born in Myanmar, dreams of becoming a teacher one day. She participates in radio-listener clubs with girls her age in a Rohingya refugee camp in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, where she learns about child marriage, cyclone preparation, hygiene and the COVID-19 pandemic. Sofira finds it empowering to participate, and she teaches members of her community what she learns at the club. “Before, I knew little about the coronavirus. Now, I have more knowledge, and I feel safer because I know what to do and what not to do,” she says.

UNICEF supports 93 radio-listener clubs in the Rohingya refugee camps, serving 930 girls and 1,395 boys.
Equitable access to quality education in emergencies

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the largest humanitarian crisis for education in UNICEF’s history. Never before had a crisis occurred simultaneously in every country across the globe. At the peak of the pandemic in 2020, some 1.6 billion learners were affected, almost half of them girls. As part of the COVID-19 response, 153 countries and territories issued humanitarian action appeals to respond to disruptions to education affecting 261 million children across all sectors. The number of countries making humanitarian action appeals represented an increase of 92 countries since 2019. In 64 countries, the risks for children were compounded by armed conflicts, attacks on education, climate-induced disasters, forced displacement and migration, which continued unabated. Many of these events were compounded by the global pandemic’s socioeconomic impacts.

Recognizing that the pandemic would have a particular adverse impact on children, particularly girls and children with disabilities, in fragile and conflict-affected settings as well as in remote locations, UNICEF spent US$0.7 billion (58 per cent) of the total of US$1.17 billion under Goal Area 2 of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, on education in humanitarian contexts. UNICEF had the highest expenditures in Lebanon, Yemen, Turkey, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria, all hosting refugee or displaced populations supported by UNICEF or were themselves the sites of extensive internal displacement due to conflict. This reflects the extent to which children’s access to learning continues to be severely affected by ongoing conflict and crisis. Globally, more than 48 million out-of-school children (49 per cent of them girls), primarily in humanitarian situations, were provided with education services.

In 2020, UNICEF focused on keeping families and children connected with the education system. UNICEF was an early advocate for the reopening of schools as the magnitude of learning loss and emotional damage became apparent.

UNICEF responded to four Level 3 emergencies (including those declared Level 3 for the COVID-19 pandemic response) and three Level 2 emergencies during 2020. UNICEF, during its 2020 humanitarian action, aimed at reaching 47.7 million children (nearly half of all Global Education Cluster partner targets combined) with formal or non-formal education and with continuity-of-learning measures, including early learning – four-and-a-half times more children than its 2019 humanitarian action target of 10.2 million. By the end of 2020, UNICEF had helped 32.6 million children in humanitarian settings (68 per cent of target) – up from 7.4 million, including 3.1 million children on the move, in 2019 – to remain protected and continue learning. The sheer number of children in need and the scale of the emergency, however, prevented UNICEF from reaching all children in need. A total of 22.4 million children were provided with learning materials, and 6.1 million children and adolescents (48 per cent girls) were given access to skills-based programmes. In addition, 301 million children (49 per cent girls) in 109 countries were helped to access distance and home-based learning.

During 2020, UNICEF continued its leadership of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Education Cluster with Save the Children. The Global Education Cluster was active in 28 contexts (25 countries, in addition to 3 hubs of the Whole of Syria), with dedicated UNICEF cluster coordinators in 21 contexts out of the 27 where UNICEF is a lead/co-lead agency. In July, UNICEF also took on the chairing role from UNESCO for the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector and launched an ambitious goal of updating the Comprehensive School Safety Framework.
Spotlight on thematic funding: Leadership in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic

At the end of March 2020, UNICEF released the memorandum ‘Education System-wide Scale-up in Response to Disruptions from COVID-19’ to kick-start countries’ COVID-19 response plans, aligned with the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action.36 UNICEF allocated catalytic funding to 153 countries and territories to engage country coordination systems in the COVID-19 education response planning. The funds were to:

- Enhance education-system-level responses to the pandemic, ensuring all children, particularly girls and the most vulnerable populations, were at the centre of the response
- Support the planning and implementation of safe school operations and risk communication
- Enhance knowledge-sharing and capacity-building, both for the current and future pandemics.

In March 2020, with the support of GPE, UNICEF allocated US$8.1 million to 87 eligible countries to accelerate early emergency planning and response for children to continue accessing learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF further allocated US$4.4 million to the remaining 66 UNICEF programme countries and territories to ensure a strategic and rapid global response. This support was made possible by global thematic funding for education generously provided by donors such as Norway, Denmark and Sweden.

In 2020, UNICEF received US$64.2 million in grants from ECW across 23 countries, for the Middle East and North Africa Regional Office and the Whole of Syria response,37 as well as for UNICEF’s Office of Emergency Programmes for support to the Global Education Cluster. This represents 42 per cent of ECW’s total fund allocation in 2020. The funds were used to target the most marginalized children in humanitarian crisis situations, supporting activities to strengthen cluster coordination and deploy distance learning. Investments were also increased in mental health and psychosocial support, WASH, and other cross-sectoral activities linked to student, teacher and parent well-being, in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thematic funding has helped to mitigate the worst impacts on children’s learning, to support the process of rethinking education service delivery in times of crisis, and to lay the foundations for building back better and more equitable education systems, with a particular focus on girls, children with disabilities, children in conflict contexts, and other vulnerable groups.

Continuity-of-learning measures and COVID-19

School closures in low- and lower-middle-income countries led to an average of more than four months of lost schooling in 2020, especially affecting marginalized children.38 UNICEF supported measures to increase access to learning for marginalized children, including girls, children in lower-wealth quintiles, refugees, children on the move, internally displaced children, and speakers of minority languages. Accelerated learning programmes were pursued by one in five countries across the globe, and remedial programmes were among the most used by 43 per cent globally to limit learning loss.39

UNICEF supported governments to roll out online digital platforms as well as more low-tech approaches. In South Sudan, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), UNICEF invested approximately US$450,000 for distance learning through radio and television broadcasts, reaching a total of 1.5 million in- and out-of-school children (630,000 girls) from pre-primary to secondary. Nearly 922,000 children received learning supplies for home-based education, and over 795,000 children and young people (344,498 girls) gained access to pre-primary, primary and secondary school services, and accelerated learning. UNICEF Uganda enabled distance learning via the Kolibri online platform and home learning packs between March and December 2020, for 2.5 million children, including 368,048 refugees.
Voices from the field: Nanyonjo Catherine Desire, a student at Kiwolera Army Primary School, Kamuli District, Uganda

Nanyonjo Catherine Desire is a 13-year-old girl from Kamuli District, Uganda. Desire is one of 13 children being cared for by her grandmother. Desire loves school, and continued learning using the radio while schools were closed due to the pandemic from March 2020 until October 2020.

Desire’s school is among 20 primary schools where the Ministry of Education and Sports, UNICEF and Kyambogo University have been piloting the use of accessible digital content and assistive technologies like Kolibri. Desire is keen on digital learning and familiar with Kolibri, a platform to help children with disabilities and those without access to digital learning materials continue learning. She can access a Mobi-station, which allows students to connect to online content, at school.

Desire says that taking the radio into the garden and going to school to access the Mobi-station have helped her to learn. “When I come here, I read stories, I learn English, I take quizzes,” says Desire, who has started to enjoy reading. “I speak English more fluently, and I have learned how to use a computer,” she adds.
In India, through UNICEF’s continued technical support to 17 state governments and partners, 57.4 million children (49 per cent girls) aged 3–18 years were reached with digital and non-digital remote learning opportunities. In Maharashtra, India, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Government and Pratham Books, launched a reading campaign, reaching approximately 1.5 million children (48 per cent girls). In Jharkhand, India, psychosocial support was integrated into remote learning programmes through Digi-SATH, a digital initiative using social media platforms, reaching approximately 1.2 million children (50 per cent girls).

In Jordan, the Ministry of Education collaborated with the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, along with private sector entities including Edraak and Abwaab, to develop remote learning platforms. One such platform is Darsak, an e-learning portal with content aligned with the national curriculum, with video courses for Grades 1–12.

In 2020, UNICEF and partners supported governments to ensure that students could sit their final examinations despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, through distribution of personal protective equipment and the provision of remedial examination support and hand-washing facilities in examination centres. In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF and partners ensured that school-based examination facilities and student accommodation were supported with COVID-19 prevention measures; 522,235 students (260,619 girls) sat exams.

UNICEF also supported the use of formative assessment tools to determine remedial work needed to help children catch up when schools reopened. During 2020, UNICEF spent a total of US$80.3 million to support formative assessments.

In Mongolia, following school closures from February to September 2020 affecting more than 600,000 children, the Government dedicated the first month of the new school term to assessing learning and providing remedial lessons and activities. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Science to develop and distribute teacher guidance for remedial classes covering all core subjects from pre-primary to upper secondary.
The Learning Passport and continuity of learning during a global pandemic

The Learning Passport is a digital platform to support remote learning. It was designed to ensure that children on the move, including refugees and those living in or fleeing from conflict, can access learning. The partnership between UNICEF and Microsoft on the Learning Passport enabled the roll-out of digital learning solutions rapidly and at scale in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, Timor-Leste, Puntland in Somalia, and Jordan launched the Learning Passport. By the end of 2020, the platform had enabled 32,058 children to access digital learning content while schools remained closed.

Timor-Leste was one of the first countries to scale up the Learning Passport nationally at the onset of the pandemic. In addition to providing children with digital lessons, the Learning Passport enabled the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to train all teachers on COVID-19 prevention, reaching 95 per cent of teachers (15,000) in the country. When schools reopened, the Learning Passport continued to provide learners, educators and caregivers with public access to a digital library of teaching and learning materials.

In Puntland, Somalia, the Learning Passport for primary and secondary students included lessons in sign language so that learners with hearing impairments could access content, reaching 24,468 Grade 8 and 12 learners (41 per cent girls).

A girl in Timor-Leste shows off Eskola ba Uma (School at Home), an online platform supported by the Learning Passport, on which children and parents can access a range of audiovisual material to help students continue learning during school closures.
In June 2020, UNICEF launched the Youth Learning Passport in Jordan in a virtual event with the Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, Zain Jordan and UNICEF. The platform is the first version of the global Learning Passport to launch in the Middle East and North Africa region and in Arabic, and is free for young people. The Learning Passport reached nearly 7,000 learners (approximately 70 per cent girls) in Jordan in 2020. Offline and online components are combined with courses in advanced coding and software development, digital literacy, life skills, social entrepreneurship and the English language. The Learning Passport is becoming a core tool to increase access to quality learning for children excluded from education, and will help strengthen the resilience of the overall education system.

With support from GPE and Aflatoun International, UNICEF is working to enhance the gender responsiveness of the Learning Passport by identifying and curating content that is gender-transformative, girl-focused, age-appropriate and engaging. In 2020, the Gender Equality Package (GEP) which includes curated content for learners of primary and secondary age was developed, covering five overarching thematic areas: gender equality; comprehensive sexuality education; prevention of GBV; science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); and economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. The GEP includes content in three languages – Arabic, English and Spanish – with plans to support additional languages in future. Countries implementing the Learning Passport can choose to offer the GEP as part of their local learning materials.

Safety protocols and school reopening

Safety protocols are a key component of UNICEF’s global response to COVID-19. In 2020, UNICEF supported the provision of hygiene supplies to schools and the dissemination of life-saving information material on hand washing and details of recommended behaviours to address stigma or xenophobia. UNICEF with partners and stakeholders developed guidance to strengthen country reopening plans, with gender and equity at the centre. Documents include: Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools, developed with WHO and IFRC; the Framework for Reopening Schools, developed with UNESCO, the World Bank, WFP and UNHCR, outlining six key dimensions for assessing readiness to reopen and to inform planning (policy, financing, safe operations, learning, reaching the most marginalized, and well-being/protection); and Building Back Equal: Girls back to school guide, with UNESCO, the Malala Fund, Plan International and UNGEI. By the end of 2020, UNICEF with local partners had supported 405,017 schools globally to implement school safety protocols across 89 countries.

UNICEF also supported rapid assessments in the provision of WASH services, the development of national infection prevention and control protocols to support reopening of schools, and the procurement and distribution of cleaning and disinfection materials. In China, to facilitate school reopening for 241 million children, UNICEF supported a comprehensive communication campaign developed in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention. A rapid assessment was conducted to understand the awareness and concerns of children, adolescents, parents and teachers. Posters and videos included QR codes or other links to a brief survey with simple questions to gather audience feedback and identify emerging needs. Printed materials reached the most disadvantaged and marginalized children.

In Tonga, UNICEF supported trial days on which remote learning modalities were tested and analysed to inform system planning. The development of national COVID-19 contingency and response plans and the integration of material to address COVID-19 and other disease outbreaks in education-in-emergency policies, preparedness plans and training, and disaster risk reduction efforts will strengthen the resilience of education sector planning in Tonga in the long term.

In Iraq, education cluster partners, with support from UNICEF, conducted a ‘back to learning’ campaign to increase enrolment when schools reopened for the 2020–2021 academic year. Also, in partnership with national organizations, UNICEF identified 19,632 children who were out of school and enrolled 7,000 of them in the formal system in Dohuk, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk and Ninawa. Of these, 4,000 children are internally displaced persons and returnees. UNICEF also trained 1,374 teachers (392 women), against a planned target of 3,000, in Kirkuk and south Mosul on, among other topics, psychosocial support and life skills. In addition, UNICEF reached 10,000 community leaders, parent–teacher association members and education staff to support continuity of learning via blended learning approaches in Al Anbar Governorate.
Voices from the field: Tackling challenges of the pandemic to reach children with school health and nutrition in the Middle East and North Africa

Maria Tsvetkova, World Food Programme Regional Education Advisor, is working closely with UNICEF’s regional education team in the Middle East and North Africa to support countries with the return to school.

“2020 has been a very challenging year,” Maria reflects. “We all had to switch gears in terms of work modality; doing things online and remotely has been quite challenging. We faced many difficulties, particularly with the school feeding programme, as we were not able to do our basic work through supporting missions and we had to switch to remote work. Partnering with UNICEF has been a great experience. We fully came together around the global Framework for Reopening Schools and developed our own regional plan of action in collaboration with all United Nations agencies. This helped our in-country teams work more closely together, especially in conflict-affected countries such as Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Libya.”

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In Homs, Syrian Arab Republic, Amal, 16 years old, works on her art at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Building resilience through risk-informed education system planning

Over the past 20 years, 7,348 disasters have been recorded worldwide, resulting in an estimated US$2.97 trillion in economic losses and more than 4 billion people affected. The countries most susceptible to education emergencies contained more than 128 million out-of-school children of primary and secondary age, with acute learning challenges even for those in school.

UNICEF helps to reduce interruptions to education in these countries by integrating the analysis of hazards into education system planning, and incorporating measures to reduce risks, protect education investments and include marginalized children in learning. Strategies to strengthen resilience include: (1) disaster risk reduction in education; (2) climate change education; (3) school health and nutrition; (4) conflict-sensitive education and peacebuilding; (5) child protection in education; and (6) social protection in education. These efforts have led to an upward trend in the share of UNICEF-supported countries with emergency preparedness/resilience mechanisms in place. In 2020, some 65 per cent of countries conducted a risk assessment, compared with 55 per cent in 2019; and 62 per cent of countries were found to have effective risk reduction strategies, compared with 57 per cent in 2019.

The Pacific Island nations of Fiji and Vanuatu are among the most exposed globally to the risks and adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters. Despite the overlapping emergencies of Cyclone Harold and COVID-19, within two months Fiji and Vanuatu successfully reopened all schools, adhering to comprehensive guidance on the safe operation of schools and welcoming back all students.

In Western and Central Africa, with support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), UNICEF launched a strategy of cross-sectoral resilience through education in the Sahel region to strengthen education systems to cope with multiple hazards related to climate change, the environment and conflict. The strategy aims to help 13 million boys and girls to access quality learning opportunities, and to give 2 million boys and girls conflict-resolution and peacebuilding skills.

Education under attack

The number of countries experiencing attacks on education has risen in recent years. From 2015 to 2019, ninety-three countries experienced at least one reported attack on education, with military use of schools reported in 33 countries, and 11,000 separate attacks on facilities, students and educators. The risks to children were aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In Afghanistan, limited access to child protection services resulted in nearly double the number of child recruitment, abduction and sexual violence incidents compared with 2019. In Yemen, an estimated 2 million children were out of school (400,000 because of the conflict), and over 2,000 schools were fully or partially damaged or occupied by armed groups. In the Central African Republic, more than 380 severe violations of children’s rights were recorded between January and July during the pandemic – two and a half times more than during the same period in 2019.

UNICEF works with the 109 countries that have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration of 2015 to protect education from attack. UNICEF is on the front lines in conflict-affected countries, developing comprehensive school plans to mitigate risk, getting children back to learning by providing socio-emotional support and non-formal learning opportunities, training teachers, rehabilitating schools, and distributing supplies for teaching and learning.

In Yemen, prolonged conflict has affected the education system for the last six years, and teachers have received little to no salary since 2016. UNICEF played an important role keeping the education system functioning through the provision of teacher incentives and salary allowances to 111,550 teachers and school-based staff and 437 temporary teachers; 23,384 beneficiaries collected their incentives for five months of the 2019–2020 school year through an e-payment modality. In addition, with UNICEF support, 2,086 women in rural schools received their teachers’ salaries.

In Chad, 400 student peace ambassadors were trained in 40 schools, and the peacebuilding skills of 442 teachers and 300 members of parent–teacher associations and mothers’ associations were enhanced through training. UNICEF also supported peacebuilding efforts by young people and women through establishing nine community networks for protection across Chad.

Education for children on the move

During 2020, the plight of children on the move (migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum-seekers) deteriorated further because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over half (52 per cent) of Rohingya refugee children hosted in Bangladesh still had no legal status, restricting their access to essential services like education beyond the Cox’s Bazar camps. Turkey continued to host the world’s largest refugee population, with over 1.6 million Syrian child refugees (48 per cent girls). Ethiopia sheltered 802,821 registered refugees and asylum-seekers and 1.8 million internally displaced persons (1.1 million children).

UNICEF accelerated its efforts for the inclusion of refugee children in national education systems while concurrently responding to risks created by the global pandemic and to the needs of children affected by conflict. In humanitarian situations, UNICEF supported 3.1 million children on the move (48 per cent girls) to access learning. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF also supported 2.4 million children on the move, including those with disabilities, with home-based learning solutions. More than 1,000...
refugee-hosting schools were given support to ensure that COVID-19 safety protocols were implemented for all children, and to ensure the safe integration of refugees into national education systems.

In Iraq, UNICEF supported internally displaced children in camp settings through blended learning and home-schooling, as well as by reaching their parents with educational messages. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF reached 284,160 children (133,500 girls) – against a planned target of 170,000 – with stationery and supplementary learning materials to support home-based education.

In Kenya, UNICEF supported quality education for refugee and host community children in the Kakuma and Kalobeyei settlements. UNICEF also supported capacity-building for teachers, enabling them to reach over 21,514 children (8,699 girls).

In Greece, the Akelius Foundation and UNICEF continued developing the Greek digital language-learning course, first introduced into classes in early 2018. By July 2020, following the expansion of the programme to respond to the pandemic, the course had reached over 7,117 children and adolescents in 52 locations through the Akelius digital language-learning platform.

In January 2020, UNICEF worked with UNHCR to launch the ambitious two-year UNICEF–UNHCR Blueprint for Joint Action for refugee children. The initial phase of the blueprint covers 10 countries (Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Rwanda) which are home to 2.14 million refugee children, 20 per cent of the world’s total population of refugee children. The Blueprint will help accelerate joint efforts to promote and protect the rights of refugee children and the communities that host them, through their inclusion in national plans, budgets and service delivery systems. In Libya, for example, 31 schools in the east, west and south of the country were rehabilitated, benefiting 18,515 children (9,860 girls). The rehabilitated schools include two community schools in Sabha, in the southern region, attended by migrant and refugee children. Working with Member State governments, UNICEF and UNHCR aim to reach 1.1 million refugee and vulnerable host community children and youth with individual learning materials through nationally supported systems at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. The Blueprint aims for a global scale-up of proven approaches, to reach all refugee children worldwide from early 2022.

Non-formal and accelerated education programmes

The pandemic highlighted the importance of alternative education pathways to maintain access for marginalized groups, and of remedial measures such as catch-up classes and summer schools. To ensure that out-of-school children – including girls, and marginalized children such as refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants and asylum-seekers – can continue learning, non-formal and accelerated education programmes offer learners flexible and age-appropriate opportunities. These programmes also offer vital pathways that support the integration of refugees and children on the move into their host countries’ education systems. In 2020, UNICEF scaled up implementation of the Let Us Learn initiative, bringing innovative educational opportunities to out-of-school children who were attending non-formal education programmes before the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNICEF Bangladesh used mobile phone calls to stay connected to non-formal education learners and their families, support home learning and pass on messages about COVID-19 prevention and response. Facilitators of the Let Us Learn initiative reached out to every learner every second day with a 10-minute call to maintain communication and help prevent dropout.

UNICEF supported non-formal education through the Supportive Learning Programme and remedial classes in the Syrian Arab Republic, to help 20,545 children and youth (11,083 young women) who were previously out of school return to learning. An additional 3,957 children transitioned from non-formal to formal education through the Self-Learning Programme.
Spotlight on thematic funding: Reaching girls and the most vulnerable in Niger

UNICEF in Niger used thematic funds to respond to the needs of girls and the most vulnerable children. In rural areas, 4,000 girls were equipped with tools and training for menstrual hygiene management and assertive leadership skills. The Nomadic Education Programme, which provides learning opportunities for children from nomad families while their families are away, allowed 2,854 children (1,264 girls) in regions neighbouring Algeria and Libya to continue learning.

The ‘triple nexus’: humanitarian–development–peace

Conflict and fragility are among the greatest bottlenecks to achieving SDG 4 targets. During 2020, some 76 per cent of active conflicts in the world occurred in fragile settings. Entrenched patterns of inequality, exclusion and marginalization, particularly in education and other basic social services, are common in most of today’s conflicts. The global pandemic has exacerbated social and political challenges in these settings.

UNICEF works to connect humanitarian and development efforts with education to support peacebuilding and social cohesion in fragile and conflict-affected settings. In 2020, UNICEF utilized US$72.8 million to support risk-informed peacebuilding education programmes across more than 44 countries. Initiatives focused on expanding access to education for marginalized communities in conflict-affected settings, promoting peace capacities, and supporting inclusive and multilingual curricula.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2,933 teachers (968 women) were trained on child-centred methodologies, peace education and psychosocial support, exceeding the target set for the year and resulting in improved learning conditions for more than 167,000 children.
In Burkina Faso, UNICEF worked with partners to address the urgent needs of 1.5 million people, including 690,000 vulnerable children, by scaling up its response to emergencies through the Stay and Deliver programme while strengthening social cohesion and resilience.

In Libya, UNICEF’s peacebuilding project reached 800 adolescents and 400 adults with skills development focusing on resilience, as part of the country’s implementation of the Life Skills and Citizenship Education Framework for the Middle East and North Africa. The project also includes parent and community sensitization activities. Activities such as non-competitive sports as well as arts and media clubs are used to engage young people.

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**Evaluation of UNICEF’s contribution to education in humanitarian situations**

**Key findings and future actions**


The evaluation highlights UNICEF’s role leading global advocacy and dialogue and its contribution to the evolution of the global response to education in emergencies. The evaluation highlights that UNICEF’s education in emergencies programmes are evidence based and mainstream gender considerations. UNICEF was found to have contributed substantively to developing and strengthening the policies and capacities of governments and partners, introducing innovation at country level. UNICEF provided appropriate surge support and acted as the provider of last resort, often filling gaps by collaborating with local partners to deliver assistance in remote and hard-to-reach areas.

The report found that some vulnerable groups have not been given sufficient priority. Persisting challenges were identified in targeting the most vulnerable children, such as data limitations and insufficient funding. Education accounts for less than 10 per cent of the humanitarian funding that UNICEF received. Expenditure is unevenly distributed, partly due to the scale of need and earmarking of funds, which limit UNICEF’s ability to serve as provider of last resort in resource-constrained settings.

Recommendations include giving priority to developing the skills of UNICEF’s staff and partners on aspects of education in emergencies. The report also recommends that, in protracted crises, a greater emphasis is placed on building internal understanding, technical capacity and partnerships, to shift the focus to quality teaching and learning.

**Key actions taken to address findings**

UNICEF has prioritized the development of staff capacity, with an online training package for education and management personnel. UNICEF’s education in emergencies team has also continued supporting capacity development and knowledge-sharing through thematic ‘deep dives’, online discussions, case studies, meetings and webinars on best practices and emerging lessons in the education response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNICEF finalized key programming guidance tools for enhancing inclusion, with a focus on girls and children with disabilities in humanitarian settings. As part of its COVID-19 response across countries, UNICEF also strengthened country-level monitoring of the socioeconomic impacts for children, especially the most vulnerable.

UNICEF country teams have implemented innovative learning solutions at scale, reaching over 301 million children with remote learning. UNICEF will continue its support for remedial learning and for scaling up digital learning solutions to reach all children.

With the Global Education Cluster, UNICEF launched research with Sussex University and cluster partners to develop an enhanced rapid-response education-in-emergencies toolkit in humanitarian settings to improve children’s safety and learning.
Schools as integrated service delivery platforms

For millions of children across the world, schools provide more than education: They are safe environments where children can learn and receive nutrition, protection, WASH, and health services such as immunization. When schools closed during the pandemic, the most vulnerable children were deprived of commodities provided through schools, such as vital vaccines, free or subsidized school meals, and hygiene products. The interruption of learning and the closure of schools put children, particularly girls, as well as their teachers and families, at risk of stress, violence and abuse.

UNICEF places strong emphasis on intersectoral approaches. Education teams collaborate with colleagues in health, nutrition, child protection, WASH, social policy, disability, gender, and adolescent development, and with C4D teams at the country, regional and global level. Together, they ensure that core systems are in place for finance, data management, training, and supply management. Accountability is through regular reporting and through engagement with civil society, communities and donors.

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, for example, school feeding programmes were adapted to feed families: Food baskets were distributed to children’s families by local partners. This programme incentivized teachers, parents and children to remain engaged with schools. UNICEF and partners supported 104,916 children (54,145 girls) with school meals in eight states. In Lesotho, in collaboration with WFP, UNICEF supported school feeding in the form of monthly take-home rations for vulnerable learners. Burkina Faso’s Back to School campaign offered school meals to the most vulnerable girls to help bring them back to the classroom.

In Timor Leste, UNICEF, WHO and the Ministry of Health offered a catch-up immunization campaign in schools to ensure children’s vaccinations were up to date.

UNICEF Ghana, with funding support from the Mastercard Foundation, the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Global Affairs Canada, and the Canada National Commission, collaborated with the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service on a back-to-school campaign. The aim was to ensure the return of all learners to school, especially vulnerable girls, and including pregnant girls, young mothers and those with disabilities. Nearly 3,600 district-level personnel were trained, and the programme reached over 260,000 stakeholders in 3,900 communities in over 120 districts. The campaign included messages on safety and the protection of children, and guidelines, on preventing pregnancy among school-age girls, re-entry to education for young mothers after childbirth, right-age enrolment, and psychosocial support for children, including those with disabilities.

UNICEF supported WASH in schools, including incorporating menstrual hygiene management in national education COVID-19 response plans. In Guyana and Suriname, UNICEF supported the development of school reopening protocols. WASH in school services were made available in 874 schools, and 23,000 adolescent girls in Guyana and 12,000 in Suriname were reached with menstrual hygiene management kits to reduce risk of school dropout. In South Sudan, adequate WASH, including menstrual hygiene management, was a critical element in the country’s educational response to COVID-19. UNICEF provided 38,264 dignity kits to adolescent girls.

Summary

In 2020, UNICEF reached more children under more difficult circumstances than ever before. By the end of the year, more than 32.6 million children had been helped in humanitarian settings, as compared with over 7 million the previous year. Given the challenge of reaching the most marginalized with remote learning, UNICEF developed global technical guidance with specific strategies for these children. Overall, UNICEF succeeded in rapidly initiating a global education response that places learning at its centre. Yet the pandemic still reduced children’s access to learning, and the most marginalized children fell further behind. Even for those with access to remote education opportunities, learning remained a challenge given the psychosocial stress and limited access to learning support.

To recover from the pandemic, countries will need to quickly get all children back to school to receive the comprehensive support they need. Humanitarian responses to crises must recognize the role of education in restoring and maintaining peace and must provide adequate financial support for teaching and learning. Schools must serve as integrated service platforms, able to improve delivery of a wide range of services to children.
Voices from the field: Supporting vulnerable children in the Syrian Arab Republic

Afkar Al-Shami, an education specialist in UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office, is supporting vulnerable and often displaced children to access safe and secure learning opportunities. The continuing conflict and bombardment of residential areas has forced the population to use schools as shelter, depriving children of access to schools. The situation was exacerbated by the outbreak of COVID-19, when schooling was suspended. As learning shifted to remote modalities, teachers were trained on distance learning techniques; schools were deep-cleaned so that teachers could record lessons there to share with students through a messaging app. The shift to distance learning helped ensure that children had continued access to learning opportunities.

“I am so proud of UNICEF’s role to ensure learning continues,” says Afkar.

Ahmad, a student, says, “Now, with online learning, my dream to become a doctor feels real.”
Result Area 2: Improving learning outcomes

The term ‘continuity of learning’ proved something of a misnomer in 2020. Despite the best efforts of countries and the support of UNICEF and its partners, learning was disrupted everywhere, and remote education often failed to provide quality learning for all children.

In 2020, UNICEF allocated US$272 million to improving learning outcomes. Over half – 55 per cent – of spending was devoted to service delivery activities, including the procurement and distribution of learning materials to more than 43 million children. Of the total spending for learning outcomes, 45 per cent went towards systems-strengthening activities, including early learning and teacher development.

UNICEF typically reports on the share of UNICEF-supported countries with effective education systems for learning outcomes, through an analysis of five dimensions: how countries are working on teacher development; early learning; community participation; mother-tongue/multilingual education; and learning assessment. Progress was shown on each of these dimensions between 2016 and 2019, but a year-on-year comparison with 2020 would not be meaningful because of the vast difference in context: Countries may well have had systems for assessing learning outcomes, for instance, or for promoting teacher development, but these systems were not designed for a year of school closures. Even the most developed countries saw unprecedented increases in failure rates on year-end examinations, and many countries were unable to organize examinations at all. Nonetheless, many countries developed frameworks and procedures to increase the resilience of systems in the future, to strengthen teacher preparedness, and to provide students with remedial learning opportunities as soon as schools reopen.
FIGURE 10: Results chain for improving learning outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPENDING IN MILLIONS OF US($)</th>
<th>OUTPUTS</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>System strengthening</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learning materials</strong></td>
<td><strong>Education equity index 0.70</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early learning</strong></td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>63% of countries showing improvement in learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher development</strong></td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td><strong>43.4 million children received learning materials</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community participation &amp; training of school management committees</strong></td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td><strong>59,223 school management committees received training</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning assessment</strong></td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td><strong>41% of countries have effective education systems for learning outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother tongue/multilingual education</strong></td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td><strong>42% of countries have gender-responsive teaching and learning systems</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender-responsive teaching &amp; learning</strong></td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total spending for **LEARNING** is **US$272 million** of which:

- **55%** (US$148.4 million) was focused on **adolescents**
- **50%** (US$123.2 million) was focused on **humanitarian**
- **74%** (US$202 million) was focused on **gender**
- **30%** (US$80 million) was focused on **service delivery**
- **74%** (US$202 million) was focused on **system strengthening**
FIGURE 11: Systems-strengthening indicators for learning outcomes

**Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with equitable education systems for learning outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCA</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Five dimensions of effective education systems for learning outcomes**

**Teacher development**

- 20% 23% 35% 44% 46%

**Early childhood education**

- 21% 33% 44% 58% 55%

**Community participation**

- 50% 51% 50% 56% 53%

**Mother tongue/multilingual education**

- 40% 54% 52% 53% 50%

**Learning assessment**

- 45% 57% 56% 57% 50%
In **Malaysia**, the UNICEF-supported Teacher Digital Learning Community trained 3,200 teachers from 1,900 schools (48 per cent from rural schools) to strengthen capacity for online remote education, reaching over 100,000 students.

In **Congo**, UNICEF supported teacher capacity-building within the framework of curriculum reform, targeting mathematics, reading and life skills, by training over 10,000 teachers (4,165 women). Also, 2,933 teachers (968 women) were trained on child-centred methodologies, peace education and psychosocial support, benefiting more than 167,000 children.

In **Afghanistan**, 17,406 children (53 per cent girls) successfully graduated from UNICEF-supported community-based schools and alternative learning classes.

**UNICEF Ecuador** supported teacher training using remote learning mechanisms for 934 mentors (760 women) and 12,338 teachers (8,994 women), benefiting 260,000 students (119,220 girls).

**UNICEF Malawi** reached 600,000 pre-primary children through interactive radio lessons as an alternative modality during COVID-19 related school closures.
Learning in the early years

Early learning provides the foundation for children’s learning and skills development, and enhances their future opportunities. Yet half of pre-primary school-age children (175 million) globally cannot access pre-primary education. In low-income countries, only one in five young children are enrolled in pre-primary education.56

The UNICEF Education Strategy, 2019–2030, calls for all children to have access to at least one year of quality pre-primary education, giving priority to marginalized children, including those affected by emergencies. This goal has suffered a setback because of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which preschools were among the most affected. Of the 1.6 billion children whose education was interrupted, 155 million were pre-primary students.56 UNICEF responded by disseminating COVID safety protocols, providing information and support to parents, and working with governments to include preschools in efforts to maintain continuity and to reopen as quickly as possible. Distance learning modalities were especially challenging for younger learners. Some gains were made during 2020 in integrating early childhood education (ECE) within education sector plans, but the overall percentage of countries with effective ECE programmes declined from 58 per cent in 2019 to 55 per cent in 2020. The overall trend over past years has been a decrease in ECE spending globally 3 million, or 4.5 per cent of its total expenditure on education, towards ECE – a decrease from 6 per cent in 2019, and significantly less than the UNICEF target of committing 10 per cent of education resources to ECE.

More than half of ECE funding (totalling US$29 million) went to service delivery activities, to provide early learning opportunities, parental education, learning materials and teacher training. For example, in Cabo Verde, 87 per cent of public preschools (290 of 334) were provided with toys and pedagogical materials (books, games, manipulable materials, etc.) that benefit about 16,000 children (49 per cent girls).

The rest of UNICEF’s ECE funding (US$24 million) was spent on systems-strengthening efforts to improve support for policy, leadership and budget; and for the pre-primary teaching and learning environment.

The Republic of Moldova, with financial support from GPE, provided training to more than 81 per cent of its ECE managerial and educational staff (10,474 individuals, all of them women) on positive parenting for early childhood development (ECD). It also undertook online and individual counselling sessions with parents/caregivers to support 103,508 young children (36 per cent girls) – 70 per cent of all children aged 3–7 years in the country.

The disruptions to everyday life caused by the pandemic mean that many young children are at home, unable to attend ECE and care; therefore, they are entirely reliant on their caregivers for nurturing care and to meet all their developmental needs (physical, emotional, social and cognitive). The burden on families to balance childcare and work responsibilities has been compounded by economic instability and social isolation in many cases. Hence some young children are deprived of the stimulating environment, adequate nutrition, learning opportunities and social interaction with attentive caregivers that are key to brain development.

UNICEF worked throughout 2020 to help countries explore alternative modalities for reaching children and their families. Countries were helped to develop materials and modes of delivery based on the available infrastructure for remote learning. Even in countries where preschools and schools remained open throughout the pandemic (e.g., Belarus), social distancing and COVID-prevention protocols mandated new teaching and learning approaches. UNICEF Malawi reached 600,000 pre-primary children through interactive radio lessons and messages, while in Ecuador, short video lessons were developed for children aged 4–5 years old, with technical assistance from UNICEF, and delivered through mobile phones, reaching over 400,000 children during the lockdown.

Despite the required closure of schools in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ECE benefited from the transition to online learning opportunities and the Government’s strong commitment to early learning. Coverage of one-year pre-primary education for all pre-primary aged children in Azerbaijan increased from 85 per cent in 2019 to 87 per cent in 2020. The pre-primary enrolment rate for children aged 1–5 years increased from 28.5 per cent in 2019 to 31.3 per cent (48 per cent girls) in 2020. A UNICEF-supported evaluation of the School Readiness Programme for 5-year-olds, completed in 2020, found that the programme had been instrumental in establishing pre-primary education as a national priority. UNICEF continued to support community-based early learning centres, the number of which rose from 320 to 500 (95 per cent in rural areas) during the year.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Europe and Central Asia, UNICEF responded to school closures with the #Learningathome regional campaign which provided parents with concrete examples of fun and creative learning activities to do with their young children while isolated at home. The #Learningathome campaign reached more than 50,000 people through social media and television. In Europe and Central Asia, the communication campaign reached 22 countries. In Kazakhstan, the campaign reached 2 million people via social media channels and the UNICEF website.57

UNICEF also strengthened the evidence base on ECE. In 2020, UNICEF published Build to Last: A framework in support of universal quality pre-primary education.58
Voices from the field: Accelerated School Readiness Programme in Mozambique

In Mozambique, UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Education to introduce the Accelerated School Readiness Programme, a two-month programme to prepare children for primary school and prepare parents to support their children’s development.59

About working with UNICEF, Anibal Fombe, Director of Education at the Ministry of Education in Milange District, Mozambique, states, “I have learned that preparing children before they join education brings many positive aspects to the teachers, the school, the family and for the community. At this stage the child can understand instructions, some letters, objects, get attention, listen, and the family is also able to prepare the child for school and help with homework. Teachers can start Grade 1 lessons from the beginning of the school year and find students with the enthusiasm to learn through play-based learning methodologies. The parents’ sessions prepare families to support their children in education matters.”

Children’s session of the Accelerated School Readiness programme in Milange District, Mozambique.
Policy, leadership and budget

UNICEF’s advocacy and policy dialogue for education systems-strengthening continued to emphasise early learning and pre-primary education. The share of UNICEF-supported countries with effective policies, leadership and budget for ECE increased from 72 per cent in 2019 to 75 per cent in 2020.

Croatia, with the lowest pre-primary enrolment rates in the European Union, increased its regular annual investment in pre-primary by more than half to expand access. UNICEF provided evidence to support the allocation of additional resources for the most marginalized children.

To support countries to mainstream ECE into education sector planning processes, UNICEF and GPE co-led the development of an interactive toolkit, the ECE Accelerator Toolkit, which can guide efforts to strengthen capacity for analysis, planning and implementation of quality ECE programmes. The toolkit provides interactive customizable tools, such as fit-for-purpose indicators, checklists, templates and guiding questions, which may be populated with recommendations in real time. It is a ‘living platform’ that will be expanded over time, and is user-friendly and open source. The toolkit is available for downloading, translation and contextualization for practitioners in various contexts.
Integrating early childhood education (ECE) in education sector plans: Key to advancing results in ECE

UNICEF is working with governments and global partners to expand universal equitable access to quality ECE and meet SDG Target 4.2. Integrating ECE systematically in education sector plans and budgets, establishing ECE as a policy priority, and advocating for domestic resource allocation for this critical subsector are essential.

In 2019–2020, UNICEF partnered with GPE under the Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) initiative to pilot an innovative consultative approach to strengthening national capacities to plan, cost and finance ECE programmes in four countries:

- In Kyrgyzstan, the Education Development Strategy (2021–2024) and the Education Action Plan (2021–2023) were finalized, identifying ECE as a priority, and shared for the Prime Minister’s Office to endorse. A pre-primary department was officially established within the Ministry of Education and Sports.
- In Ghana, the ECE Policy Framework anchored in Ghana’s Education Sector Plan (2018–2030) and the Education Sector Medium-Term Development Plan (2018–2021) was finalized and approved by Ghana’s Cabinet, including a costed ECE plan, indicator framework and guidelines for implementation.
- In Lesotho, an education sector analysis included in-depth consideration of access to and quality of ECE. The Education Sector Plan and Implementation Plan highlight the scale-up of reception classes as a strategic priority, involving the addition of 90 classes and the provision of teaching and learning materials and WASH facilities.
- In Sao Tome and Príncipe, the Education Policy Charter (Carta de Política Educativa) and the five-year Action Plan were completed and endorsed by the Local Education Group and Ministry of Education. The ECE subsector is identified as a key priority as the country shifts to guaranteeing two years of quality compulsory pre-primary education.

These pilots illustrate the potential for leveraging sectoral planning processes to prioritize ECE while increasing ownership and accountability. Rwanda, Madagascar and several countries in the Pacific Islands have already started to take a similar approach.
Spotlight on thematic funding: ECE advances in the Pacific Islands

With support from UNICEF, Kiribati and Tonga advanced their commitment to expanding access to quality ECE nationwide, by developing locally relevant ECE curricula and teacher training programmes. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, notable progress was made, with training of trainers begun and draft curricula and teacher guidance prepared for piloting in both countries.

In the Solomon Islands, with support from UNICEF, a pre-primary year was introduced in all government schools as part of basic education.

Effective governance for early learning

Strong governance structures and mechanisms are critical to ensure quality assurance and accountability for the delivery of quality pre-primary education. Given the complexity of ECE provision and the devolution of responsibilities and accountabilities in decentralized systems, an effective regulatory and quality assurance system based on defined quality standards, as well as effectively-coordinated planning and actions across the various levels of the subsector, are needed.

In 2020, UNICEF continued to advocate for clear and consistent quality standards, curricular frameworks, and quality assurance and information systems to monitor and improve the quality of ECE; it also leveraged strategic partnerships and networks to engage the diverse stakeholders required to achieve impact. The percentage of countries with effective governance for ECE increased from 54 per cent in 2019 to 55 per cent in 2020.
In Uzbekistan, UNICEF provided technical support to the Government to operationalize the new Law on Pre-Primary Education, develop the Education Quality Assurance Framework, and draft the teacher qualification frameworks and evaluation criteria needed to enhance the professional standards and continuous professional development of over 100,000 pre-primary teachers.

UNICEF and the National Childcare and Development Network (REDCUDI) in Costa Rica implemented a comprehensive programme that focused on the right to integrated childcare, including ECE, and on making improved-quality, accredited, sustainable child development and care services available to all. In addition, a certification and quality recognition system was developed and implemented in 1,344 childcare centres serving 56,945 children.

The National Preschool Education Policy was approved by the Cabinet in Sri Lanka in 2020. A review will now take place of the draft national curriculum framework for preschools to inform a comprehensive curriculum review by the National Institute of Education.

In the Maldives, UNICEF supported the National Institute of Education to review the pre-primary national curricula; the focus was on simplifying the content and addressing gender stereotypes and gender-discriminatory material.

Throughout Pacific Islands nations, ECD was recognized as a priority in the 2020 outcomes statement of the Forum of Economics Ministers meeting. The Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Development (PRC4ECD) adopted a 10-year regional workplan for ECD. As secretariat of PRC4ECD, UNICEF partnered with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and other developmental partners (e.g., Australia, New Zealand and the World Bank) to promote comprehensive support for young children and their families.

Voices from the field: Growth and innovation in Westmoreland, Jamaica

The name of Keron King, Principal of Little Bay Primary and Infant School, went viral following a UNICEF blog post and video for the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office ‘Education on Hold’ report about how King is delivering and collecting homework by motorcycle for students in the rural community during the pandemic.63,64 "Since UNICEF featured our school," says King, "People can’t talk about the school without mentioning UNICEF – it’s part of the conversation in the community."

King had completed the UNICEF-supported Virtual Instructional Leadership course by the National College for Educational Leadership, and says: "At Little Bay Primary and Infant School, our mentality is that we are open to growth and innovation to ensure education continues and that the needs of our children are met. As such, the Virtual Instructional Leadership course has been extremely helpful for me as a principal. The course has provided school leaders with a space to share and collaborate to help overcome a challenge we have never had before."

"After completing the course, I encouraged my staff to sign up, and they did. Going forward it was easier for us to understand how each extra step we take as a school ensures fewer of our children are left behind. Staff appreciated the course, which helped build team spirit. It gave me a greater appreciation of UNICEF and its level of support for education."

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Principal of Little Bay Primary and Infant School, Keron King, hands over lessons to Kaedia Ellis Johnson with her daughter and student Sasheena Johnson.
Early learning for children with disabilities

UNICEF Cuba contributed to education for socio-emotional care in the face of disasters by providing guidance to families and teachers in more than 220 schools/communities in 7 provinces. Some 4,500 families will benefit from the booklet ‘Vamos a Jugar’ (‘Let’s Play’) and the cartoon series with the same name, which provide support through traditional games for early childhood when movement is confined due to emergencies.

With the financial support from the Austrian Development Agency, UNICEF in the Republic of Moldova was able to reach 190 preschool managers, educators, psychologists and speech therapists with capacity-building to apply child-centred methodologies in three districts: Calarasi, Cantemir and Sîngerei. The knowledge and skills helped professionals adopt an individual approach to young Roma children and those with special educational needs. Over 4,000 parents were reached with messages on nurturing care and positive parenting.

In Croatia, 481 professionals from 56 early childhood intervention institutions were supported to identify and work with young children with speech, language and communication difficulties. An open source online training platform for ECD professionals was developed.
Voices from the field: Partnering for ECE in Mozambique

The Network for Early Childhood Development in Mozambique, RDPI (Rede para o Desenvolvimento da Primeira Infância), brings together 38 national and international non-governmental organizations. RDPI is the only institution in Mozambique that focuses solely on early childhood development (ECD).

“RDPI is proud to partner with UNICEF for many reasons,” explains Gertrudes Noronha, Coordinator of RDPI, Mozambique.

“We have organized various advocacy events to promote play for learning and holistic development, advocated for ECD policy and produced inclusive ECD communication materials. We have trained our members and partners on ECD in emergencies, and supported children affected by cyclones with inclusive ECD kits. We also carried out a mapping exercise to support the Government of Mozambique in establishing the preschool subsystem.

“The relationship between the UNICEF Education-ECD team and RDPI has been like a friendship. The collaboration with UNICEF stimulates the growth of RDPI, and we would like to express our gratitude and wish to continue our good cooperation for strengthening our advocacy efforts for young children, especially the most vulnerable.”

© Rede para o Desenvolvimento da Primeira Infância, 2019

A ‘playing fair’ event for early learners in Maputo, Mozambique, organized by RDPI with UNICEF support.

© Rede para o Desenvolvimento da Primeira Infância, 2019
Quality teaching and learning

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted once again the important role that teachers play in children’s learning and well-being. UNICEF, recognizing the key role of teachers as learning shifted from in-person to remote, supported the re-skilling and up-skilling of teachers to maintain continuity of learning, transferring the focus from long-term efforts to improve classroom practices and child-friendly pedagogies. Where schools were closed, UNICEF supported professional development for teachers through training in online teaching as well as hybrid approaches. Where schools remained open, or preparing to reopen, UNICEF backed teachers with training on safety protocols and the mental health and psychosocial support that children need, particularly those already living in conflict-affected areas. As schools started reopening, teachers were helped to assess students’ learning loss and provide remedial support.

In 2020, UNICEF’s spending on teacher development increased to US$53 million from US$51 million in 2019. Of this, 52 per cent was spent on systems-strengthening activities, including school leadership, while the remainder was spent on service delivery. The percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective teacher development systems reached 46 per cent, an increase of 2 percentage points compared with the 2019 figure. Moreover, improvement was observed in all four dimensions of teacher development: school leadership, teacher professional development, teacher accountability, and incentives to attract teachers to rural or deprived areas.

The UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office led the development of the global public good, Ready to Come Back: A teacher preparedness training package (available in English, French, Arabic and Farsi). The package provides practical, concise and crucial information about the impact of COVID-19 on daily teaching practices, as well as tips and suggestions on how to improve safety, well-being and learning with students in face-to-face or remote settings. The publication helps improve teachers’ skills in distance learning and can be adapted to context and used at the teacher’s own pace. Ready to Come Back is being further developed as an easily accessible online resource for teachers, in the same languages. The content remains relevant, as many schools have yet to reopen and children in the region are now facing two consecutive interrupted school years.

In Sierra Leone, to prepare for the full reopening of schools, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education to conduct training for approximately 24,000 teachers on safe school protocols and basic psychosocial support, including training for 980 expert trainers.

In Malaysia, the UNICEF-supported Teacher Digital Learning Community aimed at building teachers’ capacity as effective remote online educators. This programme was cited in Innocenti Research Brief 2020–10 as one of the most promising practices for promoting equitable remote learning, in a review of 127 countries. To date, 3,200 teachers from 1,900 schools, of which 48 per cent are from rural schools, have participated in online teacher training; these teachers reach over 100,000 students. As part of this digital community, teachers have shared 1,000 teaching resources, which have attracted more than 30,000 views.

In Ecuador, UNICEF provided mobile phones and data for connectivity to 4,342 teachers and student counsellors so that they could provide pedagogical and psychosocial support to students and caregivers. A special focus was on those schools hosting refugee, migrant and host community children and adolescents. In addition, teacher training using remote learning reached 994 mentors, 12,338 teachers and their 260,000 students.

In the Maldives, UNICEF expanded the use of innovative technology during the pandemic and trained 54 per cent of teachers in government schools with online teaching skills using G Suite. In 2020, some 3,885 teachers (2,641 women), reaching a total of 54,218 students, were certified.
Voices from the field: Reaching children with learning during a pandemic – Learning Bridges in Jordan

In September 2020, the Ministry of Education in Jordan, in partnership with UNICEF, launched a national blended learning programme, Learning Bridges. Learning Bridges provides all students in Grades 4–9 with a printed activity pack each week on the core subjects of Arabic, English, Mathematics and Science, with life skills embedded throughout. Each activity pack comes with a QR code that links to an online resource with audio content for children with poor literacy or with visual impairments.

Learning Bridges has been used by teachers to support children’s remote learning during school closures and will continue to be used when schools reopen. Advice is provided for parents on how to support their children’s learning. Schools and districts created electronic noticeboards to share students’ work and promote teachers’ innovation. Learning Bridges has supported the Ministry of Education to identify key learning objectives, and has helped schools to shift away from a reliance on textbooks. UNICEF’s initial investment of US$500,000 enabled the programme to reach 300,000 students and train 30,000 teachers as of January 2021.

Deer Al Qabah, a teacher in a boys’ school in one of the most disadvantaged areas in Jordan, shared how Learning Bridges has had a positive effect on his students: “We were suffering with engaging vulnerable children to improve their education involvement. I almost lost hope in attracting students to school, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Suddenly, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education introduced us to the Learning Bridges programme, and it was like lighting the torch of attraction to education again. Now I can see my students’ passion for returning to learn and sharing the activities and solutions using the simple materials they have.”
Teachers working in prolonged conflicts, emergencies and crises fulfill many roles beyond supporting students’ learning, including providing psychosocial support and protection, and may themselves suffer from trauma. The pressure on teachers increased as teaching switched to unfamiliar online platforms and applications during the COVID-19 pandemic; UNICEF supported teachers to adapt.

Although the pandemic reordered priorities, it did not mean an end to efforts to address long-term challenges through teacher development. In South Sudan in 2020, a total of 3,053 teachers (586 women) completed an in-service continuous professional development programme; an additional 8,790 teachers (2,637 women) were trained on basic pedagogy and learner-centred methodologies.

UNICEF continued to work closely with the Ministry of General Education and Instruction during the pandemic to address sexual exploitation and abuse of children by teachers and personnel.

In Viet Nam, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Education and Training to support an online training course on teaching children about climate change, which was made mandatory for its 1.1 million teachers. In Congo, as an investment in improving learning outcomes for children, UNICEF supported the training of teachers within the framework of curriculum reform, targeting Mathematics, reading and life skills, which improved the pedagogical competencies of over 10,000 teachers (4,165 women).
Spotlight on thematic funding: Improving learning opportunities for vulnerable children in the Gambia

UNICEF in the Gambia relied exclusively on thematic funding to reach and influence the lives and well-being of thousands of children, teachers and communities during 2020. Lack of education supplies can prevent children from enrolling in school; UNICEF therefore delivered critical educational supplies to 12,000 children from 60 schools in disadvantaged locations. In addition, over 200 teachers improved their classroom practices with UNICEF-provided training packages on learner-centred pedagogies, gender-responsive pedagogy, early learning stimulation methods and inclusive teaching practices.

UNICEF also helped raise the profile of early childhood education (ECE), through policy advocacy, capacity-building and the development of an integrated ECD policy covering issues around health, protection, nutrition and birth registration. As a result of UNICEF’s policy advocacy, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education allowed every public school to host ECE classes.

Furthermore, UNICEF supported the engagement and capacity-building of mothers’ clubs and school management committees in over 500 schools nationally, resulting in sustained gains in girls’ education, and increased enrolment at all levels.

To reach some of the Gambia’s most vulnerable children, UNICEF supported the Government to develop a national strategy for Majalis (Qur’anic) education. This strategy aims at reducing the number of children and adolescents out of school and address the perennial children protection and WASH challenges that marginalized and vulnerable children experience in the Majalis centres.
Learning assessment systems

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc with learning assessments. There may be an unexpected positive aspect, however: in the face of the crisis, some countries have revamped their assessment systems to prioritize assessment for learning (formative assessment) rather than assessment of learning (including examinations). With assessment for learning, teachers pay more attention to identifying individual students’ learning needs through classroom-based continuous assessments; teachers then plan lessons based on what students do and do not know.

During school closures and the delivery of blended learning, some countries devised new ways of delivering assessment tools to students and collecting their responses. Although collection of learning data may have slowed down, this gave countries time to examine data already collected and to focus on how to use it for planning and policy.

UNICEF collaborated with the Government of Bulgaria and a business partner with an educational tutoring website to co-create and test online diagnostic screening for core subjects in Grades 1–8 and tutoring resources for Grades 1–4, reaching over 119,500 students (104,173 in primary; 62,140 girls). Individualized learning programmes are automatically generated from the results of diagnostic screening. Learning programmes are presented to children as interactive games, and each includes a set of suggested video lessons and exercises on the educational website, structured by grade and subject.

Countries are rediscovering the importance of formative assessment in helping teachers understand students’ performance levels when they return to the classroom. Formative assessment is key for designing lesson plans appropriate to students’ needs, and should continue after the return to ‘normality’.

A UNICEF-supported programme in Uzbekistan focused on teaching at the knowledge level of students – both in remedial and long-term instruction. The programme identified priority learning outcomes and success criteria, and assessments were designed to determine the extent of learning loss and knowledge gaps. Assessments informed the design of catch-up plans for students with the largest learning gaps.

In Nigeria, classroom-based learning assessment was conducted at the state level using the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA). A concept note on establishing a robust learning assessment was developed, and the U-Report digital platform (online and offline mode) was utilized for remote assessment of children’s learning levels.

In Mongolia, school closures related to COVID-19 affected more than 600,000 children. The Government dedicated the first month of the new school term to assessment of learning and to remedial lessons. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Science to develop and distribute guidance for teachers on remedial classes. Teachers used formative assessments to gauge children’s learning following the school closure period and then adapted lessons accordingly, with recap videos and a simple tool to collect feedback from learners.

Community participation

Community engagement is one of the most effective levers for improving the delivery of education in schools. Members of the community participate through parent–teacher associations (or other local mechanisms) to hold school leaders, teachers and themselves accountable. However, the impact on learning outcomes depends on two elements: First, parents must have the necessary information (data and evidence) to inform their engagement with the school; and second, mechanisms for community engagement must empower parents to be heard and to influence decision-making processes.

UNICEF’s work on community participation encompasses system-level support, such as the development of policies, guidelines, regulatory frameworks, training materials and feedback to communities. Work also includes direct service delivery to targeted communities and schools. Overall, the aim is to support the provision of community-based education where relevant, and the training and effectiveness of school management committees or other community-based associations.

UNICEF also works to improve data and the use of evidence by parents for informed participation in school management and for strengthening accountability. An example of this approach is the Data Must Speak programme, used in an increasing number of countries. Co-funded by GPE, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and UNICEF global thematic funding for education, the programme provides support to ministries of education and school communities for more effective data use to improve equity in education systems. In 2020, UNICEF worked with ministries of education to provide annually updated community-focused school profiles for local communities. UNICEF also supported the design and piloting of community and school profile cards in Chad, Madagascar, the Niger and Togo, as well as capacity-building of school leaders and policymakers in Namibia, the Niger and Togo.

Unfortunately, the pandemic led to a significant setback for field-level work over the course of the year, including for implementation of the Data Must Speak programme. UNICEF’s expenditure on community participation declined from US$53 million in 2019 to US$40 million in 2020. In total, US$19 million (48 per cent) was spent on system-level interventions, while the remaining US$21 million (52 per cent) supported service delivery activities. Nine country offices (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Chad, the Congo, Egypt, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria and the Sudan) spent over US$1 million each to support community participation, with Nigeria spending $7.8 million; this comprised 76 per cent of UNICEF’s total expenditure on community engagement.
Around half (53 per cent) of UNICEF programme countries reported effective community participation in education. Worldwide, more than 59,223 school management committees were trained in 2020, despite school closures, leading to a cumulative total of 261,330 – well beyond the 2020 milestone of 175,000 and already exceeding the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, target of 210,000.

Strategies for improved community mobilization were drafted in Angola, Chad, Madagascar, the Niger, Togo and Zambia. In Afghanistan, 174,064 children (53 per cent girls) successfully graduated from community-based schools and alternative learning classes. Informed by SDGs 4 and 5 and the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP III 2017–2021), community-based education has proved to be the most effective approach to education for out-of-school children in Afghanistan, particularly for girls in the most marginalized and socially conservative rural communities.

Spotlight on thematic funding: Supporting the Back to School and Safe Schools initiatives in Ghana

Through education thematic funding, UNICEF Ghana provided critical support to girls’ education and inclusive education throughout 2020. An adapted Safe Schools package, which includes elements of psychosocial support and guidance on preventing corporal punishment, sexual harassment and bullying, was finalized. More than 2,000 teachers, staff and personnel received training and support to roll out the Safe Schools initiative.

UNICEF also supported the Government in its efforts to ensure girls and marginalized children returned to school after the COVID-19 disruptions through the roll-out of the national Back to School campaign across 16 regions, reaching 364,217 students (173,282 girls) in 6,400 communities.

Final-year students in class preparing for examinations. Students were provided with masks to help curb the spread of the virus.
Gender equality in learning outcomes

Many countries show wide disparities in learning between boys and girls. In virtually all upper-middle-income and upper-income countries, girls greatly outperform boys in reading. Girls who reach secondary education tend to outperform boys in reading, but this may be influenced by the higher rate of dropout among girls at lower levels of the education system. The onset of adolescence brings additional barriers to girls’ education and increases the risk of dropping out of school. The learning poverty rate, which measures the share of 10-year-olds who cannot read a simple story, is disturbingly high: 93 per cent in low-income countries, for both boys and girls.

In low-income countries and lower-middle-income countries, a nuanced pattern emerges, with boys often outperforming girls in both reading and Mathematics, although with many country-specific exceptions. There are further regional differences as well, with lower secondary boys generally outperforming lower secondary girls in Mathematics in East and Southeast Asia, while the reverse is true in West Asia and North Africa.

The reason for different levels of achievement in learning between boys and girls across countries is not well understood, although there appear to be links to social norms, the availability of resources, and patterns of work. This is an area of research for UNICEF.

The share of UNICEF-supported countries with gender-responsive teaching and learning systems was 42 per cent in 2020, a slight improvement from 40 per cent in 2019. However, the number of country offices reporting on this indicator dropped from 94 countries in 2019 to 92 countries in 2020. Notable improvements in the number of gender-responsive teaching and learning systems were made in the Europe and Central Asia region.

In 2020, of US$272 million spent by UNICEF to improve learning outcomes, US$55 million was allocated to activities that specifically targeted gender equality.

The pandemic has compounded the risks girls face in access to education and achieving learning outcomes. It is estimated that up to 10 million more girls will be at risk of being forced into child marriage between 2020 and 2030. When schools closed and distance learning modalities replaced classrooms, at least every seventh girl globally – 222 million in total – was unable to access remote learning, often due to an intersection of gender and digital divides – i.e. lack of access to the internet or to devices, or parents favouring giving access to the few devices at home to boys. The pandemic has also increased girls’ risk of GBV, psychosocial stress and mental health issues, affecting their ability to learn. Those able to access remote learning solutions are further exposed to exploitation online.

UNICEF worked to help countries keep girls at the centre of the COVID-19 response for continuity of learning. In Rwanda, UNICEF partners with a local organization, Imbuto Foundation, on a model remedial learning programme to address the underperformance of girls in literacy and numeracy. In 2020, this programme reached more than 9,000 students (80 per cent girls) in 150 schools. In response to school closures, UNICEF worked to ensure that the most marginalized girls were supported by teachers to continue learning. This pedagogical assistance included direct individualized tutoring and provision of radios to girls from lower-wealth quintiles.

In Ghana, where there are gender gaps in STEM, UNICEF in partnership with KOICA has supported the Ghana Education Service to implement the Better Life for Girls initiative since 2017. The initiative includes a comprehensive package of interventions that aim to improve teaching and learning of STEM, and girls’ interest in STEM education. Through the initiative, a programme on gender-responsive delivery of STEM was launched in 72 junior high schools, reaching over 4,000 girls.

In Nepal, UNICEF works with a non-governmental organization, World Education, to support local governments and communities in Province 2 to identify over-age out-of-school girls and help them build the foundational literacy, numeracy and life skills they need to enrol in formal education. A UNICEF report in March 2020 found that a nine-month programme supported through the Girls Access to Education (GATE) non-formal education initiative succeeded in increasing girls’ scores by 52 percentage points to an average post-test score of 64 per cent. More than 94 per cent of these girls were then able to join formal schooling programmes.
Summary

The extraordinary disruptions of 2020 may obscure emerging learning trends, both positive and negative. On the positive side, for instance, there are continuing successes in foundational literacy being achieved through structured pedagogy programmes that include teachers’ guides and textbooks in languages of instruction that children know (mother tongues). Even though implementation of the Data Must Speak model was curtailed by school closures, the model continues to show its promise in improving the availability of information about learning at school and community levels. Learning assessments in many countries were reconfigured to focus more on assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning. On the negative side, the most vulnerable children still do not have access to ECE, denying them the crucial opportunity to prepare for the next steps in their learning journeys. Simply restoring ECE to pre-COVID levels of quality and access will not be enough. A further concern is that UNICEF’s expenditure on ECE was lower in 2020 than in 2019, continuing a downward trend.

The COVID-19 pandemic also demonstrated both the challenge of improving basic education services to the most vulnerable children, and also the potential of doing so. UNICEF will give priority to helping education systems become more resilient, adopt multiple flexible learning pathways for all children, and innovate the use of digital technologies in ways that reduce learning gaps.
Result Area 3: Skills development

Adolescents are growing up in a transforming world. Technology, migration, climate change and conflict are reshaping societies, forcing people across the globe to adapt to unexpected changes. Adolescents need education and skills to become lifelong learners, secure productive work, make informed decisions and positively engage in their communities for a better and greener future.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 258 million children and youth around the world were out of school and deprived of critical opportunities to develop skills for lifelong learning. An estimated 230 million adolescents of lower secondary school age were not mastering foundational skills of literacy and numeracy. With the pandemic, conditions worsened. School closures threatened to increase violence against children and adolescents, leaving adolescents, particularly girls, vulnerable to GBV risks. The crises also took a toll on children’s mental health and psychosocial well-being.

More than one in five young people aged 15–24 globally was not in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2020. Two out of three of these are women. The COVID-19 crisis threatens to create even more obstacles for young people in the labour market: Longer school-to-work transitions, job losses and lay-offs will be compounded by the challenging economic environment which will affect job markets.

In 2020, UNICEF country offices continued to encourage a multiple-pathways approach to education and training. This approach considers that skills development can take place at different times, in various settings and contexts, and through various providers during the life course. Learning can take place face to face, remotely (online, on television or radio, and with printed materials) or through hybrid modalities. A high-quality multiple-pathways approach promotes equity and inclusiveness by offering more opportunities to reconcile skills development with social norms and expectations, home duties, learning

and work prospects. This is particularly true for working children, young mothers, and displaced people. Having more alternatives also improves the chances of success for youth with disabilities. A multiple-pathways approach is also critical in situations of conflict and crisis for marginalized groups.

A continued emphasis was placed on the integration of gender-equitable skills within education systems, throughout different age groups and pathways, mainstreaming gender equality in skills-development practices, tailoring programming to better meet labour market needs, and mainstreaming skills development through curricula, policies, plans and community engagement.

UNICEF spending on skills development totalled US$58 million in 2020. Of this amount, 64 per cent (US$37 million) was spent on service delivery, including the provision of skills development for more than 7.7 million children and youth (6 million in humanitarian settings). The remaining 36 per cent (US$21 million) was spent on systems-strengthening. Of all children and youth reached in 2020, some 48 per cent were girls and 79 per cent were in humanitarian situations.

FIGURE 14: Results chain for skills development
In Morocco, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to deliver distance learning via television and a web platform which benefited 1,103,600 children (539,660 girls).

In Bangladesh, nearly 112,800 adolescents (70 per cent girls) engaged with life-skills-based education, including training on dissemination of COVID-19 messages via a mobile application reaching more than 224,000 adolescents, parents and community members.

In Kyrgyzstan, 4,200 young people (71 per cent girls) took part in an assessment of issues affecting their well-being via the UPSHIFT social innovation tool and reported improved critical thinking and communication skills.

In Colombia, UNICEF partnered with ClickArte to develop La Aldea, an online tool for teachers and parents of children aged 6 - 12 with an innovative methodology for reading, writing, mathematics, sciences and socio-emotional skills. By the end of 2020, 92,808 children (44 per cent girls) and 3,621 teachers (nearly 60 per cent women) had participated in the programme.

In Viet Nam, UNICEF trained 28,600 teachers from lower secondary schools and technical and vocational training centres to set up and facilitate social innovation clubs. A total of 631,379 adolescents (48 per cent girls) participated in the clubs.

In LAC, 27; WCA, 18; ECA, 17; ESA, 17; EAP, 12; MENA, 14; SA, 8 reporting countries.

FIGURE 15: Illustrative results for skills development
Skills development in ECE

Early childhood provides a critical development window to support the formation of skills that lay the foundation for children's future learning and skills development. Skills such as creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and resilience are essential to mastering foundational literacy and numeracy at primary school. Consideration must be given not only to the type of skills, but how these skills are taught, to ensure children's healthy development. It is necessary to build strong education systems that have alignment between ECE and primary levels, and that support children in their transition and ensure consistency in curricula and pedagogical practices between the two levels. Such education systems, combined with the standards and quality assurance mechanisms that support the building of skills and attitudes, ensure children are ready to develop foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

As part of the response to COVID-19, UNICEF ensured that pre-primary teachers and caregivers had access to information, tools, training and guidance to support children's learning, well-being and development. Supporting the scale-up of pre-primary education remained a primary focus in Morocco, contributing to an increase in pre-primary enrolment from 57 per cent in 2019 to 72 per cent in 2020. UNICEF directly supported the training of 3,900 pre-primary teachers and worked with the Ministry of Education to develop a toolkit for parents to ensure continuity of development and learning for preschool children. The kit was disseminated nationwide through the media and key partners. In Mexico, UNICEF delivered online training to over 13,000 teachers on psychosocial support for children in their early years, to prepare for the reopening of ECE services.

Through a grant received from Canada’s International Development Research Center (IDRC) under the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) Initiative, UNICEF was able to further scale up the Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) approach, which focuses on national capacity-strengthening by integrating ECE into education sector planning processes. The KIX grant in 2020 allowed Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Tajikistan to strengthen early learning and children's development of appropriate skills.
Voices from the field: Francisco Trejos from UNICEF Panama

“My name is Francisco Trejos, I am an education officer for UNICEF Panama. I am proud of my work at UNICEF, because when schools closed due to COVID-19, our experience in emergency situations allowed us to quickly work with the Government to support families with ECE materials. For more than four months, through social networks, radio and television, UNICEF published more than 50 video stories with activities for children at pre-primary and primary levels. These materials were key to the routines of thousands of children during school closures. They kept learning, and parents and caregivers felt supported. For children, especially those under five, interactions with adults and other children are key to social and emotional development, language skills and others.”

Francisco holds an ‘I defend responsibility’ card as part of the month of values and ethics during school closures.
The Prospects Partnership

The Prospects Partnership is a programme funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, bringing together the International Finance Corporation, ILO, UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Bank. Spanning eight countries – Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda – the partnership seeks to transform the way governments and other stakeholders respond to forced displacement crises, through the involvement of development actors.

The programme focuses on supporting migrant and forcibly displaced children and young people to acquire critical learning competencies and skills for employability, by strengthening pathways from school to the world of work. The Prospects Partnership also supports children’s and young people’s active participation in societal forums to equip them with skills to constructively engage in their communities.

UNICEF’s involvement focuses on education and learning, protection services, youth engagement, transition from learning to earning, innovation, gender-sensitive programming, data improvement and global advocacy.

Skills development in primary and lower secondary education

Adolescent girls and boys need support to complete primary and secondary education and achieve meaningful learning outcomes. Accredited flexible learning opportunities must be offered to those who cannot attend regular school. More than 61.5 million adolescents (10–19 years old) of lower secondary school age are out of school. Many children in school are over-age for their grade or are learning very little. At current rates of progress, 825 million school-age children in low- and middle-income countries will not develop basic secondary-level skills by 2030. UNICEF focuses on a child-centred approach to delivering subject knowledge, integrating foundational, transferable, job-specific and digital skills into the curriculum.

In Morocco, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to develop guidance for teachers on integrating life-skills and citizenship education into teaching practices, as well as addressing quality gaps in distance learning during the pandemic. Direct UNICEF support on distance learning via television and a web platform was beneficial to 1,103,600 children, including 539,660 girls.

In Colombia, UNICEF partnered with ClickArte to develop an online pedagogical tool, called La Aldea, which offers an innovative methodology for reading, writing, Mathematics, Sciences and socio-emotional skills. La Aldea is for use by teachers and parents of children between the ages of 6 and 12. By the end of 2020, a total of 92,808 children (44 per cent girls) and 3,621 teachers (nearly 60 per cent women) in 600 schools and 16 departments had used the tool. The Ministry of Education has included La Aldea in the tools available to teachers nationwide to strengthen distance learning.

In Indonesia, UNICEF initiated a pilot programme on digital skills development in greater Jakarta. Girls and boys from 20 secondary schools, vocational schools and community-based learning centres participated in innovation challenges, to be selected to participate in boot camps and mentoring programmes.

Skills development in upper secondary education

There is a global need to increase equity at the upper secondary school level, to reduce the number of students who drop out, and to ensure that graduates have the foundational and transferable skills that link them to productive work opportunities through structured internships, apprenticeships and career guidance.

In Azerbaijan, scaling up of the Basic Life Skills initiative had already been identified as a key priority for UNICEF in 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic. When schools closed, UNICEF adapted the Basic Life Skills curriculum to an online format to ensure young people could continue to access the programme. More than 5,000 people, including adolescents, their family members and teachers, were reached via online platforms. An assessment of the initiative found that more than three quarters of participants (77 per cent) had learned new skills and concepts, and a similar number (74 per cent) had tried to use the strategies shared through the programme in their own lives. During the year, a toolbox of resources for programme coordinators, facilitators, parents and youth to collaborate via interactive video platforms was also developed.

In Kosovo, formal accreditation was given in 2020 to UNICEF-supported social innovation and entrepreneurship flagship initiatives such as UPSHIFT, PONDER and PODIUM that aim to build a bridge between the education and employment systems. The Ministry of Education and Science also aligned the programmes with the upper secondary education curriculum, marking a significant step towards the institutionalization of skills-building programmes within the education system in Kosovo.
Examples of UNICEF’s social innovation and social entrepreneurship initiatives

**UPSHIFT** is a social innovation and social entrepreneurship programme designed to build skills and opportunities for young people who are disadvantaged due to issues such as poverty, gender discrimination, disability or ethnicity. UPSHIFT aims at empowering young people with the skills and resources to identify and design solutions to problems in their communities.

**PONDER** improves the life skills of adolescents by fostering media literacy, empowering adolescents to approach information critically, to identify and examine bias, and to judge the value, authenticity and authority of the information they encounter.

**PODIUM** teaches adolescents and youth of the most marginalized groups in Kosovo how to advocate for the needs and rights of their communities. The initiative is designed to improve the resilience of adolescents and youth by increasing their knowledge of their rights, improving their awareness of the power of social change and advocacy, and cultivating campaign management and advocacy tactics – all while increasing their confidence and empowerment.

Stefania, Evenina and Anton, the social entrepreneurs behind the PaperHUB project, came up with the innovation after participating in an UPSHIFT training at Kyiv National Economic University. PaperHUB offers small awards to students who drop off paper for recycling to reduce the amount of waste on campus.
Technical and vocational education and training, skills and employability

Globally, enormous gains have been made towards the goal of universal primary education, leading to increased demand for secondary education. Many adolescents and young people enter the formal and informal labour markets from the secondary level; therefore, secondary schools must teach skills relevant to the world of work. UNICEF programming focuses on developing skills for learning, personal empowerment and employability. One of UNICEF’s successful skills-development programmes is UPSHIFT.

In 2020, UNICEF Ukraine supported the expansion of the UPSHIFT programme, empowering young people as grassroots innovators and social entrepreneurs to develop innovative projects around the COVID-19 response and environmental challenges, reaching 75,000 beneficiaries.

In Kyrgyzstan, 4,200 young people between the ages of 10 and 19 (71 per cent girls) were reached through UPSHIFT and took part in an assessment of issues affecting their well-being. Participants reported improved critical thinking and communication skills. The initiative also created better awareness among decision-makers of young people’s concerns and demands. UNICEF selected 94 proposals (from 380 young people) – focusing on education, protection from violence, and the environment – for implementation and funding. Thirty-six proposals received additional financial support.

Generation Unlimited

The aim of Generation Unlimited, founded in September 2018, is to upskill the world’s 1.8 billion young people (aged 10–24 years) and connect them to opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship and civic engagement. Generation Unlimited is the world’s leading public–private–youth platform, scaling up innovations for and with youth. In collaboration with over 200 partners, and leveraging UNICEF’s extensive field presence and convening power, Generation Unlimited has reached more than 100 million young people in 45 countries across six continents.

Building on the momentum and lessons of early-adopter countries such as India, Bangladesh and Kenya, Generation Unlimited has seen tremendous growth during 2020 despite the global pandemic. Generation Unlimited and its partners quickly adapted to young people’s need to scale up digital learning and the focus on skills and livelihoods for young people, hand in hand with Reimagine Education.

For example, in India, 15 million young people (50 per cent girls) benefited from career guidance through partnerships with the Aasman Foundation and SAP. In Brazil, 1MiO was launched to engage private companies and other partners to provide 1 million learning, training and employment opportunities for young people, especially the most vulnerable. In Africa, Generation Unlimited helped launch the Youth Agency Market Place (YOMA), which supports young people’s quest for growth by matching them with opportunities for education, skills, volunteering, apprenticeships and social innovation challenges that help them acquire twenty-first century skills. YOMA now reaches over 1.5 million young people in seven countries and aims to scale to more countries in Africa and beyond.
Gender equality in skills development

Investing in girls’ and young women’s skills development is one of the most urgent and effective means to drive progress on gender equality, poverty reduction and inclusive economic growth. In many countries, however, this does not translate into employability, because of restrictive gender norms. UNICEF focuses on skills development for girls at each stage of their learning journey from pre-primary to secondary and supports gender-responsive programmes and innovations to create a bridge between secondary education and the world of work.

In 2020, UNICEF Senegal supported out-of-school adolescents and youth, with a focus on girls, with entrepreneurial skills development. Some 455,000 children (approximately 49 per cent girls) participated in skills-development programmes that fostered learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and/or employability.

In South Africa, UNICEF supported 1,957 girls from 27 districts in 112 schools to participate in a virtual job-shadowing programme, TechnoGirl. Additionally, 31 new mentors/job-shadowing host organization coordinators were trained on the TechnoGirl programme. The programme also supported 285 Grade-12 learners who had completed their three-year job-shadowing programme to review and confirm their development plans.

Following school closures in Kyrgyzstan, the girls-in-science project STEM4Girls promptly adapted all capacity-building events to an online format. Some 290 girls are now peer-trainers and will lead online learning sessions for others in their school on gender equality, gender stereotypes, GBV, child and forced marriage, sexual harassment, choice of STEM profession, and communication and leadership skills.

Spotlight on thematic funding: Skills training for the world of work in Bangladesh

Every year, 2 million young Bangladeshi (aged 15–24 years) embark on their first experience in the world of work. Too often, however, they find themselves ill-equipped to be truly productive. A recent study found that most of the young workers surveyed (85 per cent) had gained the skills they were using at work somewhere other than in formal education settings.81 To address this issue, Generation Unlimited, in partnership with UNICEF, which is leveraging thematic funding, is supporting the Government to roll out the ambitious Adolescent Skills Framework.

Led by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), 27 agencies from across the Government, private sector, civil society and development partners, including Generation Unlimited’s national partners, co-created the skills framework. The framework builds on work initiated by UNICEF through the NCTB under Bangladesh’s Ministry of Education, and is part of an overall effort by the Government to reform school curricula and integrate the skills young people need to succeed in the world of work. The framework is a key guiding document for several reform agendas, including competency-based curricula, experiential learning pedagogy, interdisciplinary approaches and formative assessment methods.

Closing the youth skills gap is expected to ease high unemployment, underemployment and economic inactivity among young people (aged 15–24 years), who constitute 20 per cent of the total population in Bangladesh. Currently, more than 1 million youth in the country are unemployed; almost one third of these are NEET, and most are young women.
Case Study 4: Kazakhstan: UniStat girls in STEM initiative encourages girls to reach for the stars

To further promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education for girls and young women, UNICEF Kazakhstan is working with the Government and partners to mainstream STEM education in Kazakhstan and provide young people with the skills needed to match economic demand.

UNICEF Kazakhstan, jointly with the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, launched the UniStat learning initiative, an educational project for girls and young women (aged 14–35) on the development of UniSat nanosatellites. Participants worked with leading aerospace experts to program, assemble and test a nanosatellite prototype, which was successfully launched into the stratosphere. In addition to the technical STEM training involved, UniStat promotes transferable skills such as teamwork, communication and project management.

For Amina Sadu, a 17-year-old participant in UniStat, the programme helped improve her confidence and reinforce her dream of becoming a physicist. “I’m a dreamer. If I want to achieve a goal, I’ll do my best to make it,” she said.
Non-formal education and community-based skills development

UNICEF uses cross-sectoral approaches to contribute to equity and inclusiveness in skills development. Interventions are delivered through non-formal education and skills training, as well as in community settings, to respond to the educational needs of marginalized adolescents.

Building on a two-year programme on conflict-resolution skills, in Ukraine, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Science developed a peer-to-peer mediation toolkit and video tutorial on solving conflicts and promoted it among 1,000 educators in conflict-affected areas. In addition, during school closures in March 2020, UNICEF conducted a series of 55 online workshops titled ‘Solving conflicts in digital space’, reaching 2,177 adolescents and 1,883 adults.

In Bangladesh, about 112,800 adolescents (70 per cent adolescent girls and young women) engaged in life-skills education. About 4,200 adolescents were trained to disseminate COVID-19 messages via a mobile phone app, which reached 132,846 adolescents, 27,962 parents and 63,517 other community members.

Voices from the field: Cash transfers support girls’ education in Afghanistan

“I love to go to school to learn so that I can land a good job in the future to support my family,” says Hasiba, a 14-year-old girl in Herat, Afghanistan. “Yet my father has been jobless for over a month now, and he cannot afford buying us pens and notebooks.”

The Afghan Women’s Leadership Initiative, supported with funding from the US Department of State’s Secretary’s Office of Global Women’s Issues, aims at supporting girls like Herat who are out of school. Across the country, 60 per cent of out-of-school children are girls. Through community engagement and mobilization, including unconditional and unrestricted cash transfers to families, the initiative aims to improve families’ access to basic services, particularly education for girls.

“This initiative aims to support and empower adolescent girls,” says Aye Aye Than, Adolescent Specialist, UNICEF Afghanistan. “Through support to girls’ education, we can prevent child marriage.”

Hasiba, a 14-year-old girl in Herat, Afghanistan, participates in the Afghan Women’s Leadership Initiative. She and her father receive unconditional cash transfers for her to attend school.
Alternative learning pathways

UNICEF supports ‘second chance’ education for adolescents who did not complete primary and secondary education, combining foundational literacy and numeracy with the twenty-first century skills needed to participate in the workforce. Flexible accredited learning provides opportunities for out-of-school adolescents, including working adolescents, those in underserved rural communities, and refugees. The formal curriculum is adapted to flexible time frames and is delivered using adapted pedagogical methods and materials as well as information and communication technology.

The Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP), launched in 2018 by the Ministry of National Education in Turkey and UNICEF, supports out-of-school adolescents and youth to make up lost years of learning and to transition into formal education. Since its inception, ALP has reached 26,746 adolescents (12,781 girls) aged 10–18 years through face-to-face delivery. In 2020, an online version of ALP was initiated. While the online platform ensures continuity of learning during pandemics and other emergencies, it will also be a tool to reach greater numbers of out-of-school adolescents in Turkey, particularly girls, young people with disabilities, and others who face barriers to reaching physical ALP facilities. ALP is accredited and certified.

In the Philippines, UNICEF has reached 200,000 adolescents (approximately 44 per cent girls) in the non-formal Alternative Learning System through the ICT4ALS online platform, a content repository of curated non-formal education learning materials, COVID-19 resources, and links to apps and webinars. The programme also uses low-tech learning materials for learners without internet access. UNICEF is currently expanding the platform with an additional 60 interactive multimedia learning modules.

In Brazil, UNICEF worked with 3,200 Brazilian municipalities using the School Active Search platform to identify 345,000 out-of-school children and re-enrol more than 61,500. Nine states received online technical support to improve learning through Successful School Pathways.

Skills development through remote learning

As learning shifted to remote modalities in 2020, the digital divide threatened to exacerbate the learning crisis that predated the pandemic. Some 825 million children around the world were not gaining the skills they need.84 UNICEF data show that at least 463 million children were not reached with remote learning (including by radio, television or internet) during school closures. Three out of four students who were not reached by remote learning options live in rural areas and/or poor households.85

UNICEF India, in collaboration with PwC India and YuWaah, is bridging the digital gap by engaging 300 million young people over the next 10 years to gain twenty-first century skills and explore economic opportunities and employability.

In Viet Nam, UNICEF supported the development of a National Digital Literacy Framework in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Training. In hard-to-reach areas of Viet Nam, UNICEF provides 28,000 marginalized students with open source augmented and virtual reality education solutions. Public and private partnerships have been key.

UNICEF has signed agreements with mobile network operators which span 94 countries and 1.8 billion subscribers, reaching millions of children and young people with free access to online learning content. In May 2020, UNICEF announced a new partnership with Airtel Africa, aimed at providing children with access to remote learning and with cash transfers. Under this partnership, UNICEF and Airtel Africa will use mobile technology to benefit an estimated 133 million school-age children currently affected by school closures in 13 countries across sub-Saharan Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic.86

The Giga initiative

The Giga initiative was launched by UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to connect every school to the internet. Giga has enabled over 86,000 schools and more than 25.8 million students and teachers in 19 countries to access distance learning and essential services.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Giga accelerated its reach and connected more than 2,700 schools. By the end of 2020, Giga had mapped the location of 800,000 schools in 35 countries and reported real-time connectivity speed data for over 26,000 connected schools.

The situation during the pandemic has demonstrated the urgent need to accelerate connectivity and online learning and other initiatives for children and their communities, which contribute to driving economic stimulus. Giga has raised approximately US$4.8 million for a programme targeting nine countries to explore diverse technologies, business models and regulatory frameworks that provide broadband connectivity solutions to schools and communities.
Case Study 5: South Africa: Opening schools up better by expanding access to digital learning

South Africa’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic has relied on dynamic partnerships to scale up digital learning to reach every child. UNICEF and the Department of Basic Education partnered with 2Enable to develop a new, free, digital learning content platform for pre-primary and primary students. UNICEF and Ubongo, Africa’s leading children’s edutainment and media company, with support from the British Council, then uploaded localized, engaging content to the 2Enable platform in an effort to expand access to digital learning to all children in South Africa.

The Department of Basic Education and UNICEF, with support from the LEGO Foundation, also collaborated to develop home-based online and app-based approaches for children from pre-primary to secondary level; engaged in direct outreach to teachers; and integrated play-based learning into lessons, reaching 7.8 million children.

The University of Pretoria and UNICEF worked together to reach more than 150,000 secondary school students with mathematics and science through a digital coaching intervention. Students were introduced to various technologies, including robotics and other dynamic innovations, as part of the Junior Tukkie programme.

To support early learning, UNICEF translated popular digital materials, suitable for children aged 0–5 years, into all 11 local languages of South Africa. Over 683,000 parents of young children have accessed the Tshwaragano Ka Bana (Let’s play, learn and grow together) series.

Policy, advocacy and planning

UNICEF advocates for universal access to transferable skills for children of all ages, genders and abilities in schools and learning environments. UNICEF fosters partnerships between governments, donors, civil society and the private sector to ensure transferable skills are embedded in education systems for children from early childhood onwards.

In Thailand, UNICEF is leading support for curriculum reform towards a competency-based curriculum with an integrated skills framework. The Dare to Dream platform has reached nearly 30,000 children and youth.

In Viet Nam, adolescent participation went to scale in 2020. A total of 28,500 teachers from lower secondary schools and technical and vocational training centres were guided to set up and facilitate social innovation clubs. As a result, 631,379 adolescents (48 per cent girls) participated and are now able to identify community problems and take a human-centred-design approach when developing and testing solutions. In Ho Chi Minh City, through partnerships with the Saigon Innovation Hub and non-governmental organizations, 2,200 adolescents participated in initiatives on urbanization, pollution and violence.

In Peru, UNICEF advised the Ministry of Education on the draft National Policy for Adolescent Education and Well-being, successfully advocating for a gender-responsive approach in national student guidance and tutoring guidelines. UNICEF also assisted authorities in identifying and removing regulatory and coordination barriers to accelerate the implementation of a law for the retention of pregnant girls.
In Tanzania, UNICEF participated in global digital challenges focusing on skills-building. Through #ReImagineYourFuture challenges, over 500 participants were exposed to human-centred design methodologies that fostered creativity and self-reflection skills. UNICEF also supported the United Republic of Tanzania Innovation Week 2020, which showcased the most recent locally built innovations to more than 5,600 participants. As well, UNICEF, in close collaboration with the Youth 4 Children Innovation Hub of the University of Dar es Salaam and the private sector company Launchpad, hosted a panel discussion on the role of education technology and a follow-up event showcasing education technology innovations.

**Spotlight on thematic funding: Voices of COVID Generation platform in Malaysia**

The Voices of COVID Generation (VOCG) platform is an initiative of the Ministry of Education in Malaysia, UNICEF and ARUS Academy, in response to children’s learning being disrupted during school closures due to the pandemic. All adolescents in Malaysia can access the VOCG platform for free and find project-based content in mathematics, science, geography and history, drawn from the local curriculum. Students can also learn about COVID-19 and share their feelings about the pandemic, fostering a sense of community while their schooling is disrupted.

VOCG received an honourable commendation from the Wenhui Award 2020 for innovative education responses to COVID.

Students from SMK Tanjong Rambutan in Malaysia with VOCG kits to help them learn, and to reflect on and express their experiences during the pandemic.

**Summary**

The past year has underscored the importance of resilience, both for education systems and for individuals. Resilient individuals have the life skills to adapt to changing circumstances. UNICEF is working to support children with life skills appropriate to each stage of life. By the age of five, a child should have the life skills necessary to transition to a more formal school environment where foundational (language and mathematics) skills will be further developed. By age 10, a child should have transferable skills such as problem-solving, negotiation, empathy, communication and participation, which will be critical to completing a successful education. By the age of 18, a young person should have the technical, vocational and digital skills to enter the workplace.

With only a quarter of children of secondary school age currently mastering basic skills, UNICEF acknowledges the urgency of continued investments in research, evidence-building and teacher development to ensure that all children can complete a good-quality education and move on to meaningful employment with the skills necessary for success.
High-level priorities

A teacher guiding students in using the Learning Passport in a classroom at Oasis Primary school in Hartcliffe, Harare, Zimbabwe.
Implementation of the Education Strategy amid a pandemic

The midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, identified a number of lessons important to the implementation of the Education Strategy. UNICEF has already shifted the focus of its education work beyond equitable access to schooling, as measured by enrolment and completion rates, to quality basic education.

UNICEF’s programming for gender-transformative education is also shifting to promote systemic change, grounded in an assessment of gender power dynamics rather than narrower targets, such as gender parity, that may mask some of the most critical challenges. UNICEF has also institutionalized a commitment to inclusive, equitable education, ensuring that the education rights of the most vulnerable and marginalized children are upheld at all levels of education.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of investment in disaggregated data to focus on the populations at greatest risk, to identify the social, economic and environmental determinants of exclusion from schools and services, and to inform differentiated programming approaches. UNICEF must further systematize its efforts to leave no child behind, by embedding an ever-stronger operational approach to equity across the organization, so that programming can find a better balance between coverage and reaching the most vulnerable.

The education response to the COVID-19 pandemic catalysed the realization of the three intended strategic shifts in the global Education Strategy – i.e., systems-strengthening, evidence generation, and innovation.

A student named Patience doing practical experiments at her school laboratory at Kavuzi, Malawi, when the school reopened after closing due to the pandemic.
Achieving results at scale and speed

The pandemic put a spotlight on the role of technology in reaching children and their families with basic services. Remote learning methods, including digital learning solutions, were used by most countries where school closures disrupted children’s learning. More than half of the world’s children and young people are, however, on the wrong side of the digital divide, deprived of the learning opportunities of their connected peers. Digital learning is the ‘great equalizer’ that can reach every child everywhere, and reach them at speed and scale. The availability and potential of technology means that digital learning should be part of a basic basket of services deemed essential for every child and young person.

Making digital learning a reality for every child across the world is UNICEF’s ambition with the Reimagine Education initiative. Launched in 2020, the Reimagine Education initiative aims to reach all children – some 3.5 billion by 2030 – with world-class digital learning, i.e., learning that is interactive, adaptive, playful, inclusive, market-relevant and nimble. The initiative brings together a diverse range of actors and stakeholders from the private and public sectors to contribute expertise and resources to connect all children to digital learning opportunities. This aim is being achieved through the provision of learner-centred content, accessible platforms, and affordable data and devices, and by engaging children and young people.

Reimagine Education has the potential to change the world quite literally, making it more connected, more equitable, and more resilient in the face of external shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic. The cost is estimated at US$47.45 billion by 2030, shared by multiple sectors, including US$428 billion on connectivity and US$46.5 billion on delivery of quality digital learning.\(^28\) The cost of doing nothing would be an irreversible deepening of the digital divide and of learning gaps.

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Reimagine Education: A once-in-a-generation opportunity to reach all children at speed and scale

Reimagine Education is UNICEF’s flagship initiative which seeks to enable every child and young person (3.5 billion by 2030) to access world-class digital learning solutions that build the skills they need for a brighter future. The initiative operates through five key interconnected pillars: world-class digital learning solutions; connectivity; devices; affordable data and content; and young people’s engagement.

Through the Reimagine Education initiative, UNICEF is working with the public and private sector to ensure every child has access to a modern education. This means an education that is:

- Child-centred, self-paced, interest-based, individualized, relevant to the child’s context, and language-appropriate
- Skills-based (foundational, transferable, digital, entrepreneurial and job-specific skills) and promotes engagement of youth at school and in the community
- Universal and reaches all children and youth, with a specific focus on marginalized children, and provides accessible content and tools to all, including children with disabilities
- Gender-responsive and contains gender-transformative content that addresses girls’ and boys’ specific needs
- Applying appropriate technology, including digital, low/no tech and hybrid, to reach all children and youth.

Reimagine Education is supported by Generation Unlimited, a global initiative to ensure that largest generation of young people in history is prepared for the transition to work and engaged citizenship. Multi-sector partnerships are required, to expand education, training and employment opportunities for young people on an unprecedented scale. Convened by the United Nations Secretary-General, Generation Unlimited calls for a movement of world leaders, business partners and civil society to rally investment and put connectivity and digital learning in the hands of every child and young person.
UNICEF India, in collaboration with PwC India and YuWaah, is bridging the digital gap by upskilling 300 million young people over the next 10 years in the areas of economic opportunities and employability, 21st century skills and learning and youth engagement.

In Jordan, the Ministry of Education, in partnership with UNICEF, launched Learning Bridges, a national blended learning programme. It includes weekly printed activity packs and QR codes to online resources covering Arabic, English, mathematics and science for approximately 300,000 students in Grades 4 - 9. Adapted online resources are available for children with poor literacy or visual impairments.

In Viet Nam, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to develop a National Digital Literacy Framework focusing on in-school and extracurricular activities. In hard-to-reach areas, UNICEF is reaching 29,000 marginalized students with open-source augmented and virtual reality education solutions and is empowering adolescent girls to engage in science, technology, engineering and mathematics using this technology.

In Timor-Leste, through the Learning Passport, 95% of teachers in the country (15,000) were trained on COVID-19 prevention and school reopening.

In Puntland, in northeast Somalia, was the first place in Africa to deploy the Learning Passport, a digital learning platform developed in partnership with Microsoft. 5,000 students accessed education via the Learning Passport when school closures were in effect.

UNICEF and the Akelius Foundation developed the Akelius Digital Language Course to support refugees, migrants and language minorities. The platform was also used as a tool during COVID-19 lockdowns in Greece and Lebanon. It is also available online and offline in many languages, including English, French and Greek.

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Partnership and resource mobilization

UNICEF has worked closely with partners to accelerate support to the education sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. In March, UNICEF, WHO and IFCR authored the IASC’s Interim Guidance on COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools. In April, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNHCR, the World Bank and World Food Programme released the Framework for Reopening Schools, which was later supplemented by the Guidance on Reopening Early Childhood Education Settings, co-developed with the World Bank and UNESCO. UNICEF has also supported large-scale campaigns such as Save our Future to advocate for the reopening of schools and the return of all children to school and learning, and contributed to the development of the white paper Save Our Future: Averting an Education Catastrophe for the World’s Children, which sets out priority actions to avoid reversing the gains made in education.  

UNICEF continued its commitment to leadership in coordination at country level in all contexts, throughout 2020, and demonstrated its unique country positioning allowing it to ensure synergies and alignment across emergency and development programmes. Demonstrating the priority given to supporting the recovery of education from the pandemic, UNICEF is partnering with UNESCO and the World Bank on “Mission: Recovering Education in 2021”. This effort aims at helping all children to return to school and make up for lost learning, and at preparing teachers to provide the needed support. UNICEF and its partners will track progress towards these goals through existing indicators, following the SDG 4 monitoring framework, as well as through more recent data efforts such as the UNESCO–UNICEF–World Bank joint Survey on National Educational Response to COVID-19 School Closures and the COVID-19 Global Education Recovery Tracker. The latter is a tool developed in partnership with Johns Hopkins University’s eSchool+ Initiative, UNICEF and the World Bank to monitor school reopening and recovery-planning efforts in more than 200 countries and territories.  

As part of GPE’s largest-ever emergency education response, UNICEF is now the grant agent in 36 of 66 countries that applied for accelerated funding from GPE, amounting to US$212.71 million out of the total US$467.22 million. An additional US$25 million has been approved for a joint initiative by UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank to ensure regional and global efficiencies and knowledge-sharing. UNICEF was also the grantee under ECW in 2020 for 16 First Emergency Response grants, as well as a number of Multi-Year Resilience Programme grants.  

As the lead agency for the IASC Education Cluster, UNICEF, with Save the Children, participated in a wide range of additional partnerships highlighted in this report. These partnerships will support countries as they begin the process of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF has deepened collaboration with the private sector at global and national levels, including through the Generation Unlimited partner network and the Reimagine Education initiative, to unlock new opportunities for children and young people through different areas, such as donation of devices, adaptation of high-quality software and content, financial resources, and expertise. Since 2020, the Education Outcomes Fund (EOF) hosted partnership at UNICEF has led on results-based financing in the areas of ECE, quality basic education and technical and vocational education/skills for work.  

The partnerships that UNICEF has with the public and private sectors and a diverse network of partners proved critical to its ability to scale up distant learning opportunities during school closures in the pandemic. UNICEF will continue to play a leadership role in the global education architecture supporting education transformation and will build on partnerships with private sector organizations, financial institutions, other United Nations agencies, multilateral partners and foundations to protect and increase education finances, including allocations to the most vulnerable children. UNICEF will continue strong advocacy through platforms such as the G20 and G7, for which it serves as a trusted technical partner. Activities financed through thematic funding will continue to be framed in the context of the three transition points in education: from pre-primary to primary education, from basic to higher levels of education, and from education to the world of work.  

In 2020, UNICEF further strengthened engagement with donor partners, including through the UNICEF Education Partner Group, initially established in 2019 together with key public donors following the launch of the UNICEF Education Strategy, 2019–2030. The Partner Group, which has, since its inception, encouraged more participation from donors, has become a forum for high-level advocacy and nurtures close collaboration with donors and allows for consultation on various programmatic areas based on sharing of lessons learned and assessment of progress. In 2020, UNICEF leveraged the Education Partner Group to exchange ideas on how to galvanize strategic action and partnerships to accelerate and expand learning opportunities for millions of vulnerable children, taking into consideration the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF’s resource mobilization will continue to prioritize engagement with key donors and partners through the Education Partner Group, as well as bilateral outreach through UNICEF headquarters, relevant offices and national committees.
## Abbreviations and acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Accelerated Learning Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>C4D</td>
<td>Communication for Development</td>
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<td>EAP</td>
<td>East Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<td>ECA</td>
<td>Europe and Central Asia</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early childhood development</td>
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<td>ECE</td>
<td>Early childhood education</td>
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<td>ECW</td>
<td>Education Cannot Wait</td>
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<td>EMIS</td>
<td>Education Management Information Systems</td>
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<td>ESA</td>
<td>Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
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<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender-based violence</td>
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<td>GEP</td>
<td>Gender Equality Package</td>
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<td>GPE</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
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<td>IASC</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
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<td>IFRC</td>
<td>International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies</td>
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<td>IIEP</td>
<td>International Institute for Educational Planning</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>INEE</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies</td>
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<td>KIX</td>
<td>Knowledge and Innovation Exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>KOICA</td>
<td>Korean International Cooperation Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCTB</td>
<td>National Curriculum and Textbook Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEET</td>
<td>Not in employment, education or training</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDPI</td>
<td>Network for ECD in Mozambique (Rede para o Desenvolvimento da Primeira Infância)</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
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<td>SBC</td>
<td>Social and behaviour change</td>
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<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRGBV</td>
<td>School-related gender-based violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNGEI</td>
<td>United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative</td>
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<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water, sanitation and hygiene</td>
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<td>WCA</td>
<td>West and Central Africa</td>
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<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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<td>YOMA</td>
<td>Youth Agency Market Place</td>
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10. ‘COVID-19: Are children able to continue learning during school closures?’.


15. ‘COVID-19: Are children able to continue learning during school closures?’.

16. The Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action – the CCCs – are the core UNICEF policy framework for humanitarian action. The CCCs promote equality, transparency, responsibility and a results-orientated approach to enable predictable and timely collective humanitarian action. Initially developed in 1998 and revised in 2010 and again in 2020, the CCCs are grounded in global humanitarian norms and standards and set commitments and benchmarks against which UNICEF holds itself accountable for the coverage, quality and equity of its humanitarian action and advocacy. For more information,


15 ‘COVID-19: Are children able to continue learning during school closures?’.


19 The updated version of the global Out-of-school Children Initiative Operational Manual will be released in 2021, on the 'All in School' global initiative website (<www.allinschool.org>).


26 The four Level 3 emergencies were the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, protracted emergencies in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, and the global COVID-19 pandemic.

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31 The four Level 2 emergencies were complex humanitarian situations in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and in central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger), and internal displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

32 The four Level 2 emergencies were complex humanitarian situations in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and in central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger), and internal displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

33 The four Level 2 emergencies were complex humanitarian situations in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and in central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger), and internal displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Currently, there are activate education clusters in 28 contexts (25 countries and 3 hubs in Syria). In all contexts, UNICEF remains accountable for the Core Commitments for Children (CCC) and as service provider of last resort.


The Whole of Syria response represents the totality of the humanitarian education response for children in Syria. It includes the response of education actors based inside the country and education actors who work through a cross-border modality. The response aims to improve access to services, the quality of those services, and the systems that support the delivery of education.


Ibid.


The Learning Passport in Jordan is available at: <https://jordan.learningpassport.unicef.org>.


Building Back Equal: Girls back to school guide.


The Sahel region includes (parts of): Burkina Faso, Chad, Cameroon, the Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.


Ibid.


61. SDG Target 4.2 is, by 2030, to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.


68. Formative assessments are formal or informal assessments conducted by teachers in the classroom to understand students’ learning progress and enable teachers to modify teaching techniques to improve learning.

69. The Early Grades Reading Assessment (EGRA) gauges early literacy skills through a 15-minute individual oral assessment of five fundamental reading skills. The Early Grades Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) is a one-on-one oral assessment of foundational numeracy skills.


85. ‘COVID-19: Are children able to continue learning during school closures?’.


UNICEF income in 2020

In 2020, total income to UNICEF increased by 13 per cent compared with that in 2019, reaching an all-time high of US$7,219 million. This was largely due to an increase in income to earmarked funds to specific programmes (other resources), which grew by 14 per cent, up from US$5,029 million in 2019 to US$5,748 million in 2020. Although income to un-earmarked funds (regular resources) also increased, to US$1,470 million in 2020 compared with US$1,371 million in 2019, it decreased as a proportion of total income to UNICEF to 20 per cent, down from 21 per cent in 2019 (see Figure A1-1).

FIGURE A1-1: Income by funding type, 2014–2020*

* Figures are based on ‘income’, which here represents contributions received from the public sector and revenue from the private sector.
‘Other resources’ contributions increased by 13 per cent compared with those in 2019, and contributions to UNICEF thematic funding pools increased by 27 per cent, from US$346 million in 2019 to US$438 million in 2020. Thematic funding also increased as a percentage of all ‘other resources’, from 7 per cent in 2019 to 8 per cent in 2020. This is 6 per cent below the milestone target set out in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, of thematic funding being 14 per cent of all ‘other resources’ in 2020. The increasing overall amount of thematic funding as well as an increasing ratio of thematic funding as a percentage is a result of both an increase in non-humanitarian thematic funding as well as an increase in humanitarian thematic funding driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. This trend is encouraging and in line with the Funding Compact commitments. In the Funding Compact between governments and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, United Nations Member States have committed to double the share of non-core contributions that are provided through single-agency thematic funding, such as UNICEF’s thematic funding pools. In alignment with this commitment, UNICEF aims to double thematic funding as a share of all ‘other resources’, to 15 per cent by 2021. To reach this goal, UNICEF encourages partners to channel more contributions through these softly earmarked funds.

‘Income’ is defined as contributions received from Governments, inter-organizational arrangements and intergovernmental organizations, and revenue from the private sector.

**Regular resources (RR):** Un-earmarked funds that are foundational to deliver results across the Strategic Plan.

**Other resources (OR):** Earmarked funds for programmes; these are supplementary to RR and intended for a specific purpose, such as an emergency response or a specific programme in a country/region. Includes ORR and ORE.

**Other resources – regular (ORR):** Funds for specific, non-emergency programme purposes and strategic priorities.

**Other resources – emergency (ORE):** Earmarked funds for specific humanitarian action and post-crisis recovery activities.

FIGURE A1-2: Other resources contributions 2014–2020: Share of thematic funding*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Thematic Other Resources (Regular)</th>
<th>Thematic Other Resources (Emergency)</th>
<th>Non-Thematic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thematic funding remains a critical source of income for UNICEF programme delivery. Through thematic funding contributions at global, regional and/or country levels, partners support UNICEF-delivered results at the highest programme level in each of those contexts for the greatest impact. It acts as an ideal complement to regular resources, as it can be allocated on a needs basis. The flexibility of thematic funding allows UNICEF to respond more effectively. It facilitates longer-term planning, sustainability and savings in transaction costs, leaving more resources for UNICEF programmes.

For partners, contributions to UNICEF’s 10 thematic funding pools are in keeping with the principles of good multilateral resource partnerships. Thematic contributions have the greatest potential of ‘other resources’ to produce high-level results directly aligned to the Strategic Plan, as endorsed by the UNICEF Executive Board and supported by the aims of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. They yield a higher return on investment than more tightly earmarked contributions, as lower management and reporting costs result in a larger percentage of funds going towards programming. They also simplify renewal and allocation procedures, and reduce the administrative monitoring workload for partners.

Overall contributions to the thematic funding pools increased from US$346 million in 2019 to US$438 million in 2020. The largest public sector contributors to the thematic funding pools in 2020 were the governments of Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands, while the largest private sector contributions were facilitated by the German Committee for UNICEF, the U.S. Fund for UNICEF, and the United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF.*

* For more information on thematic funding and how it works, please visit: <www.unicef.org/publicpartnerships/66662_66851.html>
In 2020, partners contributed US$999 million ‘other resources – regular’ for education—a 75 per cent increase over the previous year. Public sector partners contributed the largest share of ‘other resources – regular’ to education, at 92 per cent. The top five resource partners to UNICEF education in 2020 were the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the Government of Germany, the European Commission, the Government of Norway, and the Education Cannot Wait Fund (see Table A1-1). The largest contributions were received from: the Government of Norway, for the global education thematic pool; from the Government of Germany, for preventing a ‘lost generation’ in Turkey: support to the Syrian volunteer teachers’ incentive programme; and from the European Commission, for supporting access to formal education for Syrian refugees and Lebanese children in Lebanon’s public schools (see Table A1-2).
### TABLE A1-1: Top 20 resource partners for Goal Area 2 by total contributions, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Resource partners</th>
<th>Total (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
<td>362,773,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Germany*</td>
<td>282,398,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>European Commission*</td>
<td>163,650,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>119,369,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Education Cannot Wait Fund</td>
<td>37,425,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>36,843,157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Netherlands*</td>
<td>29,120,351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Canada*</td>
<td>27,877,966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>17,100,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>11,900,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>U.S. Fund for UNICEF</td>
<td>11,592,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>German Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>10,694,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>United Nations Joint Programmes</td>
<td>10,097,042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sweden*</td>
<td>9,359,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Republic of Korea*</td>
<td>9,045,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Danish Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>7,498,274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>African Development Bank</td>
<td>7,093,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Japan Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>6,875,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>UNDP-managed United Nations Partnerships and Joint Programmes*</td>
<td>6,153,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Canadian Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>5,878,237</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * Includes cross-sectoral grants SC190548; SC190479; SC200267 (education, gender equality); SC190500; SC190203; SC1900081 (education, child protection); SC190758 (education, child protection, gender equality); SC200571 (nutrition, education, WASH); SC200479; SC181062 (education, child protection, education, WASH); SC180224 (health, nutrition, education, WASH); SC190011 (nutrition, education, child protection, WASH, safe and clean environment); SC210010 (health, education, child protection); SC190013 (health, nutrition, education, child protection); SC200500 (health, education, social inclusion); SC190741; SC190728; SC181205 (health, nutrition, education, child protection, WASH); SC160635 (education, child protection, WASH, social inclusion); SC200746 (health, education, child protection, WASH, social inclusion); SC181122; SC190712; SC190701; SC170746 (education, child protection, WASH); SC181078; SC200800 (education, WASH); SC190746 (health, education, child protection, WASH, safe and clean environment); SC180742 (health, education, WASH); SC200802; SC180805 (education, social inclusion). UNDP, United Nations Development Fund.
### TABLE A1-2: Top 20 contributions to Goal Area 2, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Total (US$)</th>
<th>Grant description</th>
<th>Resource partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>79,569,071</td>
<td>2018–2021 Global Education Thematic Pool</td>
<td>Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>58,104,401</td>
<td>Preventing a “Lost Generation” in Turkey: Support to the Syrian volunteer teachers’ incentive programme (Phase V)</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>53,104,571</td>
<td>Supporting Access to Formal Education for Syrian Refugees and Lebanese Girls and Boys in Lebanon’s Public Schools</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>35,250,837</td>
<td>Supporting Access to Formal Education for Lebanese and non-Lebanese Girls and Boys in Lebanon’s Public Primary Schools (Phase IX)</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>30,755,763</td>
<td>Strengthening National Systems for Improved Access to Equitable and Integrated Basic Services, Iraq*</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>29,110,909</td>
<td>PROSPECTS – Responding to Forced Displacement Crisis*</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>24,359,746</td>
<td>Program Implementation Grant, Yemen</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>21,413,711</td>
<td>Support to Refugees &amp; Migration Programme, Ethiopia</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>21,400,000</td>
<td>Accelerated Funding for the Post-Cyclone Recovery, Mozambique</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>21,400,000</td>
<td>GPE Accelerated Funding, Nigeria</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>18,839,828</td>
<td>Strengthening Community Resilience in South Sudan Urban Settings*</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>17,743,710</td>
<td>No Lost Generation/Makani Center II, Jordan</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>16,050,000</td>
<td>Accelerated Funding for Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Nigeria</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>16,050,000</td>
<td>Accelerated Funding for Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>16,050,000</td>
<td>Accelerated Funding for Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Mozambique</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>14,194,968</td>
<td>Support to No Lost Generation (NLG) Initiative for Children of Syria (Phase V)</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>13,194,551</td>
<td>Education Sector Program Implementation Grant, Chad</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>12,972,087</td>
<td>Girls’ Education Project (GEP) Phase 3, Nigeria</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>11,770,000</td>
<td>Accelerated Funding for Education Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Myanmar</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>11,770,000</td>
<td>Accelerated Funding for Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Côte d’Ivoire</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * Cross-sectoral grants SC200550 (health, education, social inclusion), SC190601 (education, child protection), SC190741 (health, nutrition, education, child protection, WASH).
UNICEF thematic funds maintain a four-year funding period that covers the entire Strategic Plan period (2018–2021). In the first three years of the Strategic Plan, thematic funding contributions for education reached US$305 million, with US$121.9 million received in 2020, of which more than 85 per cent came from public sector partners. The Government of Norway was the largest thematic resources partner in 2020, providing more than 81 per cent of all thematic education contributions received (see Table A1-3).

Of all thematic education contributions that UNICEF received in 2018–2020, seventy-six per cent were global-level contributions (see Figure A1-6). These are the most flexible sources of funding to UNICEF after regular resources, and can be allocated across regions to individual country programmes according to priority needs.

Under the current UNICEF Strategic Plan, the Government of Norway has contributed 94 per cent of all global education thematic funding.

UNICEF is seeking to broaden and diversify its funding base (including thematic contributions) and encourages all partners to give as flexibly as possible. In 2020, thirty-three partners contributed thematic funding to education, compared with 32 partners contributing in 2019. Sizeable thematic contributions were received from the Government of Norway for global education thematic funding and from the Government of Denmark towards education activities in Iraq and the Niger, while the Korean Committee for UNICEF contributed sizeable region-specific thematic funding for activities in East Asia and the Pacific.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Partner Type</th>
<th>Resource partner</th>
<th>Total (US$)</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governments 85.43%</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>99,012,905</td>
<td>81.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>3,548,721</td>
<td>2.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>914,199</td>
<td>0.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>655,022</td>
<td>0.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector 14.57%</td>
<td>Korean Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>3,939,327</td>
<td>3.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Norwegian Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>3,470,305</td>
<td>2.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japan Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>1,615,364</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>German Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>1,389,003</td>
<td>1.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. Fund for UNICEF</td>
<td>1,115,991</td>
<td>0.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dutch Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>963,702</td>
<td>0.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Peru</td>
<td>705,600</td>
<td>0.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swiss Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>505,646</td>
<td>0.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>448,914</td>
<td>0.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Danish Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>434,197</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF China</td>
<td>397,635</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>364,298</td>
<td>0.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Colombia</td>
<td>352,800</td>
<td>0.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Argentina</td>
<td>352,800</td>
<td>0.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Ecuador</td>
<td>329,280</td>
<td>0.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finnish Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>322,952</td>
<td>0.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swedish Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>199,074</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>191,789</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Chile</td>
<td>188,160</td>
<td>0.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andorran Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>89,606</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Uruguay</td>
<td>70,560</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>69,149</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Brazil</td>
<td>65,075</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Croatia</td>
<td>47,102</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australian Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>37,530</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF India</td>
<td>30,835</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italian Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>29,642</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Icelandic Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>17,272</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE A1-3: Thematic contributions by resource partner to education, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF</th>
<th>10,065</th>
<th>0.01%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td>121,884,518</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The 2020 allocations of global thematic education funds were made according to a needs-based formula for country offices’ regional allocations and for regional office’s allocations, based on progress against critical education indicators. The allocation for a region increased with the number of children and youth in the region, the fragility of the region, the economic inequality of the region, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education indicators. The indicators used, where relevant, are consistent with the Results Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. The amounts allocated to country offices were determined at regional level, based on the Strategic Plan Result Areas, using a similar approach. The indicators were: (1) pre-primary gross enrolment rate; (2) primary education out-of-school rate; (3) primary education net attendance rate of the children from the poorest quintile; (4) secondary education gender parity index; (5) quality of education system for learning outcomes (Strategic Plan indicator 2.b.3); (6) school-age population; (7) fragility index indicator (proxy based on the number of consolidated appeals in the region during the past several years); and (8) economic inequality (based on World Bank Gini index).

FIGURE A1-8: Allocation of global education thematic funding to country offices, 2020: US$719,698
The allocation and expenditure of all thematic funding contributions can be monitored on the UNICEF transparency portal (<https://open.unicef.org>), and the results achieved with the funds – which are assessed against Executive Board-approved targets and indicators at country, regional and global levels – are consolidated and reported across the suite of global annual results reports.

Specific reporting for country and regional thematic funding contributions is provided separately for partners giving at those levels.

Transparency:
Follow the flow of funds from contribution to programming by visiting <http://open.unicef.org>.
Goal Area 2 expenses in 2020

Note: Expenses are higher than the income received, because expenses are comprised of total allotments from regular resources and other resources (including balances carried over from previous years), whereas income reflects only earmarked contributions to Goal Area 2 in 2020. In 2020, total expenses for UNICEF programmes amounted to US$5.72 billion.

‘Expenses’ are recorded according to International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and are accrual based. These are used for official financial reporting. ‘Expenditures’ are recorded on a modified cash basis. They are used for budget reporting, since they are aligned with cash disbursements and goods receipts (the way budgets are consumed).

Figure A1-9: Total expenses by strategic outcome area, 2020

To reach the results set out in the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF has planned for a total of US$20.3 billion in programme expenses. In 2020, total expenses for UNICEF programmes amounted to US$5.7 billion. In addition to the US$11.0 billion expenses of 2018 and 2019, it left an expense gap of US$3.5 billion for the remainder of the Strategic Plan period.

Total education expenses in 2020 were US$1.167 billion, accounting for 20 per cent of total UNICEF expenses for the year – the second highest category after health expenses, which accounted for 25 per cent (see Figure A1-9). Compared with 2019, the share for education fell by 0.5 of a percentage point, while, in absolute terms, expenses fell by 1.4 per cent.
In 2020, regular resources (the most flexible type of resources) were used for 12 per cent of total education expenses, while ‘other resources – regular’ and ‘other resources – emergency’ (ORE) were used for 54 and 34 per cent, respectively.

The share of spending from emergency funds (ORE) has significantly decreased to 34 per cent compared with the share in 2018 and 2019, when it was 45 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively. In absolute terms, spending from emergency funds has been steadily decreasing since 2017. In 2020, it dropped by US$90 million. Despite these declines, humanitarian crises are continuing to affect large numbers of children, and UNICEF is continuing to play a large role in backstopping education services in emergency situations.

Countries affected by emergencies and humanitarian crises generally had the largest education expenses in 2020 (see Figure A1-11). The Syrian crisis continues to have an impact on many of these countries, including Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Other countries with high levels of expenses included Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen.

**FIGURE A1-10: Education expenses trend by fund type, 2014–2020**
In 2020, the largest expenses for education were in the Middle East and North Africa, followed by West and Central Africa and Eastern and Southern Africa (see Figure A1-12). These regions together accounted for two thirds of all UNICEF expenses for education.
Equitable access to quality education accounted for 72 per cent of expenses in the sector in 2020. Activities related to learning outcomes accounted for 23 per cent of education spending, while 5 per cent of total expenses went to skills development (see Figure A1-13).

FIGURE A1-12: Total expenses for education by region and fund type, 2020

FIGURE A1-13: Expenses for education by result area, 2020
In 2020, the amount of education spending from thematic funds was nearly US$90 million, of which 31 per cent was emergency thematic funds. West and Central Africa was the region with the highest spending on thematic fund followed by Middle East and North Africa and Eastern and Southern Africa. The three regions cumulated half of the total education spending from thematic funds.

**TABLE A1-4: Top 20 countries in expenses for education, 2020 (US$)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Total expenses</th>
<th>Fund category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other Resources-Emergency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>171,672,155</td>
<td>80,725,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>79,829,827</td>
<td>72,357,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>61,176,364</td>
<td>43,473,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>43,754,421</td>
<td>1,691,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>43,292,176</td>
<td>14,178,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>42,918,867</td>
<td>6,405,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian Arab Republic</td>
<td>35,168,243</td>
<td>32,634,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
<td>32,178,085</td>
<td>9,149,309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>30,834,941</td>
<td>17,162,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>28,736,474</td>
<td>10,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>26,911,751</td>
<td>15,575,298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Globally, thematic funds accounted for 8 per cent of all the education expenses in 2020. However, this share varies widely, from 4 per cent in Middle East and North Africa, to 16 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific, and 32 per cent in headquarters.

Analysis of expenses in the goal area/sector

In 2020, three cost categories accounted for nearly 80 per cent of education expenses: transfers and grants to counterparts (US$610 million); staff and other personnel costs (US$179 million); and supplies and commodities (US$129 million) (see Figure A1-15). The higher share of expenses in ‘transfers and grants to counterparts’ is consistent with the increasing use of partnerships to achieve greater impact for children in education interventions.

FIGURE A1-15: Expense for education by cost category, 2020
### TABLE A1-5: Expenses for education by cost category and fund type, 2020 (US$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost category</th>
<th>Other Resources - Emergency</th>
<th>Other Resources - Regular</th>
<th>Regular Resources</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equipment, vehicles and furniture</td>
<td>399,155</td>
<td>389,270</td>
<td>495,219</td>
<td>1,283,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>1,725,233</td>
<td>3,922,864</td>
<td>2,865,883</td>
<td>8,513,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10,576,723</td>
<td>14,413,040</td>
<td>5,222,465</td>
<td>30,212,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General operating + other direct costs</td>
<td>11,700,107</td>
<td>25,568,733</td>
<td>12,603,981</td>
<td>49,872,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental indirect cost</td>
<td>23,419,656</td>
<td>43,060,958</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>66,480,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractual services</td>
<td>21,111,918</td>
<td>56,838,720</td>
<td>15,509,961</td>
<td>93,460,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies and commodities</td>
<td>47,986,139</td>
<td>65,221,085</td>
<td>15,450,110</td>
<td>128,657,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff and other personnel costs</td>
<td>33,755,672</td>
<td>91,508,989</td>
<td>53,323,279</td>
<td>178,587,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers and grants to counterparts</td>
<td>244,449,630</td>
<td>325,170,970</td>
<td>40,565,744</td>
<td>610,186,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>395,124,233</strong></td>
<td><strong>626,094,629</strong></td>
<td><strong>146,036,830</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,167,255,692</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Totals may not match summed figures due to rounding.

### FIGURE A1-16: Expenses for education by income group, 2020

**Education non-thematic funding**
- Lower-middle income: 26%
- Upper-middle income: 36%
- Low income: 37%
- High income: 1%

**Education thematic funding**
- Lower-middle income: 34%
- Upper-middle income: 24%
- High income: 2%
- Low income: 40%
Annex 2: Data Companion

The Strategic Plan systems-strengthening indicators are based on one to five dimensions, which in turn are based on one to six subdimensions. If the UNICEF country office has supported the subdimension, it assesses the in-country situation using a 1–4 scale, ranging from 1 ‘weak’ to 4 ‘championing’. The average of these subdimension scores is then used to determine whether a country satisfies the dimension, and the overall indicator. An average of less than 2.5 is considered a ‘no’, and an average of 2.5 or more is considered a ‘yes’.

Figure A2-1 shows that in 2020, some 49 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had an average score of 2.5 or more across the related subdimensions of education sector plan/strategy: (1) resource allocation; (2) access, participation and retention. In 2020, some 46 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had a score of 2.5 or more for the resource allocation subdimension, and 62 per cent for the access, participation and retention subdimension.

Strategic monitoring questions (SMQs) are one of the tools through which UNICEF’s programme division collects data to monitor and guide its work against the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. A Glossary of Indicators, developed as a supplemental annex to this report, provides definitions of indicators used by UNICEF country offices for data monitoring at country level, and, particularly, a description of the scales used to provide a score to the subdimension. For enquiries, please contact Nicolas Reuge, Senior Education Advisor (nreuge@unicef.org), and Jean Luc Yameogo, Education Specialist (jlyameogo@unicef.org).

FIGURE A2-1: Systems-strengthening indicators for equitable education strategy/plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
<th>Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with equitable education strategy/plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sector plan/strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resource allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access, participation and retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCA</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Resource allocation</th>
<th>Access, participation and retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE A2-2: Systems-strengthening indicators for Education Management Information System/data

**Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective EMIS/data systems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>EAP</th>
<th>ECA</th>
<th>ESA</th>
<th>LAC</th>
<th>MENA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WCA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>110</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Three subdimensions of effective EMIS/data systems**

- **Attendance and dropout**
- **Quality and timeliness**
- **Disaggregation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE A2-3: Systems-strengthening indicators for emergency preparedness/resilience

**Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective emergency preparedness/resilience within education systems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>EAP</th>
<th>ECA</th>
<th>ESA</th>
<th>LAC</th>
<th>MENA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WCA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>123</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resilience and emergency preparedness</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Three subdimensions of effective emergency preparedness/resilience dimension within education systems**

- **Human and financial resources**
- **Risk assessment**
- **Risk reduction strategy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE A2-4: Systems-strengthening indicators for inclusive education

Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective inclusive education systems for children with disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
<th>EAP</th>
<th>ECA</th>
<th>ESA</th>
<th>LAC</th>
<th>MENA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WCA</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>54</td>
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<td>2019</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>2020</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six subdimensions of effective inclusive education systems for children with disabilities

Accessible physical environment

- 2016: 18%
- 2017: 28%
- 2018: 26%
- 2019: 26%
- 2020: 29%

Human resources

- 2016: 25%
- 2017: 31%
- 2018: 34%
- 2019: 42%
- 2020: 44%

Materials and communication

- 2016: 34%
- 2017: 41%
- 2018: 44%
- 2019: 43%
- 2020: 48%

Attitudes

- 2016: 46%
- 2017: 49%
- 2018: 55%
- 2019: 57%
- 2020: 59%

EMIS

- 2016: 51%
- 2017: 62%
- 2018: 68%
- 2019: 72%
- 2020: 75%

Law-Policy

- 2016: 74%
- 2017: 85%
- 2018: 90%
- 2019: 87%
- 2020: 90%
FIGURE A2-5: Systems-strengthening indicators for gender-responsive education systems for access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
<th>Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with gender-responsive education systems for access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>EAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three subdimensions of gender-responsive education systems for access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SRGBV</th>
<th>Addressing demand barriers</th>
<th>Gender-responsive environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SRGBV, school-related gender-based violence.

FIGURE A2-6: Systems-strengthening indicators for teacher development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
<th>Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective teachers’ development within education systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>EAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four subdimensions of effective teachers development within education systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incentives</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher professional development</th>
<th>School leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE A2-7: Systems-strengthening indicators for early childhood education

Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective early childhood education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE A2-8: Systems-strengthening indicators for community participation

Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective community participation within education system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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</table>

Three subdimensions of effective community participation within education systems

- Community involvement in monitoring
- Accountability to communities
- Community and student participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
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FIGURE A2-9: Systems-strengthening indicators for mother-tongue/multilingual education

**Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective mother-tongue/multilingual education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
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<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
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<td>11</td>
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</table>

**Three subdimensions of effective mother-tongue/multilingual education**

- **Human and material resources**
- **Policy environment**
- **Community engagement**

FIGURE A2-10: Systems-strengthening indicators for learning assessment

**Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective learning assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
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<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
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</table>

**Three subdimensions of effective learning assessment**

- **Classroom assessments**
- **National assessments**
- **Examinations**
FIGURE A2-11: Systems-strengthening indicators for skills development

**Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries mainstreaming skills development within national education/training systems**

<table>
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<th>TOTAL</th>
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<th>ECA</th>
<th>ESA</th>
<th>LAC</th>
<th>MENA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WCA</th>
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<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Three subdimensions of mainstreaming skills development within national education/training systems**

- **Community engagement**
  - 2016: 3%
  - 2017: 7%
  - 2018: 18%
  - 2019: 20%
  - 2020: 33%

- **Curricula**
  - 2016: 13%
  - 2017: 16%
  - 2018: 36%
  - 2019: 42%
  - 2020: 47%

- **Policies**
  - 2016: 20%
  - 2017: 24%
  - 2018: 43%
  - 2019: 47%
  - 2020: 54%